



Position and communicate the value of an emerging frozen food service system

Master thesis / Strategic product design

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project intends to develop the initial brand communication strategy for Foodtrick, an emerging frozen food service system that attempts to expand its business into the B2B market. The system provides a simplified cooking procedure to tackle operational hurdles in the food service industry, such as labour shortage and increasing food wastage. Although Foodtrick brings high efficiency, the bias of frozen food in buyers' minds haunts the expansion of Foodtrick's business. To achieve the ambition of Foodtrick, this thesis addresses the identification of potential markets, the formulation of the brand proposition and the design of the communication execution.

The theoretical framework is formulated based on the literature on the interconnection between B2B buyer behaviour and emotional attributes. Two brand strategy tools, brand positioning and marketing communication, are introduced as means to convey the value. To better formulate the brand proposition, one needs a comprehensive understanding of 'who', 'what', and 'how'. The intended result is to incorporate functional and emotional attributes to strengthen the perceived value of Foodtrick.

Two stages of studies in positioning and communicating are performed. Positioning study results in the defining of prospective markets and developing understanding in B2B and B2C market circumstances. Communication analysis captures insights into the behaviour of buyers and end-users interacting with Foodtrick. The findings extracted from the two stages research are translated into the reshaped brand proposition,

which is that Foodtrick delivers a single but simple solution (functional attribute) assisting buyers to become independent (emotional attribute). The new positioning of Foodtrick, a one-way meal preparation journey to navigate food services owners towards independent food services, intends to invite the ideal buyers to engage. Four principles namely accessible nutrition, knowledge transparency, consistent involvement, and ease of achievement are crafted to develop the final communication strategy.

The three communication parts which are presented include visual identity, communication journey and landing page. The visual identity with a new name and logo is used to facilitate brand recognition. The communication journey portrays the required interaction and information to assist the internal team in developing brand experiences for future buyers, while the landing page is intended to demonstrate value and build external communication with buyers. These three parts are intended to be the initial steps and inspirations for the corporation's brand launch in the near future.

In conclusion, the outcome of this thesis provides a new way of thinking and strategy for communicating the value of the emerging food service system in the B2B market. Nevertheless, the final design remains several constraints and lack of external validation. The thesis concludes with suggestions and reflection for the further undertaking of Foodtrick's brand development.

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00 INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts with an overview of the project, including the background, problems and goals. It also provides the description of the whole research process and the initial limitations of this project.



0.1 FOODTRICK

A highly-efficient frozen ready-meal system designed to tackle operational challenges in the hotel food service

Foodtrick was established in 2016, belonging to a food design consultancy, WeDesignFood. WeDesignFood was requested initially to assist Hotel C, an international hotel chain, in resolving its operational problems. Due to escalating labour cost and talent shortage, Hotel C was addressing the impediment of having sufficient human resources to support their food service. Rising cost of food wastage was another issue that needed to be solved. Hence Foodtrick was created.

Company purpose and goal

The founders of Foodtrick, Louis Meisen and Arne Ramalk regarded the Foodtrick company as a food service system supplier. According to the provided document with the title "Frozen to plate", the original purpose was as follows:

Foodtrick is an A-Z concept where we tackle operational challenges within the Hotel C. The Backbone is delivering a standard quality that is not affected by occupancy, staff flow/quality and product quality from suppliers. Or reduce a lot of wastage! In a 90 % watertight system, we are left with 10% at the end of the food chain, delivering pure fresh quality to our citizens all around the world.

By using fresh-frozen ready meals and commercial microwave, previous complicated cooking procedures have

turned into simplified reheating steps (see Figure 1). With the assistance of Foodtrick, Hotel C can provide quality meals to its customers, without increasing the number of culinary professionals. Furthermore, due to the portion control and standardised production, the food wastage decreases. Within only one and a half year, Hotel C has implemented the Foodtrick system in 20 of their hotel branches across Europe and the United States.

Seeing the success of Foodtrick in Hotel C, WeDesignFood now attempts to expand the business of Foodtrick and launch it as a formal brand. **Aiming for the business-to-business market (B2B), WeDesignFood wishes to persuade existing commercial food services or general enterprises to adopt their system.**



Receive order

Bring package from the fridge

Check instruction

Regenerate meal via microwave

Plate

Decorate

Serve

Figure 1 : Foodtrick food service system

0.2 PROBLEMS & GOAL

This project aims to establish a proper proposition to mitigate the negative image of frozen ready meals.

Current circumstance

In the food service industry, frozen food items are not a stranger. Rajput and Manepalli indicate that, compared to retail, the low-price food service segment, mostly quick-service restaurants such as Starbucks and McDonald's, occupy a larger share in the global frozen food market (2019). Using partially or completely pre-prepared meals, this type of food service system responds to the critical shortage of professional personal. For Food service businesses aiming at fast serving, it is one of the most effective systems to satisfy their guests.

However, even though freezing food has been proven to be an excellent method to prevent nutrition loss and reduce unwanted waste, customers still prefer fresh food (Ahlgren et al., 2004; Connell et al., 2018).

The previous literature presumes customers eat frozen ready meals only due to the convenience and mostly consume ready meals at home; whereas consumers in restaurants often have higher expectations and prefer fresh food options (Connell et al., 2018).

Moreover, since a healthy lifestyle has been associated with eating fresh food by media and society, the freshness of food has become a significant indicator of customers evaluating intentions while dining out (Kumpulainen et al., 2016).

Hence most of the food service businesses

still choose to serve fresh food and regard it as a selling point to allure consumers.

Problems

First, the negative image of the frozen ready meal will create hesitations and increase the perceived uncertainty. Furthermore, the general frozen ready meals in the business market tend to be cheap and used in the low-price segment, such as the fast-food chain. In contrast, according to the Foodtrick company, the pricing of Foodtrick is relatively high and falls in the medium to premium segment (procurement price per meal is between 5.5 to 7.5 euro). **If potential buyers still consider frozen food to be low-price and of inferior quality, they will not be willing to engage. Thus, helping Foodtrick to re-sculpture its value correctly and adequately is essential.**

Currently, Foodtrick only has one buyer and **hasn't specified its target audience**. For organisational buyers in the food service industry, deploying Foodtrick will influence their serving process and company image. Clarifying who are the prospective buyers will benefit the future marketing plan. On the other hand, the original values of Foodtrick were explicitly created for Hotel C. **Foodtrick presently don't have a clear proposition and strategy to exhibit itself to its future buyers.** Thus, approaching, communicating, and convincing future

buyers that Foodtrick fits their food service environment and corporation remain a challenge.

Project goal

The goal of this project is to formulate a strategy for an initial brand establishment. The strategy aims to assist Foodtrick with following sub-missions:

- Define the potential markets
- Formulate the value proposition
- Provide marketing execution to convey the value

Initial limitations

Before developing the strategy, initial restrictions that may influence the way that we proceed with the project need to be noticed.

- **WeDesignFood pictures Foodtrick as one whole food service system and prefers to market it as it is. Any intrusive adjustment towards the Foodtrick system is not preferred.** This limitation becomes an impediment but also allows us to narrow down the scope of this project.
- Hotel C provides full support for both opportunities and insights exploration; however, based on their company strategy, they carry no interest in the future marketing planning of Foodtrick. **Moreover, the official name of Hotel C is also requested not to be shown in the report.**



0.3 APPROACH

The double diamond method was applied to structure the research in four phases: discover, define, develop, and reflect. (Figure 2)

Discover

The research started with the exploration of relevant literature to construct the theoretical framework. According to the framework, further studies divided into two stages of analyses: positioning and communication. The intention of the first stage is to gather insights from internal team and secondary research. The potential market segments of Foodtrick were also classified in the first stage. The second stage aims to collect perspectives from external sources, such as the current buyer, potential buyers and end-users.

Define

In this phase, the synthesis of insights gathered from the first phase was performed. The strategic directions were created based on the constructed framework for the next development.

Develop

Following the defined direction, the opportunity and value proposition Foodtrick were clarified. The proposition further turned into a design vision for establishing brand executions.

Reflect

After the design of marketing execution was finalised, the outcome was presented to Internal team for evaluation. Several recommendations were also given to the company to consider.

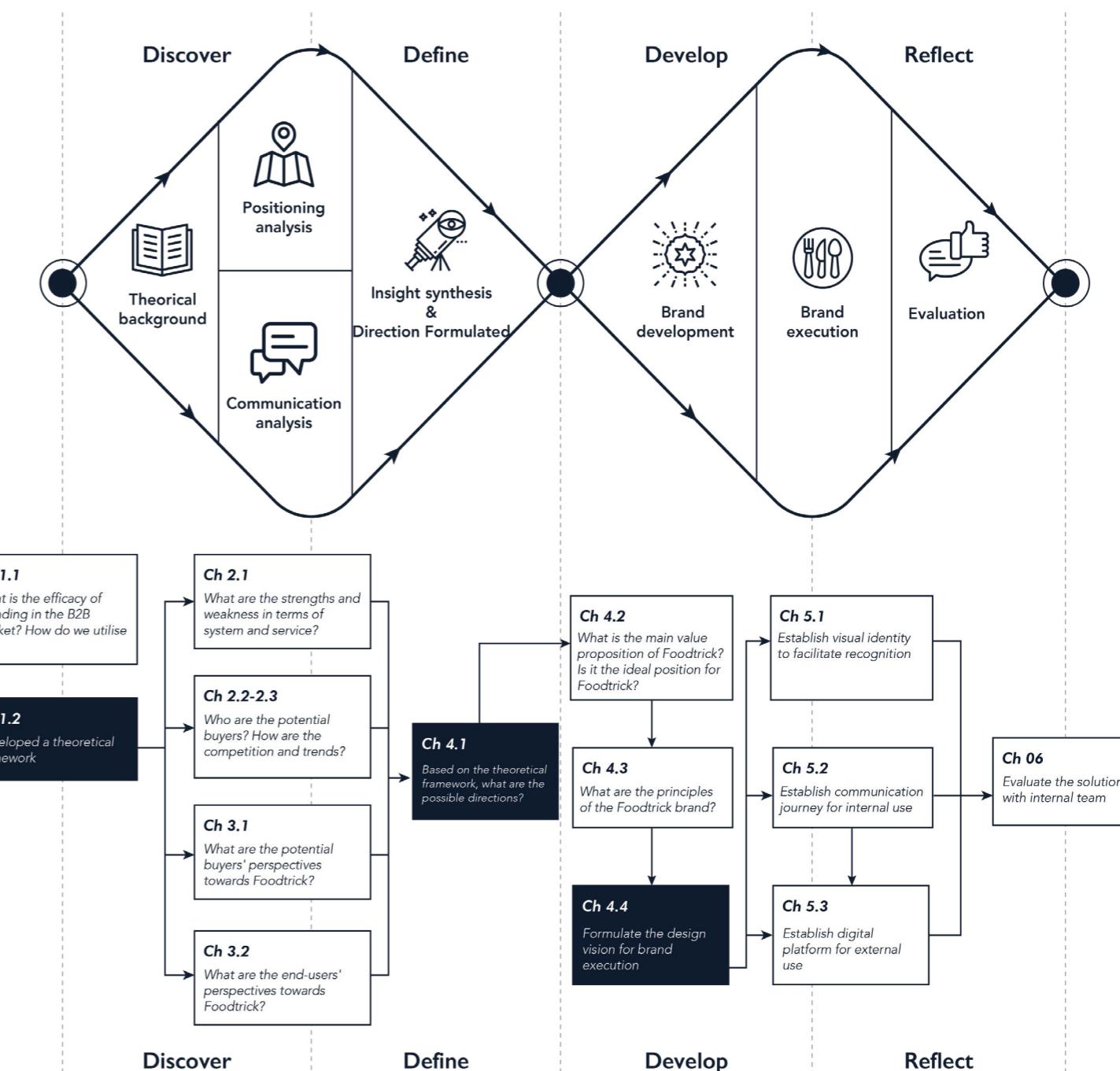


Figure 2: The overall approach/reading guide of the thesis

01

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter shows how we explored existing theory in order to inform our initial research. The literature was reviewed to elucidate the elements of effective B2B branding. We investigated B2B buyer behaviours and two strategic tools of branding--brand positioning and marketing communication. Finally, based on this review, a framework was envisioned to accomplish the goals of our project.



I.1 THE EFFICACY OF BRANDING IN THE BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKET

Formulating and conveying customer value is a foundation of B2B branding. (Eggert et al., 2018; Prior & Keränen, 2019)

Since the competition is rising and industrial products are increasingly becoming similar, business marketers aim to create unique value for their customers to be able to stand out. This leads to a growing attention of branding in the B2B market (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012; Cassia & Magno, 2012). One of the most critical functions of branding is defining and communicating the benefit of a product or service to help latent buyers in making decisions (Morrison, 2001; Lynch & Chernatony, 2007). Leek and Christodoulides stated (2012):

“Branding is essentially used to convey a set of values to potential buyers which may be considered at various stages of the organisational decision-making process.”

B2B buyers often encounter investment decisions involving significant expenditures resulting in high risk. At the beginning of the purchasing process, a company acquiring a strong brand can assist buyers in apprehending the value and increasing certainty (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012).

1.1.1 B2B buyer's behaviour and the power of emotional value

Value is the soul of the B2B brand, which can be seen as the “why” of the brand (Figure 3). The attitude and behaviours of buyers are interrelated with how they interpret the brand value. Previous literature placed most emphases that B2B buyers (or named organisational buyers and industrial buyers) tend to behave more rationally (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Morgan et al., 2007; Kuhn et al., 2008). Research declared that functional and objective attributes, such as pricing and

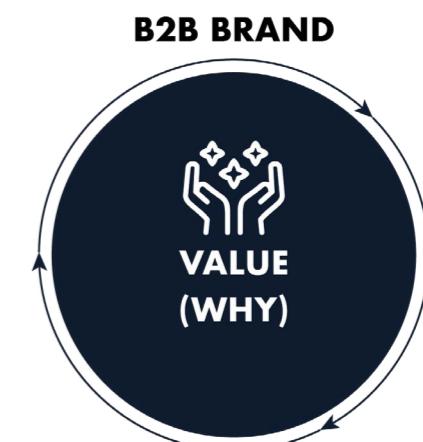


Figure 3: Value is the “why” of the brand

product performance, play a dominant role in influencing purchasing of buyers in the B2B context. Most of the industrial brands tend to only focus on communicating the functional values (Lynch & Chernatony, 2004; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

Nevertheless, the positive efficacy of emotional value on B2B purchasing decision has been acknowledged by several studies (Lynch & Chernatony, 2007; Jensen & Klastrup, 2008; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012; Almquist et al., 2018). Since the offerings in the B2B market have become more commoditised, business buyers are behaving increasingly similar to consumers in the business-to-consumer (B2C) market, which results in need to also consider personal and subjective concern of B2B buyers. **The emotional qualities are contributed by the functional values and are able to generate distinctness and increase reassurance** (Figure 4), resulting in building a business relationship with buyers (Jensen & Klastrup, 2008; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012; Almquist et al.,

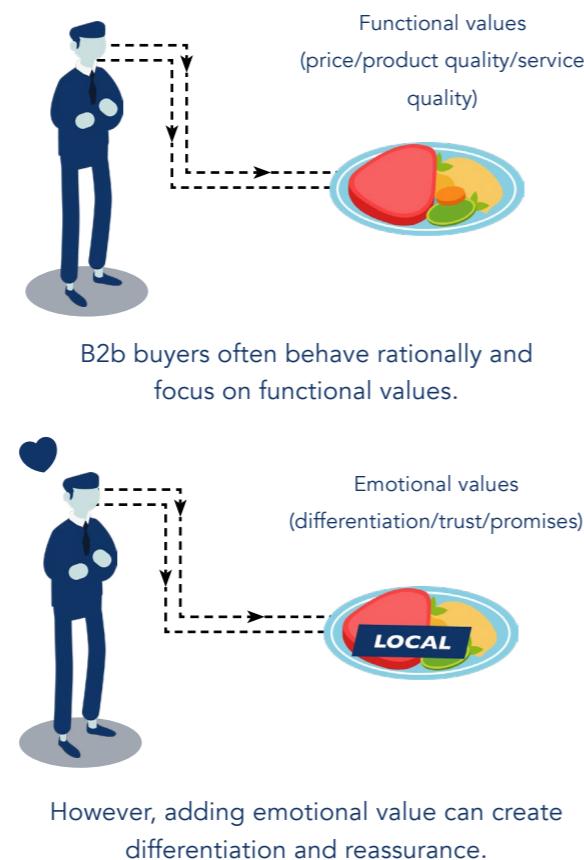


Figure 4: B2B buyers' behaviour and emotional value

2018). Leek and Christodoulides created a visualisation to display the brand value hierarchy influenced by functional and emotional components. (see Figure 5). The researchers considered brand value and business relationship value to be distinct and **indicated that enhancing the emotional qualities in the brand value can be determinants to increase business relationship value**.

It also means that the value of a brand can be improved without over-revising the products or services themselves. **By improving the emotional attributes such as imagery, advertising style, and sale storytelling, a brand can be interpreted by buyers in a more positive way** (Wirtz & Elsäßer, 2017; Almquist et al., 2018).

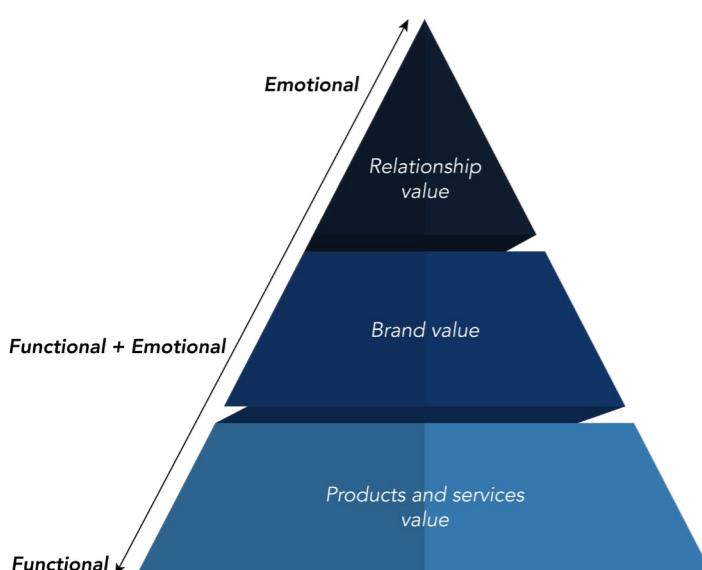


Figure 5: The brand value hierarchy (Leek and Christodoulides, 2012)

1.1.2 Brand positioning and marketing communication

There are two branding activities frequently used to formulate and convey the value of a B2B brand: **brand positioning and marketing communication** (Figure 6). Positioning is a key tool to develop the unique way a firm defines and delivers its value. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Jalkala & Keränen, 2014; Iyer et al., 2019). Positioning is seen as the bellwether of brand strategy, connecting with a brand vision, brand mission, and suppliers' characteristics etc. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Since the interests and motivations of buyers will vary, the target buyers need to be determined. Moreover, the purpose of positioning is to create differentiation with other companies; hence it is usually closely aligned with competitive analysis and trend analysis (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Iyer et al., 2019).

Marketing communication is also essential for firms to express values to potential clients. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). It hinges on whether the approach with which companies advocate their products and services is efficient and desired, internally and externally. **Personal selling, website and direct marketing are the typical mediums utilised to communicate B2B brand information** (Lynch & Chernatony, 2004; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). B2B purchasing processes involve complex interactions by multiple players; hence it is also crucial to understand who you are sending messages to (Lynch & Chernatony, 2004; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

Positioning and communication can be viewed as pitching for the perceived value of a brand. **For both strategic activities, research proposes the largest effects can be accomplished by consolidating functional value with emotional benefits** (Lynch & Chernatony, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2005; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006; Leek & Christodoulides, 2012). **Hartmann et al. illustrate that, in brand positioning, functional attributes sharpen the buyers' cognitive perception of a brand and emotional qualities strengthen the buyers' associations towards a brand** (2005). As far as communication strategy is concerned, **Kotler and Pfoertsch declare that brand value communication that manifests an understanding of the emotional concerns of buyers can be a compelling differentiation** in business markets which are dominated by a focus on functionality (2006).



Figure 6: The relation between brand value, positioning and communication

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework clarifies the established relations between brand positioning and marketing communication, also indicating the definition of “who”, “what”, “how” in brand development.

The two-layers framework is developed based on the theoretical background (see Figure 7 & Figure 8). The main goal of this project is to reshape the perceived value of Foodtrick. The intended result is to assist Foodtrick to convince and establish relationships with potential buyers.

In the two stages of research, we first explored the factors that will affect the brand positioning strategy. Next, we look into value communication for Foodtrick.

