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Online Lead Generation in B2B Marketing

The Role of Conversion Design on the Corporate Website

ABSTRACT

Subject: Information Systems
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Title: Online Lead Generation in B2B Marketing: The Role of Conversion Design on the Corporate Website
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Abstract: As the buying process has moved online, the corporate website has taken a central role in B2B lead generation. Consequently, the website is the main lead generation tool for many B2B companies. The main goal in online lead generation is to convince website visitors to submit their contact information to the owner of the website, this is known as converting. Due to a website's general lack of human-to-human interaction, the site alone must be able to convince visitors to convert. Therefore, companies must develop the design and content of their websites to facilitate conversions, in other words, they must utilize conversion design. One company that uses their corporate website as the main lead generation tool is Hibox Systems Oy Ab. This master's thesis was conducted as a case study on behalf of this case-company to evaluate the role of conversion design on the corporate website in a lead generation context. The case study incorporated a qualitative literature review and a qualitative content analysis while it also utilized quantitative data to support the conclusions made in the qualitative research. The study can therefore be classified as mixed methods research. The principles of conversion design that were found through the literature review were assembled into a hypothesized model and applied on the case-company's website. This resulted in an increase of the conversion rate, meaning that there was an increase in leads after the hypothesized model was applied. The results of the study were therefore positive. The hypothesized model of conversion design was proven to be a successful method for creating corporate websites that generate a higher number of leads. Consequently, conversion design was concluded to play a major role in online lead generation.
Keywords: Lead, lead generation, corporate website, conversion design, B2B
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LIST OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

- Conversion design = A design practice that incorporates multiple web design frameworks and approaches for improving the conversion rate of websites. It puts both business and visitor goals at the forefront of development.

- Persuasive design = A design practice that seeks to influence human behavior through psychological and social inputs when they interact with a website.

- Corporate website = A website that is used to represent a brand by providing information regarding the brand and by marketing the products and/or services provided by that brand.

- Lead = Contact information of a potential customer.

- Lead generation = The practice of generating leads for a company.

- Conversion rate optimization (CRO) = The practice of increasing the percentage of website visitors who take a predefined action. Similar to *conversion design*, but more limited in its scope.

- Landing page optimization (LPO) = The practice of increasing the percentage of visitors to a specific webpage who take a predefined action. The page is usually tailored for a subset of targeted visitor traffic and intended as a destination for visitors who click an ad.

- User-centered design (UCD) = A design framework for user-driven development.

- Call to action (CTA) = A element that prompts website visitors to perform a specific action.

- Value proposition = A promise of the value a certain product or service will deliver to customers.

- E-services = Electronic services usually delivered via some sort of technology.

- E-servicescape = The environment in which an e-service is delivered, such as a website.

1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter will present the background information and underlying problem that form the foundation of this thesis. It will also present the aim of the study, how the research was conducted and the research dependencies, while finally presenting the structure the thesis itself.

1.1 Background

In digital marketing, there are few online channels as important as the *corporate website*. The corporate website is the only channel that marketers have complete control over as they are free to design, optimize and tweak without any external restrictions (Ryan 2014, p. 44). Websites can be used for a multitude of purposes, of which *lead generation* has become one of the most common. Especially in business-to-business (B2B) markets, lead generation is used as a primary marketing practice. Lead generation can be seen all over the web, from singing up for newsletters or webinar to submitting a sales inquiry for a specific product or service. However, most companies do not fully leverage the potential of their lead generation websites, as they fail to convert potential buyers into leads due to a lacking website design. Often, corporate websites are designed with a company-centric approach without further consideration for the visitors using the site, i.e. they contain what the company that owns the site wants them to contain, rather than what the website visitors and potential customers really need. The most successful websites have been shown to prioritize a user experience that visitors truly enjoy, but despite this customer-centric web design is still surprisingly rare (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 36). Delivering what the potential buyers are looking for is a prerequisite for them to convert, because visitors who are not convinced of the value in the product or service offering are very unlikely to sign up for a newsletter or complete a contact form. However, they are very likely to simply move on the next competitor in line, such is the nature of the web.

