'Knock, knock, who’s there?’

- A B2B* intervention that questions the existing way of portraying material knowledge

Ida Aldevinge
Master of Fine Arts
Design, Master programme 120hp
School of Design, Linnaeus University, 2017

Tutors: Mahmoud Keshavarz, Fredrik Sandberg and Ola Ståhl
Examiner: Mathilda Tham
Opponent: George Green
19.05.17
Acknowledgments

I would like to start of with sending all my gratitude to my beloved husband, Anton Aldevinge, who have supported me in all my studies and made this thesis and its content possible. I would also like to send many warm thanks and appreciation to my fellow students Sanni Vouri and Sofia Gomes, for a tremendous support and engagement.

Further I would like to thank Norcospectra, for inviting me to work and get to know the issues and possibilities for design in B2B and more specifically in the context of retail interior production and sales, a relevant platform for concisions material knowledge.

Finally I would also like so send my thanks to all the participants and people involved in the making of this project, from small-scale studies and interviews to LAB experiments. Without you this thesis would not have been possible.

Lots of thanks and appreciation, Ida
Abstract

This thesis is investigating in how current buying and purchasing decisions within retail interior are made and how they possibly could be changed or affected with sensory engagement, to promote social sustainability by promoting individual knowledge and sense making in B2B (business to business) context.

The background for this thesis sprung from many sources but is mainly based on the last couple of decades’ societal changes in both digital developments, contributing to more separated consumer behaviour but also in the economical shift from a production area to a consumption age. Which both have fostered a, social and common confidence in the visual sense.

Purchasers are today in 2017, are despite last year’s recent sustainability focus within, b2b, still controlled by business factors such as generating profit and increase market share. For this reason and due to a supportive technical development urging on screen information, much of previous instinctive material and production knowledge have gone missing since the faith in the mere visual still dominate the human perception and information intake.

Business reliance on economical components has proven to not support the individual knowledge generation nor engage with entailing learning. In a series of interviews and LAB experiments this thesis explored the concept of lost material knowledge and developed a conceptual design tool for conversation and learning. Reaching out to rookies as well as advanced constructors of retail interior creating a bridge of tactile experiences to discuss and explore in B2B.

By creating a common tool, effacing the focus on the visual, this thesis argues for the importance of bringing back the information and richness of tactile engagement in order to support and foster the individual learning process and break the chain of lost knowledge.

A hypothesis that this essay is arguing for is that a reintroduction of importance at the individual level can make employees, within B2B, feel more involved and important in its development. In the long run, a continuation and development of this type of methods could change and question existing business strategies and promote the possibilities for social soft values to enter the B2B world.

Keywords: sensory engagement, informed choices, B2B, design, intervention
| Acknowledgement                              | p.3 |
| Abstract                                     | p.4 |
| Table of contents                            | p.5 |
| 1. Introduction                              | p.8 |
| 1.1 Project description                      | p.8 |
| 1.2 Personal motivation                      | p.9 |
| 1.3 Aim and purposes                         | p.9 |
| 1.4 Delineation of field of study            | p.10 |
| 1.5 Delineation of the project               | p.10 |
| 1.6 Project question                         |     |
| 2. Theory and research                       | p.12 |
| 2.1 Theoretical and Methodological framework | p.12 |
| 2.1.1 Design - as a mediating act or tool    | p.12 |
| 2.1.2 Sustainability - in knowledge generation | p.13 |
| 2.1.3 Design– a tool for the future          | p.13 |
| 2.1.4 Co-creation - a material practice      | p.14 |
| 2.1.5 Critical Design                        | p.14 |
| 2.2 Methods and implementation               | p.14 |
| 2.2.1 Co-creation implementation             | p.14 |
| 2.2.2 Critical design thinking               | p.15 |
| 2.2.3 Tool design                            | p.15 |
| 2.2.4 Observation                            | p.15 |
| 2.2.5 Interview                              | p.16 |
| 2.2.6 Semi-structured interview              | p.16 |
| 2.2.7 LAB experiment                         | p.16 |
| 2.2.8 Workshop                               | p.17 |
| 2.2.9 Prototyping                            | p.17 |
| 3. Contextual analysis                       | p.19 |
| 3.1 Sensory Experiencing                     | p.19 |
| 3.2 Sensory marketing                        | p.20 |
| 3.3 Consumption behaviour                    | p.21 |
| 3.4 Translation of material experiences      | p.22 |
| 3.5 Meaning driven selection                 | p.22 |
| 4. The design intervention                   | p.24 |
| 4.1 The design process of ‘Black box’ tool and method | p.24 |
| 4.2 ‘Black box’ method                        | p.27 |
| 4.3 Reflection of design process              | p.29 |
| 4.4 Evaluation                               | p.30 |
| 5. Summary and discussion                    | p.32 |
| 5.1 Learning outcomes                        | p.32 |
| 5.2 Potential future for further studies      | p.32 |
| References                                   |     |
| Attachments                                  |     |
How can tactility and multisensory experiences affect purchasers in B2B to make more considered* material choices?

*Considered referring to broaden the visual biases within the process of material selection
1.1 Project description

The main focus of this project was to explore the need for a more tactile and analogue information intake to promote enriched and individual learning in B2B and re-address the importance of sense of touch for the human value-creation process.

The theoretical framework for this study sprung from many diverse subjects, such as; sense and sustainability studies, critical design practices, business marketing theories, social semiotics as well as engagement studies. These frameworks have been drawn upon to study the complexity in the sense of touch for sustainable social experience and knowledge.

After observing B2B processes within retail interior sales with focus on the material selection processes this thesis conducted several different methods such as interviews, LAB experiment, observations, probing and more. The outcome of this thesis became a tactile method, including a box-tool to perform personal tactile interaction with materials and things, to promote the individual learning process and highlight the sensitivity in the sense of touch.

The outcomes of this thesis support the individual feeling and knowledge, in decision making around physical properties with things and materials. The method developed in this work, was produced in a local b2b environment but could be adjusted to work in other fields and situations – where the physical properties are of importance. The method was developed to apply to the individual knowledge process and do not aim to improve sales or but elevates the learning process and strengthen the sense-of-self in B2B by tactile engagement.

1.2 Personal motivation

From a personal background within spatial design and with an interest for behaviour studies within spatial contexts, this study rose from a local issue in a B2B context, where Norcospectra, a producer of retail interior opened up for this thesis and exploration of how material knowledge is communicated in B2B.

As mentioned before, due to contemporary societal progress emerging detached material knowledge, the focus of this thesis has been to probe how a design method could possibly support material tactility and lift the importance of sensory experience for individual knowledge and more considered material choices in B2B. This thesis base its study in the local issue from Norcospectra, and explore, from a design point of view, how a design probe or method could possibly change or perturb existing material knowledge transfer, in B2B context.
1.3 Aims and purposes

The purpose of this thesis is to study if interaction with tactile elements can affect or change purchaser’s visual choices. Further, this study aims to investigate if physical material interaction could support the individual learning process. Lastly the purpose of this study is also to find out if a design tool, could act as a catalysis for more considered material choices.