View in Figure 7, these two activities are coordinated with each other and will be influenced by the core value. To better accomplish the expected result, the target audiences (i.e. who), the desired contents (i.e. what), and the possible channels (i.e. how) need to be determined, which can be seen in Figure 8. **These factors were furthermore translated into the functional benefits and emotional benefits to construct a unique proposition (i.e. why).**

In the end, using the new proposition as the base, we establish a brand strategy for Foodtrick through a suitable brand position and communication strategy in order for potential buyers to view the use of Foodtrick positively.

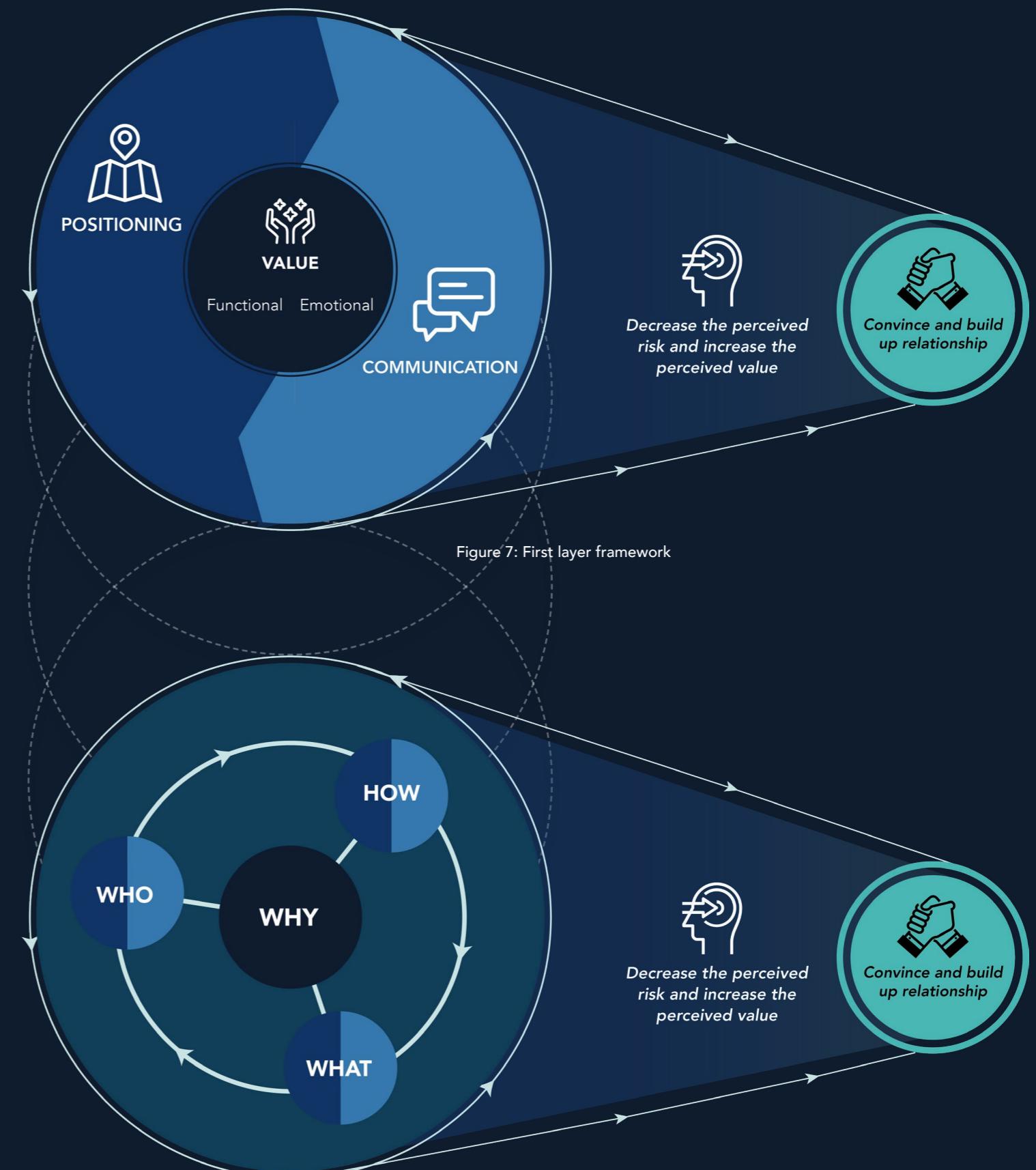


Figure 7: First layer framework

Figure 8: Second layer framework

02 POSITIONING ANALYSIS

The following three sections serve as the preparation phase to gather elements which may influence the positioning of Foodtrick. The desk research begins with detecting the internal content, then understanding the potential audiences and external circumstances. Moreover, two preliminary works of the positioning strategy, segmenting and targeting are

executed (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). The segmenting means to distinguishing possible markets and the targeting aims to determine the most promising ones (see Figure 9). A workshop was conducted to define potential buyers. In the end, by synthesising all the elements, the first conclusion is reached.



Figure 9: STP process

2.1 SYSTEM & COMPANY

The analysis into the system and company unveils the functional values and internal structure of Foodtrick.

2.1.1 System overview

The three aspects of the food service system, namely food attributes, equipment, and operation (Rodgers, 2004), which support Foodtrick to accomplish its goals, were described.

Food attributes (Figure 10)

Fresh-frozen technique is the main body of the Foodtrick, which can freeze the fresh-cooked meals to -60 degree quickly to fully preserve the texture and flavour. In order to achieve a better presentation of the meals, the system still applies fresh and dry materials as garnish. Each meal package only contains one portion to reduce waste.



Figure 10: Food attributes: frozen ready meal & fresh garnish

Equipment (Figure 11)

Three types of equipment are necessary to operate the Foodtrick system: commercial

microwaves, freezers and a salad bar. The number of commercial microwaves will vary depending on the size of the food service businesses. The freezer is used to store the ready meal packages. The decorative ingredients are stored in the salad bar for operators to select and use efficiently.

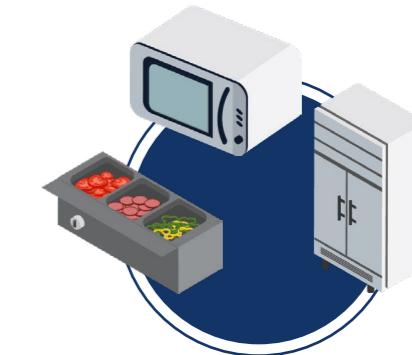


Figure 11: Equipment: commercial microwave, the freezer and salad bar.

Operation (Figure 12)

The whole cooking process was simplified into a regeneration process to decrease operational difficulty (the process can be viewed in chapter 0.1). Thus, the food service director does not have to recruit highly skilled personnel. Through adopting Foodtrick, one staff member can serve up to 80 guests per hour.



Figure 12: Operation: buyers' staff

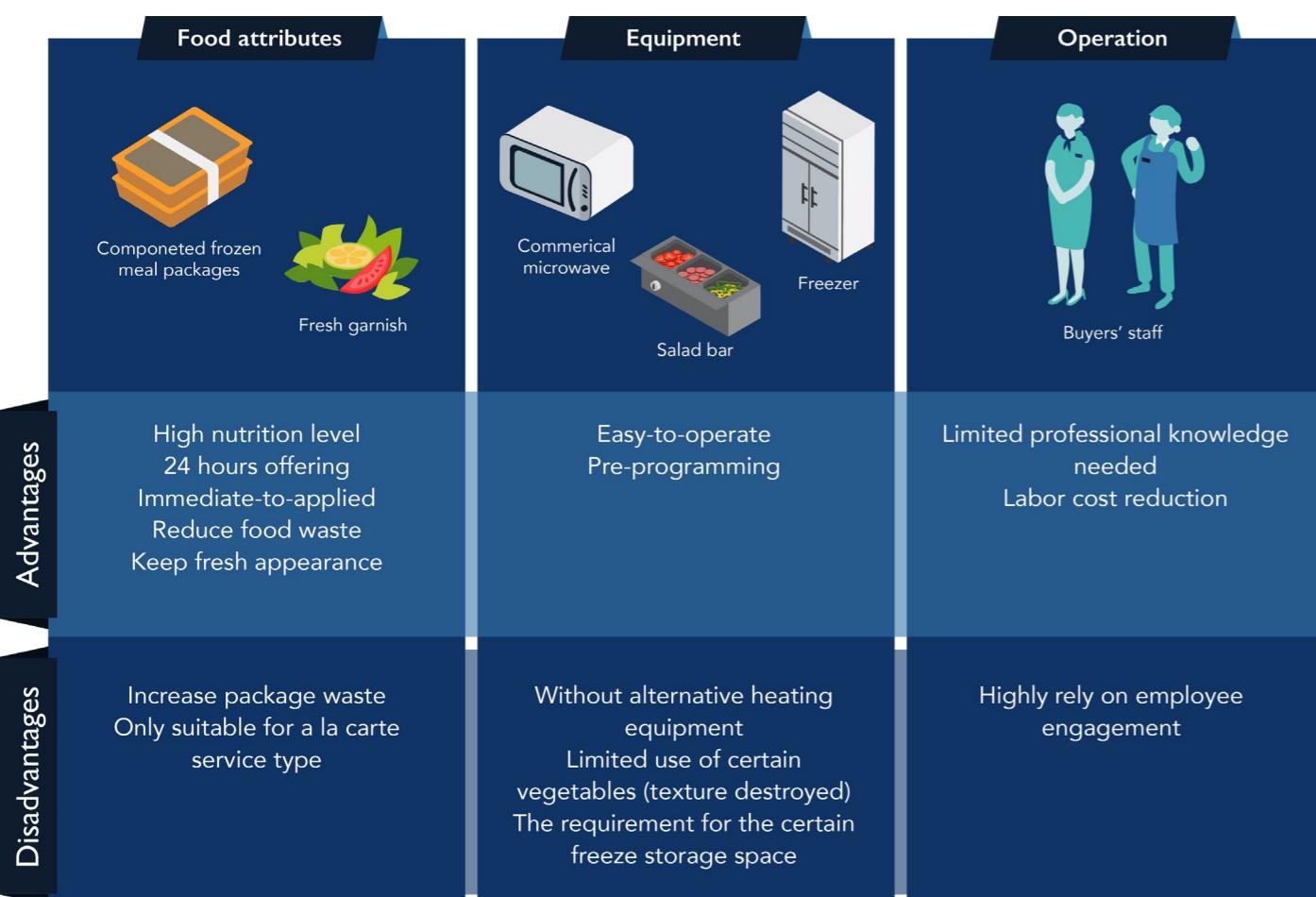


Figure 13: system overview

Discussion

By executing several informal interviews with the internal team, the advantages and disadvantages of the system were collected and listed (see Figure 13). With respect to brand positioning and value communication, three issues appeared:

Low flexibility causes limited target audiences

Using a small package causes Foodtrick to be only suitable for a la carte service, also known as the order-to-serve food service type. **Moreover, relatively high production cost and the requirement of the freezer lessen the flexibility and acceptability of the Foodtrick system.** It narrows down the target audiences. Currently, the company has no interest in making an intensive adjustment of the Foodtrick system itself; thus, this insight only becomes a suggestion of future system development. Nonetheless, it aids us to outline the possible buyer groups of Foodtrick in chapter 2.2.

Enhance the value conveyance towards employees

Since the meal preparation procedure is simplified, Foodtrick relies on the obedience of buyers' staff to follow the instruction precisely to maintain the presentation of each meal. **This situation means Foodtrick needs high engagement from its buyers' employees.** In addition, when a food service business adopts Foodtrick, it will influence the original assignments of employees, leading to possible internal resistance. Therefore, the value of Foodtrick also shall be conveyed to employees.

2.1.2 Partners

The Foodtrick system is a configuration of four partners. Each partner provides various services to assist buyers to adapt the Foodtrick system in their kitchen and operation. The responsibilities and services are detailed as follow (also see Figure 14).

Consultancy team

Food design consultancy team, i.e. WeDesignFood, have years of expertise in the food industry, and is the Foodtrick business initiator. Their accountabilities includemarketingexecutionanddeveloping an implementation plan for buyers. In terms of Foodtrick, the consultancy team offers buyers various customer services, such as employee training, partners bridging, and food knowledge tutoring. One of the most significant responsibilities of the

consultancy team is quality control and recipe improvement. Furthermore, they will collaborate with frozen meals suppliers to customise new recipes on buyer's request.

Frozen meals producers

Frozen meal producers are the technical core of the Foodtrick system, taking charge of massive frozen meals production. Foodtrick cooperates with two meals producers. They perform the materials sourcing, recipe development, design heating procedure, and packaging for each frozen meal. After the meals are manufactured, producers are also accountable for logistics, transfer meals to the assigned wholesaler.

Wholesalers

The wholesaler is an existing partner of the current buyer. Based on the buyers' demand, the wholesaler serves mass procurement of fresh/dry topping and Foodtrick meal packages from suppliers. The materials and packages will be temporarily stored and afterwards distributed to different food provision sites.

Microwave supplier

The Foodtrick system presently has a collaboration with one appliance supplier, which is microwave supplier. The appliance supplier furnishes commercial microwaves for buyers to use and provides equipment maintenance.

Discussion

Deficient marketing executions

Limited marketing channels were used to promote Foodtrick and increase visibility. For the time being, the consultancy team only utilises LinkedIn and their website to share the narratives of Foodtrick. **However, since the Foodtrick is at the starting point of business expansion, the possible approaches to communicate and interact with buyers have not been defined.**

Deficient customer supports

To assist future buyers in adopting Foodtrick smoothly and to be consistent with the original missions (namely making sure the system, flow and process are fully prepared), some services need to be joined. **However, the current appliance supplier only provides commercial microwaves. It leads to insufficient support for buyers.**

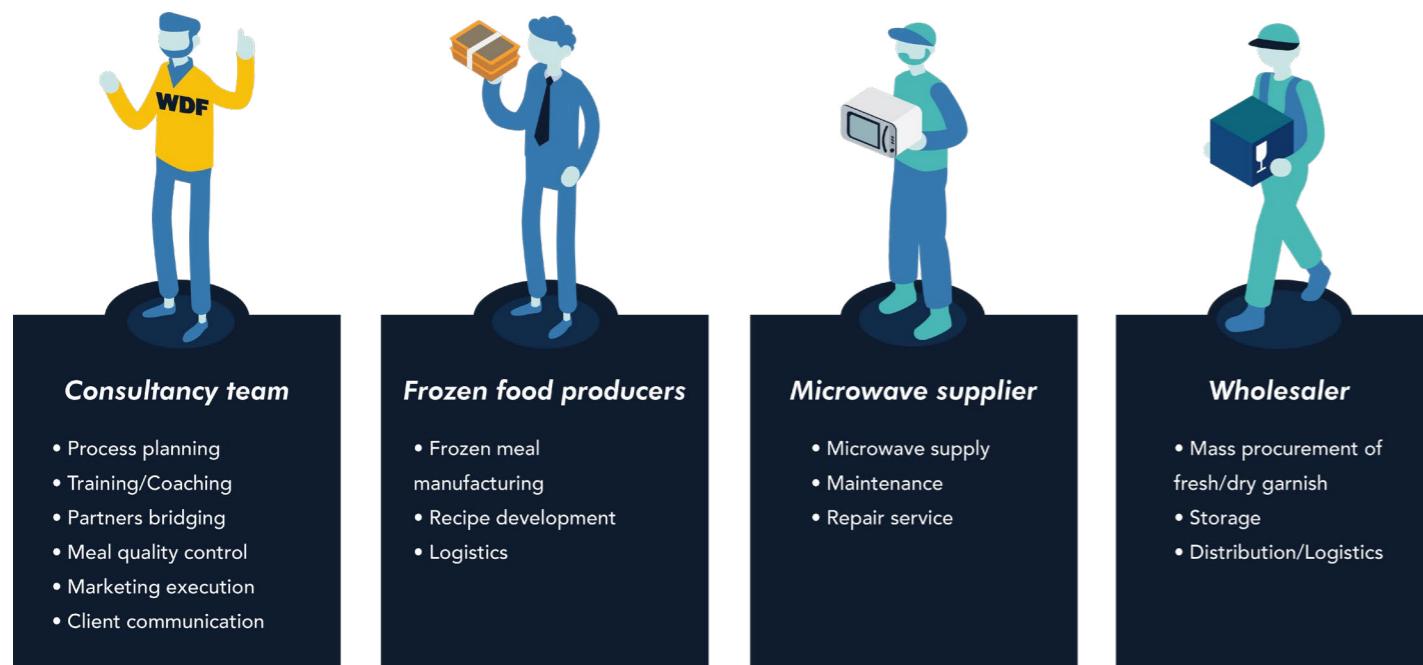


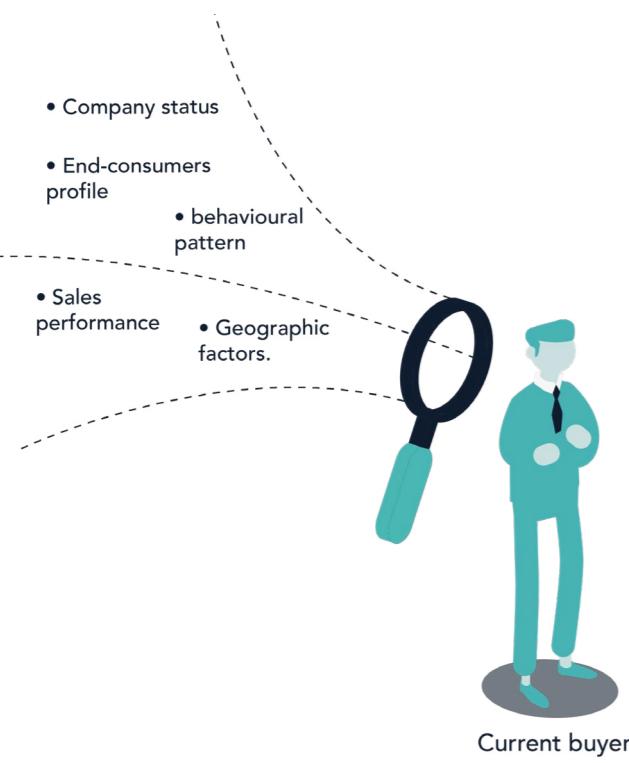
Figure 14: partner overview

2.2 POTENTIAL BUYERS

Studies into the profile of the current buyer were performed. Based on the created profile, an internal segmentation session was held to actualise a proper segmentation.

For this project, the segmentation process proposed by Simkin (2008) was adopted. The idea behind the Simkin's segmentation process is **convening a workshop to rallying participants' knowledge and information from different backgrounds**.

During the workshop, the buying proforma of the existing buyer was described and proliferated to multiple buyer groups with shared characteristics and behaviours. As an emerging company with limited resources and multiple partners, by applying this approach, the firm can achieve segmentation effectively while minimising internal resistance and without long-term research.



2.2.1 Current buyer profiling

To facilitate the workshop efficiently, we first outlined the profile of the existing buyer, which is Hotel C. **Referring to the buying proforma framework introduced by Simkin (2007), we created a profile for the current buyer. The exploring factors show in Figure 15. The sources of the associated data came from informal meetings with the consultancy team, qualitative study, and the buyer's report.** This section will shortly describe the profiling of the current buyer. The complete analysis of the buyer can be seen in Appendix A.

The existing buyer of Foodtrick is Hotel C, which is an international hotel chain, based in the Netherlands. Based on the standards by the European Hotelstars Union (Hotelstars Union, 2015-2020), Hotel C belongs to categories of 4-star hotel, offering food 24/7. Pricing of Foodtrick meals being sold in the Hotel C canteen vary from 17 euro to 25 euro.

Based on the end-consumer interviews executed in chapter 3.2.1, the main canteen guests are age 35-59. 91.4% of

them are middle-class who can afford the prices comfortably. Furthermore, according to the analysis into sales performance, the hotel branches neighbouring to airports receive more guests who are eating in the hotel, indicating that the geographic factor matters.

