Branded Interaction
Aesthetics

Enhancing brand experience via website interaction

Master’s Thesis 2017
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Foreword

I would like to devote my great appreciation to my supervisor Virpi Roto for the encouraging guidance and valuable support through the whole process. I want to also thank the companies B&O PLAY and Serious Business for the truly inspiring discussions and insights.

I also want to express my gratitude for having this great opportunity to join the Encore research group at Aalto ARTS. Special recognition also goes to my dear colleagues at Aalto University.

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Lastly, I want to thank my beloved one Vii- your support is immeasurable.

Thank you.
ABSTRACT

The web is becoming the main stage for companies to communicate and display their brand. While the technology and platforms for web design develop further, new possibilities for brands open for conveying and enhancing their distinctive brand identity in a unique and compelling way on web. This is where the opportunity of branded interaction aesthetics stands out for enabling unique, engaging and brand-enhanced experiences. It is important for the success of businesses to convey consistent and strong brand experience across all touch points, especially on the web. Whereas the demand and opportunities for branded interaction design on the web is current, the topic seems to be surprisingly neglected.

This master’s thesis aimed to identify and reveal the current status of what is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research by conducting a systematic literature review. A qualitative and explorative case study was carried out for examining an advanced example of web site with branded interaction aesthetics enhancing strong brand experience. The case study included two semi-structured interviews with three interviewees for investigating the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics in relation to the selected case brand B&O PLAY. The study explored and demonstrated how interaction aesthetics has been used to enhance the brand experience on the web via a qualitative web site evaluation of the case brand. The systematic literature review reveals a significant hole in research regarding branded interaction aesthetics and indicates a lack of established conceptualization of branded interaction aesthetics. The results of the case study demonstrate an example of dynamic interaction aesthetics enhancing consistent brand experience on the web, as well as exemplify how to reflect and evaluate interaction aesthetic features against brand experience goals on the web. This study discovered a lack of utilization of interaction aesthetics in brand experience strategy, methods and tools for companies, and of designers and practitioners to evaluate, reflect and design for branded interaction aesthetics for enhancing brand experiences on the web. Therefore, this study contributes to the identification of this significant gap in the research and in practice. Furthermore, this study pinpoints and recommends new research and development areas as well as underlines an opportunity for businesses to improve their brand strategy via branded interaction aesthetics. This rather new research area might provide more depth for the brand experience and, therefore, an opportunity for stronger brand satisfaction for users as well as for companies’ stronger customer relationships.

Keywords: Brand Experience, Company web site, Interaction Aesthetics, Interaction qualities
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1. Introduction

This master’s thesis investigates and explores the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics on the web following the ideology drawn from the experience driven design. It aims to investigate and reveal the recent knowledge concerning what is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research as well as explore an advanced example of branded interaction aesthetics on the web via further examining how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web in the case example of B&O PLAY brand. The nature of the thesis is explorative thereby researching this rather neglected research area via empirical qualitative and explorative methods.
1.1 BACKGROUND

Experience design has focused on user experience design in relation to a single product or service. The experience design approach, as described by Hassenzahl (2010), is rarely used in customer experience design of different touchpoints, such as website design and especially in regard to interaction aesthetics.

In addition, in the study of brand experience via company-wide experience Roto et al. (2015 p. 2277) state that even though user experience is a current topic in the field of human-computer interaction, it is rather rare to design user experiences that are well in line with the corporate brand identity. The paper underlines the importance of consistent experience in all touch points for strengthening the brand and for fulfilling users’ brand expectations by setting company-wide experience goals. If the expectations do not match with the product or service, the user experience might be poor and the brand experience weaker. Given this, brand experience goals should be taken carefully into consideration when designing to elicit experiences in the user. Roto et al. (2011) state that, “experience design has two main challenges: defining the experience to design for, and to design something that enables such an experience.” As the paper of Roto et al. (2017, p. 1) also states, “The core idea of experience-driven design is to define the intended experience before functionality and technology”. This will be helpful for practitioners to plan and manage the design process with a focus on the intended experience to be elicited in the user. Given this, company wide brand experience goals should be defined in order to meaningfully design and convey them to the user via the website.

The background of this thesis lies in this ideology of experience-driven design positioned within a wider emphasis on designing and conveying brand experience via company-wide experience goals. The thesis topic emerged from the Brand New research project of Aalto ARTS. The Brand New research project, multidisciplinary consortium consisted of researchers from VTT, Aalto ARTS and Hanken, and followed the above mentioned experience driven design ideology of defining and setting company wide brand experience goals. The participating organizations included multiple real estate and construction industry companies. The project aimed to develop a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamic construction of companies’ brand images from the perspectives of employees, customers and management for customizing their value promise to enhancing business renewals. (Brand new, 2017)

Aalto ARTS focused on company wide experience goals, which were defined and selected in co-creation with the employees, customers and management of the company and implemented into the company strategy as well as further in their web site design. As a continuum for the project and starting point for the thesis, these company wide brand experience goals were examined in two case companies’ web sites where the success of the implementation was assessed and brand experience goals were emphasized and conveyed to users on the website. In other words, the set brand experience goals were reflected towards brand experience perceived from the companies’ website design. These brand experience goals implemented in all touchpoints, the website being one of them, aimed to enhance the consistent and clear brand image and brand experience.

This continuum of the Brand New project, the website evaluation of the brand experience goals on the companies’ websites, worked as a starting point and background
for the thesis. However, the results of these two case company evaluations are excluded from the further scope of the thesis and therefore, will not be further explained and revealed here. However, examining and reflecting on the web site design towards the brand experience goals revealed that companies struggled to align their interaction aesthetics features and elements with the brand experience goals leading to a less consistent brand experience on the website. Consequently, this observation sparked inspiration and curiosity for the topic of branded interaction aesthetics on web.

1.2. THE RESEARCH GAP

The web is becoming the main stage for companies to communicate and display their brand. While the technology and platforms for web design develops further, new possibilities for brands has opened up to convey and enhance their distinctive brand experience in unique and compelling ways on web. Moreover, users demand even better services and they have even higher expectations from the companies’ web site for unique and pleasurable user experience. A company’s website needs to be personalized by users’ needs and expectations without forgetting to convey the consistent brand image and experience. This is where the opportunity of experience driven, distinctive interaction aesthetics stands out in delivering unique, engaging and brand enhancing experiences. Whereas the interest, demand and opportunities for branded web site design is current, the topic seems to be surprisingly neglected. (See Literature Review Chapter 2)

There seems to be varying literature around the topics of interaction aesthetics and brand experience in general, but the area where they intersect seems to be rarely studied, especially in the website context. Based on the systematic literature review, the majority of the publications neglect the intersection of them or only scratches the surface. Even though the topic and importance of the consistent user and brand experience of the products and services across all touch points including web site are acknowledged to be highly important for the company image and business success, this area of new opportunity for branded interaction aesthetics is rarely studied.

Due to this, the specific area has not yet been researched yet properly and there is a significant gap in the intersection of the interaction aesthetics and branding experience on the website design. The goal of this study is to further research the topic by exploring and identifying what has been previously studied before and what kind of advanced website example of the well branded interaction aesthetic there is. In addition, this study aims to reveal if there are any developed methodologies, tools for practitioners to utilize when designing engaging interaction aesthetics features and elements conveying the brand experience.

As result, this study aims to point out what has been studied before and to reveal possible new directions for researchers and practitioners to continue research further. Furthermore, the study aims to showcase the potential and possibilities of this area via an advanced case company example of branded interactive web site experience. The objective is not only to reveal more this significant research area for researchers and practitioners but also to highlight new opportunities for companies to enhance their brand experience on web via deeper customer engagement and more consistent, distinctive brand experience as an asset for business opportunities and expanding the digital brand strategy.
1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The main research questions of the study are as follows:

What is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research?

How interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web?

These research questions are addressed through the following research objectives in which both theoretical and empirical parts of the study are covered.

To reveal what is the current status of research within the topic of branded interaction aesthetics based on the theoretical literature review.

To explore and identify an advanced example of case brand enhancement of the brand experience via branded interaction aesthetics on the web.

To conduct qualitative, semi-structured interviews for examining the case brand, their brand experience goals and design of interaction aesthetics on their web site via an empirical case brand study.

To conduct qualitative web site evaluation of the brand experience via interaction aesthetics on their web site design based on the findings of the interviews from case brands.

To synthesize the findings and propose future research and recommendations based on the theoretical literature review and the empirical case study.

1.4. RESEARCH STRUCTURE

This chapter is to introduce the structure of the study and the nature of it. The thesis consists of the following five parts: Introduction, Literature review, Research methodology, Empirical case study, Conclusions and future research. The research methodologies are described in more detail in the research methodology chapter.

Part 1. – Introduction

The introduction is the first part of the study introducing the background information. This section also outlines the research gap and the scope of the thesis as well as further introduces the research questions and objectives. This chapter also provides the structure and framework for the thesis.

Part 2. – Literature review

Firstly, this section of the study introduces the key terms and concepts of the research topic. The main objective is to conduct the literature review by a systematic process to examine the current status of research within the scope of the thesis. The systematic research process is explained here in detail. The aim of this chapter is also to reveal relevant publications and studies around the research topic and for the conclusion to discuss the results and findings.

Part 3. – Research methodology

This part introduces the research philosophy and approach to address the research questions and objectives. In addition, this chapter introduces research methods applied in this study. It aims to answer how data was gathered as well as used and analyzed for this study. This chapter also discusses the quality of the study.
Part 4. – Empirical study

The empirical case study was conducted through a qualitative method. The empirical study consists of the benchmarking of advanced branded interaction aesthetics in web design and aims to identify and select an advanced example of branded website design for further examining. Two semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted for investigating the selected case brand. Interviews are focused on studying the brand and its brand experience to provide meaningful background knowledge for the further evaluation of the case brand's website. The case evaluation focuses on examining and analyzing the brand experience via interaction aesthetic features and elements of their website design. Lastly, this chapter discusses the results and findings as well as the conclusions of the empirical case study.

Part 5. – Conclusions and future research

Final chapter summarizes the thesis and discusses the contribution of the study as well as provides directions and recommendations for future research.

1.5 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Research structure and framework outlines the main characteristic of this study in the next following Figure 1.
Introduction and background

Background information and research gap, research questions and research objectives

Literature review

Key terms and concepts
- Brand experience
- Interaction aesthetics
- Interaction qualities

What is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research?
- Systematic literature review of the current status on research

Research methodology

Research philosophy and approach
- Methodologies, Data collection and analysis, Quality of the study
- Limitations, Validity and reliability of the study

Empirical study

How interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web?

Benchmarking
- Advanced branded interaction aesthetics on web design,
- Selecting a case brand for further examining

Interviews

Brand experience via branded interaction aesthetics

Web site evaluation

Findings and conclusions

Conclusion and future research

Contribution of the study, discussion and future recommendations

Figure 1, Frame of the thesis
2. Literature review

The theoretical literature review aims to investigate and identify the current status on research of what is known about branded interaction aesthetics. The process is conducted via systematic literature review methodology in order to reveal the meaningful research in the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics. Before the systematic literature review, the key terms and concepts of brand experience, interaction aesthetics and interaction qualities are firstly discussed.
2.1. KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The following chapter aims to introduce the key terms and concepts briefly.