By bringing in experimental and critical design methods into a B2B context this study will broaden earlier studies within the field. Additionally, this thesis will motivate the relevance of localising the study in this specific area through end-user studies, and conclusively the study will argue for the relevance of tactility experiences for material knowhow and decision-making in relation to consumption behaviour and its importance for sustainability.

By providing a tool - that favours one of the human senses this study aim to explore a new field for information intake, enrich material knowledge in production spheres and facilitate a possibility for sharing information. The result of this work will hopefully also contribute to slow down the speed-blindness in purchasing decisions.

Due to limitations and the restricted framework of this thesis, but also due to a complex topic, all aspects of the issues addressed cannot be included or fully discussed here. More studies of B2b related buying- and consumer behaviour needs further development, in order for this topic to be fully addressed. To be able to talk about the effects of the method developed in this thesis continuous evaluation, re-making and reforming work is needed for the method to stay updated with time and societal values.

1.4 Delineation of field of study

The broad context of this study includes sensory engagement theories, knowledge generation development studies and consumption behaviour theories. The local B2B anchoring also contributed to involve studies from sensory marketing, interviews with an author within the field and semiotic choices of materiality and things. By comparing these relational subjects with contemporary design projects this study aims to explore how a design tool eluding the visual focus could be developed for varying level of knowledge within B2B. To be able to develop a generic tool for the context, studies and LAB experiments where held outside of the above-mentioned Norcospectra, to be able to pull insights not only from the specific context but from other areas as well.
1.5 Delineation of project

The importance of the individual experience for meaning creation, which was commonly found in several sources that laid ground for this thesis, has not been explored in business practices and merely touched upon in theory. Neither has it been explored how these issues could be addressed from a design point of view. Due to the found research gap, this thesis will try to address the individual experience of how material information is acquainted in a design context, using a critical and intervening approach in a B2B context. The method of critical design will further be explained, and discussed in the theoretical framework (2.1) of this thesis.

This thesis has many layers of depth when it comes to sustainability and how humans get acquainted with their surroundings, perceive and understand information. The research brought up in this thesis will problematize the issue of study material meaning in relation to sustainability, for which reason this study will consider material preferences and what tactile interaction can contribute with in terms of awareness and information in material decisions, rather than looking into the specific meanings assigned into materials.

Today there exist several numbers of sustainability methodologies, evaluating the performance of companies, for which reason this thesis will not set out to do so. Rather this thesis will provide a dialog about sustainability in terms of social sustainability and informed choices.

This thesis is going to explore the phenomenon of ‘lost material knowledge’ by intervene into a B2B context with a design tool and in this way question how information is transformed from a producer of goods to a consumer. The thesis aim to explore the value of a multisensory experience, and what affects that can have on the consumers buying decisions.

1.6 Research question

How do tactility and multisensory experiences* affect decisions and how can tactility alert more conceived material choices?

* The term ‘multisensory experience’ or ‘sensory experience’ is used along this work to define an individual’s perception of a thing or object that challenge preconceived mind settings.

"Despite their ethical intentions, ethically minded consumers rarely purchase ethical products" (Carrington et al. 2010, p.139).
2
CHAPTER
2 Theory and research

2.1 Theoretical and methodological framework

The foundation this thesis has acted upon has been research concerning; design as a mediating act, sustainability – in knowledge generation, creating a tool with co-creation and critical design. The more specific interest of; individual experience for value creation, sensory experience for business and how to address the ‘intention-behaviour-gap’ in consumption for continuous sustainable living will be discussed and outlined in the contextual part (3.0). The theoretical framework presented was influential to the methods used and the learning and outcome of this thesis.

2.1.1 Design - as a mediating act or tool

The world today is, to quote Sanders “technologically-driven, materialistically-delivered and fast (Sanders in Scrivener et al. 2000, p.3)”. The role of a designer is changing as fast as its surroundings. Today the future of design is not played out in objects but in relations and processes.

Studies regarding the translation of material experiences, studying what type of information that could spring out of interaction of some kind, have started to emerge. The co-written article of Wilkes et al. from 2015 brings up how design tools could act as interdisciplinary translators of material experiences. Wilkes et al. claim that this type of studies are important for designers in order to better emphasise users, and consequently understand what type of implications this could have for economic and environmental sustainability (2015).

With this, design must work as a continual process, in the journey new tools and methods answering the future needs must be developed. The number of tools must be as many as the future design situations emerging. The landscape of design tools created must be sensitive to the human senses and express a new language, which should have infinite meaning. Where design’s role has to interpret these new languages and explore the implication of this evolution.

Pedgley et al. have another take on this subject, writing about how material experience could act as a foundation for materials and design education. Pedgley et al. emphasises the importance of senses to conveyance meanings. The authors mean that material interaction could be a way to shift the learning culture from bringing in knowledge about materials, to a culture consisting of “generating experiences with materials” (Pedgley et al. 2015, p.613).

Commonly the authors believe in tools that translate subjective experiences, and describe it as the future of design (Wilkes et al. 2016, Pedgley et al. 2015). To be able to identify how to touch stakeholders emotionally is essential, in order to be able to manipulate meaning creation, which have economic and environmental sustainability consequences as well as it affects the quality of life (Wilkes et al. 2016). In this way design can be seen as a mediating tool and not just a profession or result. For this reason methods used in this paper reflects the idea of developing a tool for future learning and not a defined solution.
2.1.2 Sustainability - in knowledge generation

Sustainable development was in 1987 defined, as “development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). Today however it has been widely discussed whether the level of consumption that is carried out is a necessity for prosperity or thereat for the intention of sustainable living. Sustainability approaches are commonly found in all businesses, but can answer differently to sustainability depending on their role, aims, and nature of business (Tukker et al., 2008). Due to sustainability’s embedded nature in business it is still a complicated issue debating how and how much business can contribute to sustainability and through what means (Tukker et al., 2008). As there already exist several numbers of sustainability methodologies evaluating the performance, recourse use and environmental emissions from businesses, this thesis will not set out and do so. Rather this thesis will turn away from traditional takes on sustainability by researching in social sustainability and informed choices in B2B.

Carrington et al. write that the subject of consumption withhold a complexity, as there exist a clear gap between how stakeholders think, and how they actually act, which they describe as a ‘intention-behaviour gap’ (Carrington et al. 2010). Carrington et al. (2010) mean that it is of importance to understand this extension in order to tackle the issue of consumption. Hultman et al. also recognizes this transformative era, phrasing “radically new ways forward to truly change Western unsustainable societies will also need conceptualizations that bring present contexts and understandings into question, and learn from experiences (however small-scale) that challenge dominant practices” (Hultman et al. 2016, p.6). The stance towards sustainability will herein be shown by investigating in ‘how’ things are consumed and not by accounting ‘how much’ (Gardner et al. in Worldwatch Institute, 2004, p.4).

By focusing on the knowledge created and how to act more thought-out, the sustainability approaches in this research will emphasis sustainability in knowledge generation, through sensory and tactile engagement.