By assembling the data from Appendix A, an existing buyer proforma was created (see Figure 16). **Buyer proforma consists of five columns, including the profile**

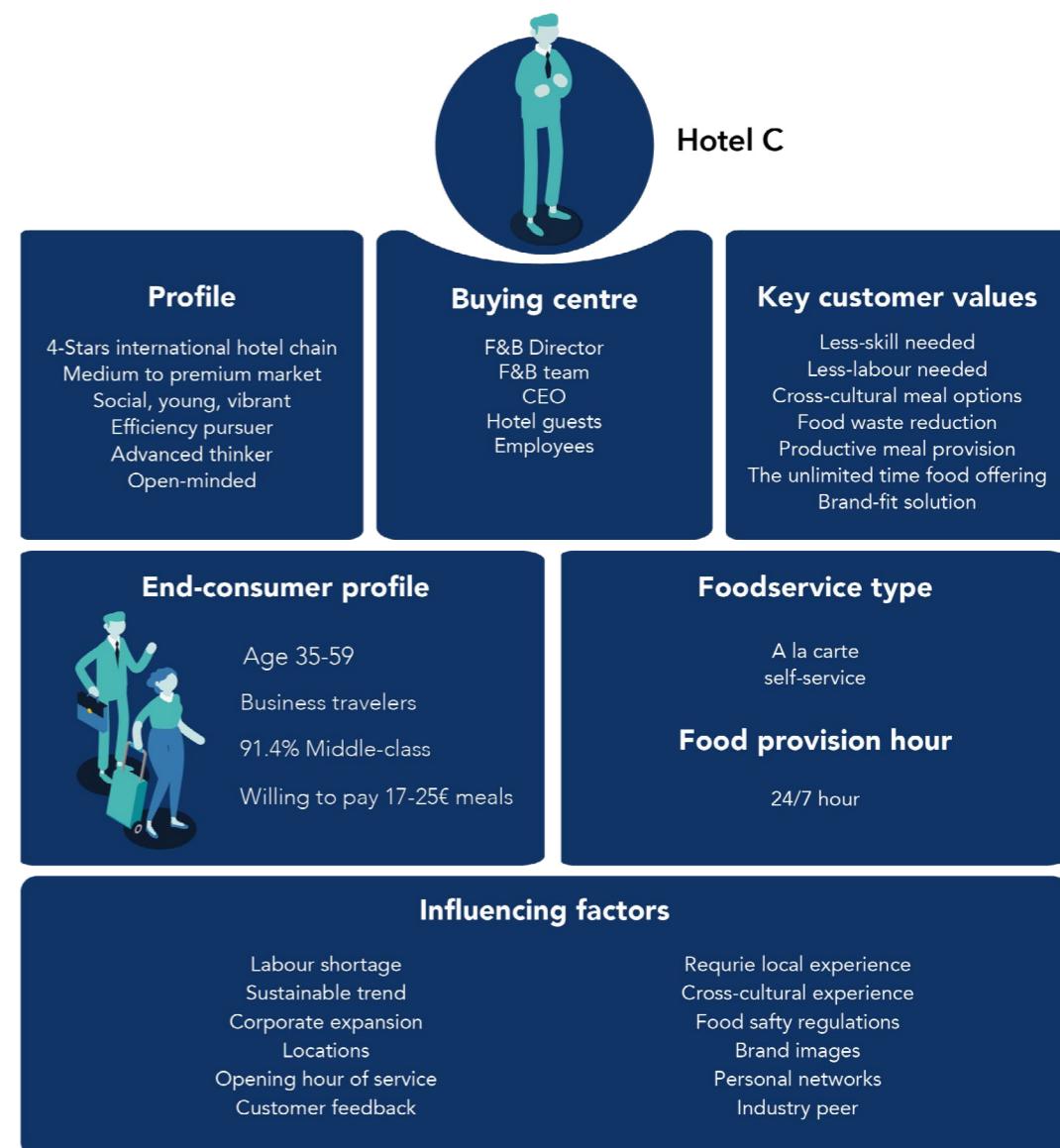


Figure 16: Current buyer proforma

(characteristics of buyers), buying centre (Influencers of purchase), key customer values (needs, job to be done), end-consumer profile (final purchasers), Food service types, Food business hour and influencing factors. It helps us to explore buyers with analogues characteristics and be latter applied in the workshop.

2.2.2 Segmentation workshop

The process aims to reach a non-threatening yet desirable transition, using aggregated knowledge to evolve an agreeable segmentation solution (Simkin, 2007). Three criteria were set for the process (Figure 17).

Process

The four phases and the timeline of the workshop display in Figure 11. Through the process, the number of possible buyer

groups was first increased then decreased by aggregation and assessment. Four employees from the core stakeholders were participating in the workshop. Each of them came from different backgrounds, including operational supervisors, marketers and sales representatives. The whole segmentation process and considered factors to define final segments can be seen in Appendix A.

Result

Six buyer groups were produced during the workshop. Each buyer group was created under distinct traits, which can be seen in Appendix A.

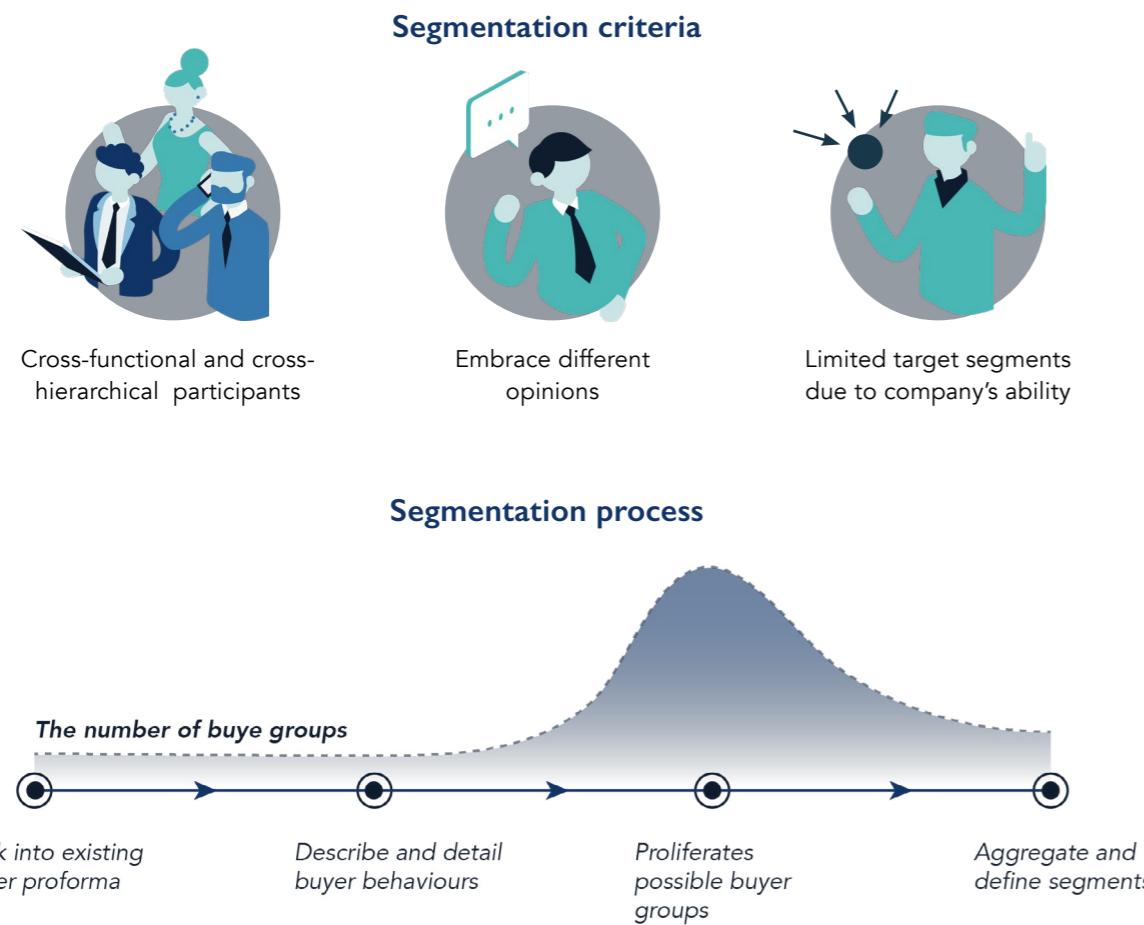


Figure 17: The criteria and process of segmentation workshop

In the end, two potential buyer groups of Foodtrick were prioritised, presented in Figure 18. The four to five-stars hotel chain in the Dutch market, for instance, Van der Valk and Postillion is one of the market segments. Foodtrick can be adopted to their canteen or room service. It also concluded in the meeting that Foodtrick will be more alluring if the hotels have a branch near the airport or outskirt area. The other segment is medium to premium airport lounges in Europe market, for example, Aspire lounge and Privium lounge.

In the workshop, marketers also indicated that hotels and airport lounges are

seeking similar key customer value, such as long-hour food provision and multicultural meal options to satisfy guests. The end-consumer in these food provision places are more willing to pay the price of Foodtrick meals. Besides, the influencing factors of labour shortage and food waste increase are occurring in these two businesses.

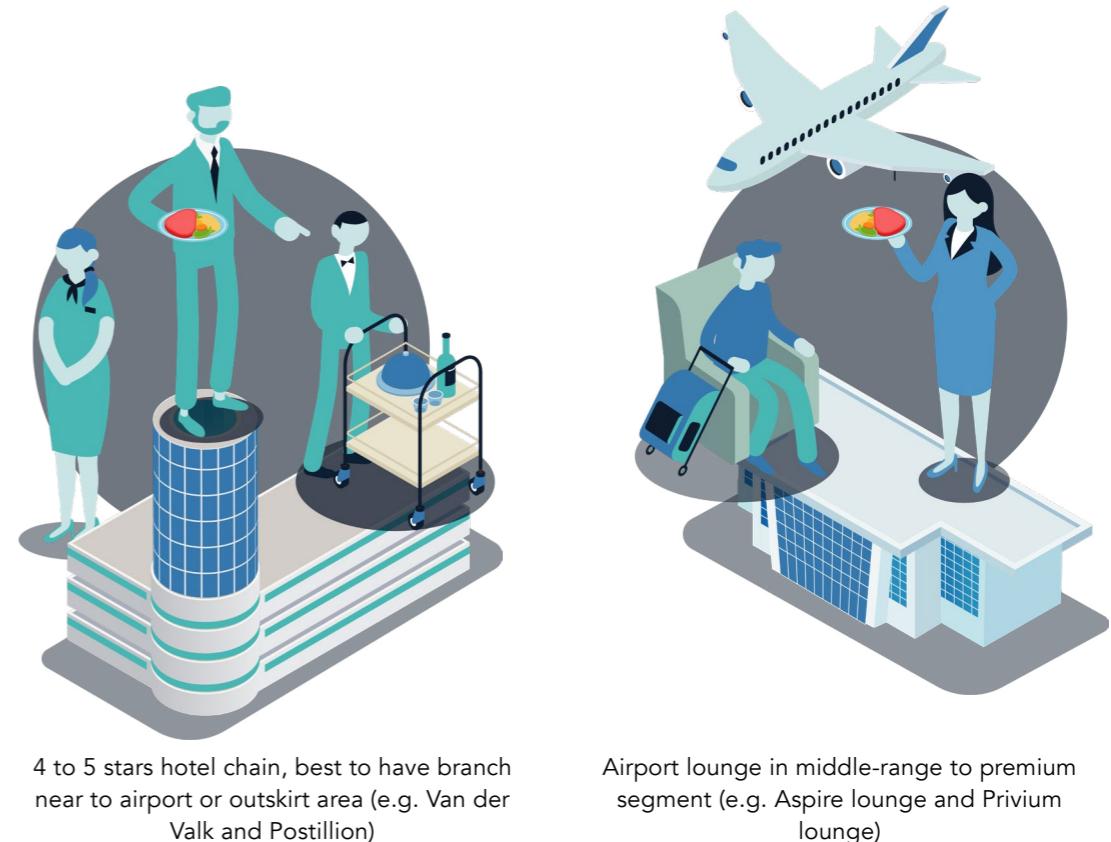


Figure 18: The main segments of Foodtrick

2.3 COMPETITION & CONTEXT

Observing the relevant competitors and trends aids us to distinguish opportunities and threats.

2.3.1 Competition

Process

Two analyses were conducted to understand the competitive landscape. Firstly, through exploring company goals, target buyer groups, and offerings, we classified competitors into three groups: direct competitors, secondary competitors and indirect competitors (see Appendix B). On the basis that Foodtrick plans to expand locally first, we chose only competitors who are currently active in the Dutch market. The data was sourced from competitor companies' websites. The overview is displayed in Figure 19.

Direct competitors, such as Albron, Gate Gourmet, and Newrest are caterers which share a similar mission to Foodtrick and belong to similar buyer groups. Secondary competitors (e.g. Frio Food, Aviko and Oerlemans) share a similar purpose and similar buyer groups, yet only supply frozen food items and limited services (e.g. logistics, storage). Indirect competitors offer substitute solutions to satisfy similar buyers' needs; for example, the food waste tracking program of Leanpath or the food delivery service of companies such as Thuisbezorgd.

In the second analysis, we listed the values

each direct competitor conveyed to their buyers and separated the values into the functional (e.g. quality, healthy) and emotional attributes (e.g. honesty, trust) for comparison (presented in Figure 20).

Discussion

High bargaining power of buyers

The flexibility of Foodtrick is currently limited in comparison to that of its direct competitors. If the targeted buyers are searching for suppliers, they have a broad choice of corporations who provide flexible and varied solutions. **It leads to an increase in the bargaining power of buyers to select suppliers regarding their requirements** (Bruyl, 2018). If prospective buyers are not convinced by the perceived value (including pricing, products and services) of adopting Foodtrick, they will not make purchases.

Diluting role

With regard to competition amongst food service suppliers, the visibility and credibility of direct competitors are already distinguished. **Furthermore, the food quality-focus and waste-reducing characteristics of Foodtrick are similar to most of the suppliers. This situation dilutes the role of Foodtrick in the market** (Vorst, 2017). Therefore, some kind of differentiation needs to be established, that has not been addressed by competitors.

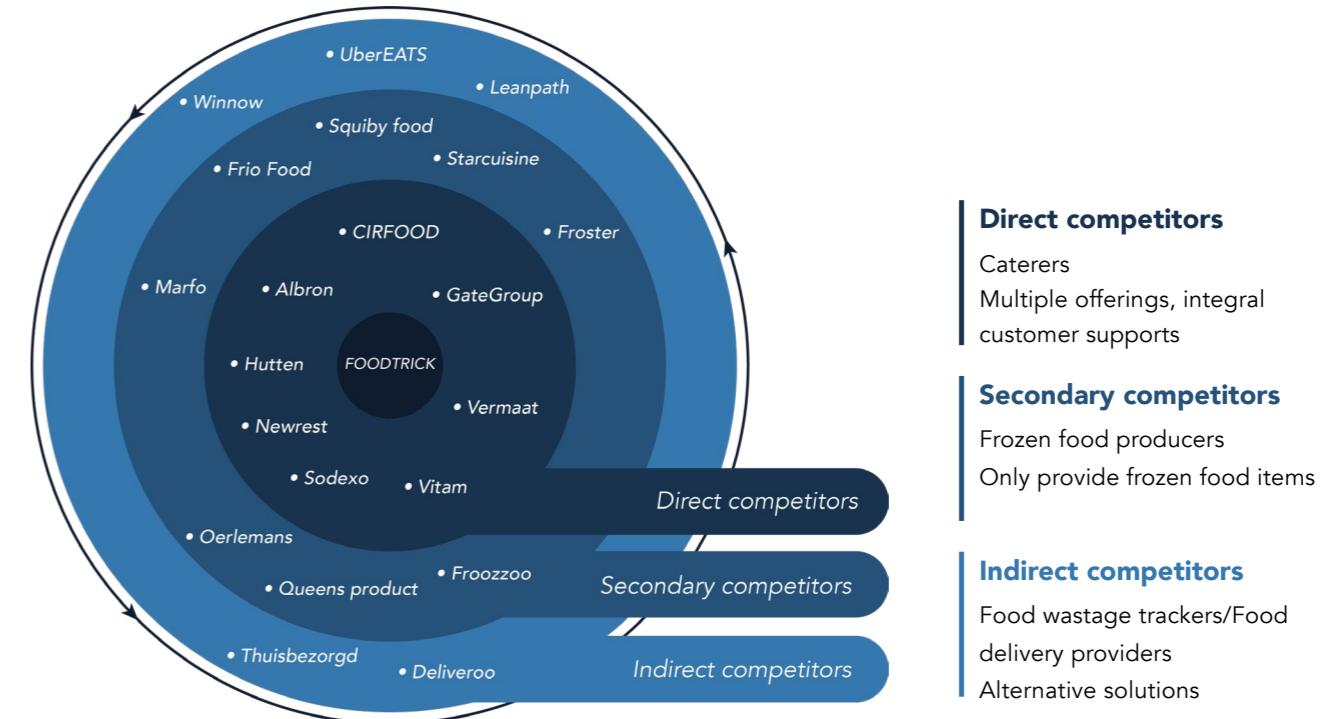


Figure 19: Competitors overview

	Functional attributes	Emotional attributes	
Albron	Tasty Healthy sustainable	Passion Involved	Daring Trust
CIRFOOD	Healthy Sustainable Authentic taste	People Honest	
GateGroup	Authentic taste Standardized	Sustainable	Ecouraging
Hutten	Freshly prepared Focus on your health Make a genuine impact - sustainable		Genuine
Newrest	Improving Innovating Balanced meal	Sustainable Customised	Personal
Sodexo	Quality Healthy		Human Responsible
Vermaat	Health Sustainability	Customised	Personal
Vitam	Yummy Healthy	Enterprising	

Figure 20: The comparison of direct competitors

2.3.2 Industry trend

The hotel industry and the airport lounge businesses are being impacted by constantly transforming food service trends (Fiddle et al. 2001). Foodtrick demands to detect relevant trends in the B2C and B2B contexts. We shall apply the DESTEP approach (Vliet, 2010) to classify trends.

Method

By investigating the industrial reports, we listed and divided the elements into demographic, economic, political, ecological, social, and technological categories (see Appendix C). A visualisation depicts the solutions in the B2C and B2B markets influenced by four trends (Figure 21).

Easy eating

Time pressure drives consumers' pursuit of convenience, leading to transformation in forms of food products and services. **In the B2B context, rising labour costs mean that business owners also require expediency, and food offerings that are easily reproducible.**

Personalised eating

Consumers, particularly from the Millennial generation, perceive dining out to be more than just consuming food. **Digitalisation and social media fuel consumer aspirations for personalised and unique experiences from food provision businesses.**

Healthy eating

Deloitte claims 40% of the generation aged 18 to 30 are consuming a diet corresponding with clean eating, avoiding

foods high in sugar, fat or additives (Romain et al., 2019). **There is a growing awareness of the granular traceability of the food journey from source to consumption. Moreover, the image of being healthy is correlated with consuming fresh foods.**

Responsible eating

Accenture reveals that 73 per cent of consumers would actively shift to a brand supporting social issues (2017). **These trends lead to multiple B2B food brands incorporating sustainability and social responsibility into their brand attributes in order to attract consumers.**

Discussion

Long-hour food offering and replicable feature

Hallmarks of the Foodtrick system, such as **its ability to be easily implemented and offer food in 24 hours, gives it competitive advantages in its response to the trend towards convenience and the businesses with the characteristics of hotel chains and airport lounges.** Also, since these buyers often own branches in different locations, the ability of the Foodtrick system which can be replicated easily in different sites suits their requirements.

Transparency as the valuable communication tool

If we consider trends towards healthy and responsible eating, **we can assume that being transparent is a requisite approach to building confidence in using frozen meals.** Since Foodtrick has the advantage of being healthy by having high nutritional value, it can afford to be clear and transparent about the ingredients of each of its meals when trying to win over future buyers.



EASY EATING

B2C

Online ordering platform
Home delivery service
Digital reservation services
Ready-to-go meals
Vending machines

B2B

Self-service platform
Ghost kitchen
24/7 food offering
Frozen food



PERSONALISED EATING

B2C

Customised meals/services
Instagram-worthy food
Proactive staff interaction
Local food
Cross-cultural food

B2B

Tailored catering system
Signature recipe
Self-ordering platform
Customised staff food



HEALTHY EATING

B2C

Vegetarian/Vegan food
Plant-based proteins
Transparent ingredient/nutrition list
Customized healthy meal

B2B

Clean label ingredients
Source tracking program



RESPONSIBLE EATING

B2C

Alternative meat product
Recycle packaging
Recycle cutlery
Animal-cruelty free product

B2B

Clean supply chain
Local farm sourcing
Source tracking program
Waste management

Insufficient sustainability

The consultancy team claims that compared to offering a buffet service, using Foodtrick meal packages can reduce food waste by 70%. **However, due to the type of packaging, small separated components, package wastage can escalate to almost 200%.** In an era of growing consciousness of sustainability in customers, this negative image will be harmful when Foodtrick is presenting its value. This issue will be addressed in the near future.

Figure 21: Four trends in the food service industry

POSITIONING CONCLUSION

At this stage, we completed several analyses into internal structure, potential buyers and external circumstance for Foodtrick.

Through the research, six influential elements are detected. These elements are chosen not only for their effect on positioning strategy but also on brand communication.

I-01



Hotel chain/airport lounge in the medium and premium segments

Based on segmentation workshop, the potential buyers are in the hotel chain/airport lounge.

I-02



The critical role of end-users in the buying centre

Employees and end-consumers as influencers in buying centre will affect the purchase decision of the buyer in food services

I-03



Time-unlimited, nutritious value, immediate-to-use as advantages

24 hours food offering, nutritional balanced meals and immediate-to-applied as main functional advantages

I-04



Differentiation by heightening unique emotional values.

Heightening on the distinctive emotional benefit and incorporating with the functional attributes may highlight Foodtrick's position in the market. It can also erase the buyers' resistance towards frozen meals.