Companies engaged in online lead generation need to invest in developing their websites to generate as many leads as possible and to maximize the quality of those leads. B2B companies in particular that are bound by a lengthy buying process (Gillin & Schwartzman 2011, p. 7) should strive to convert as many website visitors as possible to achieve a growing trajectory. In most B2B cases, a converted lead does not equal a sale

due to the buying process, but a converted lead does equal a sales opportunity. This is the essence of online lead generation in B2B, increasing sales opportunities. According to a study made by HubSpot Research (2016), 72% of companies with fewer than 50 leads per month do not achieve their revenue goals. While companies that do acquire more than 50 leads per month were shown to have a substantially greater chance of hitting their goals. The tipping point of 50 leads is obviously not universal for all markets and businesses, but the study did show that there is a relationship between a higher number of leads and a higher chance of reaching revenue goals. This means that the more leads a company has, the likelier its business is to grow.

In lead generation, the *inbound marketing* framework has become the main marketing concept for generating leads online. The website is the main lead generator or conversion engine in this framework (Kurvinen & Seppä 2016, p. 187). In practice, this means the website is responsible for the actual gathering of leads. As mentioned above, many companies fail to fully utilize the potential of their websites despite its recognized importance in the lead generation process. The virtual nature of websites means that they mostly lack human-to-human interaction, which puts on-page content and design at the forefront of converting website visitors into sales leads. To fully leverage the corporate website as a critical part in the procurement of new business, companies need to design and plan their sites accordingly. Generating leads is the fundamental task of any lead generation site. This thesis will research the practice of designing websites for this task.

1.2 Research problem

Hibox Systems Oy Ab is a B2B company that primarily focuses on online lead generation as its core marketing tactic. Therefore, the procurement of actionable sales leads is the foremost priority of the company's marketing efforts. The company utilizes a corporate website to procure new leads and to market the company's service offering and brand. The website is the most important marketing communications channel the company currently deploys as a part of their marketing strategy. Most of the company's sales leads are generated through the website, effectively making the website not only the most important communication channel between the company and its potential buyers, but also the most important channel for increasing sales opportunities. Despite the importance of the website within the company's marketing strategy and lead generation funnel, design

principles for lead generation has not been considered to any greater extent at the time of the website's development (Turajlic 2018).

At the time this thesis was started, desktop traffic on the website generated roughly 35 leads per month with a conversion rate of 1,46 % (averages for 2018, see appendix A). With regard to the sales and revenue the company is generating in total, the numbers of leads are not too low. However, the conversion rate shows great potential for increasing the number of website visitors that convert into leads. This combined with the fact that the website's main task is to generate leads but has not been designed with modern conversion design principles, highlight a flaw in the lead generation process. Additionally, many leads generated from the website do not fulfil the specifications required for constituting an actionable lead (Komarov 2018). It can therefore be concluded that through proper research and development of the website design, the number of generated leads and the quality of those leads could hypothetically be improved.

1.3 Aim of the study and research questions

This thesis is conducted as a case study on behalf of the case-company Hibox Systems Oy Ab. The aim of the study is to research the role of design on the corporate website as it refers to the generation of sales leads. Upon completion of the study the case-company will be able to draw conclusions regarding whether or not the design of their site should be considered as a type of lead generation tactic. In practice, the research will study if the number of website visitors that convert into actionable leads can be increased by developing the visual design and on-page content of the website. This will be done by creating a new design for one preselected page on the case-company's corporate website, which will then be compared with the previous design.

The research questions have been defined as the following:

1. How can the conversion rate of a corporate website be increased through design?

2. How has the new design of the case-company's subject page affected the conversion rate?

1.4 Limitations

This case study is specifically limited to the case-company's corporate website. No results or methodologies regarding conversions or design on other websites will be acknowledged apart from proven frameworks defined in the literature review (see chapter 4 and 5). Only one webpage on the company's website will be used as a test subject for the study, meaning that all development and testing will be confined to one URL and not the entire website. Furthermore, the study will not concern itself with any other aspects of marketing or lead generation that are not in direct relation to the website, nor will it consider aspects such as how traffic is generated to the website. It will only concern itself with situations taking place *on* the website, from visitors landing on the subject page to converting. This means the study will also not consider how leads should be handled after they have converted.