2.1.3 Design– a tool for the future

Design have long served as a creative agent, and been described in consensus with creativity. A common used definition of creativity is that it is a process by which “an agent uses its ability to generate ideas, solutions or products that are novel and valuable” (Sarkar & Chakrabarti, 2011 in Vasantha et al. 2013, p.23). Products, processes, tools, organization, environment and people where designing takes place, all have significant impact on the concept generation process. According to Vasantha et al. design tools serve the purpose of capturing designers’ thoughts thro facilitating the “sharing and reuse” (2013, p.21) of design outcomes and the most important purpose of design tools is that they support the externalization process of design (Vasantha et al., 2013). This thinking around design as a tool and not a static solution has shaped this thesis in the making.
2.1.4 Co-creation - a material practice

Co-design has the last 10 years emerged in the design research landscape as an evolution of the user-centred design field and participatory design. Co-design has contributed to change the traditional concept of user-centred design that addressed users or participatory design whereby users are invited in some parts of the design process, to co-design and create with actors. This thinking has turned around the user into a co-creator and has affected the role of designer into new domains of collective creativity (Sander and Stappers, 2008). The birth of co-creation has truly shook how the role of a designer is looked upon. From having design as a sole profession to enable design for trained as well as inexperienced stakeholders creates unlimited resources of experience and expertise. Co-creating thinking have almost made a designers role similar to a farmer. The designer has to have the bigger mind to see the potential in all ‘harvest’ existing in different fields both close to the core but also far away from the studied mean. Co-creating theories have been most present in this work, collecting experiences and thoughts from different perspectives, areas and stakeholders and in seeing their views equally worth.

2.1.5 Critical Design

Critical design can be regarded as a quite newly emerged field within design research. As is expressed by design researcher Malpass (2016, p.473) critical design “aims to generate debate” and in the context of critical design “the purposive function of the design is discursive”. The name of the discourse may sound threatening, but the name is only an expression for the questioning means it pleads to. A benefit from using critical design is that the method allows the researcher to embrace the uncertainty in actions by visualize new realities or alternatives forms that challenge the “expectations of use or the user” (Malpass, 2016, p.477). In this way critical design practice could be descried as an affective medium rather than an expound able one, which facilitates new ways of knowing by expanding the relations between users and things in the process they exist in. The method could also create inter-subjectivity among stakeholders by addressing new but shared realities.

In this work critical design thinking has been most influential to be able to encourage reflections in a profitable business environment and the work carried out should not be seen as any type of critic to the company or local business context as such. Instead the design tool developed should be seen as a mean to be sensitive to the individual knowledge generating process, and portrait new considerations in B2B situations dealing with material characteristics.

2.2 Theoretical implementation and methods

2.2.1 Co-creation Implementation

This study is in its methods attempting to use co-creation as foundation for developing a design tool that can mediate co-creation in B2B situations. Therefore, this work will strive towards collecting collective knowledge to create a design tool that support the use of co-creation, in situations where knowledge before have been a dialog instead of sharing knowledge and experience. Initially more ‘traditionally’ design oriented, non-participatory methods such as observing, and interviewing, where used to collect background material. The design-process then entered a collective phase where stakeholders in a LAB environment shared knowledge and experience and helped shaping this thesis in its prototyping manners.
2.2.2 Implementing critical design thinking

Initially this thesis set out to end as practical solution, but entering the B2B context and finding issues in the process triggered this thesis to re-direct the approach to include critical design thinking. With this said the means was not to criticize the company as such but to be able to criticize and intervene into the process. The most essential inspiration from critical design thinking was to be able to promote reflection in everyday business process and not put focus on evaluate the physical 'tool' developed but the meaning of the method as such. Picked up in research, critical design thinking helps to embrace uncertainties and as it is explorative it challenges the expectations of the use as well as with the user. Critical design practice also support the diversification of the ways design problems are understood, it awaken objects epistemic qualities and can transmit descriptive comprehensions of complex issues (Malpass, 2016). For which critical design thinking has been present in shaping the outcome of this thesis.

2.2.3 Tool design – application

Tool design is a great method to capture both the designers thought processes and stakeholders feedback and reactions during workshops and gatherings. A great mean is also that tool design can facilitate both the sharing and re-use of design results by supporting an externalization process. In other words, design tools do not only store an index of design activities but also moreover support reasoning amongst successive acts (Vasantha et al., 2014). What can be criticized in this field is that design tools are used and chosen for the understanding of each tools ability, which imply that they not always come to their right. Another standpoint is also the one of shaping design tools, which require close deliberation and a clear construct of how the method or tool work and how to make use of its collected means. With this said tool design has been the base for the outcome of this thesis by means of allowing creativity and flexibility in the origination of physical tool and method pleading to sensitivity in business.

Methods

2.2.4 Observation

As an initial method for this study, observation was used to identify the needs, in the specific context of B2B to fully understand the local context of Norcospectras client and manufacturing process, providing retail interior solutions. Wikberg Nilsson et al. (2015) claim the importance of observation as a method since it provides specific contextual information that other approaches would fail to provide. It could also reveal implicit information about the user experience, such as temporal lack of understanding in specific contexts, information that can be disregarded by an interviewee in an interview for example (Wikberg Nilsson et al. 2015). Observing could further acknowledge other unspoken behaviour like user goals or attitudes, for which the aim of this method was to support an understanding for what could provide a propitious stakeholder experience.
2.2.5 Interviews

To secondarily confirm the initial issues found in the observing method, driving right to the core studying end-users and consumers of goods, a mix of methods was used to strengthen the initial problems. According to Wikberg Nilsson et al. interviews provide a great method to meet with users and find out about their experiences, opinions, motivation and behaviour. Wikberg Nilsson et al. claim the importance and usability of this method in a design process, since it can be used under several different phases of the process (2015). As interviews not are of co-design means, this method was only used initially to gain insights of stakeholder experience and behaviour.

Observation in combination with interviews was a consolidation approach for this thesis. The observational part acted as hindsight to see if the stakeholders acted or reacted as they answered in the following interview. In the interrogating part, the aim was to ask questions about the retail environment to see what details or parts that the user would notice, or speak about, and compare this information with the behaviour to conclude how they would act in relation to what they would say. This was done to be able to aim at directing the design tool towards the 'intention-behaviour-gap' issue.

2.2.6 Semi-structured interview

When entering into the field of academia and approaching consumer marketing professor and author Hultén for an interview, it was considered that a full structured interview would provide a too restricted conversation environment. Instead an unstructured interview was considered appropriate. The benefits of an unstructured interview is described by Wikberg Nilsson et al. as a way to let the interviewee answer areas or topics more openly in order to provide free flexibility toward the interviewee (2015). However, there were some more specific questions that need answers, for which a semi-structured interview was regarded more useful and appropriate. Wikberg Nilsson et al. (2015) differentiate semi-structured interview from unstructured interview by claiming that a semi-structured interview has topics that guide the conversation, yet still provide the interviewee with full flexibility towards how to answer.