2.1.1 Brand experience

According to the notion of Brakus et al. (2009, p. 1288) “Brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments.” Given this, brand experience is more than just a nice package, logo or font. It is a comprehensive and complex sum of multiple factors from multiple touch points affecting how brand is perceived and experienced. In this study, brand experience was discussed in a context of interactive web site, perceived and examined from the web site design as one of the key brand touch points. It was rather difficult to find publications which particularly addressed brand experience within this context. Due to this difficulty, to convey brand experience on a website via interaction design it is worthwhile referring to the notion of experience design by Hassenzhal (2010).

As Hassenzhal (2010, p. 8) states, “The experiential approach to designing interactive products explores ways to create and shape experiences through products.” According to the paper, experience design aims to define and set the experience before deciding how to convey it via technology. Even though, eliciting a particular experience via interaction design cannot be assured, it can be still made more possible by ensuring that the essence of the product, the functionality and every single detail of it, is in line with the intended experience to be elicited in the user. (Hassenzhal 2010) Given this, the intended experience to be perceived from the brand should be taken carefully into consideration for eliciting it in the users via web site. For technology mediated experiences Hassenzhal (2010) distinguishes experience across three levels, why, what and how, which are also referred to and discussed in the publication of Lenz et al. (2013, p. 127) accordingly: Why addresses the needs and emotions, and the experience involved and emerging from the activity. It addresses the higher level what is meaningful for people. What refers to the functionality: what can be achieved with the action, for example, of ordering a product from the website. How refers to how to site functionality within a concrete action e.g., moving the mouse or clicking a button. Drawn from this ideology of experience design, in order to elicit a meaningful and intentional brand experience, experience should be clarified and what and how levels of the website interaction aesthetics design should be meaningfully designed to elicit the intended experience. This ideology of experience design to think is worth attention in the context of enhancing and eliciting experience on a website meaningfully. However, this three-level notion does not directly apply to emerging brand specific experiences hence the “Why” level refers to higher meanings for people but rather exemplifies how to consider the How and What level for emerging intended experiences.

![Figure 2. Three levels (Hassenzhal 2010)](image-url)
2.1.2 Interaction aesthetics

As mentioned earlier, this thesis focuses more on the dynamic interaction aesthetics aspects for conveying the brand experience on the web, or the perceived brand experience emerging from the action interacting with the web site. Hence, in this study aesthetics are not only seen as the static appearance of the user interface but rather as Djajadiningrat et al. (2000, p. 132) state in their paper, “Don’t think beauty in appearance, think beauty in interaction.”

Lavie et al. (2004) claim that the aesthetics dimension, or the beauty of websites has been rather neglected in the research in the field of HCI (Human Computer Interaction) with the focus more on the efficiency aspects. However, beauty and aesthetics are areas that have been researched for decades. They examined via literature review multiple aspects of perception of visual aesthetics in the field of Human Computer Interaction, design and aesthetics in general. They point out the lack of convenient methods to measure aesthetics and therefore, as a result propose two dimensional structures for the perceived visual aesthetics of websites where perceptions consist of two main dimensions, classical aesthetics and expressive aesthetics. According to the study, users judge both of these dimensions in website aesthetics.

Lim et al. (2007) argue based on comprehensive literature research, that even though interest towards aesthetics related quality of interaction has been increased in research, it is still unclear from the practical designer point of view, how to shape aesthetic interactions. They also reveal the nature of the aesthetics related to interactive artifacts has been researched resulting that aesthetics are not only based on visual appearances but rather on the holistic experiences of the usage. Also Hummels et al. (2010, p. 1-2) argue that beauty in interaction is not only a quality of the object but also subjective, experiential and a social given as well as pre-reflectively affected by cultural and ethical aspects. Löwgren (2009, p. 130) discusses the aesthetic nature of interaction stating that perceived aesthetics also depends on what a user expects from the interaction experience, or in other words, the purpose, potential and value of the product itself.

2.1.3. Interaction qualities

This study aimed to understand better how interaction aesthetics has been used to enhance brand experience on the web. Hence, the approaches towards defining interaction qualities defining and describing the interaction was considered meaningful for understanding from where branded interaction aesthetics design forms. There are several publications discussing interaction qualities from the different perspectives, and a few are notable enough to be pointed out.

Lim et al. (2007) discuss this in their paper about “Interaction gestalt” and propose a set of attributes for designing interactions. Also Löwgren’s (2009) paper discusses the nature of interaction aesthetics by dividing it into four concepts of qualities. Lenz et al. (2013) studied publications about current approaches of the nature of interaction by highlighting discussions about attributes, qualities and different dimensions shaping the interaction. As a result, the study proposes interaction vocabulary for describing the quality of an interaction, drawn from the belief that desired experience should be first clear and specific to be matched with the interaction attributes in the design. The study focuses on how interaction feels by differentiating interaction at the two levels, Why and How. This is drawn from the three level
approach defined by Hassenzahl (2010) and introduced in the earlier chapter. The Why level addresses the awareness of the experience to be designed via the How level, constituting the meaningful set of attributes to form the interaction. Lenz et al. (2013, p. 133) state, “Neither can we focus on the interaction alone, without taking the experience and meaning that will inevitably be created into account. Nor can we possibly design (for) experience, without acknowledging the experience-inducing powers of concrete interaction.” The vocabulary excludes the “beauty” since they think it is not considered as an attribute since beauty emerges at a higher level. However, they state “We believe that beauty in interaction emerges, when the actual interaction is in line with the overarching experience, when the interaction is successful in supporting the story to be told” (Lenz et al. 2013, p. 133). For this thesis, the latter mentioned approach is interesting in relation to the topic of branded interaction aesthetics.

2.2. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Based on the initial literature research, there are plenty of studies related to HCI and Interaction aesthetics, user experience as well as branding in general. However, there seems to be considerable gap in the publications where interaction aesthetics are researched from the brand experience perspective. How the quality of the web site interaction aesthetics influences and forms users’ experience and perception about the brand is barely studied. In particularly, how to enhance the brand experience through interaction aesthetics seems to be lacking based on the initial research. Therefore, a systematic literature review was conducted.

2.2.1 Frame for the literature research

The search and selection of the published works were conducted using a systematic approach by first selecting the research source engines, the method including key words for the search. The resulting publications from the search were skinned through and selected for further examination via 3 phase process: filtering based on the title and keywords, filtering based on the abstract and filtering based on the content. The selected source for the literature search was Scopus and Google Scholar. As the research scope and overall focus for the literature search was brand experience via interaction aesthetics, key wording was carefully selected aiming to reveal the most relevant and accurate publications related to the topic. Google Scholar gave 428 000 hits for the “interaction aesthetics”, which indicated that the topic seemed to be widely discussed across different fields and therefore, the selection needed to be framed more specifically. Experimenting different kind of search terms and keywords, such as “user experience, HCI, Interaction design” resulted in hundreds of search results with a very broad content whereas alternative search terms “brand experience” and “interaction aesthetics” resulted only in one hit from Google Scholar and one hit from Scopus. The final search wording was selected as follows: ("Interaction Aesthetics" OR "Interaction qualities") AND Brand). This search was set for all fields and the set wording was limited to appear only in the document titles, abstract or keywords of the publications. The time span was set from 2005 to 2017 in order to find publications. This search resulted in 236 hits with Google Scholar and 162 hits with Scopus for further selection and examining and the systematic process are discussed next. The literature search was conducted in April 2017.
2.2.2 Phase 1 – Filtering based on title and keywords

A total of 398 search results mentioned above were examined for further selection based on the title and keywords. This aimed to identify any relevant publications related to the set scope for understanding the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics. After brief screening of the material, results seemed to be surprisingly diverse with interaction aesthetics and qualities coming across in variety of different disciplines such as medicine, tourism and even dance related publications. Since the search results were somewhat vague, the definition and screening criteria for the further selection were, that the publication must at least contain content about interactive technology, connected to somehow branding. As a means to narrowing the search down in this phase within these search parameters, 18 hits from Google Scholar and 31 hits from Scopus were selected after first briefly screening for further validations. During this stage, one duplication was found (Aagesen et al. 2016) appearing in both search engines results and this one duplicated publication was deleted from the Google Scholar search resulting 17 papers from Google Scholar and 31 papers from Scopus for further examining.

2.2.3 Phase 2 – Filtering based on abstract

A second phase of filtering of the publications was conducted from the narrowed 17 hits from Google Scholar and 31 hits from Scopus. This was done based on screening the abstract with the criteria of including content about interactive technology, preferably connected to branding. All the irrelevant ones were excluded from this search if they did not meet the criteria for the content. This resulted 7 hits with Google Scholar and 13 hits with Scopus for further evaluation.

2.2.4 Phase 3 – Filtering based on content

Lastly, the final selection was completed by screening the publications in the setting that the publications discussed and approaching the topic at a particular meaningful level including relevant content about interactive technology. This was necessary because the results did not quite meet the expectations due to the rather vague and loose emphasis within the research topic. In this final phase there were featured 5 papers from Google Scholar and 7 papers from Scopus, 12 in total being selected for the review.

2.3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This literature review focused on examining the current status in research in the intersection of the interaction aesthetics and brand experience on the web. The review focuses on examining the perspectives and approaches which the publications take in relation to the scope of the thesis. The objective for the literature review was to address the research question concerning what is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research. As mentioned earlier, 12 articles in total were selected for the review. This representative selection connects to different themes such as Brand Experience, Communication Goals, Interaction aesthetics and interactive web site design which will be referred to next.

The connection to brand experience or perceived brand was addressed more in these 5 papers: Aagesen et al. (2016), Bolchini et al. (2009), Jiang et al. (2016), Noh et al. (2016) and Tikkanen (2016). However, they did not all refer to those exact key words. Aagesen et al. (2016) discuss in their paper the importance
for design to support the brand in a meaningful, constructive way in order to elicit meaningful brand experiences and the authors also highlight the strategic benefit for companies in doing so. In addition, Aagesen et al. (2016) reveal in their study with interaction design experts that there is a lack of systematic means to craft interaction aesthetics and interactive experience to support the brand behind the interactive artifact, even though the importance is recognized widely and branding knowledge and practices are studied from the visual aesthetics point of view. Furthermore, Jiang et al. (2016) address the same issue in their study as do Bolchini et al. (2009, p. 652) who raise this question: “Does usability of a web-based communication artifact affect brand, i.e., the set of beliefs, emotions, attitudes, or qualities that people mentally associate to the entity behind that artifact?” However, Bolchini et al. (2009) discuss “web usability” not the term “interaction”, and so does Jiang et al. (2016) but both connect it to branding. Indeed, Bolchini et al. (2009) do not specifically focus on the interaction itself but rather on the overall usability of the website and its correlation in brand perception. On the other hand, Jiang et al. (2016) study interaction design as only one of the five design elements essential to users’ perception of the website aesthetics which shapes the corporate image exhibited and perceived via the web site. This paper refers to perceived “corporate image”, not the term brand and the emphasis on interactivity in relation to the corporate image is not strong.