The analysis and evaluation of both the new and the old design will be performed through screenshots. Meaning that mostly static elements that can be interpreted visually will be acknowledged in the study, however, some interactive elements will be included as well. Other elements that can be interpreted by the human senses, such as sounds for example, will not be taken into consideration. Nor will technical aspects such as loading times and server speeds that otherwise might affect the user experience be included in the study.

Google Analytics will be used for the collection of website visitor data to be used in combination with above mentioned screenshots and to determine the conversion rate of the subject page. Mainly data for the subject webpage will be used throughout the study. Data from any other page on the website or aggregated data for the entire site will only be used to present broader aspects such as the average conversion rate, or to better illustrate overall website performance and only if this is needed to support the readers understanding of a specific subject or process (all data used in the study can be viewed under Appendices).

The case-company receives roughly 75 % (see appendix B) of its website traffic to the subject page from desktop computers and laptops. Therefore, the study will be confined to analyzing the desktop version of the subject webpage. Other formats of the webpage design, including mobile and tablet versions will not be included in the study. The screenshots used in the study will also be limited to a specific screen resolution of 1920 x 1080 as this is the most used resolution among the visitors to the subject page (see

appendix C). Moreover, it would not be practical or reliable to perform the study based on multiple screen sizes or devices as it would require an extremely wide scope. All screenshots for analysis was taken in the same web browser, which in this case is Google Chrome, to avoid any inconsistencies that might occur between browsers.

1.5 Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into 7 chapters, of which chapters 1 and 2 work as introductory chapters presenting the background for the study and the case-company. Chapter 3 depicts the research methodology, while Chapter 4 and 5 respectively, represent the findings of a literature review that focused on examining existing literature regarding lead generation and conversion design to create a hypothesized model of optimal conversion design. This model was used in the development of a new design for the subject page and in the evaluation of the page. Chapter 6 presents the results of the research by evaluating the new and old design of the webpage and by examining the conversion rate. Chapter 7 is a concluding chapter that answers the research questions, provides recommendations for the case-company, suggestions for further research and takes a critical look on the study itself. All chapters have multiple sections that depicts various subjects related to the main subject of the chapter in question. Headings for all chapters and sub-sections can be found int the table of contents.

2   CASE-COMPANY: HIBOX SYSTEMS OY AB

This chapter will present the case-company of this thesis. After briefly presenting the company's history and fundamentality, it will go through the company's core business along with its verticals and the company's marketing & sales strategy.

2.1   The company

Hibox Systems Oy Ab (hereinafter Hibox) is a small-to-medium-sized enterprise operating within the Information Technology (IT) industry, specifically with developing and selling interactive information and entertainment solutions for television-based services. The company is privately owned and is headquartered in Turku, Finland, while operating a research and development (R&D) facility in Vaasa, Finland and a global sales office in Vienna, Austria. Hibox employs 32 individuals, of which the majority are either back-end or front-end developers. The rest of the staff consists of administrative personnel including sales & marketing professionals (Granholm 2018).

Founded in 2004 to develop a new IPTV-solution (Internet protocol television) for a newly developed hotel chain, Hibox's service offering has developed into a complete television technology service that thanks to its flexibility can be adapted to many television-based systems. This allows the company to focus on a wide range of customer segments and can facilitate a high number of projects with a relatively limited number of staff.

2.2   Service offering and verticals

The core product consists of a middleware-platform. Middleware is per definition "software that facilitates exchange of data between two application programs within the same environment, or across different hardware and network environments" (WebFinanceInc. 2018). Focused on television technology, Hibox's middleware-platform is designed to connect existing application programs to end-user devices such as televisions, mobiles and tablets. Apart from this solution, Hibox develops additional products for their customers that complete the service offering. These products consist of e.g. casting solutions, mobile applications, and software and hardware for both evacuation and housekeeping systems. The company markets their products and services to other

businesses in need of serving their own end-customers with television technology-based solutions. A typical business model in B2B context as the end-user is often not the same individual as the actual purchaser (Gillin & Schwartzman 2011, p. 6-7). This effectively classifies Hibox as a business-to-business (B2B) company.