2.2.7 LAB Experiment

To find out how purchasers within B2B shape their criterion in order to make buying decisions, a LAB experiment was set out, suggested from the interview with professor Hultén. The experiment was also conducted with inspiration from Karana’s MoM Model (Meaning of material model). In Karana’s data generating process, in order to conduct the MoM model, Karana set out to ask a target group to select materials (that Karana assigned with an oral meaning like; elegant). The second step in Karana’s data generation was to ask the target group to provide a picture of the material selected and lastly Karana’s participants were asked to explain why they thought a certain material was thought of as elegant.
In a similar manner, a LAB experiment was conducted for this thesis, however the LAB exploration for this thesis included four steps – where the overall focus was to provide an opportunity for tactile interaction and again pay attention to the combined information of what the participants would say and do. For the experiment, it was important to seek participants outside the context of Norcospectra (the local context for the study). This was done in order to avoid biased answers. It was also established from initial observations that purchasers at Norcospectra held a high knowledge of the materials used within the company, for which the LAB study aimed to sympathises with clients of Norcospectra. For this reason, it was important to find purchasers that were not used to acquaint for material choices, in order to support a new client of Norcospectra not familiar with the company or their materials. A request was sent out to purchasers within the area of interior, since it was considered that they would be the most representable selection. The stakeholders would be dependent from the context, still not unfamiliar to choose material or discuss the selection process of such. Eventually four different purchasers with different expertise areas participated in the LAB experiment for this thesis, equally as many men as women. The experiment then carried out was a combination of tasks, questions, individual as collective reflection and the different steps will be further explained in part 4 of this thesis.

2.2.8 Workshop

The LAB experiment set out in this thesis have also brought some desirables pulled from the method of a workshop, in terms of gathering people with no connection to existing context or project (Wikberg Nilsson et al. 2015) to explore the areas of material selection and tactile interaction. However, the study carried out is still claimed to be a LAB session since the method was a fusion of tasks, questions and reflections of personal experiences.

2.2.9 Prototypes

As a desirable of this thesis, small scale and rough prototypes where made to test co-created ideas in reality. It should be said however, that it was not the form that was evaluated or preferred, but the reaction the prototypes delivered. The prototypes made for the project could be seen as conversation pieces, whose meaning is to create discussion. For this project it was also considered that an intervention into a B2B process, not could be profitable or timesaving when having a critical sensitivity at the same time, this is further discussed in the contextual part of this thesis.

“The value of prototypes resides less in the models themselves than in the interactions – the conversations, arguments, consultations, collaborations – they invite”

3. Contextual analyses

The contextual parts include researchers with diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and these are woven together by four common topics herein named; Sensory experiencing and sensory marketing, consumption behaviour, translation of material experience and meaning driven selection. The selected researchers all bring something to this thesis and the hypothesis that this study builds upon. However, the somewhat sprawling theoretical framework also mean to represent a range of diversity, for which they are considered relevant to this study.

3.1 Sensory experiencing

David Howes, researcher within sociology and anthropology, believe that the human senses are a social construction, which is lived and understood differently in various times and cultures, in other words a constant changing communal process of know-how (Howes, 2006). Howes get support in his theory by urban researchers Degen and Rose. They also claim the importance of sensory experience but place it in relation to the built environment. They emphasise that experience is not just the direct effect of the design, of e.g. a built environment, it is also dependent of bodily mobility and perceptual memories in situations (Degen and Rose, 2012). Degen and Rose (2012) and Howes (2006) share the belief that humans in their body and mind socially construct their knowledge process.

Urban and sustainable researcher Sarah Pink, mean that these interdisciplinary debates around sensory experiences derive as a critical response to earlier work that have handle the ‘sense of place’ in visually dominating ways. Pink claim that humans experience contexts in multisensory ways and therefore should multisensory avenues be used as ‘novel’ approaches to foster local sustainable development (Pink, 2008). Pink assert that if attention is paid towards “sensorial elements and embodied engagements” it is possible to understand “how these processes operate” (Pink, 2008, p.95).

As found in literature, theories regarding the specificity of sensory experience is hard to find as existing material have different perspectives on what it means and what to do about it. There have been some more social projects where sensory experience, in the meaning that is seek to educe in this work, could find inspiration in. One of those projects is: UnSicht Bar in Berlin.

UnSicht Bar, Berlin

UnSicht Bar (germ. No sight) is almost as simple as the name; the restaurant lets hungry dining and lunch guests in Berlin have a meal, in complete darkness. The dining-in-the-dark concept is based around a completely dark dining area where visually impaired waiters steer the guests with a firm hand. In the foyer, the menu is presented by flavours instead of ingredients and seated at the table the dishes are presented by clock model as the dining guests are blinded by the dark. (https://www.unsicht-bar-berlin.de/en/html/home_1.html).
The business concept is multifaceted both portraying the everyday of a visually impaired person as it also reinforces the other human senses and what they are capable of. The concept is thoroughgoing as even the webpage is black in background and no pictures are presented or can be found. What is not mediated by the concept is if it could be used as a tool to extract information, knowledge or experience and how that could possibly be done.

3.2 Sensory marketing

As an answer to last decade’s consumerism development, a field within business called ‘sensory marketing’, have emerged to deal with consumption and explore the way humans acquaint knowledge about possible interesting goods. It studies, how people make buying decisions and discusses which senses to appeal to steer consumers in a retail environments (Hultén, 2008). The field have developed as a business approach to be able to ‘sell more’, which is the direct opposite of this study. However, as big parts of the field aims to localise habits and highlight the importance of sensory engagement in decision-making.

Consumer researcher Krishna (2006) highlights how consumer judgment is dependent on interacting senses. At the same time, Krishna expresses issues with interaction of senses where for example vision can mess up weight estimations due to confusing size or misleading colour that fools the eye (2006, p.557). Krishna mean that vision is often the dominating sense but when a customer is visually occupied the perception of other sensory inquiry, rise in status (2006, p.557).

Sensory marketing researcher Hultén emphasis Krishna’s work and continues the reasoning with a value shift from a collectivistic view to a more individualistic view in everyday life where the lifestyle expressed by individualization hide three personal driving forces in consumption; image building, self-fulfilment and sensory experience. Image building gives individuals the possibility to affect their own identity and image of it; self-fulfilment is connected to life quality in qualified consumption where service activities emphasize self-expression. Lastly, sensory experience expresses both self-identity and self-fulfilment as it is cognitive, emotional and value-based (Hultén, 2009, p.261). Research have proven that consumers who were not able to touch objects to get relational information about them, where left frustrated and did more rarely investigate in un-touched objects (Hultén, 2009, p.274).
3.3 Consumption behaviour

The topic of consumption behaviour melts into theories of sensory marketing research yet there are several studies focusing on behaviours in shopping contexts. Park and Kim emphasis how consumers use mostly ‘visual’ information such as, images, quality information, price, pictures, and video clips as determining facts (2003, p.16). Yet consumers tend to engage in relational behaviours if they see a possibility to reduce information and get useful communication (Park & Kim, 2003, p.17). Researchers within business ethics add a word of warning on consumption behaviours, claiming that despite most consumers ‘good intention’ consumers rarely act as they say. Carrington et al. (2010) mean that there exist a ‘intention-behaviour gap’, as consumers seek relational information that could help them make decisions. Some consumers change their mind after seeing more beneficial prices, other quantity, different looks and so forth. Some researchers even claim that intentions are poor predictions of the actual actions.