Some of the articles had the perspective more on the overall communication goals in relation to branding as in the study of Bolchini et al. (2002) where the emphasis was on comprehensive communication goals for designing interactive applications with stakeholders and professionals. Also Bryan-Kinns et al. (2004) discuss in their paper about the communication goals related to branding and its complexity with multi touch points but do not provide research or present any study on this. However, their paper underlines the crucial need for it to achieve consistent brand experience in interactive environments.

Also as a publication about interaction aesthetics related to branding, Tikkanen (2016, p. 19) addresses the issue that interaction aesthetics are not sufficiently taken into account among brands in their communication. The study aimed to examine interactions eliciting certain emotion and how interactions can be used to convey brand personality and values. In this study, prototypes were tested in a similar way as Aagesen et al. (2016) did in their study in relation to the emotions elicited through specific interactive attributes and brand expressions experienced. However, the study was rather small due the nature of the master’s thesis study and focusing on only one interaction attribute.

The study of Bolchini et al. (2007) discusses communication goals which they refer to as embodied brand values, strategic messages which should be transferred into a tangible set of requirements to be implement into the website. According to them, these elements can be functional or non-functional such as graphics, architecture or services or, in other words, elements for users to experience. The study does not discuss the brand experience itself nor the interaction aesthetic features per se and therefore, can be considered rather irrelevant for this thesis study. Also, the study of Bolchini et al. (2009) discussed the communication goals and their importance in branding strategy. Their study focus was how brand and its values are communicated and conveyed and how the user perceives them as well as how that relates to usability. Only the study of Aagesen et al. (2016) notes a relation between particular expressions of an interactivity attribute and brand traits at a deeper level. Therefore, the publication has most relevance as theoretical background literature.
Interaction aesthetics and interactive technologies viewpoints were studied to some extent in this literature review within several papers from slightly different perspectives and emphases. However, most of the publications were concentrating mainly on the traditional aspects of visual aesthetics and user interfaces in the field of HCI. Hassenzahl (2010) discusses interactive technologies and design in a context of HCI, usability and interaction from the experience approach, but does not approach specifically from the branding perspective. Other publications making connections to interaction aesthetics or interactive technologies were Aranyi et al. (2015), Jiang et al. (2016), Hoffman (2013), Bryan-Kinns et al. (2004) and Sikorski (2008). However, no particular perspective or approach emphasized the dynamic, engaging aspects of perceived interaction aesthetics in web sites in relation to enhancing or conveying brand experience. These connections and relations were rather vague or commonly neglected in the literature review.

Therefore, from this systematic literature search, publications by Aagesen et al. (2016), Bolchini et al. (2009) and Jiang et al. (2016) had the most relevance addressing how web design affects the way brand is perceived. However, only the publication by Aagesen et al. (2016) strongly addresses and studies the perceived brand experience in relation to interaction aesthetics in web design and addresses the topic of the thesis meaningfully. As mentioned earlier, Aagesen et al. (2016) study underlines the strategic importance for the business to shape and the brand perception and points out the significant lack in research and practices within this area for understanding how branding relates to interactive artifacts specifically in interaction aesthetics or user experience point of view. His study with the interaction designers reveals the lack of interaction aesthetic means for expressing the brand which is also commonly missing from the brand book. The study addresses the issue that it is difficult for designers to articulate aspects of interactive experiences which might leads to the limitations to critique and identify design opportunities and hence, also the difficulty to transfer the brand into medium of interactivity.

2.4. CONCLUSION

The results of the systematic literature review included surprisingly few publications addressing the research topic of branded interaction aesthetics and, therefore, this area is rather neglected. Many publications highlighted the lack and need for research within visual aesthetics of interaction. Moreover, the area of brand experience elicited and perceived from the interaction aesthetics especially in the web site context was also largely neglected. Surprisingly, the literature review also revealed, via the search from Google Scholar and Scopus, that within the “brand experience” and “interaction aesthetics” search term only two publications were found. This indicates that this area is rare or these specific terms for addressing this topic are not established.

This literature search has some limitations to be pointed out. The literature review only revealed what is published in the frames of these specific keywords of Interaction Aesthetics, Interaction Qualities and Brand. It is arguable whether these words are most convenient to reveal the relevant literature to address the set research questions of the thesis. Search results indicate quite a varying range of different keywords used in the resulting publications. Even within this small scope of literature, variations of different wordings such as corporate image, branding, interaction qualities, interactivity and web usability are used to describe similar topics. According to the results, it seems that either the topic brand experience via interaction aesthetics is rarely studied and there are no systematic and consistent definitions and keywords to address
this topic or the researcher was not able to identify them in this literature search. As mentioned before, the most relevant publication for this study in light of the literature review was Aagesen et al. (2016). This paper has key words such Aesthetics; Branding; Interactivity; Design; and Experience. These are rather broad terms to describe this narrow scope of research area and, hence, were found with both search engines used in this literature search.

Drawn from the search results and publications, this literature review not only underlines the importance of the topic but also points out the great gap in this specific research area and the value as well as opportunity for further research. Exploring and examining this area further benefits both academia and companies for enhancing a more consistent and engaging brand experience via interaction aesthetics on a web site. Hence, it also validates the significance and need for further exploration and research for examining the question concerning how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on web sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bryan-Kinns, Nick; Broadbent, Peter;</td>
<td>Anthropomorphizing mass communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Hassenzahl, Marc;</td>
<td>Experience design: Technology for all the right reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Hoffman, Daniel L;</td>
<td>Designing interactions for learning: Physicality, interactivity, and interface effects in digital environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Sikorski, Marcin;</td>
<td>HCI and the Economics of User Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Tikkanen, Marjo;</td>
<td>What makes the flow-Understanding the immateriality of screen-based interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Aagesen P.T., Heyer C.</td>
<td>Personality of interaction: Expressing brand personalities through interaction aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Aranyi G., Van Schaik P.</td>
<td>Modeling user experience with news websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Bolchini D., Garzotto F., Sorce F.</td>
<td>Does branding need web usability? A value-oriented empirical study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Bolchini D., Garzotto F., Paolini P.</td>
<td>Design requirements for communication-intensive interactive applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Bolchini D., Garzotto F., Paolini P.</td>
<td>Branding and communication goals for content-intensive interactive applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Noh M., Chae M., Lee B., Yoon M.</td>
<td>Effect of smartphone brand satisfaction on the purchase of other smart devices of the same brand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Literature review list of publications
3. Research methodology

The research methodology chapter begins by introducing the research philosophy and approach to address the research questions and objectives. This is followed by the introduction of the methodologies applied in the study as well as how the data is collected and further analyzed. The chapter ends with the discussion of the quality of the study including validity and reliability as well as limitations.
3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

This master’s thesis aims to examine and explore the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics. The research intends to reveal this rather neglected research area and further explore and examine it to provide a better understanding by using a case example. This thesis study is qualitative and exploratory in nature and hence does not aim to provide any final solutions or answers to the research question directly but rather underlines and exemplifies this rather new research area. The main goals for the study were firstly to address the research question concerning what is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research via the method of systematic literature review. Secondly, the empirical part of the study addresses the research question concerning how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web via exploring and identifying an advanced example of branded interaction aesthetics on the web and further examining the selected example via an empirical case study.

The empirical case study aimed to examine the topic further with a comprehensive exploration addressing the research question of how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web been conducted. The objective was to seek out unique and engaging branded web sites enhancing and conveying a strong brand experience via interaction aesthetics. The goal was to discover and identify an advanced example of a brand with a strong brand experience elicited in their web site via branded interaction aesthetics. The empirical case study is divided into benchmarking, interviews and B&O PLAY brand sections which were conducted through following methodologies.

Benchmarking was undertaken using multiple sources from the internet with the main source being Awwwards (The awards for design, creativity and innovation on the Internet, 2017) from where the case brand B&O PLAY was found. In addition, the website Behance (Online platform to showcase & discover creative work, 2017) was another key source for exploring the topic and where the case brand B&O PLAYs digital brand book project were initially found. The benchmarking is described in more detail in the benchmarking section.

Two semi-structured video Skype interviews were conducted: an interview with the Global Senior Art Director of the case company B&O PLAY and Branding and Strategic design agency Serious Business, which has designed a brand experience focused web design for B&O PLAY. Both the interviews aimed to identify and further explore the brand experience of B&O PLAY, the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics in their digital design on the website. The main goal was to identify the brand experience goals, values and guidelines, emotions and feelings which they wish to elicit in users and how they have implemented them into a digital interactive design. This data gathered from the interviews

3.2 METHODOLOGIES

The systematic literature review aimed to reveal the current status of research in the intersection of the brand experience and interaction aesthetics relating to what is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research. The systematic literature review was conducted through a systematic process in three phases as described in detail in the literature review section of the study. The literature review was followed by the conclusion and a discussion of the results and findings.
was significant and necessary for understanding the indented brand experience as a base for the further website evaluation. The nature of the interviews was qualitative and explorative.