Hibox focuses their service offering on two main verticals with several customer segments in each. The verticals are *Hospitality* and *IPTV & OTT* (Internet protocol television and over-the-top) providers. The hospitality vertical's largest customer segment is hotels, but does also consist of cruise ships, healthcare facilities, senior living and even correctional facilities. Providers within IPTV & OTT mainly consist of telecommunications operators, media companies, broadcasters and OTT providers.

Figure 1: Hibox's vertical markets split into customer segments.
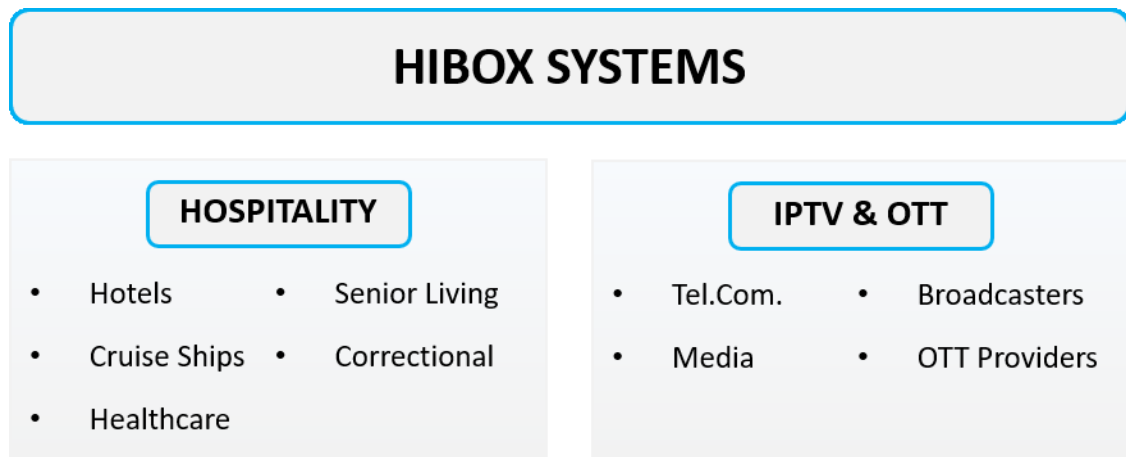
Due to its character as a middleware / software company and its reseller business model, Hibox is a truly global brand. According to Hibox CEO Staffan Granholm the company's activities are not constrained by any geographical limitations (Turun Sanomat 2013). Thanks to this fact and regardless of the company's small stature, Hibox has managed to grow into one of the strongest competitors on the market, especially in the Nordic hospitality market as of recent years, but also on a global scale in multiple verticals. For example, the increased digitization of the healthcare industry is becoming a predominant driver for further development of the healthcare-specific solutions and is forecasted to increase revenue streams in the coming years.