Another contribution to the debate comes from Webb Keane, he brings a more philosophical view on behaviour, discussing the social analysis of material things. Keane (1998, 2001, 2002, 2003) argues about the way people handle and value goods can be reflected in underlying assumptions of how the world is constructed (Keane, 2003). Keane’s theories are abstract regarding behaviour but they contribute to an interesting perspective of how people relate to materiality and how that is shown.

According to sensory marketers and researchers within behaviour studies it can be hard, maybe even impossible to predict the reason for a purchase as the customers’ intention can change, and change again. What is appearing clearly is customer’s value and appreciation for relational information. Below follows an example of a fashion designer who claim that his company is 100% transparent.

Honest By; honestby.com

Honest by is company launched by designer and art director Bruno Pieters. With inspiration from India and with awareness of damage to our eco-system and climate change challenges, Pieters launched a clothing line. It provides fashionistas with latest trends; at the same time as it provide customers with exact and detailed information of all content possible, down to the very thread holding the pieces together. Pieters’ philosophy is that the story behind the design can be as beautiful as the design in itself. By providing customers with such detailed information Pieters mean that customers can make the most informed choices due to the information given. By providing customers with such accuracy Pieters also hope that it helps customers to see the rightful price in the pieces launched and highlights the very raw materials it is constructed upon (*info and pictures honestby.com).
3.4 Translation of material experiences

More recent studies regarding the translation of material experiences, not studying the reaction to objects, but rather studying what type of information that could spring out of interaction of some kind have started to emerge. The co-written article "Design tools for interdisciplinary translation of material experiences" brings up how design tools could act as interdisciplinary translators of material experiences. Wilkes et al. claim that this type of studies are important for designers to better emphasise users, and consequently understand what type of implications this could have for economic and environmental sustainability (Wilkes et al., 2015).

Pedgley et al. have another take on this subject, writing about how material experience could act as a foundation for materials and design education. Pedgley et al. emphasises the importance of senses to conveyance meanings. In other words, the authors mean that material interaction could be a way to shift the learning culture from bringing in knowledge about materials to a culture consisting of, generating experiences with materials (Pedgley et al. 2015).

From architectural and urban planning perspective researcher Ahlquist, emphasis the seamless integrations of knowledge transfer by investigating in sensory materials in architectures. Ahlquist studies have been mostly inspiring for this thesis in terms of seeing the possibilities of exploring the sensory engagement in structures to understand material interaction in a bigger scale and how to relate sensory engagement to a design perspective (2016).

3.5 Meaning driven selection

The key to understand the importance of material knowledge is the fact that people distinguish materials not only by their technical functions but also by what the materials mean to them (Karana, 2010). Materials can in other words be assigned with different meanings in different contexts but also due to how the materials are experienced. It could be stated that without interaction, the material meaning is lost (Karana, 2010). Manzini (1986) where at least one of the first to claim so, he meant that there had become a 'loss of recognition' towards materials. Briefly the meaning of materials is not defined until there has been an initial sensory input of some kind (Karana, 2010, Wilkes et al., 2016).

In 'material selection' literature sensorial properties of materials such as shape, function and manufacturing processes are recognized as the most important factors affecting designers’ material decisions (Ashby & Johnson, 2002, Karana 2010). To see if descriptive categories of materials existed in people’s explanations of materials and what meaning they expressed Karana and Hekkert (2008) developed a model called 'MoM model'.

'MoM model' stands for Meanings of Materials Model and is a pictorial model describing the dynamic interaction between a user and a material, in which the material obtains its meaning (Karana, 2010, p.276). The end result of Karana & Hekkerts’ study (2008) showed that any material could be attributed with any meaning, some materials however were easier associated with some meanings rather than others (Karana, 2010).
As researchers Wilkes et al. also conclude, drawing from social scientists’ demonstrations, “experiences of materials are not defined by a materials physical properties, sensory and aesthetic properties or cultural associations in isolation but result from the interplay between all these different factors (2016, p.1235).” Wilkes own stude from (2014) also showed that perceived sustainability of materials couldn’t solely be reduced to a single set of physical properties or attributed to cultural preconceptions only. The perceived sustainability of a material rather stem from people’s criteria for the category of sustainable – which is something that vary from person to person and from community to community.

Karana (2010) is also explicitly dissuading designers to create a design method, which aim towards creating specific material meaning, claiming that it is not possible. Karana is advising designers and future readers of his work to “look beyond obvious properties and avoid constructing one-to-one relationships between material properties and meanings” (2010, p.282). Instead Karana (2010) suggest an integrated approach, which incorporate both tangible and intangible aspects of materials.

These studies problematize the issue of study material meaning in relation to sustainability, for which reason this study will consider material preferences and what tactile interaction can contribute with in terms of awareness and information in material decisions, rather than looking into the specific meanings that is assigned into materials.

Taken together these contextual fields act together to emphasize the importance of studying material meaning in relation to the human sense making, in order to facilitate change in consumption patterns and consumer actions.
CHAPTER 4
4. The design intervention

This design intervention arises as an answer to existing ways of portraying material knowledge in B2B situations. The tool developed promotes the individual experience and knowledge deriving from it, for altering how individual knowledge in B2B is accounted and viewed upon.

4.1 The design process of ‘Blind spot tool’

Pulled from observation and subsequent interviews this thesis found, as research also has concluded, that there exist a gap between how stakeholders think and how they later eventually act, also referred to as ‘intention-behaviour-gap’. Working towards a B2B context revealed a one-way-information process in communicating knowledge when selecting materials for retail interior, in which the ‘intention-behaviour-gap’ was found. This was also noticeable with end-users of retail environments but since they do not have the opportunity to influence the already built environment in the same way, the focus of this specific thesis became to aim a design opportunity towards influencers and decision-makers of the built environment (i.e. purchasers of retail interior).