The case brand B&O PLAY section includes two parts: an analysis of their brand experience drawn from interview data and a qualitative web site evaluation. The qualitative evaluation of the website of the B&O PLAY was conducted for investigating how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on their website as an advanced case example of branded interaction aesthetics. The main purpose was to evaluate if the identified brand experience goals were elicited and conveyed to users via interaction aesthetic features and elements. In other words, evaluation aimed to investigate if the elicited and perceived brand experiences were in line with the intended experience goals. The objective of the evaluation was to reflect the quality of interaction aesthetics towards brand experience. An evaluation was conducted of a qualitative and explorative nature by one expert evaluator on Firefox browser through a 13-inch Macbook Air and the touchpad was used for interaction. Interaction features were identified and selected from a B&O P2 Bluetooth speaker campaign website. The two following evaluation methods were applied to the evaluation. Selected interaction features were reflected and evaluated towards Lenz et al. (2013) Interaction Vocabulary (Figure x) which provides ways to describe interaction, especially concentrating on how interaction feels as an experience. However, it focuses on the interaction itself, not the aesthetic appearance of the interaction. In this evaluation, visual appearance is considered as significant and an expressive part of the brand experience. In addition, for evaluating and addressing visual aesthetics, a method from Lavie et al. (2004) (Figure x) was utilized for this purpose. The method is developed for the perceived visual aesthetics of websites by dividing the visual aesthetics into two dimensions: Classical and Expressive. The classical dimension refers to classical, orderly and clear design as well as the usability of the web site. The expressive dimension refers to the designer’s creativity, originality and the ability to break design conventions. Each of the aesthetic dimensions is measured by a five-item scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classical Aesthetics</th>
<th>Expressive Aesthetics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic design</td>
<td>Creative design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant design</td>
<td>Fascinating design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear design</td>
<td>Use of special effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean design</td>
<td>Original design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symmetric design</td>
<td>Sophisticated design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Model of two dimensions for perceived Visual Aesthetics, Lavie et al. (2004, p. 389-290)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
<th>INTERACTION ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>EXPERIENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Esteem, focus on the interaction itself, significance of the present moment, relaxing, calming, accuracy, care, appreciation of interaction/product</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Animating, stimulating, activating, efficiency, focus on instrumental goal of interaction, expression of willpower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant feedback makes own effect experiential, competence, feeling of own impact creates a feeling of security, you see what you do, makes immediate correction possible, nothing in between, you experience what you do, increase of competence, the instant feedback creates a feeling of recognition.</td>
<td>Instant</td>
<td>Emphasizing the moment of interaction, creating awareness. Centering on the interaction itself rather than its instrumental effect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence by intuition, control</td>
<td>Uniform</td>
<td>Delayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates feeling of security</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>Inconstant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty, ambiguity, magic, handing over the responsibility (the interaction happens somewhere else), you don’t put much of yourself in it</td>
<td>Mediated</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeper analysis is needed, room for variation = room for competence, room for new ideas, exploration</td>
<td>Approximate</td>
<td>Precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carefulness, awareness, appreciation, making a relationship with the thing (being gentle with it), being a part of it, revaluation of the action, raises the quality, allows to perform a loving gesture</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
<td>Powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscious of the significance of your own doing, assurance, security, goal-mode, seeing what is going on, expressive, very easy</td>
<td>Apparent</td>
<td>Covered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Relations between attributes of interaction and experience Lenz et al.(2013, p. 135)*
3.3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was gathered for the systematic literature review and empirical case study. Data collection for the systematic literature review followed a careful, detailed and systematic process as described in depth in the literature review chapter. For the empirical case study of B&O PLAY, two qualitative, semi-structured interviews were carried out: an interview with the case brand B&O PLAY and an interview with branding and strategic design agency Serious Business. Both interviews were conducted via video Skype call and lasted approximately 60-80 minutes. Interviews were held in English and interviewees agreed to the recording for documentation purposes. Participants expressed high commitment and interest towards the topic and interview. The interview with B&O PLAY was conducted on 12.07.2017 with the Global Senior Art Director René Christoffer. The interview occurred in a relaxed atmosphere. As preparation for the interview, the main themes and nature of the interview were provided beforehand for the interviewee. The interviews followed a semi-structured method, questionnaire and the main themes were prepared for it and the intended objectives and themes were covered during the interviews. As the purpose of the interview was to explore this new topic, space for a relaxed new discussion direction was incorporated as a means to discovering unexpected insights. Both interviews were recorded and recordings and notes gathered were went through after the interviews for analyzing the data. The analysis was performed via grouping the data based on the objectives and themes established for the interview. Also, a B&O PLAY brand book was examined as background data but for confidentiality reasons it cannot be revealed in depth. The interview with Serious Business was conducted on 11.07.2017 with two interviewees Helga Osk Hlynsdottir and Thales Macedo, and both were involved in the digital brand book project designing digital and interactive brand experience for B&O PLAY. Therefore, interviewees were considered as a valuable source of information for the case study due to their strong expertise and knowledge in interaction design and branding. They also provided valuable designer points of view for the project in addition to the B&O PLAY company point of view. The Global Creative Art Director of B&O PLAY was an excellent source for the interview due to their strong expertise and knowledge of the topic. Moreover, he was involved in the B&O PLAY digital brand book project which provided highly valuable information for the project as well as connecting both the interviews together. It is worth mentioning that it was highly challenging to find interviewees for this study.

Multiple persons were approached for the interview including other external companies such as the agencies who had designed the websites, including the B&O PLAY P2 Bluetooth speaker site. Fortunately, three interviewees accepted the invitation and were considered as excellent sources for the research.

3.5. QUALITY OF THE STUDY

3.5.1 Validity and reliability

This thesis is limited to the context of dynamic interaction aesthetics and brand experience specifically in website design. A broader overview for branding and interaction design in general is limited and beyond the scope of this study. In addition, experience design is such a widely studied and broad topic and due to that and the nature of the thesis, the focus is solely on brand experience via interaction aesthetics. The website evaluation of the case study is qualitative, a self-report evaluation of one
researcher, and thus the results are not supposed to be viewed as solid facts. The purpose of the study is rather to reveal and explore new research areas by pointing out and introducing an advanced case example of how engaging brand experiences can be conveyed via interaction aesthetics on the website. This also aims to fuel interest for companies and designers to consciously consider how some specific interaction aesthetics features can elicit particular emotions and experiences in the user as well underline the opportunity of this topic for further research. The results of the study are not generalizable due to only one case study being examined but rather they are a means to introducing one way to approach this topic. Due to the new research area, or at least the new approach to it, the methodology for evaluation was challenging to select due to the difficulty in identifying or a total lack of proper methods or tools for this purpose. Hence, the combination of two methods were rather inconvenient to some extent but worked well as an example. This thesis works as the first steps and starting point for establishing this rather new research area through qualitative, explorative methods.

3.5.2 Limitations

As a limitation of the study it can be considered that the website evaluation was undertaken by one expert evaluator only. Having more evaluators could have validated the results better. On the other hand, a young creative designer evaluator falls into the target user group of the B&O PLAY website which can be considered beneficial for this case study. A further limitation is that only two interviews with three interviewees were conducted for this case study. This was due to the restrictions of the time schedule and the difficulty to get relevant interviewees for this case study of the thesis. Furthermore, due to the forementioned restriction and nature of the thesis, it was not convenient to have more than one brand for the case study even though some comparisons could have added depth to the study. This was also due to the fact that it was significant to have the data and background information of the possible brand experience goals and guidelines as a basis for the evaluation. Otherwise, the evaluation would have lost the core purpose, which was to reflect and evaluate the interaction features and elements towards the intended and defined brand experience goals. Due to this, brand experience goals needed to be investigated and verified from the case brand which was challenging as an outsider since the brand experience goals might not be defined clearly and this information, commonly from the brand book, might not be made public. As a result, only one case study brand was examined and thus, the results are not generalizable. However, this study aims to highlight the research topic via introducing one way to approach it. Another considered limitation of the study is in the process of the systematic literature review. The set search terms “interaction aesthetics”, “interaction qualities” and “brand” can exclude relevant findings around the research topic. Defining the key words according to the initial searches in search engines tended to be rather difficult because the results were so vague, so it is possible that the finalized key terms do not reveal all the relevant publications. This study also came across confidential limitations and hence all gathered data cannot be revealed which to some extent has affected the results of this thesis. Regarding the case study interviews, due to the delicate nature of the topic including strategic information, the interviewees might did not provide full information. In addition, it is not known whether there are already practitioners conducting this strategy of delivering brand experience via a website systematically with some developed tools and methods of their own but which cannot be found from the literature research nor revealed in the case study.
4. Empirical case study

The empirical case study consists of four main parts for investigating and examining branded interaction aesthetics. Firstly, branded interaction aesthetics on web design is explored and benchmarked aiming to identify and select an advanced case brand example for further examining. This is followed by the interviews for investigating the selected case brand B&O PLAY. Interviews focused on studying the B&O PLAY brand experience and their branded interaction aesthetics on web design to provide meaningful background knowledge for the following website evaluation chapter. The case website evaluation part focuses on examining and analyzing the brand experience via interaction aesthetic features and elements of the website design of B&O PLAY P2 Bluetooth Speaker site. The chapter ends in the discussion of the findings, results and conclusion of the empirical case study.
4.1. BENCHMARKING ADVANCED BRANDED INTERACTION AESTHETICS ON WEB

Benchmarking and exploration were conducted with the emphasis on identifying advanced examples of web sites with outstanding branded interaction aesthetics. The focus was especially on dynamic interactive features and elements design to enhance and convey the strong and consistent brand experience in a unique way.

Various strong brands were benchmarked, such as Adidas, Nike and Kone among others.

The main source for this benchmarking was the Awwwards website (the awards for design, creativity and innovation on the Internet, 2017). This website focuses especially on recognizing and awarding the best and most innovative web design through evaluating four main criteria: content, usability, design and creativity. They honor the best sites according to the score they have received from the Awwwards community (Awwwards – Certificates, 2017) consisting of global professionals. The search on the Awwwards website resulted in 3043 hits for Web & Interactive Websites, the B&O PLAY P2 speaker web design being one of them designed by the B-Reel Agency from Sweden. Their web design was also recognized by the Awwwards gaining Honorable Mention and being selected as a nominee for great web design by the jury of professionals (Beoplay P2, 2017).

The B&O PLAY P2 Bluetooth speaker website (“Experience the product” P2, 2017) design stood out as an engaging and creative, unique website example with compelling and strong brand experience via interesting interactive features. Their commitment is to engaging user experience transfers right from the first click onto their website. High quality, carefully designed rich visual elements and smooth interaction features catches and attracts the eye. Passion for a beautiful product and sound experience design transmits to the user through the website. What is also unique and distinctive about the website design is the decision have a separate page for each product that introduces it in multiple ways comprehensively – all the way from the technical details and rich product visuals to the experience of using it. The most interesting and unique aspect of their website is the separate “Experience the product” section. They emphasize that each product is unique from their design and features, and this is also conveyed through the unique, tailored visuals of each product with beautiful high quality elements, pictures, animation and videos. Due to the nature of this study, focusing on the intersection of interaction aesthetics and brand experience, this “experience the product” section is a great example of how to emphasize the emotional experience of the product – as well as of course the brand itself. As the website was also recognized by the Awwwards, it was considered as an advanced example of interactive web design for this study and hence the B&O PLAY brand and their “Experience the product” web design was chosen for the empirical study for further evaluation as a great example of the well presented brand experience through interactive technology.

Benchmarking also resulted in an interesting interactive digital project from creative agency Serious Business initially found through the source of Behance. (B&O Play Brandbook on Behance, 2017) The project was undertaken for B&O PLAY to digitalize their brand book into an inspiring brand experience. As described in their website: “The new digital brand book serves the need of different stakeholder groups. It offers two paths of exploring the brand. The first section of the brand book contains an interactive website which enables the user to actively explore the brand story through an audiovisual experience by scrolling through the
brand story of B&O PLAY” (Project B&O Play, 2017). The project stood out as a new, inspiring way of visualizing and showcasing the brand and delivering it in a way to elicit a strong emotional and digital interactive brand experience in the user. The project introduction video from Vimeo (B&O PLAY Digital brand book, 2017) was unique and engaging, conveying the strong brand experience of the B&O Play and the interactive experience seemed to be carefully and well designed. Since the research question being addressed in this thesis concerns how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on web sites, this digital brand book project seemed an interesting project to examine, especially due to the unique idea of digitalizing the brand book into a dynamic, interactive brand book with a strong emphasis on experience. As it is also made for the B&O PLAY brand and stands out as an interesting project for enhancing the brand experience on web site via interactive design, the project was also selected for further investigation. However, only the introduction videos of the project were public and thus, examining the project concentrated on interviewing to learn about the brand experience goals, the process and the design behind the digital brand book. The introduction videos can be found on the Vimeo and Serious Business web site (B&O PLAY Digital brand book, 2017, Project B&O Play, 2017).

4.2. INTERVIEWS

For exploring and addressing the research question How has interaction aesthetics been used to enhance brand experience on the web? in the case example of B&O PLAY web site design, it was necessary to identify the specific intended brand experience of B&O PLAY as the basis for the web site evaluation. For that purpose, two interviews were conducted for deeper investigation of the brand and the digital brand book project with the branding and strategic design agency Serious Business. This chapter introduces the themes and main objectives of the interviews and the data gathered is used as source and background for the further chapters introducing the brand, brand experience as well as conducting the web site evaluation of the B&O PLAY P2 Bluetooth speaker campaign web site. Hence, the results will not be analyzed deeper in this section but they will be discussed in the results and conclusions chapter and therefore, only an overview of the interviews will be provided here.