I-05



Transparency as the value communication tool

Being open and transparent is an assumed approach to erase buyers' suspicion.

I-06



Marketing channel and service insufficiency

Current touchpoint and customer service are lack or not integral.

03

COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

Consistently conveying value during the buying process is crucial for building and maintaining business relationships. Moreover, in the theory of B2B brand communication, Lynch & Chernatony state (2003):

"Communication is central to human behaviour, connecting individuals and creating relationships."

It can be inferred that to reach effective value communication, there has to be an understanding of buyers and end-users' behaviours and attitudes towards Foodtrick. To further our understanding of the above, we combined two models of the buying process --Rodger's process of selecting a food service system (2005) and

a model of the customer journey by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) to create a framework for the purchasing journey for Foodtrick (See Figure 22). The journey is divided into two principal stages, early-stage and late-stage, which contains five phases: need assessment; evaluation of options; selection of a system; implementation and after sales service and review. The early-stages of the journey are mainly initiated by the food service owners. As indicated by Rodgers, the selection of a system phase is the starting point when the feedback from end-users begins to be integrated into the buying journey (2005). Our framework was later applied in the mapping session (chapter 3.1.1).

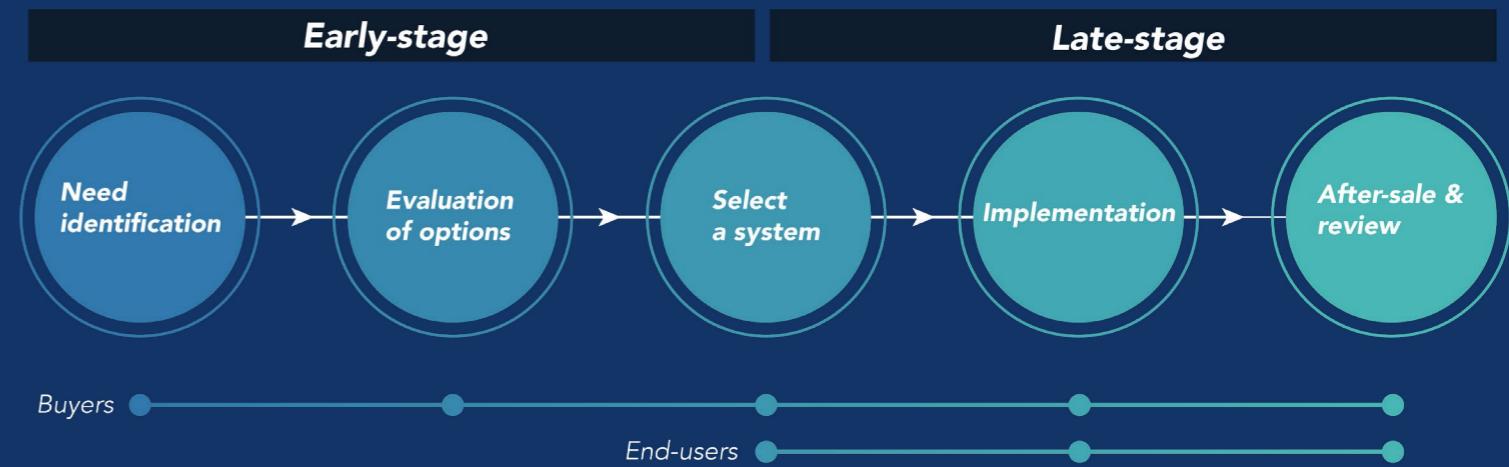


Figure 22: The selection process of food service system

3.1 BUYERS' PERSPECTIVE

This section aims to understand the attitudes of the existing buyer and possible buyers towards Foodtrick by observing previous purchases and interviewing.

3.1.1 Mapping session

Journey mapping is a common visualising practice of the process which a person or a group experience (Boeijen, et al., 2017). We aimed to comprehend the deeper reasons behind the selection of Foodtrick by an existing buyer by looking back at the previous implementation process involving Hotel C.

Process

Four participants engaged in the mapping session, including the Food and beverage (F&B) director from Hotel C, the consultancy team and the frozen meals supplier. The F&B director who initiated the purchase of Foodtrick was responsible for the food service sector in all of Hotel C's branches in the Netherlands. The mapping session aimed to acquire information about the last purchase, such as the buyer's actions and needs and the supplier's actions. Finally, we produced a visual representation of the process. The implementation journey consisted of five main-stages and eight steps (Figure 23). The process, detailed visualisation and explanations of each phase can be seen in Appendix D.

Discussions

The collaborative outcome between suppliers and buyer

During the mapping session, both the buyer and suppliers mentioned that Foodtrick is the result of a collaborative effort. **Suppliers proactively invited the buyer to join the process consistently to learn about the system and the techniques involved.** It can be reasoned that early participation and collaboration is the critical determinant in enhancing buyers' sense of involvement and their trust in their suppliers.

Implementation skills as the forte

Participants indicated **the ease of implementation of the Foodtrick system and the implementation skills of the team members fulfilled the requirements of the F&B director.** This capability is a competitive strength which will need to be showcased in the purchasing journey.

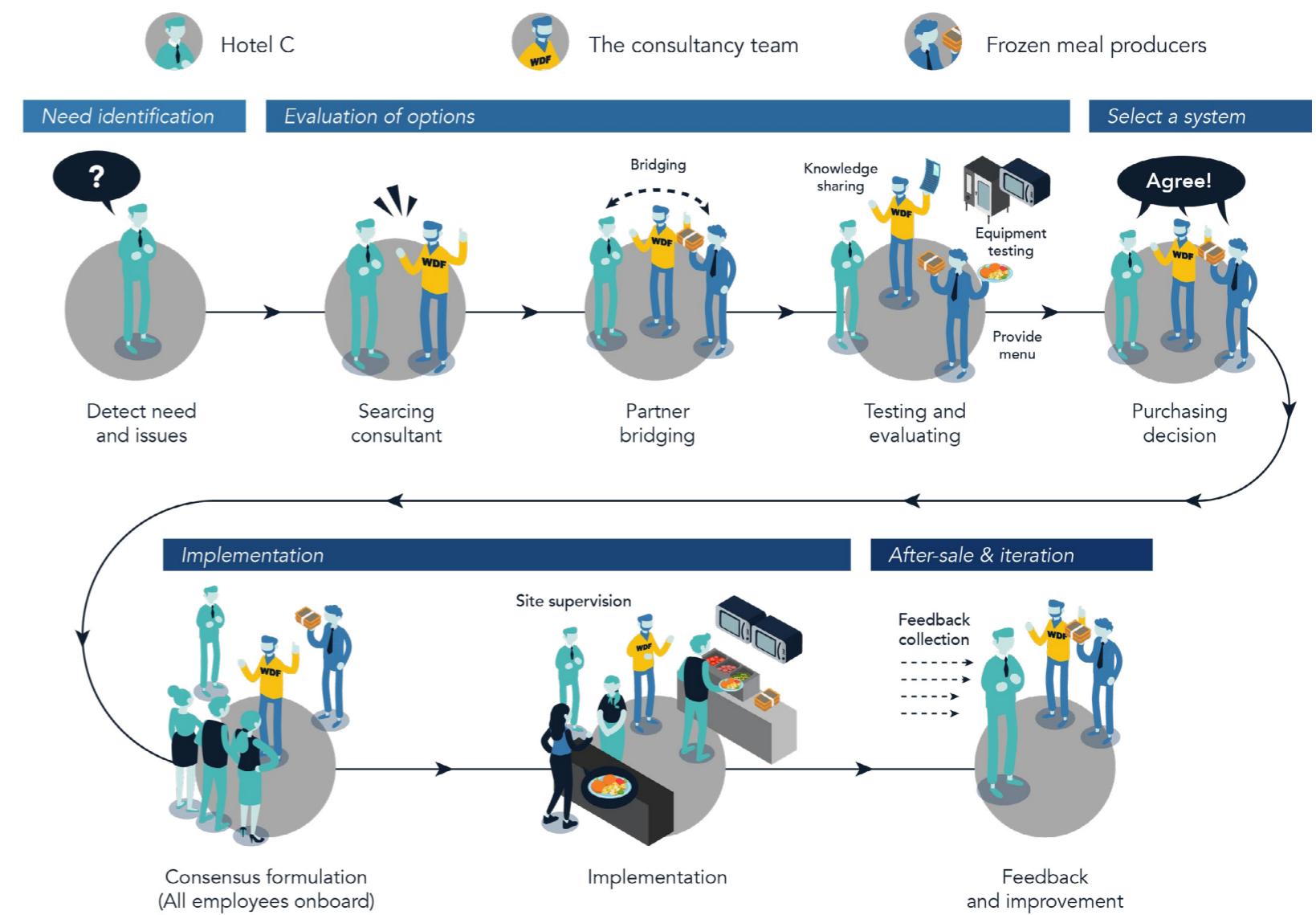


Figure 23: The implementation journey

3.1.2 Expert interview

'Experts' here refers to the food services directors who have been working in food provision sites for years, acquiring abundant knowledge and experience in the domain of food services. Performing expert interviews are helpful in capturing potential buyers' behaviours with fewer resources. The objective of expert interviews aims at better discovering:

1. The latent drivers stimulating food service owners to change their way of food serving
2. The value perception and evaluation of Foodtrick
3. Purchasing actions and the requirements faced by suppliers

Process

Eight experts were interviewed. All of them had been working in the food service industry for at least three years. Six of the interviewees were F&B managers in the middle-range to the premium segment of the Dutch hotel industry. The other two were general workplace managers responsible for catering for the staff. Interviewing these diverse participants gave us the opportunity to gather different perspectives.

Apart from the verbal questioning, three collages and a task sheet were created to aid the collection of more in-depth information (Figure 24). The collages enabled participants to articulate opinions and emotions through photos and words. The whole process and analysis can be checked in Appendix E.

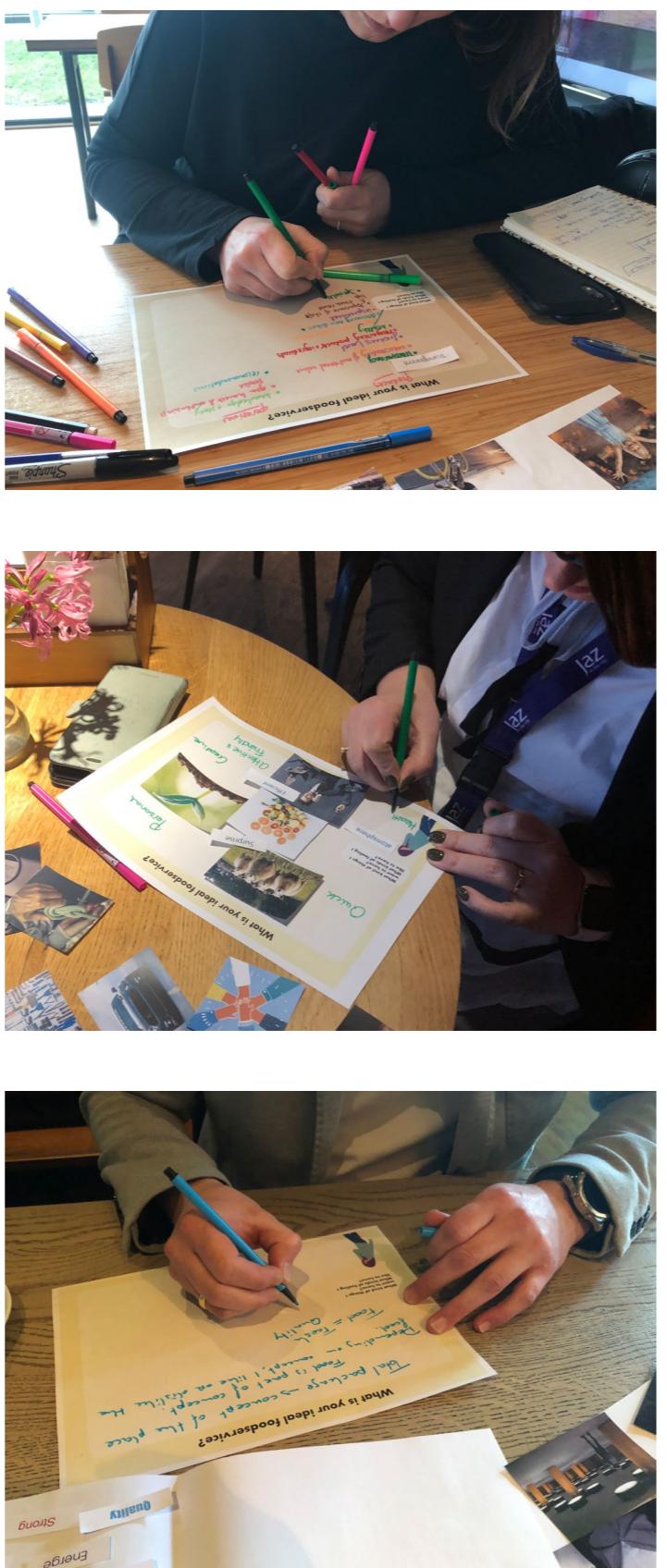


Figure 24: The collage exercises

Results

The interviews were interpreted by the interviewer and the consultancy team in a way that revealed the similarities between the two groups of participants.

The conflict between efficiency and freshness

Efficiency and quality remain two essential factors in an assessment for food service managers. Efficiency relates to the speed, productivity and ease with which the system can be operated. Quality refers to the condition of food and the quality of service. However, participants' replies showed that one of the food quality indicators remains the freshness of food. **It creates the dilemma that using frozen meals can reach high efficiency, but negative perceptions associated with frozen food remain as an impediment to applying a system like Foodtrick.**

Improving customer and employee experience

Enriching customer experience and satisfaction by improving, even transforming, the system of food provision was the shared aim of six of the participants. On the other hand, five participants were focusing on employees' feelings and experiences. **Since the growing pressure of recruiting skilled workers, employees have become part of the vital assets of a company.** This finding further strengthens the necessity of embedding end-users in the communication of value (pp. 33).

Advanced controllability and an add-on process flow

Three participants perceived Foodtrick as **an advanced means of enhancing the controllability of the food service system.**

Moreover, when asked to what extent Foodtrick can assist the business, five interviewees regarded Foodtrick as an easy add-on to the original system. This insight provides evidence to **reinforce one of the competitive advantages of Foodtrick which is its ease of implementation.** (chapter 3.1.1).

Knowledge sharing and first-hand experience

Two participants who accepted the value of frozen food stated that the possible cause behind buyers' resistance towards frozen food is a lack of information. Information could include a listing of ingredients and technical knowledge. **If buyers acquired sufficient knowledge, the perceived negative aspects of using frozen meals would decrease.** This finding is in keeping with the elements from our research on positioning, which indicated that transparency can be a key communication tool (chapter 2.3.2).

Additionally, the first-hand experience was considered as an essential medium to erase doubt and promote an understanding of value. Six participants mentioned the significance of the trial experience. **They needed not only to taste the products but also to execute the system to determine its feasibility.**

Integral service

Five interviewees expected suppliers to be fully assistive. Two interviewees shared their worries about not every kitchen having the necessary condition to apply the system, such as freezer, which meant they would depend on suppliers to assist them. **Supplying complete services would help to increase the buyers' sense of confidence in the credibility of the supplier.**

3.2 END-USERS PERSPECTIVE

This section presents the acquired data from end-users to comprehend their behaviour when encountering with Foodtrick.

3.2.1 End-consumer interviews

All the end-consumers we interviewed were the room guests staying and dining in the Hotel C. Since Hotel C has a similar customer profile of the main segment (hotel chains/airport lounges), capturing the purchasing attitude of guests in Hotel C is reasonable.

Process

The interviews were located in the two branches of Hotel C. During the mealtime of guests, the interviewer approached them and asked whether they would accept to have a short interview. The interviewer spent three hours each time to find suitable interviewees, once during lunchtime and the other during dinnertime. In the end, thirty interviews with end-consumers proceeded.

One thing needs to notice is that Hotel C does not proactively disclose the adoption of frozen ready meals to their customers. Therefore, the interviewer didn't reveal the fact to the guests that Hotel C is using frozen meals. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain a general outline of end-consumers and understand their decision pattern to purchase meals in the hotel. The whole interview process can be seen in Appendix F.

Results

Through the results of the interviews, an average outline of end-consumers in Hotel C was depicted (Figure 25). 87% of guests we interviewed are business travellers. The data of guests were also used in market segmentation (chapter 2.2). By examining their answers, we gathered the behavioural insights of end-consumers.

Accessibility towards dining out during travel

Twenty-three business travellers state convenience as the most important factor of consuming food in the hotel. With busy business activities, they rather stay in hotels to enjoy 24 hours of food provision. Moreover, most consumers travel individually; thus, they want neither to spend energy to find restaurants nor feel embarrassed to sit alone in a restaurant. It showcases the end-consumers' pursuit of eating accessibility, which also concurs with one of the consumer trends distinguished in chapter 2.3.2.

Overall service quality and healthy pursuit

Eight consumers praised the cosy atmosphere and friendly consumer interaction in Hotel C, which were also the

main driver they stay here. It also resonates the consumer trend that customers evaluate food service by the overall experience (chapter 2.3.2). On the other hand, business travellers preferred the fast meal options within more nutritious value to maintain a healthy body and shape. Guests also prefer to acquire the knowledge of the ingredient list and choose low carbohydrates or vegan options. It echoes the trend research (chapter 2.2.3), that food transparency and a healthy lifestyle are related to each other.

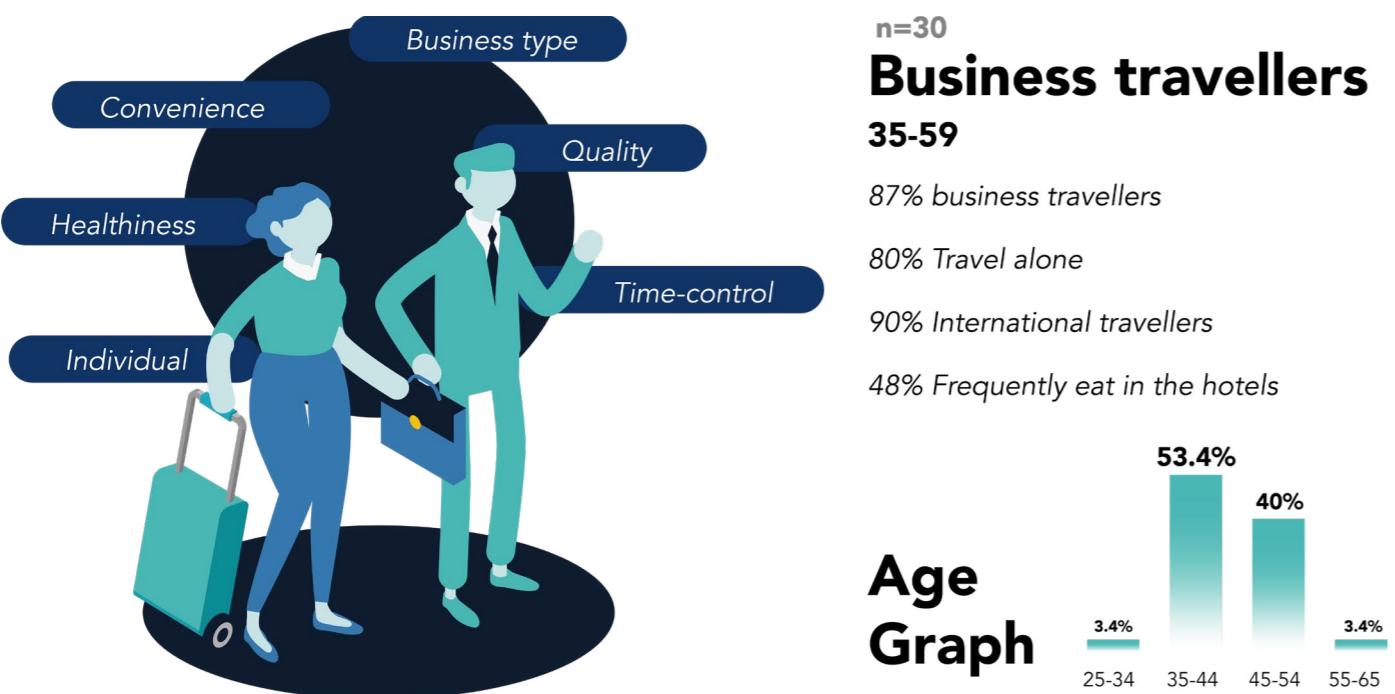


Figure 25: The overall approach of the thesis

3.2.2 Employees observation

To receive a value perception of employees towards Foodtrick, we carried out two times of in-person observations. In-person observation can assist develop the rapport and trust with participants, which is beneficial to get genuine user feedback and recognise their emotions at a short distance (Paterson et al., 2003).