From initial research and observations, at the local context of Norcospectra, it was declared that existing way of providing stakeholders with material information was by provide the stakeholder with a design and material solution chart or plan. From a profitability perspective, this is conforming way of acting, but seen from a humane perspective the process is not supporting the individual learning process nor support the perceptiveness of skin. Pulled from researchers such as (Pink, 2008, Hultén, 2011) the individual learning process should be supported by sensory engagement. By sensory engagement humans produce their understanding of them self – in relation to space, culture, time, place and context. If the sensual engagements also entail a learning process it is indirect also affecting the stakeholders value-generating process and sense of self. This research supports the main hypothesis for this study and emphasise the importance of experience for the human value generating process. A sensory emphasized purchase or selection is according to this seen as a qualified consumption or choice, supporting the individual self-fulfilment. This thinking triggered the process in the making for which is considered relevant and primal to the design outcome. As sensory experience trigger stakeholders’ identity making, the design intervention also brought this aspect into consideration.
Further with support from interviews with researcher Hultén and previous studies of buying behaviour, sustainability and knowledge generation, a LAB experiment where set out to trace the cause for material selection and ascertain how it could be different and support tactility. Stakeholders from outside of the context of Norcospectra where contacted and invited to malinger, unaccustomed purchasers, or to Norcospectra, new clients. The LAB experiment where divided into four parts, that acted together to research in how materials selection were made and for which personal reasons. During the LAB session different methods of delivering materials where tested with the stakeholders. Initially the stakeholders evaluated material samples by sight, secondly the participants were asked to choose materials but with the help of touch only (here the stakeholders where blindfolded), thirdly they were asked to answer freely to describe how they made their decision the second time and on what preferences. Lastly, they were asked to describe if sensory engagement had some impact on their final decision. The process of LAB experiment where set out with the intention to be co-creating, but as some behaviours needed clarification and stakeholders’ reason for choices needed to be investigated the LAB experiment turned out to some extent to be more participatory rather than co-creative. The co-creative part became apparent in the later part of the experiment where the stakeholders expressed and discussed their feelings and experiences, and we together discussed how the material selection could be different. These findings resulted in a phase of rough prototyping of some sort of disguise of the materials. Pulled from the LAB experiment the stakeholders proved to choose different materials if they were viewed upon or if they were hidden. By touch the stakeholders express other qualities, as they did not evaluate while looking upon the samples. They reflected over density, weight, structure, edging and shape. It became evident that the disguise of materials attentive another focus from the stakeholders and the stakeholders acted from their own experience and not from facts, looks or prices. The method pleaded to the stakeholders’ individual knowledge, feelings and sense of self and where most appreciated as all of the stakeholders where stunned over their own acting and impressed with the power of touch. The end-result to this study became a combining tool and method named ‘Blind spot’, due to its nature to disguise the content in it and confuse the eye.
4.2 Blind spot method

Blind spot method was developed in critical design means in a B2B process to catalyse the selection of materials for retail interior. The tool was therefore developed to elude the most powerful human sense - sight, to put focus on touch and emphasis the sensitivity in tactile contact, which is the foundation in human learning. The tool could be used in situations where vision is dominant to explore the value and information hidden in the tactile engagement. Tactile engagement also entails a richer muscular experience, which affects the ability to remember physical qualities.

The Blind spot method was prototyped during a LAB session with direct feedback from stakeholders and the ups and downs with the tool were quickly manifested. The prototyping developed from hiding materials under a cloth, to hide materials in a canvas bag, shoebox, to finally be a combination of box and canvas. The “box” or external shape was developed to fully cover what was hiding inside, not exposing any silhouette or other leading visual clues. The canvas or fabric was then added as a top or cover so that the tool would not unveil the objects outer shape. The canvas top made it possible to modify the size of the top to fit different sizes of arms and hands, to secure the disguise in the box. Some immediate responses of discomfort with the ‘unexpected’ happening in the box appeared but had in all cases to do with former personal experience, something the method in its use not could change nor expect as it is one of the means with the tool, to plead to the individual experience.

The method was, as mentioned before, developed to serve in a B2B context with the more specific means to catalyst discussion around material selection among purchasers, a process that otherwise is usually visually dominant and mostly economically driven. As the tool developed into a simple design mean and portable method rather than a static, physical, expensive and heavy instrument, the tool could easily be adjusted to fit other contexts or business situations. The size, colour, fabric, ‘box’ material and its shape are means that could be changed without detracting the means of the method. However, the purpose to elude the visual and address tactility is still the main mean of its design.

The method was designed to catalyst discussion; bring the unexpected and personal experience of tactile engagement rather than visual conclusions of looks, density, weight, function, price etcetera. The purpose of the tool could for example fit in pedagogical education, in workshops to prove individual experiences of the same object or things. In language education to emphasis multicultural associations, in parent groups to discuss for example what is dangerous and what is not. This is just some example, as both the exterior and content could be adjusted to the use, the method is more or less limitless.
The results from using the ‘blind spot’ method is bringing forward the individual and unique experience of touching. It also raises personal associations. The tool combines a matter of doing together with reactions, opening up for discussions. It has the possibility to work as a real eye opener, in visual dominatingly fields. It is also a tool that can be used over age barriers, from babies to elderly.

The results could serve to promote the individual experience and knowledge in business, it could act as a catalyser in meetings, it could be used in compacts to alert tactile focus, it could also be used as a method to bring back slow values and more. The results pulled from use can vary dependent on the content in the box and exactly when the tool and method is used in a process. For the specific context of Norcospectra the tool was developed to act in one of the initial phases of their design process, to promote equal material knowledge from touch and bring the unexpected element of elude the visual sense.
4.3 Reflection of the design process

Taken together this thesis and its design intervention were very hard to portrait, due to its complex nature. The studied subject could at glance easily be criticised for not consider sustainability issues. However, the main focus of this study was to bring back a tactile factor in an economic and business driven process, for which the sustainability aspect is present in appealing to the individual knowledge generating process and emphasise soft values in a hard-grain environment. The design of the ‘Blind spot’ method is supposed to break visual conventions taken for granted and appeal to the individual behind the process and alert to its sensitivity. By means, the design intervention promotes sustainability in B2B processes by addressing the human sense-of-self, and the importance of individual contiguity for a prosperous and maintained knowledge development.

The use of methods such as observations, interviews, LAB experiment and discussions enabled different perspectives and enabled creativeness in the making of this method. By combining objective happenings with subjective experience the outcome of this thesis resulted in an independent method and tool with ease of use far beyond the studied context. Without initial research such as observations and interview this design opportunity may not have arisen to the surface, and without further interviews unravelling behaviours and discussing B2B action and its economics this thesis would not have come to the conclusion presented. The methods of disguising materials and query the stakeholders in action for reactions of this, allowed different cultural and socio-political views. As the LAB experiment where arranged by arrear physical material samples, objects and stakeholders were invited randomly with the only preference to be accustomed to business purchase, this study is considered to be unbiased from business. Nevertheless, the questions, material experiencing and knowledge from the stakeholders, aim to be of relevance to the studied B2B context. The studies made in this thesis neither required any economical means more than the means of time and coming together, meet and share knowledge for which inspiration from co-creation has been most influential. The methods used in this process are genuinely trying to listen to the humans in business, be sensitive to business processes yet intervene with unexpected elements. The questions asked, discussions, information given and reactions acted all contributed to shaping this thesis. Without this background and research on similar topics this thesis would not have made it to this conclusion for which I argue that they are all reason for this dissertation.
4.4 Evaluation

By working with a design tool and method, it became clear that there exist a ‘circular’ thinking in human behaviours. With knowledge, we learn and develop. Dependent on our sense-of-self we are also keen to teach. To promote a design method and tool that is slowing down existing business models, was not the original mean or purpose with this thesis. But as research and time proved individual knowledge seem to have gone missing in the societal aim to work efficiently and rapidly. In businesses automatization, selections and eliminations of choices are constantly present in processes to seek efficiency and economical validity. This thesis and the hypotheses that this work is supporting mean that design solutions has to plead to soft-values and support the individual knowledge generation in order to change the automatic and rapid development seen both in society as well as in businesses to keep striving for sustainable living in all means.