4.2.1 B&O PLAY, Global Senior Art Director

Interview of B&O PLAY, René Christoffer, Global Senior Art Director (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY video Skype interview, July 12, 2017)

The interview with the Global Senior Art Director of B&O PLAY, René Christoffer was conducted using a semi-structured methodology through a video Skype meeting. The primary purpose of the interview was to investigate the intended brand experience of B&O PLAY. It was necessary for the web site evaluation to have them defined as base knowledge in order to meaningfully evaluate if the brand experience is conveyed to users via interaction aesthetics. Additionally, other objectives for the interview were to investigate and explore the interaction design of B&O PLAY in relation to the brand experience. More specifically, these following themes were covered:

1. Brand experience goals and guidelines of B&O Play: feelings, emotions, behaviors intended to be elicited in the user.
2. The process behind the design of the digital brand experience in their website, what are the cornerstones and how does the communication between designer and company happen in order to ensure that the design conveys the brand experience goals.

3. The project with the Serious Business agency concerning digitizing the brand book, and especially how the brand is considered when designing dynamic, interactive features and elements in the B&O PLAY web design.

These themes were discussed and the main findings will be revealed in the next chapters explaining the B&O PLAY brand, brand experience and website evaluation as well as in the 4.4 chapter of results and conclusions.

4.2.2 Serious Business, Branding and Strategic Design Agency

Interview regarding the Serious Business, digital brand book project with Helga Osk Hlynsdottir (Art Director and Designer) and Thales Macedo (Designer and Interactive Art Director). (H.O. Hlynsdottir, T. Macedo, Serious Business, video Skype interview, July 11, 2017)

(Other members of the team in the digital brand book project included: Amadeus Malmin, Frederik Lyngaa, Porfirio Lopez, Sebastian Degenhart).

The interview with Helga Osk Hlynsdottir and Thales Macedo was conducted in a semi-structured methodology through a video Skype meeting. As mentioned earlier, the branding and strategic design agency Serious Business had a project of digitalizing the brand book for the B&O PLAY (Project B&O Play, 2017) and the interviewed Global Senior Art Director was also involved in advising the brief and the project. The primary objectives for the interview were to investigate and explore the brand experience and the interaction design of B&O PLAY from the designer point of view and have deeper insights from the digital brand book project in terms of designing digital interactive brand experiences for B&O PLAY. The aim was to interview the designers about the purpose, process and outcome of the digitalizing the brand book project. One of the objectives was also to investigate further the communication between the company and agency in terms of creating digital interactive brand experiences and especially to investigate if there are specific brand experience goals and guidelines identified and given to designers to convey in the design. One of the aims was also to find out the content of the brand book within the nature of digital interactive design features and elements and especially if the digital brand book differs from the dynamic and interactive guidelines on top of the traditional static guidelines. The main three themes covered in the interview as well as main the findings from the interview addressing them will be introduced next.

1. Brand experience goals and guidelines of B&O Play: feelings, emotions, behaviors they want to elicit in the user (in terms of the brand in general and in the digitalizing of the brand book project).

2. Investigate further the project and process about digitizing the brand book, and especially how the brand experience is considered when designing dynamic, interactive features and elements online from the designer point of view.

3. Consider whether B&O PLAY define brand guidelines for dynamic, interactive features and elements in digital platforms and if so, whether they separate dynamic and static guidelines in their digital brand book.
The main findings from this interview addressing these themes are summarized and discussed next as follows. According to both, the Global Senior Art director René Christoffer (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017) of B&O PLAY and the Serious Business team members interviewed (H.O. Hlynsdottir, T. Macedo, Serious Business, video Skype interview, July 11, 2017), digitalizing the brand book was a very successful project. The purpose of the digital brand book was to create a digital brand book for different stakeholder groups involved with the brand and having a need to access the brand book. The digital book provides benefits such as easy access at anytime and anywhere. As the company is young and constantly in development with the brand, always having an updated version available reduces lost emails, outdated files and miscommunication. One of the main purposes of the digital brand book is to provide a strong, holistic inspirational and interactive audio visual experience of what the brand is about. The digital brand book possesses two main aspects.

First part is an inspirational brand story of B&O PLAY enabling the user to actively to explore what the brand is about and what it stands for via an interactive and engaging audio visual experience. It aims to inspire through its heritage, beautiful design, values and beliefs and how you interact with the brand. The project placed a strong focus on the experience of how the brand feels and sounds. Second a functional part provides tools and guidelines concerning how the brand, such as products, logo, should be displayed. In other words, it mostly contains traditional static style guide presented in a unique, interactive way. It does not provide specific guidelines for motion, movements or dynamics in digital design.

The design process was intense in nature and conducted within three weeks from the B&O PLAY head office at Copenhagen with tight collaboration and communication within the company. The project was fast phased and iterative via quick experimenting and testing supported by smooth, quick communication and collaboration between the design team and the company with direct access to all the resources. The team conducted comprehensive research about the brand via collaborative workshops and interviews to identify stakeholder groups as well as their needs for the brand book. After the research and deepened understanding of the brand, they utilized...
various design methods such as mood boards and prototypes for the visual exploration in trying to capture the essence and visual language of the brand. They focused strongly on how the brand should feel as when users interact with the products.

During the process of designing branded interactions, no interaction experience specific instructions or guidelines were given to the team. Design of the interaction features and elements were based on careful investigation and exploration of the B&O PLAY brand and products. Working at the head office enabled access to touch, play, test out and become inspired by all products and prototypes for understanding what the brand experience is about. Diving into the brand via this interactive exploration of how the brand feels and behaves and discovering all the small details that create uniqueness were key for designing the digital experience. Inspired features from the exploration were, for example, the way the user spins the music with a finger or the animation elicited from the sound wave.

Many of the interaction features were inspired and yielded by embodying the movements of the physical, tactile interactions with the products and their user interfaces into dynamic interaction aesthetics movements and animations in the digital design. In addition, some keywords and sentences of the brand were used as a source of inspiration. As an example, there is a section in the digital brand book where the small pieces come together formulating a group which is, according to the interview, inspired by key words and a sentence of the brand regarding how “all pieces play together”. Hence, the passionate team truly make an effort to dive deep into investigating and understanding the innermost meaning of the brand by capturing and distilling the essence of it into a strong brand experience in every feature. The multicultural team consist of creative artists with a strategic mindset and hence, according to the interview, they always have a strategy behind every decision to make sure that the brand strategy is implemented into every touchpoint. As they stated in the interview: “Clients don’t always understand that different interaction has different experiences, although for B&O Play it was easy to do all these things and explain them because they understood the importance, that is what they are about: feel the brand in every single touch points, everything they do the brand needs to feel whatever they stand for” (H.O. Hlynsdottir, T. Macedo, Serious Business, video Skype interview, July 11, 2017).

This section presented the themes and objectives of the interviews as well as some main findings. However, all the findings of the interviews are not revealed here due to the difficulty of explaining them before going through the next sections where the data from the interviews is used and integrated. The further sections are based on the interview findings, the data introducing the case brand B&O PLAY and their brand experience, including the website evaluation section also. In addition, the results of the interviews will be discussed further in the results and conclusion chapter and, thus, the results were not stated in depth in this section.

4.3. B&O PLAY BRAND

This chapter consist of three parts. Firstly, the case brand B&O PLAY will be introduced briefly, which is followed by introducing their brand experience and lastly, the evaluation of the B&O PLAY website. The data for the brand analysis and evaluation is mainly based on the qualitative interviews and their brand book. The Bang & Olufsen brand is well known as a design driven company with 90 years’ knowledge of designing beautiful high tech
and quality products. With this strong history, the B&O PLAY sub-brand as a young start-up strives to embrace the heritage and elaborate it into more contemporary lifestyle products which are targeted to urban, creative and design-conscious millennial digital generation (Brand Book 2017, Interviews 2017).

“The target audience characterized by a youthful and energetic approach to life, they believe life is to be lived, not observed. They are ambitious, passionate and see themselves as accomplished individuals. They are consumers for whom the freedom to be spontaneous matters. The unique and memorable experiences in their lives are often found in the spontaneous and unplanned. This is key to the Urban Creative Professionals, who are motivated as much by acquiring and accumulating experiences as by acquiring possessions – personal artefacts, always with a great story behind them” (Brand Book, 2017).

With their portable and contemporary, minimalist attention to detail design with integral and intuitive user interfaces, they aim to deliver excellent high-quality experiences to make every moment account (Brand Book 2017), (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017).

4.3.1 B&O PLAY brand experience

This section presents and discusses the brand experience of B&O PLAY. The identified brand experience is based on the data gathered from the interviews as well as from their brand book. This chapter aims to outline their brand experience for further evaluation in their website design for investigating if their aimed brand experience is conveyed to the user through their website design.

Their emphasis on the digital brand experience is strong, as is also stated in their brand book: “The website delivers first class digital design and user experience, and has been awarded several times in both disciplines. B&O PLAY website is a key flagship store for the brand and also gives an opportunity for users to experience the B&O PLAY world” (Brand Book, 2017). According to René Christoffer the Global Senior Art Director of B&O PLAY, they are always looking for the experience in their design. “Playful is a good word. Goosebumps, we are always looking for it. Hair raise, this Yesss Wow effect. These young people are our target, just the feeling that makes them to do things that they were not able to do before” (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017).
According to the brand book, B&O PLAY comment that they are “in the business of goosebumps”. Their emotional brand experience goal is “The magical positive change music can achieve”, “that moment when everything comes together”. “We want people to use our products to “make beautiful music” in their lives.” The highlights are the “Experiences of beauty” – to maximize the emotional impact of every moment. B&O PLAY also outlines in their brand book the feeling of “People engaged in the moment where magic happens. Where music is made beautiful. Life made a little more colorful. Creativity let loose or focus made possible” (Brand Book, 2017).

Brand experience and the idiom of “Make beautiful music” was revealed more in depth by the Serious Business. According to them, “You make beautiful music when you have just a very good connection with someone - with boyfriend you find these amazing special moments, when you are having amazing, fun time and everything just works out. It is also saying for that specific moment when you feel like ‘Wow, this so magical.’ - then you can say we make beautiful music together without making any actual tones “(H.O. Hlynsdottir, T. Macedo, Serious Business, video Skype interview, July 11, 2017). According to this interview, this was revealed from the discussion with the copywriter because the team designing for the digital brand book were not at first sure what this rather abstract slogan really meant. Afterwards, they found the slogan truly inspiring leaving space for yourself to imagine and define what “make the beautiful music” means.

The brand experience of the B&O PLAY is very intuitive and emotional, driven from the encounters of people and special moments. Hence, it is rather difficult to put in just a few words or inside some specific frame. It is up to the user to interpret it but the emphasis is on eliciting great emotions, feelings and experiences in the user. Therefore, their brand is very experience driven in nature and their brand experience can be defined as rather abstract in quality. The following brand experience goals (Figure 5, Brand experience goals) are summarized from their intended brand experience for the website evaluation.