Process

Observations were executed in the kitchen and canteen of two branches of Hotel C (Figure 26). By participating in shifts with multiple employees, the observer proceeded to have informal interviews to gather and record their opinions on Foodtrick. All the observations and responses were collected and put in the spreadsheet for further understanding (see Appendix G).

Results

The observer encountered and spoke to seven employees sharing their feedback on using Foodtrick. Some of the staff obtained years of experience in the food service industry as front or back-stage employees, but none of them was involved in the cooking process before joining in Hotel C.

Simplicity and achievability

Most of the positive feedback from employees was the simplicity of the Foodtrick system. All the employees are able to operate the system independently in two to three days. A new employee also mentioned the gain of sense of achievement by practising the Foodtrick system. Considering most of the employees do not have professional culinary training, **Foodtrick helps to build up employees' confidence to produce meals.**

Deficient information sharing

The menu doesn't state the applied ingredients and source in each dish explicitly. Hence the guests often need to approach front-stage staff for detailed information. This means that staff need to acquire sufficient information. This feedback also reflects on the finding from end-consumer interviews (chapter 3.2.1), where **consumers prefer to have access to information about food consumption.**

The efficacy of trial experience

All employees have tasted the Foodtrick dishes during training, which is a demanded instruction from the consultancy team. **Several employees claim that their suspicions on frozen food were reduced after they tried the frozen meals and operated the system.** These feedbacks further strengthen the efficacy of the try-out experience.



Figure 26: The observations

COMMUNICATION CONCLUSION

In this stage of research, the behavioural studies into the participants in the buying decision of Foodtrick were accomplished.

Several direct evidence is discovered to further reinforce the findings from the positioning understanding phase. The evidence is further translated into eight insights considering its effect on brand communication.



I-07
Value need to convey to employee and end-consumers

Improving end-users' experience is a shared goal of potential buyers. Embedding end-users in the brand value can improve buyers' perception of Foodtrick.



I-09
Potential buyers seek advanced controllability and simplicity

The capacity to increase controllability and easiness can be regarded as the main peculiarity of Foodtrick to allure prospective buyers.



I-11
Employees regard Foodtrick to increase achievability in food serving

By using Foodtrick, staff without culinary background are able to gain competence to generate food.



I-13
Knowledge sharing and integral support

Being knowledgeable and providing integral support to decrease buyers' doubts to use frozen ready meals



I-08
The conflict between and freshness

Even though high efficiency can be reached, buyers may not be convinced by using frozen ready meals.



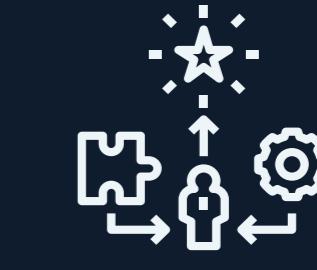
I-10
End-consumers seek accessibility to healthy food

End-consumers are business travellers who are searching for better accessibility towards a healthy lifestyle.



I-12
Involvement and implementation

Increase buyers' involvement in the early stage of purchasing process and performing implementation ability as alluring points



I-14
The first-hand experience as proof-of-concept

Allowing buyers to experience Foodtrick personally is significant to proof the concept.



04 **STRATEGIC PLAN**

In the course of the previous analysis, the related insights which can assist positioning and communicate Foodtrick are collected. In this chapter, we first synthesize and interpret the findings to construct a strategic direction. Then, the value propositions of Foodtrick are re-shaped to develop an ideal positioning. Finally, we establish four brand principles for a future communication strategy.



4.1 INSIGHTS & DIRECTION

The framework formulated in our theoretical research was applied to synthesise all of the gathered insights.

Insight syntheses

The insights were numbered and placed in the framework. The relationship between all the findings from the positioning and communication research was presented in Figure 27. **Evidential strengthened lines** were drawn where insights further reinforced other findings. **Delivery lines** indicate the discovery can be achieved through the other element.

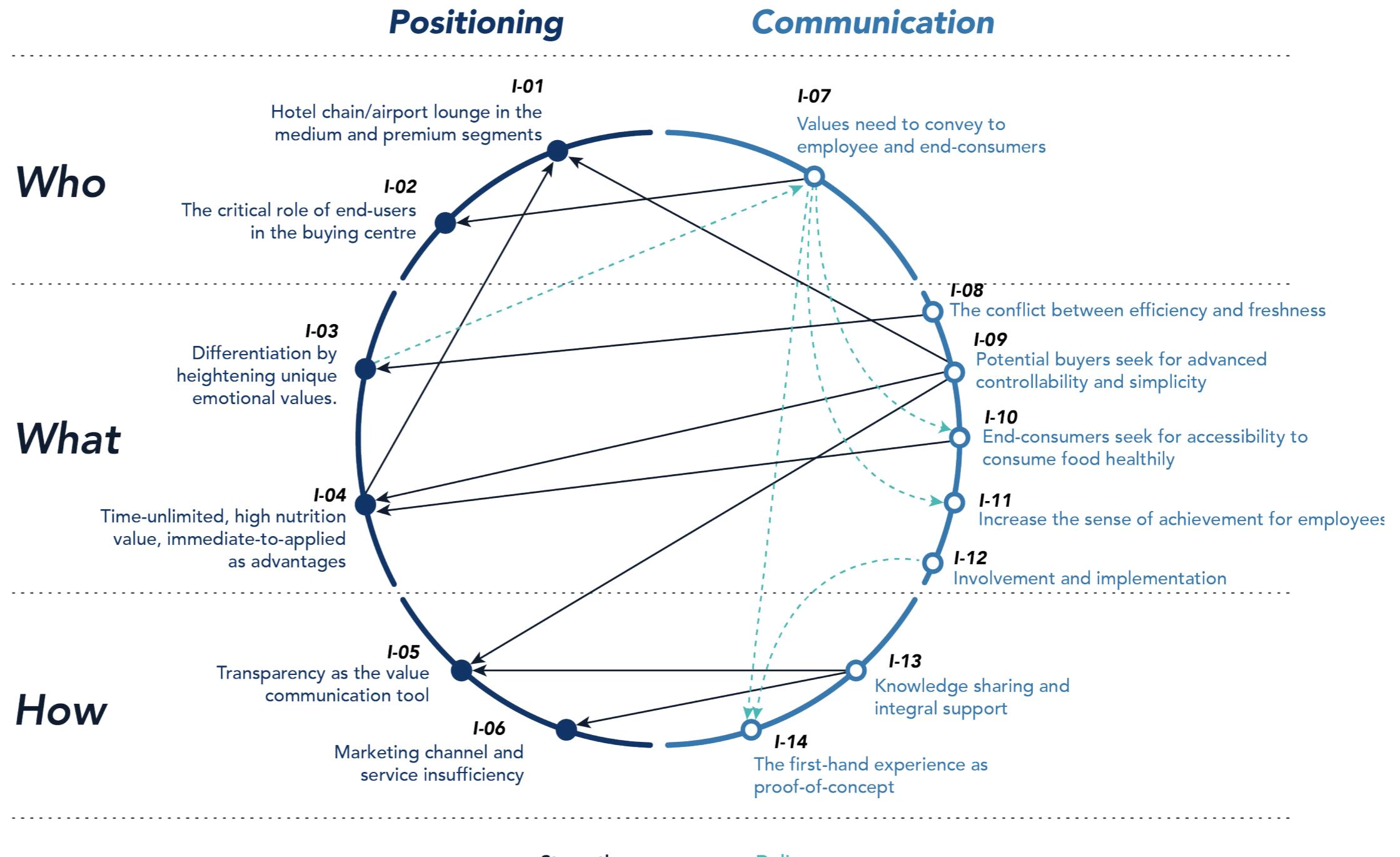


Figure 27: The relationships between each insight

Strategic directions

By interpreting the insights with the consultancy team, we translated the results into the three strategic directions of "who", "what" and "how".

Who:

Target buyers are food service owners in the hotel chains and airport lounges who look for better controllability

In the segmentation workshop, the main segments of Foodtrick were identified, which are hotel chains and airport lounge in medium and premium lounge (I-01). In the interviewing of experts, we also realized that buyers seeking better controllability of the food service system might appreciate the benefits of Foodtrick (I-09). On the other hand, end-users have been proved will make a certain impact on the purchasing decision of Foodtrick (I-02, I-07).

What:

The functional advantages combined with the unique emotional attributes desired or acquired by buyers and end-users

The functional strengths, such as extended hours of food provision, high nutritional value and immediacy of implementation have been regarded as the unique selling points of Foodtrick (I-01, I-04, I-10). Nevertheless, the current functional attributes of Foodtrick can still not compete with the buyers' pursuit of freshness (I-08); therefore, the unique emotional attributes of Foodtrick should be highlighted; especially the emotional benefits acquired or requested by two end-users (I-02, I-07). For instance, employees gain a sense of achievement by operating the system individually (I-11); and end-consumers seek accessibility to consume healthily at the times they choose (I-10).

How:

Communicate the values of Foodtrick by sharing information and integrating services & Verify the benefits of Foodtrick through first-hand experience

Involving buyers and supporting them with consistent service and being transparent with information, have been identified as critical communication element (I-05, I-06, I-13). These behaviours can increase reassurance of potential buyers. Moreover, the trial experience is viewed as the defining occasion for buyers to validate the feasibility and implementation ability of Foodtrick (I-12, I-14).

4.2 BRAND POSITIONING

This section intends to achieve effective positioning by incorporating functional value and emotional value.

4.2.1 Value identification

A small session was performed to allow the consultancy team to co-determine the emotional value of the Foodtrick brand and how this could align with and reinforce corporate values.

Process

The process of value identification can be view in Figure 28. After presenting the results of previous analyses, the facilitator asked participants to name all the possible emotions buyers and end-users have exhibited or would want to feel while interacting with Foodtrick. The emotional triggers were described in the form of "sense of..." and are linked to the outcomes of the previous chapters (viewed in Figure 29 on pp. 53).

Afterwards, participants listed the existing functional attribute or desired functional attributes and assess which emotions can be induced. These functional qualities came from the Foodtrick system itself or the provided services from the organization. The functional values and emotional values delivered to each player were later translated into value propositions and put into the table shown in Appendix H.

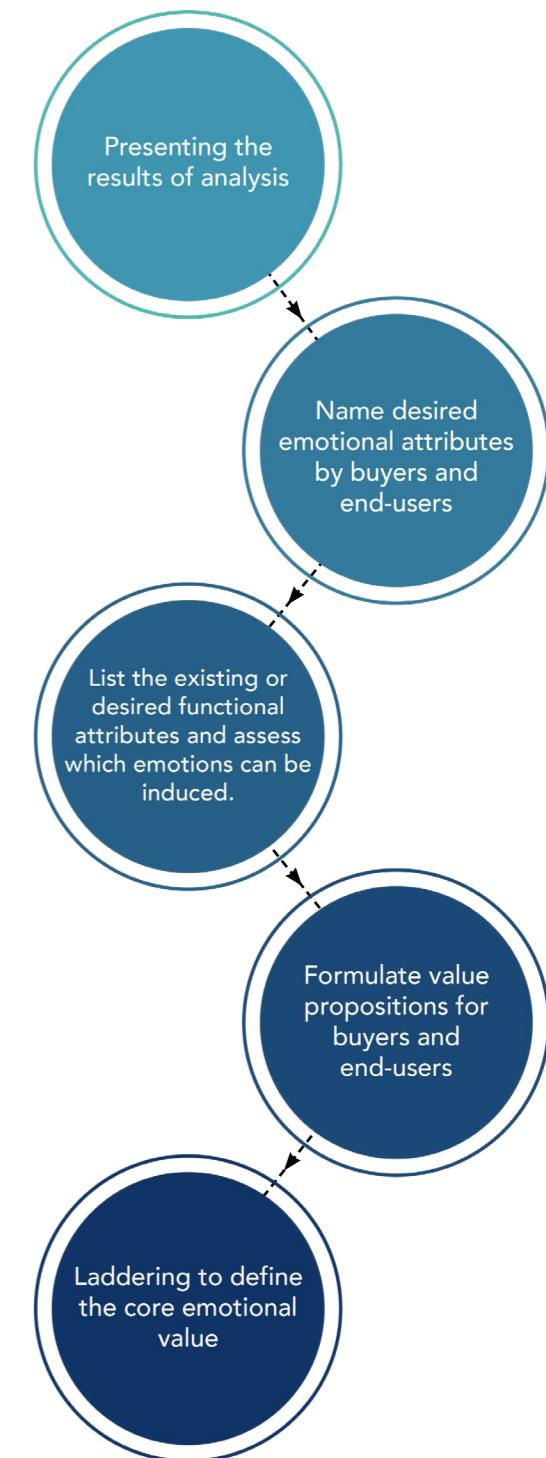


Figure 28: Value identification process

After constructing the emotional triggers for each player, the laddering method was used to discuss the main emotional value. The participants were asked to connect and reflect the similarities of these emotions. In the end, the core emotion value was chosen.

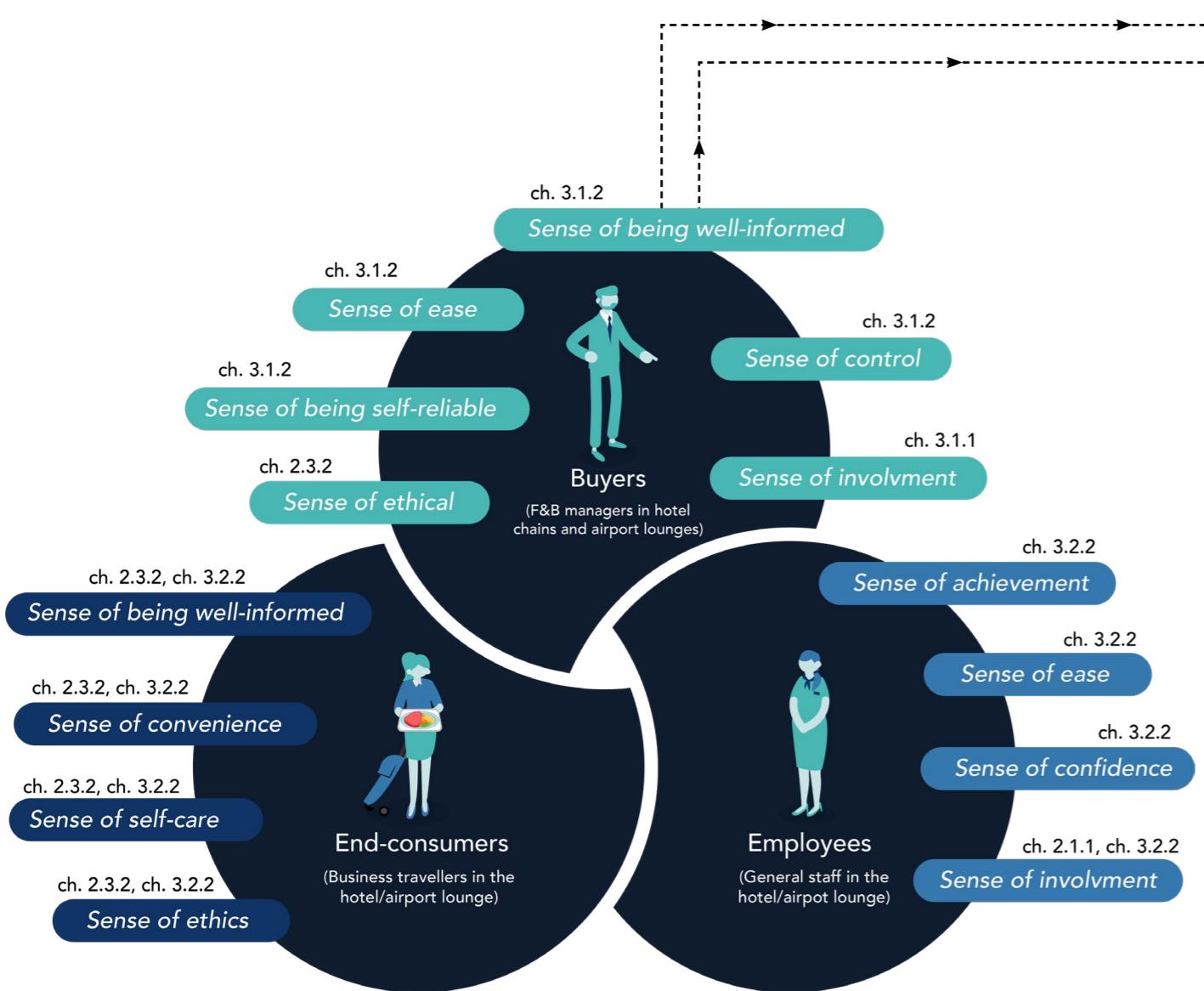


Figure 29: The emotional value gain or desired from buyers and end-users

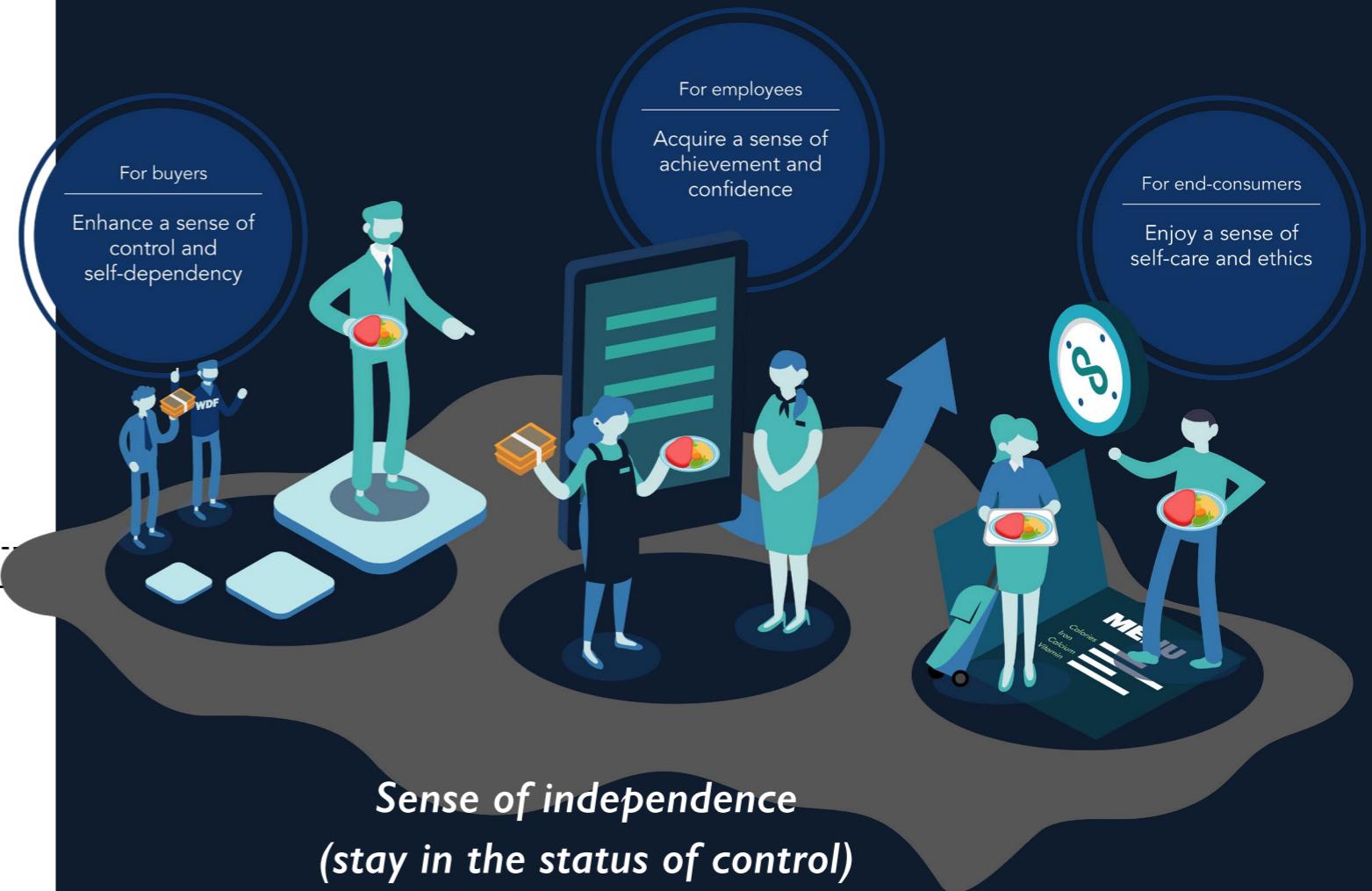


Figure 30: Core emotional value

Core emotional value

Merging the three value propositions, it concluded the shared emotions which can stimulate buyers and end-users to adopt Foodtrick are the sense of independence (Figure 30). **The meaning of independence implies being in the status of control and feel confident.** As a simplified and autonomous system producing 24 hours nutritionally balanced meals, Foodtrick empowers three players to actualise self-dependence. This emotional value echoes with the original purpose of Foodtrick, which is enabling buyers to avoid relying

on unstable quality and varied supplier. **Moreover, incorporating the emotional benefits for the three players in the food service (buyers, employees, end-consumers) into the brand core assist reinforcing the perceived value of Foodtrick.**

4.2.2 Ideal position

This section examines whether the combination of target functional and emotional attributes can be helpful in defining the ideal market position. A comparative overview of where the direct competitors were situated in the target market was formulated. As we had limited access to other consumer research, we relied on the management's view of buyers' perceptions to assess direct competitors' brands (Fripp, 2012). In the end, three determinant attributes were chosen to formulate two perceptual maps for further discussion.