The design tool and method deriving from this work turned out to be of use in other means than the studied context as stakeholders outside the given context considered the method to be user-friendly for the specific means to promote tactile experience and individual knowledge. During a LAB experiment it was pulled that the importance was in the method of disguising materials and inviting all stakeholders to the same requisite, not in the specific design of the disguising ‘box’. There are some requirements though for the method and the physical ‘box’ that needs to be considered in order for this method to be used elsewhere. Three important key factors need to be in place for the method to be prosperous. Firstly the disguising have to include static shape, a box is suggested in this work, eluding the possibility to see what is hiding. Secondly the disguising requires a sight proof entry hole into the chosen shape. Lastly it is of importance to bring maximum a handful of things, so that is possible to tell them apart.

The blind spot method is supposed to act as catalyser for further development within this complex subject where issues and tangibility from diverse processes, fields and operators need exploration and closer examination. As far as this study goes it promotes a design tool or method that emphasis to stakeholders’ experiences and sense-of-self by plead to experience by touch and the knowledge deriving from it. By the physical means of a ‘black box’, this method aim to alert receptiveness in a business process and by doing so enhance the susceptibility towards cultural preferences, traditions, experiences and individual knowledge, which is all existing in touch.
5
CHAPTER
5. Summary

This thesis set out to research in how tactility and multisensory experience affect decisions and how tactility can alert more conceived material choices. The initial findings from observations and interviews were that the studied business process relied on economical components and did not support the co-workers individual knowledge generation nor engage with entailing learning when choosing materials for retail interior. In a series of interviews and LAB experiments this thesis explored the concept of lost material knowledge and developed a conceptual design tool for conversation and learning. The ‘blind spot’ method and tool was developed to reach out to novices as well as advanced constructors of retail interior to create a bridge of tactile experiences to promote discussions and to develop slow values in B2B. It was also designed to please to the multisensory experience as it was found in research that multisensory experience produce relational information. Relational information is more likely to strike as a human’s own understanding in the making, and empowering their decisions. Because of this, the end-result of this thesis became a disguising tool that delete the visual prejudices and adds an unexpected dimension to an expedite business process. In the long run, a continuation and development of this type of methods could possibly change and question existing business strategies and promote the opportunities for social soft values to enter the B2B world.

5.1. Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes from this study are many, firstly the explored area of B2B in relation to sustainable thinking, design and co-creating includes so many entrances of perspectives that it has felt as a monumental mountain trying to describe or touch upon as many as possible to untangle the contexts complexity. Another insight is how valuable design interventions are in order to prove or question other realities. Working with design methods also helped this work to putting focus on the individual, and in this way brought a sense of humanity into the sphere of business. As for personal learning’s it has been most helpful and developing to steer such a big and complex work all by myself, for which I am very happy over the end result. I am also happy to have been uncovering some new unexploited grounds for design opportunities and throwing myself into context that I have not explored before.

5.2 Potential future for further studies

As mentioned before the studied context of this work is vastly complex and there are many entrances to further studies. Besides undertake the work presented here and continue to develop it within new contexts and with new means, there are also possibilities to continue researching how design could add or create slow-values in different business. It could also be questioned how to create such value in a business process that it is considered relevant and usable. It could also be investigated how other design methods could act catalysing and how to promote such an intervention without interfere in business. Further there is also a lack of research within human behaviours in business processes and not too many sources have explored how these new designedly ways of attacking sustainability issues can reach out to the bigger mass and contribute to a change in behaviours.
References:


Electronic sources:

http://www.honestby.com

Shadowing - A couple of consumers were asked to go for a regular shopping spree, where I asked to shadow them and their behaviour on a regular store visit (in a couple of stores that where chosen to create a link to the manufacturer Norcospectra). Afterwards we meet at a café for some open ended questions regarding their impressions of the environments and the interior solution.

What was your overall impression of (the visited stores) H&M and Nilsson Shoes?

So: (H&M) - It has too many things, it felt crowded and it feels like if they try to please everyone. It is confusing.

Sa: The way I navigate is more instinctively, touching many of the material and clothes. I can see my self surfing and paying attention to certain things; right now I am into pastel pink for example. Oh, I also avoid the accessories department, it just brings me disorder. Otherwise I think the sections are blended so I just follow my intuition. I think downstairs (H&M) is much more separated by function; teenager, training, mum etc.

So: Oh, yeah the downstairs area felt so heavy and dark.

Sa: I don’t know if it is just me or if it is through my studies but I have notice that for example exclusive brands and stores have less clothes and they also have so much more boutique service. It feels like at H&M for example all the racks are so stuffed, that you can’t see what is hanging there and it is not nice to look at. I guess it has to do with the price level. Maybe it is practical that this solution they have, that it is easy to clean or whatever. Filippa K is always nice and clean. I don’t know if the stores in miner cities such as Växjö are down prioritized? I mean in Stockholm or London or other cities the stores seems to be more minimalistic.

So: Yeah, maybe it is do to this re-make they are doing in Linnégallerian, that they don’t put any effort to the store interior or layout?

Sa: Yeah, it kind of look dated. Even ICA is more branded and have a thought-out colour code; Black and like a thought-out solutions for cashiers and stuff. It just strike me that Samarkand has a more newer approach on their H&M, but they are also the owner of COS. H&M would maybe attract at different age group if they became more like COS. Maybe that is why they keep their messiness?

So: Oh, when I was in one of the fitting rooms at H&M their where so much dust! And there was also like a broken hanger, it felt totally greasy.

Did you pay any attention to the materials of the interior?

Sa: Yeah, I think so, well again I don’t know if it is my personal background but it felt like they used MDF and the worn out flooring looked so ugly.

So: Yeah, like a kitchen.

Sa: And the cashier – it was just full of other stuff. It felt like messy un-organized swamps. Due to the mess I can’t even remember what colour the desk was... To me, when a desk stands out it feels more exclusive and it becomes visually outstanding. It is just confusing when it is hard to see.

So: Yeah, at H&M it was only white everywhere.

Sa: H&M also had so many strange spaces in their interior between their walls and columns. They
have really tried to fit so much stuff in there. The store almost feels like a labyrinth.

So: In Samarkand I think they (H&M) have more height in their interior, and the lightning is different, it is much brighter than the one in city centre. I don't like the basement part in town.

Sa: Yeah when there are no shelves, it gives such a flat impression. In the store at Samarkand I think they have managed to create volumes. But my impression is that it is greyer nuanced at Grand Samarkand, it feels like you can spend more time there when you have the impression of more airiness and new frame walls. But I think Nilson shoes have a more manageable interior space. The counter is in the centre of the shop and it feels fresh that they include more wood. It felt like the cashier was more highlighted due to darker accents. At the same time I think that they try to highlight some brand with more lightning, like Adidas and Nike shoes. I guess they want to give the impression of "white and fresh" sportswear?!