**B&O PLAY Brand experience goals**

**Craftsmanship**
attention to detail, high quality

**Magic**
magical moments, magic of music

**Beauty**
“music made beautiful”, eyes of creative and urban millennial

**Empowerment**
Creativity get loose, focus made possible, life made more colorful, “everything comes together”

When it comes to the process of designing and conveying the brand experience, R. Christoffer the Global Senior Art Director of B&O PLAY (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017) states that they do not have set any brand experience specific goals or rules
as such for designers to follow in their design processes. Rather, they try to keep their brand goals very simple and intuitive to understand as well as intuitive to make and personalized. “There are no specific experience goals, but a set of core guidelines such as the tone of voice and identity elements. We have a very clear brand DNA to follow” (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017).

According to him, they do not work with multiple agencies but only with few with the long-term collaborations which means that they are not placed in many situations where they needed to explain things from the scratch: “It is always based in something we have already done but we just need to make it better and better.” B&O PLAY gave an example about designing the experience of the P2 product: “They [the creative agency] know the product features and the rich story of it and the words such as ‘Amplify anywhere’ - wherever you go and whatever you do. In these words, they started to build visuals and design around it. Since the story was simple, clear and pure, it is not that we have a set of specific guidelines for them to understand the brand, it is very understandable already.” According to the interview they are reflecting on the previous and always aiming for improvement. A lot of trust is given to the creative agency to devise its own approaches and the best outcome and strong trust for delivering great brand experiences comes from the long collaboration as well as from successful projects and solutions. (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017)

The brand stands on the three design pillars which designers have internalized when designing the digital experiences. According to R. Christoffer the Global Senior Art Director (R. Christoffer, B&O PLAY, video Skype interview, July 12, 2017) for B&O PLAY, it is always about the very emotional, feature driven and tactile experiences online underlining their design philosophy pillars of Sound, Design and Craftsmanship. He states that, “All solutions need to reflect these beliefs within every product in the simplest way.”

4.3.2 B&O PLAY web site evaluation

The evaluation concentrates on the website of the B&O Play, the product page of the portable P2 Bluetooth speaker and its “Experience the product” section of the website (“Experience the product” P2, 2017). The interaction features are evaluated from the four key parts of the website “Amplify anywhere”, “Film”, “Tap, Shake and Play” and “Big sound”. The evaluation concentrates on the perceived brand experience through dynamic interactive features and elements of the website. As an evaluation method, interaction features are first identified and evaluated in relation to the interaction attribute vocabulary of Lenz et al (2013) (see Figure 4.). However, this approach lacks the emphasis on the beauty and aesthetics which is considered in this case study highly significant. Therefore, the features are also evaluated from the visual
and aesthetics point of view by reflecting on the attributes of the visual aesthetic website perception by Lavie & Tractinsky (2004) (see Figure 3.). In addition, the perceived emotions and experiences elicited from the interaction features are also observed. Lastly, in the conclusion part the overall experience and the interaction features and elements are analyzed in terms of whether they are in line with the aimed brand experience of B&O PLAY. The evaluation is conducted using a subjective, self-report approach.

**Evaluation - the interactive features and experiences, P2 Bluetooth speaker:**

**Amplify anywhere**

The entering product page is “amplify anywhere”, demonstrating the main feature and core element of the product which is the easy portability of the speaker and making it easy take it anywhere with you. In the center of the page is a hand holding the speaker surrounded by four different, visually rich circular layers of images expressing the multiple different environments and places where you can amplify the music using the product. The circular form also expresses the designed shape of the object as well as the sound waves emanating from the speaker. The holding hand with the imagined scenes makes the experience as real as possible. The page gives the user the autonomy to explore and play with the page with the two different interactive features. The first interaction occurs when the hand with the speaker moves according to the mouse movement and reveals more of the different circles of the images. The interaction is *instant* and *direct* reacting fast and accurately with the users’ movement and gives an opportunity to play and move the hand in the picture. The interaction is also playful and fully *covered* without giving any hints of interaction until the user moves the mouse independently. According to the Lenz et al. (2013) vocabulary, this is associated with magic, excitement and exploration with an action mode to impress somebody. The elicited experience for the evaluator is curiosity, playfulness and independency. The nature of the interaction complies with the brand experience goals of Magic, Empowerment and Craftsmanship targeted to an autonomous, independent and spontaneous young audience with the free will to explore and experience intuitively.

The other interaction feature occurs by tapping the speaker leading to the experience all the three different colors of the product from pearl to blue and black being consecutively demonstrated. The scenes around the speaker also change according the current product displayed, repeating the same hues of the color palette with the transition effects of smooth, circular and pulsing sound waves. This interaction feature is also partly *covered* whereby users are meant to find the tapping action by...
themselves, but after a while (approximately 10 secs) the transition starts automatically with the apparent intention of making “one feel competent to figure out the functionality of a system” (Lenz et al. 2013, p.132). The interaction itself is inconstant, explorative and visually stimulating in nature while changes in the rich visuals provides a surprise element for the user. On the other hand, while being surprising it is also constant, the same transition effect and same change of the colors and scenes results in the interaction creating a feeling of security. The focus on displaying only this one key purpose for the page, “amplify anywhere”, makes the page stimulating enough but not too confusing and challenging in providing too many things at once. The experience and emotions elicited from this interaction are visually powerful, magical and hypnotizing. The experience enhances and underlines the aim to create meaningful moments everywhere which is elicited by the powerful sound imitating pulses. The visual execution of the design is creative and original which enables the “wow effect”. This is aligned with the experience goals of Magic, Beauty, Empowerment and Craftsmanship.

The essence of both the interaction features of this page is slowness. According to Lenz et al. (2013) “Slow interaction was associated with appreciation of the moment, the interaction itself, and the object of interaction.” Interactions focus purely on imitating and demonstrating the portability of the speaker in various beautiful places to collect precious moments. The color palettes of the pearl, blue and black can be perceived also as day, evening and night periods which is visualized in a subtle and smooth way to emphasize the possibilities of various experience with the product no matter what time of the day. Overall, this part of the website design is consistent in visuals as well as the dynamic movements. Colors, images, buttons, shapes are in line with the brand and the product design. Everything works harmoniously together and all the elements have a strategic meaningful purpose. From the visual aesthetics point of view (Lavie et al., 2004) these two interactions address both dimensions. Especially emphasized are the expressive aesthetics hence, the effects are creative and original as well as fascinating and special. From the classical aesthetics’ point of view the visual design is clear and symmetrical as well as pleasant.

Film

The Film section of the website gives as a first impression a surprising and curious feeling. The title in the middle of the page, “Tap to play”, refers to the video which can not been seen at the first glance of the page. In turn, there is an animated clip of the video rolling in the background and only a small pill shaped peep - hole to play with. It allows users to interact and move the hole around the page to see small glimpses of the
fast-phased video behind. In the middle of the page is a call to action text “Tap to play”, which also gives a feeling of vivid, dynamic movement and fast tempo when the video behind the text is moving. This page and the interaction of it follows the same ideology and functionality as the “Amplify anywhere” landing page, where the users also first interact and play with the element moving it around the site and then tap the page for exploring and experiencing more. Therefore, the pages are consistent with the functions and usability which makes it easy to the user to assimilate and in turn makes the interaction also uniform in nature. According to the vocabulary (Lenz et al. (2013), uniform action is intuitive and makes the users feel in control by providing what the users expect. The quality of this interaction is also slow, concentrating on the engaging and playful interaction itself as a teaser to the video which is hidden. Hence, the interaction is also covered in nature; the user needs to interact and explore the feature in order to open the film. From the classical aesthetics’ point of view, there are only few visual elements displayed which makes the perception of the page clear, symmetrical and pleasant. The design is also expressive in nature due to the original peep hole and interaction with it which can be considered as a fascinating special effect.

When tapping the “Tap to play” button, a YouTube video introducing the product opens smoothly with the transition effect of product shaped circles imitating the sound waves. The video itself is engaging, illuminating all the special moments and places where you can take the portable speaker to “make beautiful music” with your friends. The visual material is mixed at a fast and slow tempo evoking the variety of different emotions, feelings and moments you can have with the product. The video clearly emphasizes the features of the product, the portability and the tapping which is also well implemented as a feature for this “Film” part of the site in the first interaction feature, as previously discussed. The video also closes automatically via the same transition feature with the sound wave circles taking the user back to the main page. The interaction with this part is seamless and engaging creating a visually rich experience for users and elicits the strong impression of special moments you can experience with this product. This interaction emerges the experience goals of Magic, Beauty, Empowerment and Craftsmanship. From the visual aesthetics point of view, the film conveys a rich visual stimulus and is inspirational for the user. The film applies strong expressive aesthetics with the effects being highly expressive and original as well as fascinating. The film provides a wide range of visually different and contrary material as well as sounds. It is filmed from the perspective of the user which makes it easy and convincing to adapt to.

Tap, Shake and Play

The “Tap, shake and Play” section literally introduces the product features of the tapping and shaking: “Just double tap or shake Beoplay P2 and you can play, pause, or skip the track” (Tap, Shake and Play, 2017). This page demonstrates the functionality of the product features in two interactive ways. In the middle of the page is the P2 product horizontally placed and the product shakes subtly and automatically giving a hint to the user to interact with it. The user can shake the product by dragging it which also reveals a small peep - hole behind the product to reveal a glimpse of a video. This interactivity also follows the same ideology as the other pages whereby a playful, mysterious and explorative functionality gives the autonomy and independence to the user to try and act upon the features. The nature of
the interaction is covered, fluent, instant, uniform, gentle and covered. The other interactive feature is tapping the product, creating sound wave pulses. As in the “amplify anywhere” page, the circular sound wave pulses consist of static images and here they consist of small glimpses of videos which makes the pulses more dynamic. The feature clearly demonstrates the tapping quality of the speaker as well consistently and visually delivering the story of the significant, special moments that can be lived through the music anywhere. The interaction is easy and smooth and gentle, enhancing the relationship with the product. The usage and feedback coming from the interaction is instant which makes the user feel the impact and attain a “feeling of recognition” which is a term also featured in the vocabulary. Taking the visual aesthetics viewpoint of Lavie et al. (2004), the interaction addresses the classical aesthetics due to the clear, symmetric and minimalistic visuals. On the other hand, the interaction of tapping and shaking the product is a rather unique feature and can be considered as an original, special effect due to the expressive qualities of aesthetics. The experience which emerges addresses the goals of empowerment and craftsmanship.

Although the website aims to conduct the three design pillars, it is lacking the most important one of all: concrete sounds. The sound is visualized strongly in the pulsing sound waves in the navigation features as well as in the circular transition elements but the actual sound of music is only in the introduction of the film. This feature of real sounds could be implemented especially in this section in the tapping of the speaker elements so that the user can actually try to play, pause or skip the tracks easily with this tapping and shaking feature. The missing sound effects would enhance, deepen and complete the whole experience and would be more consistent with the brand. However, depending on the execution of the sound effect it can be also perceived as rather irritating and unpleasant if it does not fit with the brand, usage and the purposes.