A comparative chart in Appendix I presented a comparison of the competitors in regard to the functional attributes displayed by Foodtrick.

Functional positioning

With two particular functional determinant attributes, the first perceptual map showcases the positioning of Foodtrick in the market compared to that of its direct competitors (Figure 31). The x-axis indicates the ability to offer a large quantity of quality food during extended hours (chapter 2.2.3) Several suppliers, including Gategroup, Sodexo, and Newrest, possess this capability of serving buyers in the airport lounge business. As a result, we introduced other functional attributes to increase differentiation.

Stated in the competitor analysis, lesser flexibility in the Foodtrick system weakens it in the competition. However, it allows Foodtrick to perceive the system rigidity as stable and reliable. Hence,

Foodtrick should adopt a position as a meal generation flow provider, supplying a single-form process that can be transformed or attached in buyers' kitchens immediately. Currently, most of the rival companies are outfitting varied or fully-customised options to offer food. It gives Foodtrick the opportunity to take its less-variable but steady flow as its unique selling point.

Emotional positioning

In the first perceptual map, we can see Gategroup, one of the leading airport lounge suppliers, stands in a similar position to Foodtrick. Gategroup supplies a standardised process using fresh food to airlines and lounges. Since Foodtrick uses frozen food it would be difficult to compete with this rival. To differentiate, a defined emotional value has been introduced into the second map (Figure 32). The Z-axis indicates whether the buyers can sense independence after collaborating with suppliers. Most rival suppliers will take full control of buyers' kitchens and services, including offering staff, which makes buyers lose their control and ownership of the food service process. Hence, the emotional driver for allowing buyers to feel independence and confidence helps Foodtrick to improve its competitive strength. It also highlights its role as a pioneer and challenger in the target market.

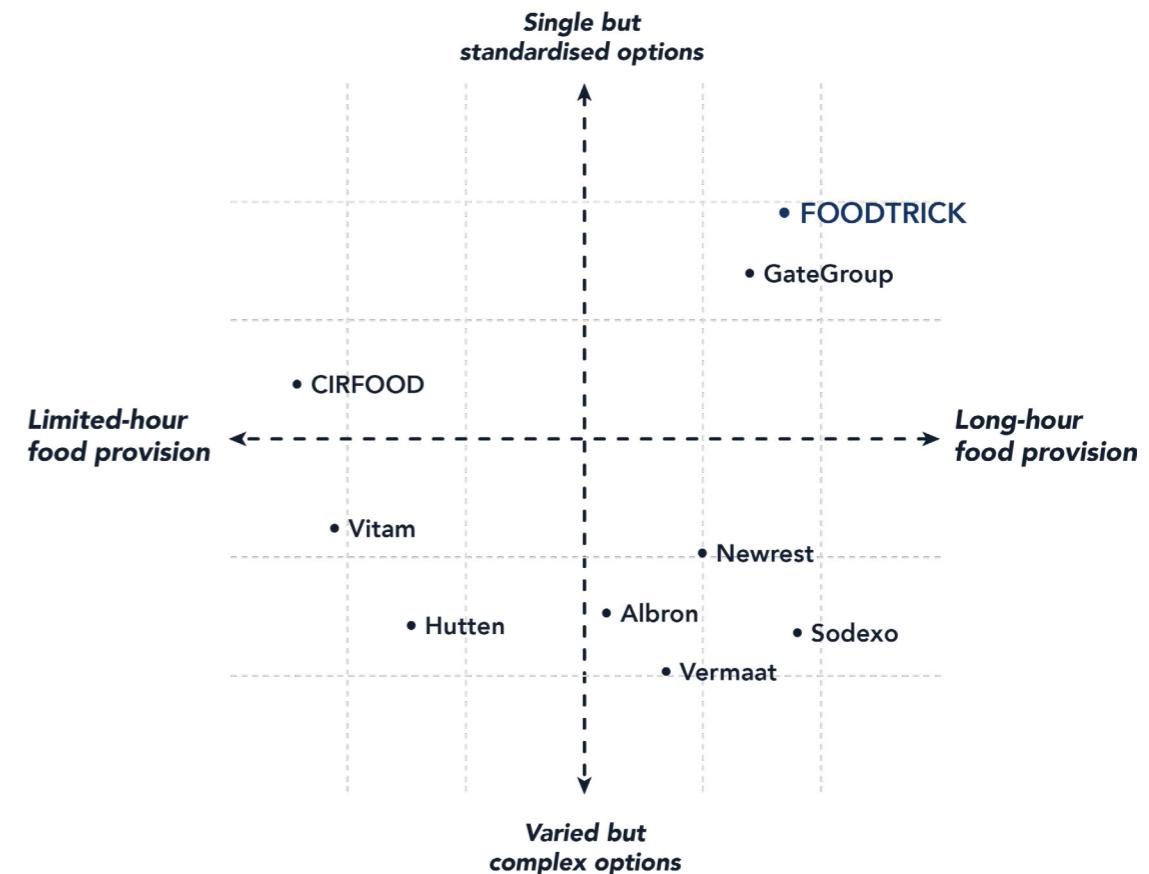


Figure 31: The function positioning

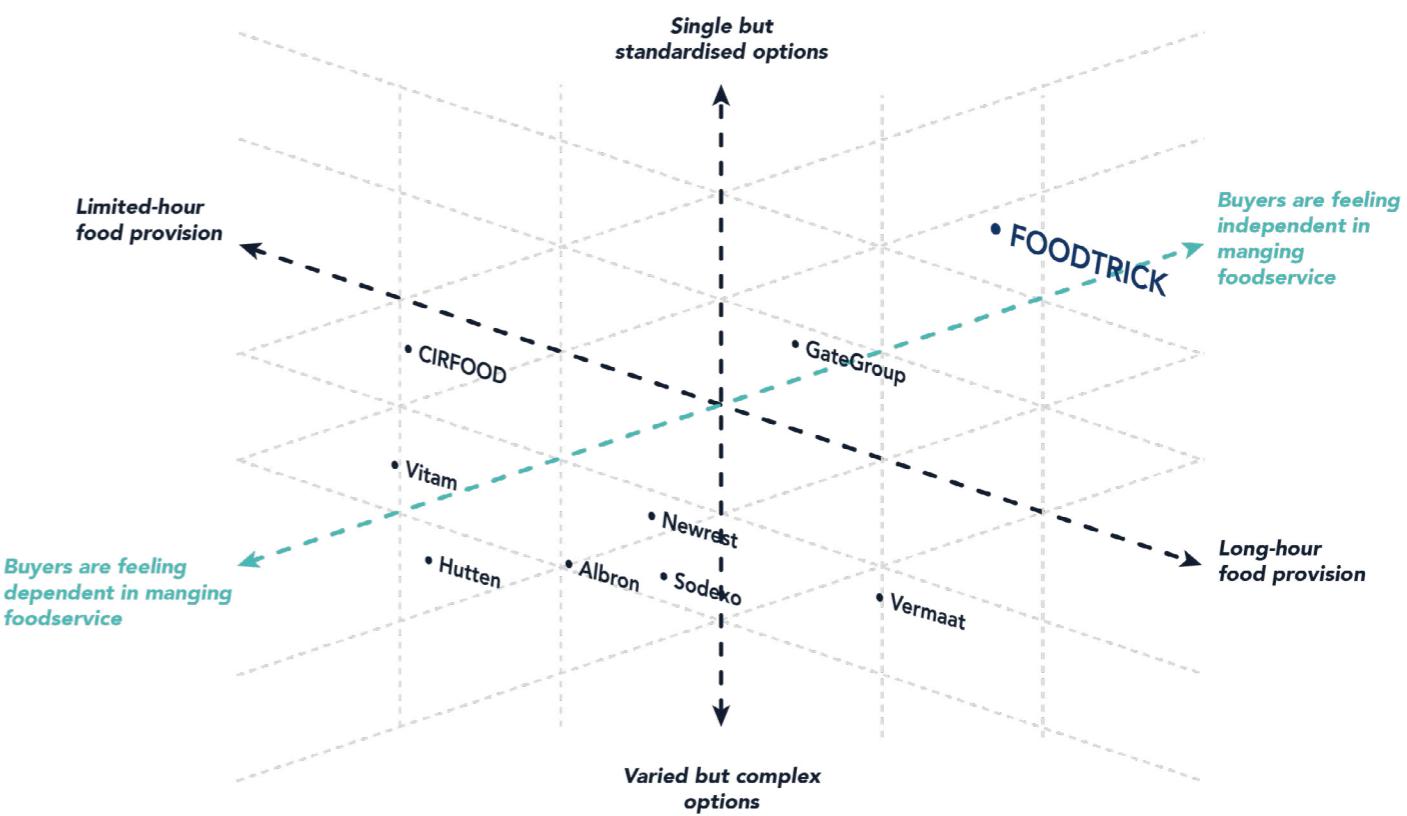


Figure 32: The emotional positioning

4.2.3 Brand core

This section shows how efforts were made to help buyers relate to the Foodtrick brand. Based on the redefined value proposition, the core of the Foodtrick brand was formulated. This formulation consisted

of a positioning statement, a vision and a mission which are reproduced below. How to develop a voice and personality for the Foodtrick brand was also discussed.

Positioning statement

“Foodtrick, a one-way meal preparation journey to navigate owners towards independent food services. We believe the complex variable is not desired, but a standardised process serving balanced meals 24/7. We empower owners, staff and guests to become more confident and carefree when facing food. “

Foodtrick, a one-way meal preparation journey

We regard the single process of the Foodtrick system as a one-direction meal preparation journey which distinguishes it from competitors. It should connect well to the target market (i.e. hotel chains and airport lounges) which has an image related to tourism.

Navigate owners towards independent food services.

Based on the strategic direction outlined above, we place emphasis on the buyers as owners who aspire to enhance control over their food service system. **Moreover, continuing with the journey analogy, Foodtrick can navigate and support buyers towards serving food independently.**

We believe the complex variable is not desired, but a standardised process serving balanced meals 24/7

This defines the **purpose and belief of the Foodtrick brand**, which aims to dispense with all complexity. The ability to offer balanced meals 24/7 meets the needs of target markets and end-consumers.

We empower owners, staff and guests to become more confident and carefree when facing food.

Including not just buyers but also end-users in our statement declares the distinctiveness of the brand and showcases the focus on end-users.

Vision

“By using advanced freshness and flavour, frozen meals, we will navigate the complicated and dependent food service industry. “

The brand vision expresses the aspirations of Foodtrick as a company which uses superior frozen meals.

Mission

“One simple process + one balanced meal at all time + one consistent support = Your one way to serve quality food”

The brand mission is the description of how Foodtrick can assist buyers to increase their control over the food service.

Brand personality

The personality of the brand decides the driving motivation of how the supplier should interact or react to their buyers (Mark et al., 2011). It also triggers the emotional association of buyers towards the brand. Among the discussion with the consultancy team, the Hero and Ruler archetypes were pointed out. **Hero archetype represents the supplier characteristics of supporting and challenging buyers to get stronger.** On the other hand, the motivation of Ruler archetype is high stability and standardisation. **In the end, the Hero archetype stands out since its supportive qualities resonate with the vision and mission (Figure 33).**



Figure 33: Hero archetype

4.3 BRAND PRINCIPLES

Brand principles are the pledges target buyers will experience during the future interaction with the brand.

After establishing the positioning, it is also critical to consistently repeat the message to heighten the brand perception in the buyers' mind. The four brand principles were crafted for Foodtrick to exhibit the value attributes (see Figure 34).

Accessible nutrition

"Foodtrick manages nutrition for end-consumers' health and helps buyers assess profits and waste reduction easily."

The word "nutrition" is used as an analogy to represent the healthy status of the end-consumer and service condition of buyers. Foodtrick ensures quality control, assisting buyers in managing nutritional values of meals, profit performance and food wastage. This principle underpins end-consumer trends and distinct functional benefits, such as providing highly nutritious meals and reducing waste.

Knowledge transparency

"Foodtrick educates buyers about frozen food to reassure them and shares information with guests to improve their experience"

Being knowledgeable to share meal information and fresh-frozen technique is a critical approach to erase buyers' and end-consumers' potential doubts on food quality and unfamiliar technology. It also helps increase end-consumers'

confidence and improve their experiences of consuming meals in buyers' businesses.

Consistent involvement

"Foodtrick involves and supports buyers and employees consistently in the purchasing process so that they can adopt the system more smoothly."

Before buyers start cruising independently, Foodtrick will first assist them to set the sail.

Foodtrick shall involve buyers and their employees constantly in the purchasing process to showcase supports and collaborative opportunity, which make adoption smoother. This principle reflects one of the strategic directions which states the importance of involving and supporting buyers in a B2B scenario.

Easy achievable

"Foodtrick provides clear planning and instructions for buyers and employees to operate the service self-dependently."

Further support to use the Foodtrick system independently will be given to buyers. **Foodtrick will gradually minimize its role but will remain in the background maintaining the security of the business relationship.**

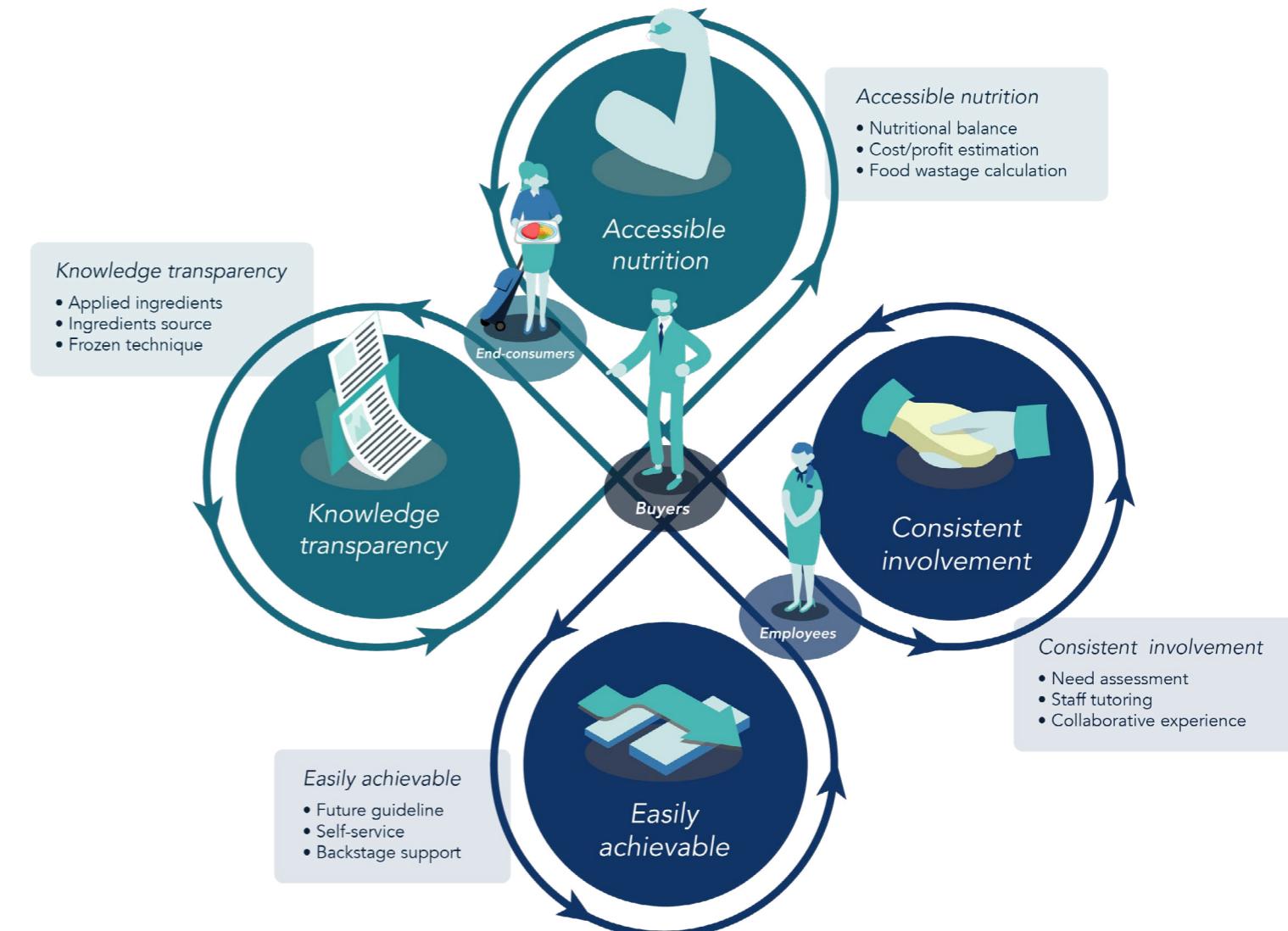


Figure 34: The overall approach of the thesis

4.4 DESIGN VISION

The design vision reflects on the original purpose of the project and also considers the findings from the previous research and strategic directions.

Vision statement

“Develop the enablement to communicate the re-shaped values for a launch of the Foodtrick brand in the near future”

The term enablement implies the provisioning of the information to either assist the suppliers to convey the values or support buyers to fulfil the purchase (Adamson, 2018). Since this project intends to expand the business of Foodtrick by properly conveying reshaped brand values, we attempt to communicate using the following:



Visual identity

During the project, the request for a new brand name and image emerged. According to the re-established positioning, **we aimed to use metaphor to create a visual identity for Foodtrick.**



Communication guideline

As a brand nears its launch, **it is necessary to have a set of clear communication guidelines for consistent messaging of values towards future buyers in the buying process.** The guidelines should allow the internal team to express brand principles and treat buyers in the same procedure (Leek & Christodoulides, 2012).



Communication touchpoint

In terms of external communication, a touchpoint exhibiting the benefits of the brand and the future purchasing experience is helpful to reach potential buyers. Moreover, it **motivates buyers to proceed with further purchasing discussions.**

Figure 35: Three design enablements

CONCLUSION

This chapter defines the strategic directions by interpreting insights through the framework. The directions allow us to achieve effective positioning then translated into brand principles and design vision.

Based on the strategic planning and new positioning, two statements concluded which will influence brand communication:

The sense of independence in target buyers should be emphasised when purchasing or interacting with Foodtrick.

The distinctiveness of Foodtrick process is the potential to make buyers enhancing independence in managing the food service. **The feeling of Independence indicates buyers can stay in the status of control and will not be overwhelmed by the complicated choices.** This aspect needs to be amplified in not just the Foodtrick process itself but also the services provided.

Instead of promoting as a food service system, Foodtrick should market itself as a single meal generation process to stand out in the competition.

We advocate that advertising Foodtrick as a single cooking process rather than a service system. **The difference is that promoting as a process can be perceived as adaptable or attachable, which will not disrupt buyers' original system.** In this case, the simplicity of the process and the easiness of implementation compared to the old system need to be expressed.

05

BRAND EXECUTION

This chapter is the manifestation of the design vision, with the following creations: visual identity, communication journey and landing page. The designs reflect the brand core and principles, while includes suggestions on future implementation



5.1 VISUAL IDENTITY

The new visual identity is created to facilitate the recognition for future audiences.

5.1.1 Name and logo

The consultancy team requested to have a new name and logo for brand launching in the near future. The name and logo should reflect the newly formulated brand positioning to create association. We aim to apply a metaphor to establish the brand image. Figure 36 presents the new visual identity. In the rest of the report, the new name "SUPPER" will be used to represent the Foodtrick concept.

SUPPER

←.....
SUPPER was selected as the new name to enable audiences to recognise that the brand is associated with food. **The utilisation of different colours in the name logo illustrates how meanings and pronunciation are combined to imply a super process and high-quality meals.**



.....→
A compass was chosen as the main metaphor to resonate with a one-way journey. It declares SUPPER is the ultimate navigation for food service owners. The use of a spoon and fork highlights the brand's relationship with food.

Figure 36: The new name and logo

5.1.2 Inspiration board

A visual board with real-life inspiration is presented in the illustration (Figure 37). The objects used in the visual board represent the values provided by the SUPPER brand. With their emphasis on “one”, the titles of each explanation provide cohesive repetition of the new proposition which is a one-way journey. This visual will also be used in further touch-point.