So: Yeah I notice that they had so much more space in between the shelves and the shoes. I also noticed how they highlighted some brands with colour for example in the Timberland section they included wooden shelves.

Sa: Yeah, in Nilson shoes the impression was that different brands changed the interior or made it more dynamic.

So: But the desk they had was tiny and had a strange shape, where they also can serve from the sides.?

Sa: Did it? Oh, I can't remember I think it was because it was blending in.

Was your impression that the shops had the same interior?

So: I can't remember.

Sa: I think Nilson shoes had more shine in their interiors, lower furniture and displays. But yeah, they were kind of similar. When I think about it I can't remember them any differently. However I think that it is easier to see that Nilson shoes have more season focus than H&M with spring shoes instead of heavy boots trend.

So: My impression is that I would rather ask for help at Nilson shoes than in H&M, due to the prize levels it just feels like H&M have no service what so ever.

Sa: Yeah, I definitive think that is due to the prize and investment level. It feels like Nilson shoes are representing more long term care, and H&M represent no care at all. It is really a different kind of message. I mean both of them had impulse shopping like small things at the cashier but the context where so different. It made me really think about buying and Nilson shoes more classy presentation actually made me think about personalize my shoes a bit but for example at H&M I would never by any of their goods just for the sake of buying.
Interview with – Bertil Hultén, Professor in Consumer Marketing

Hultén deals with the question of how multi-sensory brand experiences can contribute to different sensory experiences, at a individual level increase the personal value of the brands, that are bought and consumed. His research is conducted mainly through experimental field trials in a real store environment in cooperation with companies, but also by means of interviews.

Id: Hi Bertil! I contacted you since I know your field and behavioural interest lies a bit within my topic even if I come from a more spatial design oriented educational field rather than the field of marketing. What do you think could be the benefit of involving sensory studies in design?

Be: Emissions – the reactions from costumers, is really the key to sensory marketing, but I also believe that it can be applied to design. Through emissions there are so much so collect. A while ago I did a really interesting experiment with IKEA where we tested if their customers reacted on sensory marketing strategies. We experimented with smell, sound and light, to see if the customers reacted on this and how they reacted! We could even with the help of the tested elements steer the customers to stay in a certain area or avoid others etcetera. First we asked them how they preferred their shopping experience and then we tested what the focus groups answers for real. But do tell me about your interest! Your where writing your master thesis right?

Id: That is right, as I mentioned even if my background is in spatial design, I have a genuine interest for behavioural studies and in my master thesis I therefore seeks to research in; what meaning tactile interaction have for decision-making and if tactile experience can affect the customer and if tactile experiences of material samples can foster alternative buying behaviour? I have contact with a company called Norcospecta, who deliver retail-interior to companies like IKEA and H&M. The company initially wanted me to research in how they could transform their showroom, but during the initial studies of the company it became clear that the company have other greater issues regarding how they interact with their customers, by delivering design solutions directly to their client without involving them in the process of selecting materials. This is why I changed focus and now studying how customers react on tactile contact and if tactility contact can change or affect buying behaviour.

Be: I think your biggest key in your project is congruence; How well does the design of yours fit into the context of the company and their request? When I talk about sensory marketing I divide it into; products and services – what you seem to deal with is a room, in a service environment. We have to study how we can adjust our services and our environments after the social shift we have experienced from mass production, and mass commercialisation – that everything has to be the same. Have you heard about T-Ford in the 1910’s? All of their cars were made the same, even the same colour, black. Today we are facing a much more individualistic society, I mean if we look into the car industry today you can design almost every part of your new car – you can choose what you like and what you do not like and take that away. Today it is the individual that is in centrum! If we look to economy, the welfare states we have today have created a totally different situation for people. People today can to a great extent buy what they like and prefer. All of those decisions are based on people’s perception of things. If I take my self as an example, sure I do shop on offer and sometimes let the economical factor steer my decision on everyday items but I never focus sole on the economical factor.
in bigger decisions. Then it is other parameters that I consider such as material, quality, my previous experience etc. So I mean what we can see in our social development and our development over time is that the collective is disappearing and that individualism is appearing where people strive towards self-realization through their actions and decisions. What I am suggesting in my research is that companies and businesses must find new touch-points and understand the single individual; they must create more variables to get to the individual. I mean the understanding of things, products, and environments lies in the individual experience and that is happening within every individual.

Id: If the experience and what you in your study call “experience logic” is happening within every individual, does that not make it impossible to apply the science in real life?

Be: That is a valid question, but there is also the fact that the purchasers within companies are also consumers and humans and they having their own preferences – even if they declare to be neutral. I mean they are also consumers and humans with earlier experiences colouring their decisions even if they say it do not. That is why I think this intervention point is so interesting! You know what? It would quite easy to prove your theory, that choices differ, very simple. Let’s say you talk with the purchaser within IKEA or H&M and initially provide them with two options. Then you quickly introduce another six, and see how they react and what they choose. I am quite sure that you would find the answer there and that you could prove your hypothesis in that way. Oh, due to your interest I strongly recommend you to take a look at chapter 10 in my new book “Sinnesmarknadsföring teoretiska och empiriska utgångspunkter”. That whole chapter is about how different factors integrate. And I mean take ‘The gestalt principles’ one of the oldest theories about human understanding. Image a person standing looking into a mirror; even then, we humans need to understand things as whole and try to describe those qualities from its character and qualities. That is why it is important to look to people’s full experience and not only in traditional design aspects such as visual properties etcetera.
Step 1:
The participants were offered two options of materials, named left and right option, and asked to choose one for retail interior design.

Step 2:
The participants were offered six more material samples, in total eight, and again choose one.

Step 3:
The participants were asked to explain their final decision, on what qualities they based their material choice.

- If I don’t have to consider the economical aspect, I would go for walnut. I think it has such a rustic vibes.
- Now when you gave me so many options I think it became harder. But I have to go for something white, it is a classic.
- If I am not limited to the first two options maybe I go for this ash piece. Ash has so much structure.
- Well, I like to see the raw materials, and oak is a nice type of wood. It has a grain pattern, and oak is also a classic.
- I don’t have to consider the economical aspect, I would go for walnut. I think it has such a rustic vibe.
- I don’t have to consider the economical aspect, I would go for walnut.
- Ash has so much structure.

Step 4:
Finally, the participants were asked to describe the value of sensory engagement for their decision.

- I would say that the sensory engagement made it possible for me to determine what type of wood it was and its treatment.
- Some types of materials can have a very similar look. Some treatments also make them like chameleons.
- I think it can be hard to differentiate some materials from others. Like this white piece, I did not realize it was corian.
- The sensory feeling of ash is very soft. I like that attribute about a wood.
- Well, besides what I said about the aging, I think oak is idealistic for interior design because it is such a hard and resistant wood.