Big sound

The “Big sound” page is about underlining the great technical performance of creating big sounds and the small, compact design of the product. The interaction of the page is very subtle and small. In the corner of the picture is the speaker and when the user enters the page the small hairline sound waves starts to pulse smoothly from the speaker. When the user moves the mouse, the waves respond to the movement by subtly

speeding or slowing down the movement or moving slightly in the direction of the waves. In accordance with the other pages,
for this interaction there is no big functional purpose to justify it. As this is the last page of the “experience the product” website, the main focus is to guide user further towards the button “Buy Beoplay P2” where more technical and broader information is provided on the product. The sound waves move and point out the text box which guides the users’ eyes towards it for reading and focusing attention on it. Above all the other pages, this section is the most minimal one, with only one very small interaction effect, that of pulsing sound waves which the users exercise little control over. This interaction from the visual aesthetics point of view is minimal and pleasant, addressing the classical dimension of the aesthetics whereas the feature can be also considered as sophisticated in relation to an expressive aesthetics dimension. The experience elicited addresses the Craftsmanship experience goal.

Navigation and transitions between the four pages

The navigation has been made easy for the user. The main navigation bar is clearly and visibly in the top of the page. All four of the main titles and in addition the “buy” button is easy to find and click. The “Buy” button follows the same pill shaped visual language as the other visual material of the page. In addition, there is another navigation bar on the left side of the page inside the image template where all these four main sections are displayed. This secondary navigation bar has been designed in a very subtle, delicate, minimal way. There are only small hairlines visible which elicit curiosity in the user to go and move the mouse on top of it. Placing the mouse on top of it reveals the main titles with smooth and delicate text transitions and the most interesting part is the hairline transforming into an interactive effect of the dynamic movement of the sound wave. The hairlines start to wave when the mouse is on top of the title and speeds up the longer user stays in the spot as well as slowing down when moving to the next title. This subtle dynamic interaction effect is covered and instant as well as direct and uniform in nature. Interaction is very intuitive and easy and follows the minimalistic, simplified style of the design. The hidden navigation bar is also very original, creating the pleasant feeling of surprise.

From the visual aesthetic point of view, this interaction addresses a fascinating surprise element and, therefore, can be described as creative and original due to the use of special effects according to the expressive dimensions. It also addresses the classical dimensions by demonstrating an aesthetic, pleasant, clear and clean design.

The transitions between the four parts of the web site follow the same style: clicking titles leads the user into the pages via transitions of visualized, circular and pulsing sound waves. Each of the page transitions are also delicately tailored: the effect unexpectedly flips the pill shaped circular wave in different directions according to the page features, creating a small surprise element. Hence, the interaction is inconsistent and creates originality and liveliness on each page. Reflecting the aesthetics dimension, interaction is symmetric, clean, pleasant and clear according to classical aesthetics.
The emphasis is also strongly on expressive aesthetics due to the *creative, fascinating* use of *special effects,* and the *originality* of the design. Overall, in the interactions the power is mostly for the users, whereby they can choose the different features to open and test, play with the interaction elements, such as the peek hole, before tapping the button. On the other hand, there are some automatic, immersive transitions such as the film part where the tapping of the button leads the user to watch the video via strong transitions opening the video straight away. Therefore, the overall emerging experience addresses all experience goals of *Magic, Beauty, Empowerment* and *Craftsmanship.*

### 4.3.3 Findings of the web site evaluation

**Perceived brand experience of B&O PLAY via interaction aesthetics**

This chapter concludes and discusses the results of the website evaluation in terms of whether the identified brand experiences of B&O PLAY is in line with the perceived experience conveyed through the interaction aesthetic features and elements of the website in the evaluated P2 “Experience the product” section on their website (“Experience the product” P2, 2017).

The findings from the evaluation indicates that the overall brand experience from the website design is unique, engaging and creative. Reflected and drawn from the study of Lenz et al. (2013), the interaction attribute and the experience elicited by the interaction aesthetic features seems consistent and aligned with the B&O PLAY brand experience goals. According to the evaluation reflected in the interaction vocabulary, interactive features elicited experiences such as “magical and hypnotizing” due to the rich visuals and explorative, curious as well as surprising elements and features. There were many covered interactions which according to interaction vocabulary is associated with excitement and exploration.

Fluency elicited the feeling of autonomy and hence, interactions resulted also in experiences such as curiosity, playfulness and independency. Uniform interaction elicited the feeling of being in control via intuition. On the other hand, evaluation resulted in many instant attributes which are associated with the feeling that the object understands you, the feeling of one’s own action experience and creating the feeling of one-ness. In addition, explorative interactions provided a “wow effect” and excitement as well as the appreciation of the moment. Some beautiful and emotional visuals of the interaction aesthetic features, such as the video in the Film section visualizing the target audience and the speaker in use, elicited the strong
impression of special moments users can experience with this product via creating a feeling of a variety of different emotions, feelings and moments a user can have with the product. Gentle interaction expressed feelings of appreciation and caring, strengthening the relationship with the object.

These experiences elicited from the interactive aesthetic features matches well with the identified brand experience of B&O PLAY. In addition, the experience takes well into account their young millennial target audience. Emphasis is also clearly in the unique functional tapping feature of the product, the great quality as well as impressive technology. Brand experience is coherent and seamless across the different pages supporting each other through connected visual and emotional language. The main experience goals of *Magic* (magical moments, magic of music), *Beauty* (“music made beautiful”, eyes of creative and urban millennial), *Empowerment* (Creativity get loose, focus made possible, life made more colorful, “everything comes together”) and *Craftsmanship* (attention to detail, high quality) are emphasized clearly through the website design.

Reflecting on the perceived website aesthetics by Lavie et al. (2004, p. 292) relating to the visual aesthetics measurements of classical and expressive dimensions, the evaluated website interaction aesthetics seem to address both of the dimensions. According to the study, classical dimension reflects on the usability of the website whereas orderly and clear design expressive aesthetics refers to designers’ creativity and originality and by the ability to break with design conventions. The perceived aesthetics elicited both classical attributes as well as expressive attributes in equal amounts. From this it can be interpreted that the website interaction aesthetics addresses both the visual beauty as well as the creative and expressive aesthetics. The study of Lavie et al. (2004, p. 289-290), reveals that users seems to judge the website on both dimensions of aesthetics - classical and expressive. According to them, users consider the aesthetic qualities of the disciplined, clear and controlled design that follows the classical rules whereas they also appreciate the expressive and innovative solutions aesthetics of websites. In addition, Lavie et al. (2004, p. 290) state that classical design is strongly related to the perceived usability of the site, from which it can be interpreted that the brand experience elicited from the interaction aesthetics is also supported with the usability. The visuals as well as the interactive transitions and elements are smoothly and beautifully designed eliciting their core philosophy, the “Experience of beauty” (Brand Book, 2017).

**4.4 RESULTS AND CONCLUSION OF THE CASE STUDY**

This section is to sum up the results of the case study of B&O PLAY, the empirical case study of the brand experience via interaction aesthetic features and elements on the website. The objective for the case study was to address the research question concerning how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the website. The interviews aimed at the investigation and identification of the intended brand experience goals and guidelines of B&O PLAY, or in other words, what feelings, emotions and behaviors they intended to elicit in the user via the website design. This served as a basis for the website evaluation for investigating if the intended experiences matched with the perceived ones. In addition, the interviews
aimed to investigate the process behind the design of branded interaction aesthetics, especially whether brand is considered when designing dynamic, interactive features and elements in B&O PLAY web design. The designers’ points of view for this were drawn from interviews relating to the B&O PLAY digital brand book project with Serious Business. This chapter concludes the findings from the case study.

The interviews with B&O PLAY and Serious Business firstly revealed the intended brand experience of B&O PLAY and how they have implemented it in their digital design on the website as well as in the design process behind the digital brand book project. The intended brand experience was investigated and evaluated with the evidence that it is indeed well in line with the experience perceived from the branded interaction aesthetics and the evaluation demonstrated how they had used dynamic interaction aesthetics for conveying and enhancing the brand experience on web. The evaluation not only revealed the brand experience in more depth but also helped to analyze the means to evaluate branded interaction aesthetics. The process revealed some of the following challenges. First of all, it was not easy to find a brand with strong, consistent branded interaction aesthetics in their website design due to the fact it was difficult to identify the brand experience goals behind the design as an outsider. Hence, when this promising, advanced example of the B&O PLAY website was discovered, a deeper investigation of the exact intended brand experience was needed and conducted for validating the assumptions of the experience. In addition, commonly the brand book and strategy is hidden from outsiders and might not contain clear brand experience goals and guidelines and therefore the investigation of the means behind the design could have proved challenging. Multiple employees from B&O PLAY were approached before finding the right contacts who accepted the interview invitation. Also, multiple external design agencies were involved in designing the website for B&O PLAY and were approached until the project of the digital brand book with Serious Business was discovered and they fortunately accepted the interview invitation. It was also very fortunate to have the both interviewees: global Senior art director of B&O PLAY who was advising the brief and the project of the digital band book as well as the Serious Business creative agency delivering the project. These both, the company point of view as well as the designer point of view provided a broader overview of the holistic brand experience and the comprehensive design process behind the branded interaction aesthetics for B&O PLAY.

Discovered from the case study

**Brand strategy**
Lack of strong brand experience specific strategy especially for interaction aesthetics on web.

**Interactive digital brand book**
Highly convenient way to communicate the comprehensive brand experience in an interactive way.

**Challenge to identify brand experience goals for evaluation**
Difficult to identify and validate the brand experience goals and the means behind the design as an outsider.

**Methods and tools**
Lack of tools and methods for both evaluating emerging experiences from the branded interaction aesthetics on web as well as for designing them.
Additionally, some more challenges were discovered in the case study. For the website evaluation of interaction aesthetics, it was very challenging to discover evaluation methods and criteria since the topic is not common in the research and lacks proper tools for this purpose. The two methodologies used were to exemplify the way to conduct this kind of evaluation, but it was not convenient enough. The methodology of visual aesthetics attributed to Lavie et al. (2004) lacked detailed descriptions of the evaluation criteria and the visual aesthetics attributes, which made in-depth assimilation of the aesthetic experience difficult. As a result, the analysis from the visual aesthetic aspect related to interaction is not very precise. The methodology of interaction vocabulary (Lenz et al. 2013) provided a more detailed and comprehensive description of the interaction attributes which eased the evaluation and were considered a more convenient method for this purpose. Therefore, the results of this qualitative evaluation are not precise but rather aim to exemplify how to evaluate the means of the branded interaction aesthetics on websites.

Since the case study aimed to reveal how interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web, the process behind the experience via branded interaction aesthetics design were also investigated. The results of the case study indicated that the successful design results from multiple ingredients rather than a clear, systematic and consistent brand experience strategy for the brand experience via interaction aesthetics. Even though the B&O PLAY website design can be considered as an advanced example of a well conveyed brand experience via dynamic interaction aesthetics and also the digital brand book is indeed unique in embodying, enhancing and delivering a digital brand experience, they seem to lack a clear experience specific strategy, tools and methods to guide and provide for designers and other people involved in creating the digital brand. No brand experience goals or guidelines were provided as such for the designers. Successful results seem to elicit from the designers’ skills to assimilate the brand and its experience from extended investigations of the brand via methods such as workshops and interviews with stakeholders, mood boards and prototyping for embodying the essence of the brand into digital interactive brand experience. There is also support, guidance and feedback from the company which is continuously provided throughout the whole process. Even though the user perceives a consistent and strong brand experience from their website, the actual process behind it might could benefit from the established tools and methods from the designers’ point of view.