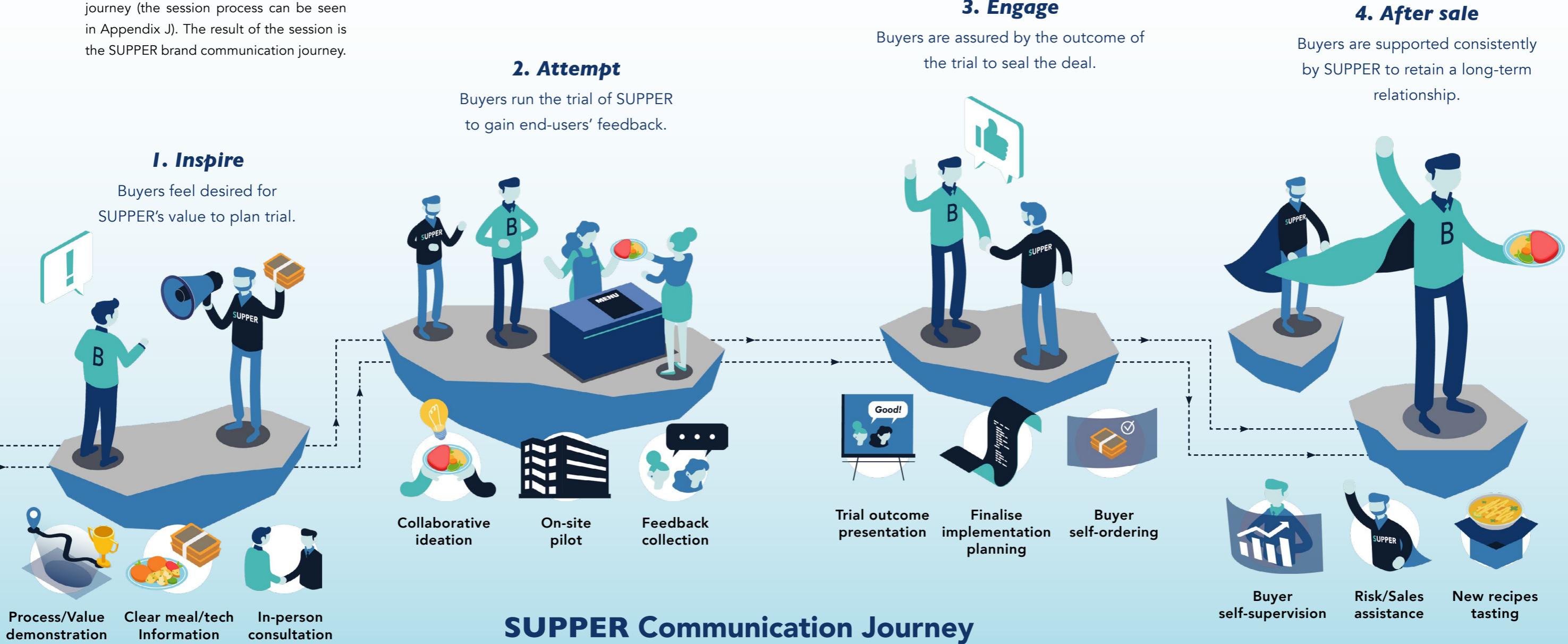
Figure 37: The inspiration board of SUPPER

5.2 COMMUNICATION JOURNEY

Brand communication journey is established to provide directions in developing tangible brand interaction with buyers.

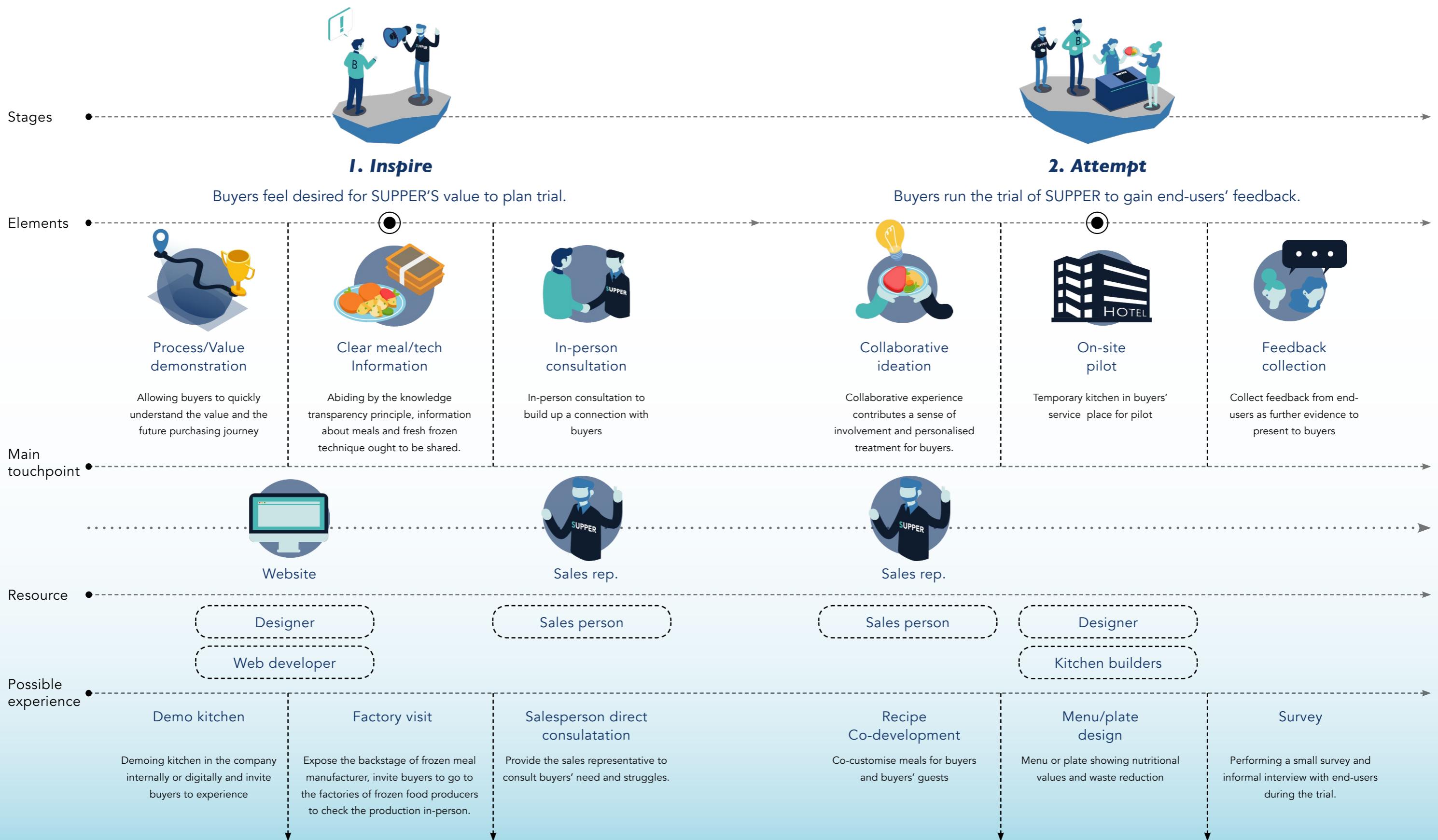
By employing the implementation journey (chapter 3.1.1) as the foundation, a creative session was conducted to obtain the required information and provided experience in the future purchasing journey (the session process can be seen in Appendix J). The result of the session is the SUPPER brand communication journey.

The journey consists of four stages where each includes three main elements, main channel and potential brand experience. The resources to support the main channel or experience are also listed for future implementation (pp. 69 to pp.72). **The end goal of the journey is that the SUPPER team assists buyers to adopt SUPPER and to gradually achieve the buyers' independence in managing their food service.**



The first stage is to embed the motivation of trialling in buyers by giving a full understanding of brand value and concept.

The second stage can be seen as proof of concept for SUPPER. The trial experience is one of the crucial determinants of whether the buyers will realise the purchase.



The third stage is buyers performing purchasing decision and signing the contract. During this phase, SUPPER assists buyers to implement a new system in their business and enable them to feel confident for the next step.



3. Engage

Buyers are assured by the outcome of the trial to seal the deal.



Trial outcome presentation

Presenting the collected financial insight and user responses to convince the buyers

Finalise implementation planning

Construct planning for future implementation.

Buyer self-ordering

Providing customer self-service to encourage buyers to gain a sense of independence.

Buyer self-supervision

Regular self-reporting and waste/profit supervision are operated by buyers themselves

Risk/Sales assistance

Maintain as backstage assistance to fix buyers' problem and suggest improvements

New recipes tasting

Constantly upgrade the offering to sustain the relationship with buyers

Stages

After the purchase stage, the follow-up experience is vital to retain a business relationship. At the same time, avoiding disturbing buyers more than necessary will

be ideal and resonate with the emotional attribute, which is providing buyers with a sense of independence.



4. After sale

Buyers are supported consistently by SUPPER to retain a long-term relationship.

Elements



Main touchpoint



Resource



Possible experience

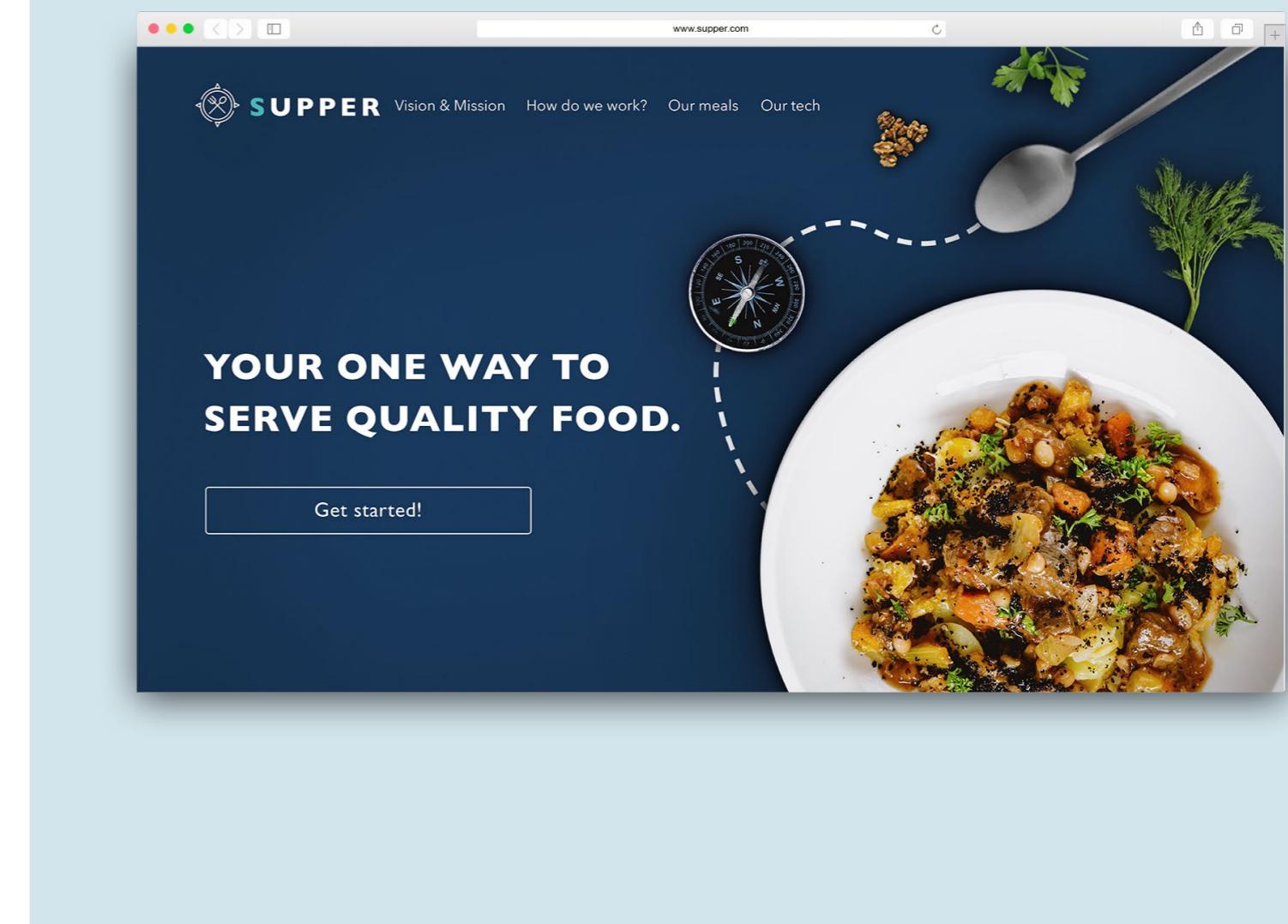


5.3 LANDING PAGE

The purpose of a digital platform is to quickly illustrate the value of SUPPER and trigger action from buyers.

Digital marketing has been identified by the consultancy team as an effective tool to initiate external communication with buyers. Furthermore, as indicated in the communication journey, a web page becomes the key touch-point for buyers to promptly recognise the benefits of SUPPER. It is also a portal to lead buyers from virtual interaction to an in-person consultation. Hence, the framework and visuals of the landing page are created.

Based on the communication journey, the goals of each section on the landing page are established. Moreover, the scenario of how buyers will be interacting with the web page is formulated in order to further visualize the content. The visualisation is presented from page 74 to page 78. (For the details, check <https://www.supperjourney.com/>)



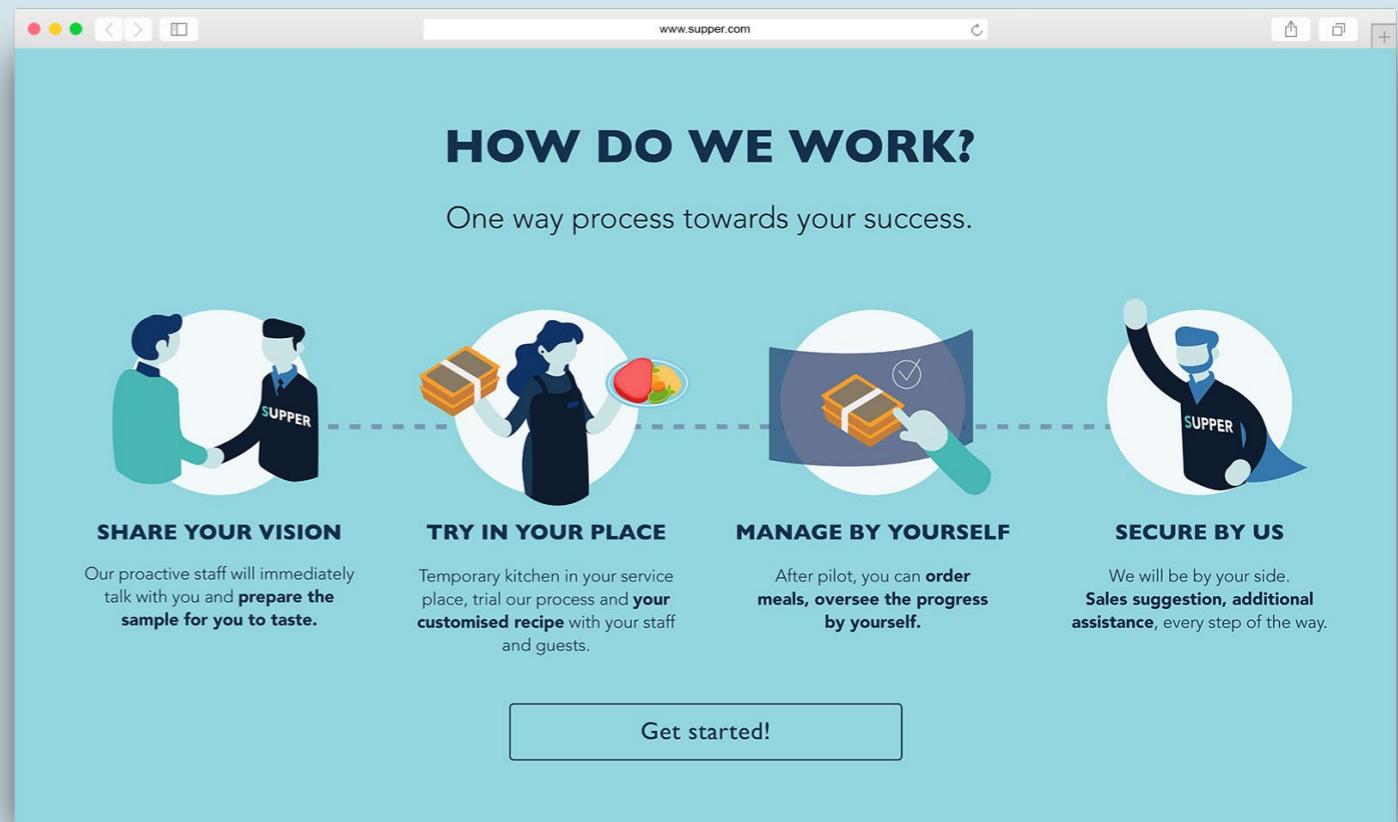
Initiate attention

When being led to, or directly visiting the landing page, buyer's attention will be immediately caught by the simple catchphrase "Your one way to serve quality food." and the link to a call for action. The symbol from the inspiration board, i.e. the compass, is used to enhance the connection that SUPPER as the one leading process.



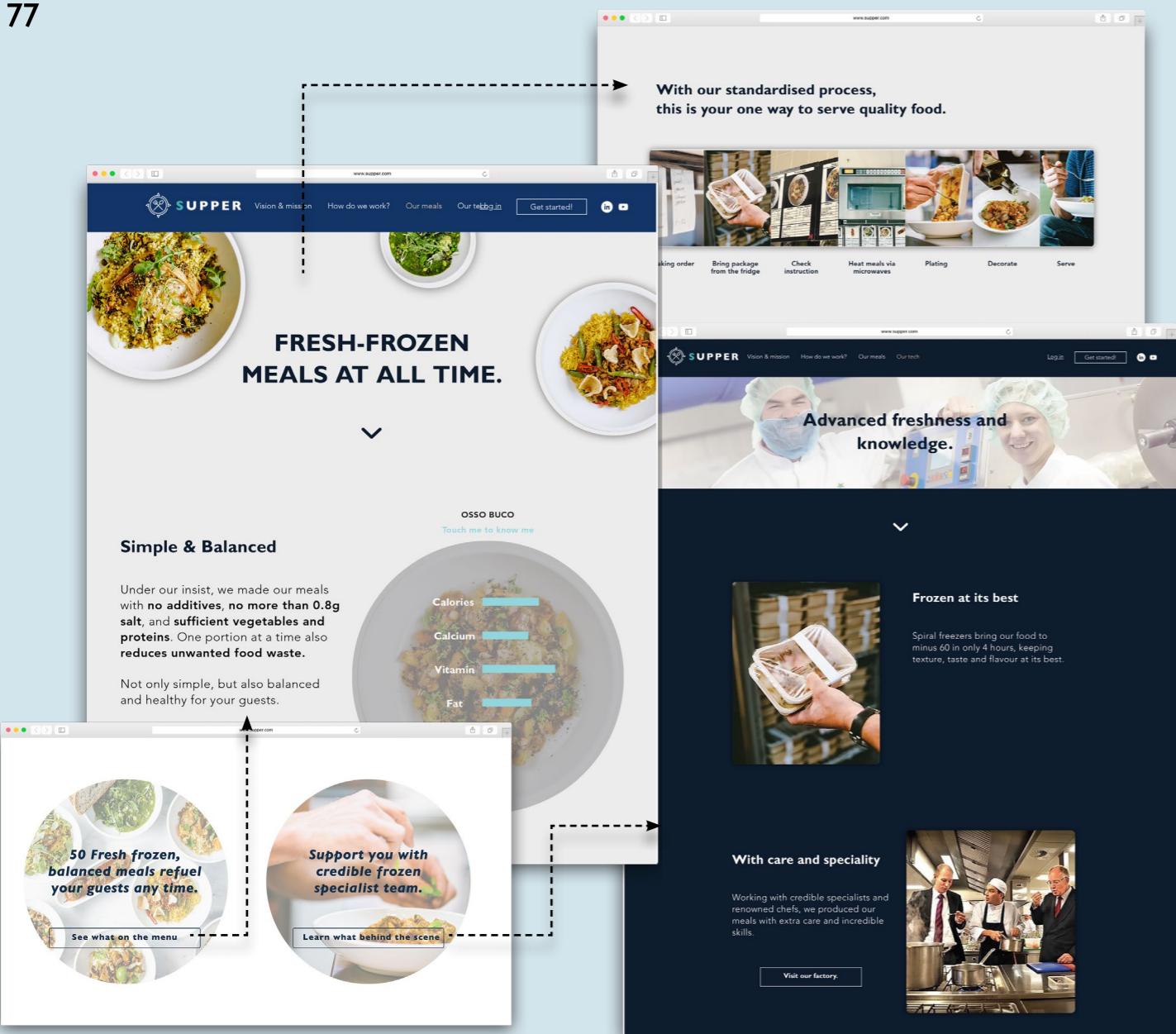
Exhibit brand mission and value

Right beneath the first section, buyers will see the mission statement of the SUPPER brand. An animation is created for buyers to compare the old cooking process and the new SUPPER journey.