Drawn from the case study, the digital brand book project is distinctive, unique and a highly convenient way to communicate the comprehensive brand experience. According to interviews, both B&O PLAY as well as Serious Business stated that digitalizing the brand book project was a success and the insights of the project will be implemented further. The recipe for this successfully designed branded interaction aesthetics of the web design of B&O PLAY as well as the digital brand book project might result from the following ingredients.

a. Clear, unique brand

According to the case study, the B&O PLAY brand is quite easy to grasp and assimilate due to the strong brand heritage and long history of Bang & Olufsen, and the key brand pillars, core values and beliefs which are defined and communicated clearly. Even though B&O PLAY does not provide experience specific goals and guidelines for brand experience nor for the design of dynamic
interactive features and elements, they have a clear brand DNA system to convey and communicate with the people involved with the brand, which evidently leads to successful design solutions. According to interviews, this also results from the long-term collaborations with the same highly skilled design agencies always offering better, inspiring, creative and impressive solutions for them.

b. Nature of the project and collaboration with the company

In the digitalization of the brand book project, due to the design sprint nature of the project they had an opportunity to work intensively and closely with the company and their brand for full three weeks with the whole team. They worked concretely at the B&O PLAY head office and closely with all the key stakeholders involved with the brand book and hence, the collaborations and communications were rapid, smooth and continuous, providing quick answers and iterations. In addition, they had a unique chance to engage and interact with the whole product portfolio including new prototypes of the forthcoming products as well as with all the other brand materials. This setting of working with all the resources available in an inspiring and fruitful environment by organizing user involvement with workshops and interviews can be interpreted as being enablers, leading to a lowered risk for misunderstanding and miscommunication when designing their brand experience. Due to this setting, the benefits were also instant and iterative feedback for improvements, the validation of assumptions and the arrival of solutions from the B&O PLAY company. Long term collaborations with the highly skilled professional external creative agencies were also mentioned to be behind their website design due to the fact that they already know every single smallest detail of the brand and always driving for better, incremental results when delivering unique, distinctive design for B&O PLAY.

c. Skilled and passionate team

As mentioned, a highly skilled and passionate as well as outstanding solutions seeking team were behind both the digital brand book project as well as the P2 Bluetooth speaker web site. The digital brand book team had a very strong experience in branding, strategic design and interaction design which was beneficial for the project. A lot of trust is given to designers to create and form the design for B&O PLAY with continuous feedback provided. In the digital brand book project the brief was rather open and a lot of room was given to designers for playing and figuring out their own creative ideas and the essence of the brand and its experience. These skilled designers aimed and succeeded to catch the essence of the brand and embody it in an outstanding digital brand experience.

CONCLUSIONS
5. Conclusions and future research

Conclusions and future research chapter provides an overview of the study by discussing and outlining the results and conclusions. This chapter also discusses the contribution of the study via answering the research questions. Finally, this chapter provides future research opportunities and recommendations for companies’, designers and practitioners.
5.1. Discussion and contribution of the study

This thesis discusses the contribution of this study via addressing and answering the two research questions: **What is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research?** **How have interaction aesthetics been used to enhance brand experience on the web?** These research questions are addressed through following research objectives which were covered in theoretical and empirical parts of the study.

**Objectives of the study**

*To reveal what is the current status of research within the topic of branded interaction aesthetics based on the theoretical literature review.*

*To explore and identify an advanced example of case brand enhancement of the brand experience via branded interaction aesthetics on the web.*

*To conduct qualitative, semi-structured interviews for examining the case brand, their brand experience goals and design of interaction aesthetics on their web site via an empirical case brand study.*

*To conduct qualitative web site evaluation of the brand experience via interaction aesthetics on their web site design based on the findings of the interviews from case brands.*

*To synthesize the findings and propose future research and recommendations based on the theoretical literature review and the empirical case study.*

**What is known about branded interaction aesthetics in research?**

The first research question is addressed in the study via an investigation of the current status of the research in this area. The systematic literature review of the current research around the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics underlines the significant gap in the research as well as revealing the need for further research. Interaction aesthetics has been already studied widely but what is lacking is research of the scope of branded interactions aesthetics conveying and enhancing the brand experience on the web. Hence, this study contributes to identifying an unexplored research area. Additionally, drawn from the literature review, there seems to be lacking a clear definition and concept to address “branded interaction aesthetics” and also lacking is the interaction vocabulary to address both the perceived visual aesthetics as well as the dynamic nature of interaction aesthetics. This is significant if researchers and practitioners are to meaningfully discuss, reflect, evaluate and design branded online interaction aesthetics.

**How interaction aesthetics have been used to enhance brand experience on the web?**

The research question is addressed both in the systematic literature review by defining the current status of the topic as well as through the empirical case study via benchmarking, interviews and website evaluation of the B&O PLAY case brand. Results shows that both research and practice within this area of branded interaction aesthetics is currently in its infancy. The empirical case study of B&O PLAY revealed that even though their web site can be considered as an advanced example of a well conveyed brand experience via interaction aesthetics
both in the website as well as in the digital brand book on online, they seem to lack a clear, systematic and consistent brand experience strategy for branded interaction aesthetics including defined brand experience goals and guidelines. Even though the user perceives a consistent and strong brand experience from their website, the actual process behind it might could benefit from clear brand experience goals and established tools and methods to convey them from the both the company and designers’ point of view.

Hence, according to both the case study as well as from the literature review, no convenient methods and tools have been developed for the purpose to enhance and emerge specific brand experiences via branded interaction aesthetics. Even though the literature review discovered that the study of Aagesen et al. (2016) address the topic and propose a framework for this, it is still a bit in an initial level. Practitioners could benefit from established tools and methods in the design process for better designing and reflecting on the brand experience goals towards the interaction aesthetics features and elements. On the other hand, companies could also benefit from a better implemented digital brand strategy including well defined and communicated brand experience goals as well as a digital guide for designing branded interaction aesthetics. Considering these aspects, when engaged in the decision making process of which digital website platform to use, more viable digital solutions to deliver and enhance the brand experience could be provided. Hence, this study contributes to underlining an opportunity for businesses to consider improving their online services via delivering distinctive, unique and a more consistent brand experience.

The website evaluation part of the empirical case study resulted with the conclusion that the brand experience elicited from the interaction aesthetics of the B&O PLAY website is in line with the intended brand experience. Despite the positive results of a well conveyed brand experience on their website, the primary goal of the study was not only to verify that but rather demonstrate a case example of how to reflect and evaluate the interaction aesthetic features towards brand experience goals, first and foremost, how to design dynamic interaction aesthetics for enhancing a consistent brand experience on the web.

Moreover, this study discovered that there seems to be no convenient evaluation methods for this purpose which would address both the dynamic quality of interaction as well as the visual aesthetics of it. In this study, both qualities are considered as important hence, the evaluation of brand experience goals should address both the visual as well as the dynamic aspect of the interaction. The method used for this evaluation combined two different methods as an example but this may not be considered convenient enough. Therefore, this study also contributed to identifying the significant gap in the research via pin pointing a new development area for the evaluation of methods and tools.

5.2. FUTURE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study proposes following future research areas and recommendations to investigate and study further within this addressed thesis topic.
5.2.1 Companies’ point of view

Brand experience goals and guidelines

This rather new research area might provide more depth for the brand experience and hence an opportunity for stronger brand satisfaction for users as well as for companies’ stronger customer relationships. As all companies want to be distinct in the market and enhance their brand, this study revealed a need for development opportunities for the companies and research to create a more consistent brand experience on the web. Conveying a strong brand experience via website interaction aesthetics requires companywide strategic implementation of well-defined, clear brand experience goals and guidelines to address, via interaction aesthetics, features on the web as well in all other digital touch points. The brand experience goals should work as a starting point for the design in order to transfer and embody it into branded interaction aesthetic design features, as discussed in the literature review.

Digital brand book for comprehensive brand experience

According to the case study, a digital brand book is an excellent way for communicating, showcasing and conveying the holistic brand experience for everyone involved with the brand. It enables crafting and conveying a comprehensive brand experience via dynamic, interactive elements, animations and audio visuals which makes it easier for both the company to express and users to absorb the essence of the brand. A digital brand book presents multiple possibilities, such as easy access, updated information and a comprehensive brand experience which cannot be delivered via a traditional static brand book due to the lack of dynamic, interactive aspects. The content of the digital brand book could benefit from the distinction of traditional static guidelines from the dynamic interactive guidelines for designing dynamic, interaction aesthetic digital features. This distinction of the dynamic guidelines could provide information, such as that relating to the brands’ dynamic “body language” or the nature of dynamic interaction aesthetics with descriptive attributes concerning whether it is, for example, rather apparent than covered (Lenz et al. 2013) via concrete, demonstratively dynamic examples. There are also opportunities such as implementing methods and tools for designers and developers of the technical platform for conveying the brand experience via interaction aesthetics.

5.2.2 Designers and practitioners point of view

Methods and tools

As the study revealed, there seems to be no convenient methods and tools for practitioners for embodying the brand experience goals into dynamic interaction aesthetics design features and, thus, there are new wide research and development opportunities. In addition, even though the technology aspect was left outside the research it is still worthwhile to note that since design solutions are highly dependent on the enablers as well as on the restrictions of the technology, designers need to maintain a close collaboration with the technical people.

Technology point of view

What is left outside of the study is the technology aspect, i.e the role of technology in supporting the design of branded interaction aesthetics. Since website platform and other technology solutions form the base by defining the opportunities and restrictions for the design solutions, the area should be
investigated in relation to whether it could support the design of branded interaction aesthetics. In other words, ideally a brand experience should be considered already in the platform decision and development and hence there are opportunities to research technology supported and brand experience driven possibilities for website platforms. To enable consistent brand experience via dynamic interaction aesthetics, it might be beneficial to design, for example, templates or features for the web platform. This could be helpful to design and emerge the specific brand experiences via interaction aesthetics features and elements on web. There are opportunities in this area to explore and research further.

5.2.3 Academic point of view

The intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics

From the systematic literature review, it can be interpreted that the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics features remains a fuzzy area in research. Also as the Aagesen et al. (2016) study reveals, there is a vague understanding of the descriptive interaction attributes and the gap in the process of designing branded interactive experiences via interaction aesthetics features. The literature search process also revealed the lack of established key wording and conceptualization of the intersection of brand experience and interaction aesthetics. Hence, the area requires more research and the establishing of the proposed concept and notion of “branded interaction aesthetics” due to the fact that none of the publications defined the notion of what is “branded interaction aesthetics”.

Methods and tools

The study discovered that there seems to be no convenient methods for the evaluation purposes addressing both dynamic quality of interaction as well as the perceived visual aesthetics of the interaction aesthetics features on the web. The study revealed that even though the interaction vocabulary of Lenz et al., (2013) was helpful for the evaluation, it is defective because it is lacking the perceived visual aesthetic point of view which is considered as important for evaluating meaningfully interaction aesthetics. Therefore, there is research and development to be conducted on the methods for addressing both the perceived visual aesthetics as well as the dynamic interaction aesthetics. It would be highly beneficial as a tool of reflection for both designing and evaluating the elicited brand experience from the design features.
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