Showcase the brand experience

After scrolling down, **buyers will be introduced to the way of working in SUPPER brand, consisting of four phases: conducting an in-person consultation with buyers, performing a trial in buyers' food service place, allowing buyers to order and supervise themselves, and securing buyers' future progress and sales.** Buyers can further capture the full picture of brand experiences they will encounter with SUPPER.

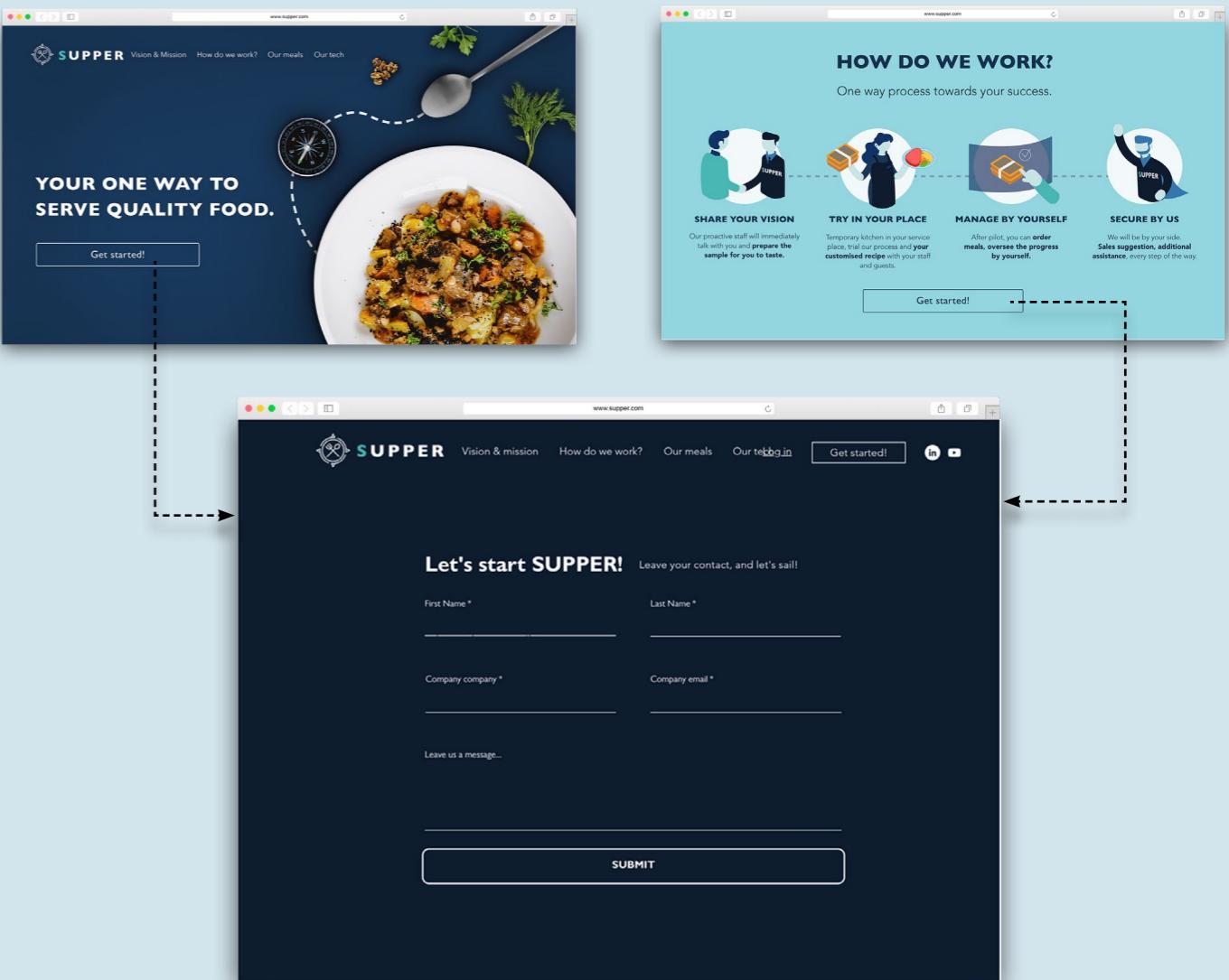


Transparent information of meals and tech

Next, buyers will find the two links to information about SUPPER meals and fresh-frozen technique. These links will also show on the menu bar in the first section.

In the "Our meals" page, buyers will obtain sufficient information on the meals in an interactive way. Buyers can touch the image of any meal to show the nutritional value and food waste reduction. On the rest of the page, buyers will find the detailed meal regeneration process so they will understand the ease of the SUPPER process. The opportunity for buyers to customise meal also shows at the end of the page.

In the "Our tech" page, details of fresh-frozen technology will be shown. This page also shows the brand experience, where buyers are invited to visit the factory.



Call to action

After acquiring all the information and being intrigued by the value of the SUPPER journey, buyers will click on the "Get started" button to leave their contact information. The SUPPER team will contact the buyer in order to arrange an in-person meeting as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION

The chapter demonstrates the development of brand executions to communicate a new positioning. Three executions reflect on the intentional results of the theoretical framework, which is reducing the perceived risk and increase the perceived-value.

Two conclusions were drawn from this chapter, concerning the brand communication strategy of SUPPER:

The equal significance of digital and personal marketing

For SUPPER, the virtual and tangible mediums are equivalently significant for value conveyance and building a business relationship. Digital touchpoint can be perceived as the vehicle to easily load and display necessary information. The personal channel, such as sales representatives, is required to understand prospects' pain and requirement in depth.

Trial experience remains a crucial moment of truth

Even though we chose to develop a digital platform as initial enablement to execute brand communication, the importance of trial experience remains. **The unique selling point of SUPPER is not just about the nutritionally balanced meals, but more specifically the simplicity of the process and ease of implementation.** These stand-out benefits can be showcased in the demo kitchen. However, the benefits will be better showcased in the buyers' own food service environment.

06

EVALUATION & REFLECTION

In this chapter, we first present the evaluations of the brand communication strategy. The reshaped positioning and three executions are implemented internally to obtain feedback. Afterwards, we discuss the limitations of the project and provide recommendations to the SUPPER company. In the end, a personal reflection on the project is given.



6.1 EVALUATION

Further validation is necessary to assess whether the outcome of the project meets with the intended result and corporate direction.

Since brand development of SUPPER is still in the early stage, the consultancy team is reluctant to test the new brand concept externally. Thus, concept validation and evaluation were conducted internally.

Process

Two approaches were used in the validation of reshaped positioning and three execution (Figure 38). **First, a meeting was arranged with internal team members to present the outcomes of the project.**

The development of the brand core and brand principles was introduced first to check for consistency with the ideals of the corporation. Then, the visual identity and communication journey were presented. **The second approach was to further digitalise the framework of the landing page via an online platform (<https://www.supperjourney.com/>).** The link to the web page was later sent to the internal team for them to review it. Three aspects were considered in the evaluation questions:

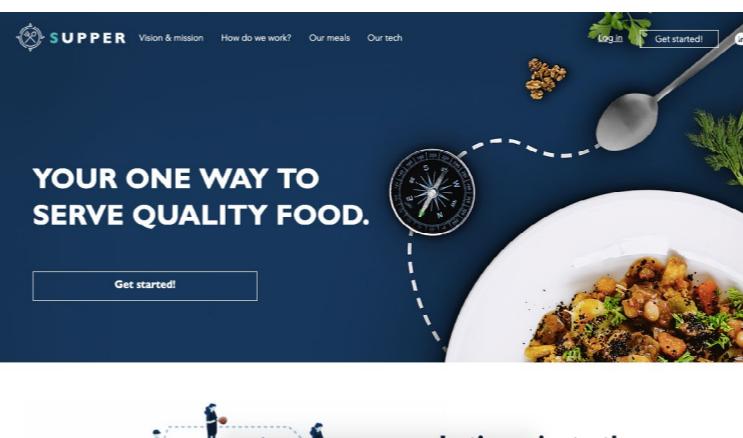
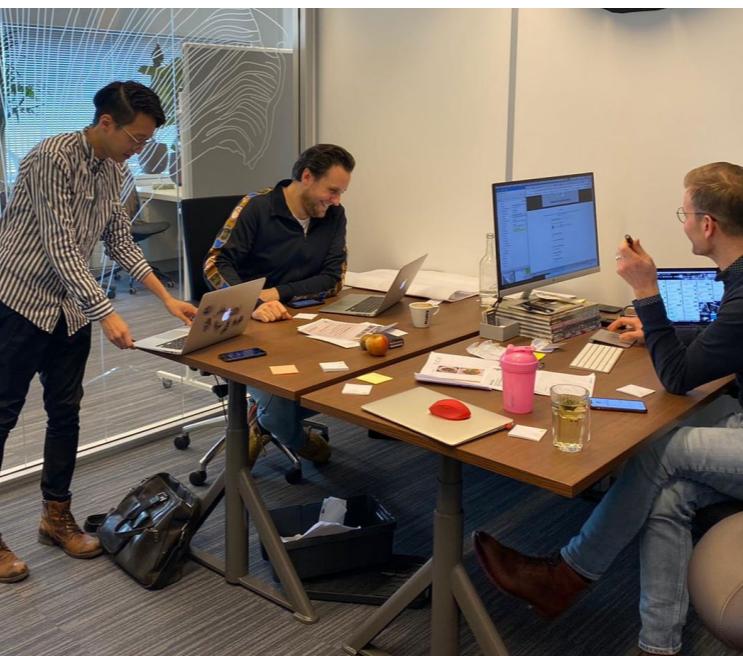
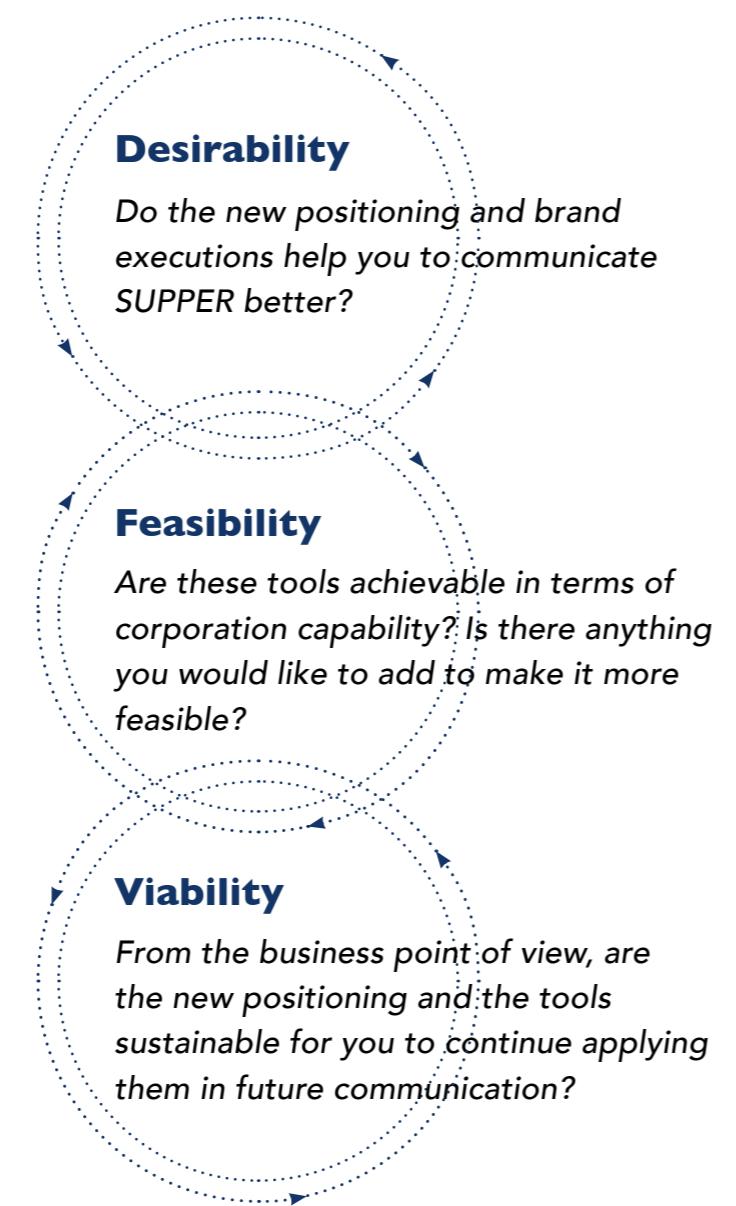


Figure 38: Implementation - meeting and website

Evaluation

According to the internal evaluation, overall positive feedback was received with some revision advice.

Evaluation on reshaped positioning

The intention of reshaping the positioning of SUPPER is to increase the perceived value of using the frozen ready meal concept in the target business market. The development of re-positioning consists of incorporating functional and emotional values, segmenting potential markets, and clarifying the ideal tone of voice. In the end, the new positioning was translated into brand core and principles (chapter 4, sections 3 and 4).

In terms of potential market segmentation and targeting, the internal team appreciated the application of the workshop to promptly explore the market.

The potential and suitability of the hotel chain and airport lounge market are also approved by the founder of SUPPER. Nonetheless, deeper research on target buyers is still suggested in the recommendation section (chapter 6.2).

The idea of marketing the SUPPER concept as a one-way meal serving journey was regarded positively by the internal team members. The founder of SUPPER asserts that **most high-level managers are more focused on ease of implementation and profit than on food quality and multiple options.** Thus, reinforcing the simplicity of the SUPPER process can persuade buyers to engage. Portraying SUPPER as providing navigation and guidance for buyers also resonates with the defined brand characteristic as hero archetype. On the other hand, the use of a sense of independence as the

main emotional value had conflicting feedback. Emphasizing the competitive benefit of helping buyers feel a sense of ownership was encouraged by the internal team. **However, the term "a sense of independence" may cause audience confusion, which needs more effort to explain.**

Evaluation on visual identity

The internal team members appreciated the cohesiveness between the visual identity and reshaped positioning. During the later stages of this project, a visual practitioner was recruited by the company to finalise the brand image. The visual practitioner agreed on the application of different visual objects (chapter 5.1) to be effective and inspiring for brand recognition. **Furthermore, SUPPER has been chosen as the official brand name for an imminent launch.**

Evaluation of the communication journey

The formulation of the communication journey served as an informational model for the internal team to develop further communication. Feedback on the communication journey was mainly positive. **The communication journey was described as clear and concise by the team members.** One of the founders claimed the benefits of the journey were not just informing the internal partners about future directions in communication but that **it could also be used in briefing future buyers.**

Nonetheless, several suggestions were given for revision. For instance, **the first stage of the journey was found to lack activities to awaken interest in SUPPER. More information sharing, marketing and one-way communication would be**

needed to enhance this stage.

Evaluation of the landing page

The touch-point design was built to present the brand core values and initiate a connection with buyers. The design of the web page received praise. The positive feedback was mainly focused on the animation and structure. **The internal team declared that the animation offered an easy to understand the comparison between old and new processes.** The visual and linguistic emphasis on the easiness of the SUPPER process was also positively noticed. Still, several revisions on the web page were suggested. **For instance, visual representations of the expected gain in profit were not included. Such information could help to convince buyers.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, basing our evaluation on three aspects, the outcomes were acknowledged internally in a positive manner. Nevertheless, there were recommendations for externally validating solutions and continually elaborating concepts. These suggestions are listed in the recommendation section (see chapter 6.2)

6.2 LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning the project outcome and future brand direction, limitations and recommendations were discussed and provided.

Limitations

Apart from the initial constraints mention in chapter 0.2, as the development and structure of the emerging brand are still in infancy, limitations of results and analysis are noted:

Restraints on participants

Due to the fact that the investigation was aimed towards the B2B market, it was difficult to approach potential buyers. This led to a limited sample and data. In addition, this project regarded food service practitioners as experts to utilise their opinion. **Personal beliefs of the interviewee and interpretations by the researcher and consultancy team might have also caused bias.**

Restraints on scope and resources

The resources and methods were limited owing to the reservations and capacity of the corporation capability and reservation, resulting in the narrowing of the project's scope. **Unclear investment and time constraints restricted the project from performing future planning in more depth.**

Recommendations

Recommendations were proposed in terms of future brand studies and the concept improvement of SUPPER.

External validation

The internal stakeholders have validated the communication design and are convinced that the communication strategy contributes significant benefits to kick-off the brand; however, validation from external parties is still required.

Achieving effective marketing and branding is a cost-consuming activity. A deeper evaluation and validation should be cautiously executed before increasing investment.

Target groups require further investigated

This project applied Simkin's theory to define market segments (chapter 2.2.2). Nonetheless, even though we consolidated knowledge from cross-functional personnel to select potential prospects, our ideal buyer groups were still theoretical. **We recommend that after the corporation acquires more resources, further quantitative or qualitative assessment needs to be performed to ascertain the size and characteristics of ideal buyers.**

Sustainability improvement of packaging

As indicated in the industry trend analysis (chapter 2.3.2), the pursuit of sustainability in either B2C and B2B market remains, so that there is an increasing requirement for reusable and recyclable products. The use of singular portion meal packages in SUPPER will cause more waste from packaging. Hence, **to convey the proper value of SUPPER and convince future buyers, the company needs to seek advanced solutions in improving the sustainability of packaging.**

6.3 REFLECTION

This section delivers the reflection on the project and personal experience.

Contributions

This thesis aims to establish an initial strategy for SUPPER to kick-off its brand with three missions (1) Define the potential markets (2) Formulate the value proposition (3) Provide marketing execution to convey the value. This thesis provides some contributions.

First, while considering the company's ideals and abilities, the potential markets of SUPPER, which are hotel chains and airport lounges, are identified in a relatively simple approach.

Second, by consolidating the functional and emotional attribute of the brand, the value proposition is strengthened. The new positioning helps to embark the design elements in future branding, while the final execution enables the SUPPER team to communicate its value more positively.

Third, based on the comprehensive work of literature, target markets, the behaviour of buyers and end-users, and of course, the food service system itself, this thesis furnishes SUPPER corporation with insights into the internal challenges and the current market climate for future business expansion.

Implications

Implications towards the future undertakings of SUPPER became apparent during the project. One of those is the unwillingness of Hotel C to publicly participate in the development of this project. Even though being satisfied with the benefits of the catering system, Hotel C keeps concealing the truth of selling frozen ready meals. **It implies that business owners and end-consumers still have a strong negative bias when it comes to using frozen ready meals in food services.** It means that the offering of SUPPER, including not just products but also service, needs to be powerful enough to surpass the negative opinions associated with it. SUPPER will need to conduct more extensive research into buyers before raising the investment.

Since the system and product face multiple constraints, **SUPPER should focus on enhancing the added experience and service provided to the buyers and end-users.** As the outcome of this project suggests, assisting future buyers to achieve the goal of serving food effortlessly and independently should become the main focus of SUPPER in the near future. Moreover, **as the doubts in frozen ready meals are high, being more transparent and more sustainable can assist SUPPER in earning the heart of buyers.**

Personal reflection

Food has always been my passion, and this has inspired me to find a food-related project for my graduation. The insights I gained and the challenges I faced made this a truly unforgettable experience.

This project proceeded as a wild expedition to me for over six months. Working in a very dynamic environment such as a start-up means that the situation changes almost every day, often resulting in frequent pivots in direction and scope. My personal challenges, such as lack of structure and tendency to over complicate things have influenced me while defining to define the problem and cope with ambiguity and fuzziness. Even though my supervisors gave me a lot of flexibility my lack of confidence and my anxiety often affected me in decision making and time management.

Nonetheless, this project has helped me to explore myself and learn some valuable insights into the proceedings of design projects, such as stakeholder management. Moreover, it provided me with an opportunity to build up relationships with the people who share my passion for food. The support and valuable feedback from the corporation make me confident in the value of my contributions. The knowledge and experience I have obtained during this project will benefit me in pursuing my future career in the food industry.

I am grateful and ready to take the next step.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Reaching the end of this journey, I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who elevated me when I was struggling at the bottom of the valley.

First, I would like to thank my supervisory team, Rick Schifferstein and Pinar Cankurtaran for supporting me and giving me a lot of flexibility. Their suggestions and criticisms guided me on the right path. Next, I would like to thank Louis and Arne from WeDesignFood for providing me with this opportunity, encouraging me to proceed further, and inspiring me with their enthusiasm for food. Also, I would like to give my gratitude to the team members, Leendert and Loe, who provided a lot of ideas and recommendations. For all of the participants in this project, I want to show my appreciation for your time and engagement.

To all of my friends and family, wherever you are, for accompanying and assisting me through this project. To Gu, Justine, Winnie, Yan, Iris, Tanvi, Manon, Jesal, Fon, and Emila, for their valuable advice and incentive. To Li-Chi, Audrey, and Ji, for their mental support and encouragement. Especially to my family, for their selfless care which could never be replaceable.

Finally, to my love, Mattijs, for your consistent support and company throughout this journey. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to you. Thank you for being here with me.



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