2.3 Marketing and sales strategy

With a small marketing budget and a staff of 32 employees, of which the majority focus on developing and supporting Hibox's core business, there are limited resources available for marketing communications. Currently, all marketing and sales efforts are performed with a small team consisting of the company's C-level executives, sales personnel and one marketing employee. Due to these limited resources, the marketing and sales strategy is two-fold, it combines a reseller-model with in-house marketing and consists of three key areas: *lead generation*, *sales* and *account management*. The strategy is based on the *inbound marketing framework* which is explained in more detail in section 3.1.1. The strategy is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Hibox's marketing and sales strategy.
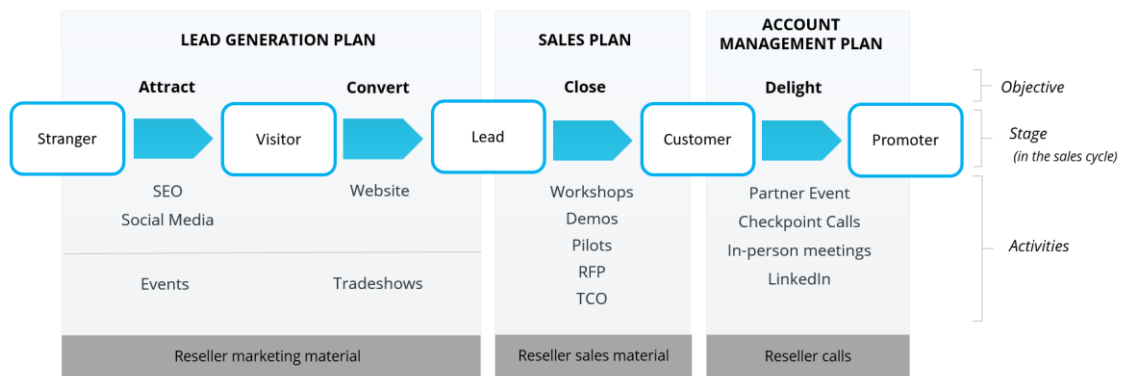
The reseller-model works as an added dimension to the marketing and sales strategy and represents the majority of all international sales while all domestic operations are performed by Hibox. The reseller network is crucial to the company's growth because with current resources, Hibox could not generate the same number of sales as they do today without this global network. Therefore, the reseller network plays a key role and is an integrated part of the marketing and sales strategy (Shaw 2018). However, many of the leads that resellers handle are assigned to them by Hibox and are originally acquired through Hibox's website.

Hibox supports resellers with marketing material, lead acquisition and other sales operations to help the resellers effectively generate new customers. However, the resellers market Hibox's products independently within their specific region and their marketing efforts are not directly controlled by Hibox.

Apart from supporting the resellers, Hibox's own marketing efforts mainly focuses on cost-efficient online marketing done in-house with the goal of attracting high-quality leads of a sufficient number (Granholm 2018). Additionally, Hibox also performs some offline marketing consisting mainly of industry-specific tradeshows and exhibitions, or collaborations with partners. Events are also advertised through online channels.

Despite the reseller networks important role in the strategy, most of the company's marketing resources go into in-house marketing. Due to this fact, and the fact that Hibox does not directly control the marketing activities of the resellers, Hibox's own marketing efforts is the constitutional focus of this study. The primary output of these marketing efforts are *leads*. As figure 2 shows, the lead acquisition plan forms the main part of all marketing activities and is the first step to generate actual sales.

2.3.1 Lead generation plan

The lead generation plan, as with the majority of the marketing activities is based online. The plan is built around the corporate website www.hibox.tv. The website is the primary channel for all the company's marketing communications. Traffic from all other online, and to a great extent offline, sources are directed towards the website (Lehtinen 2017, p. 7). The website works as a platform on which the company can present their products and brand, but first and foremost it is a platform for acquiring leads. Leads are collected by convincing website visitors to complete a contact form, which allows the company's sales team to reach out to the potential customers and secure a sale.

The primary method of attracting visitors to the website is search engine optimization (SEO). Through SEO Hibox aims to achieve high rankings in Google's search engine result pages and thus, drive a high number of high-quality traffic towards the website by attracting the interest of the users. High-quality traffic in this case refers to traffic that consists of B2B buyers that is in the buying process of finding a service provider of Hibox's nature, meaning that they have a true intent of converting into a lead already when they arrive at a landing page on the site. A secondary traffic source is social media. Specifically, LinkedIn and Twitter are used to nurture existing relationships, increase brand awareness but also ultimately drive traffic towards the website as a secondary method after SEO.

As could be seen already in figure 2 in the preceding section, the company's lead generation plan revolves heavily around the website. Together with the traffic sources, the website forms an online lead generation funnel in which the website plays a central role working as the main enabler in the conversion process. Figure 3 illustrates the funnel and shows its relevance within the marketing and sales strategy.

Hibox's business revolves heavily around the procurement of new leads and the company website has been identified as a decisive part of the lead generation plan. As determined in section 1.2 the website was not originally designed with any specific frameworks that aim to increase conversions, albeit its decisive role in the procurement of leads is indisputable. It is therefore in the interest of the case-company to study if the conversion rate and quality of leads can be improved by focusing on the most central element in the lead funnel, the website.

Figure 3: The online lead generation funnel of Hibox.
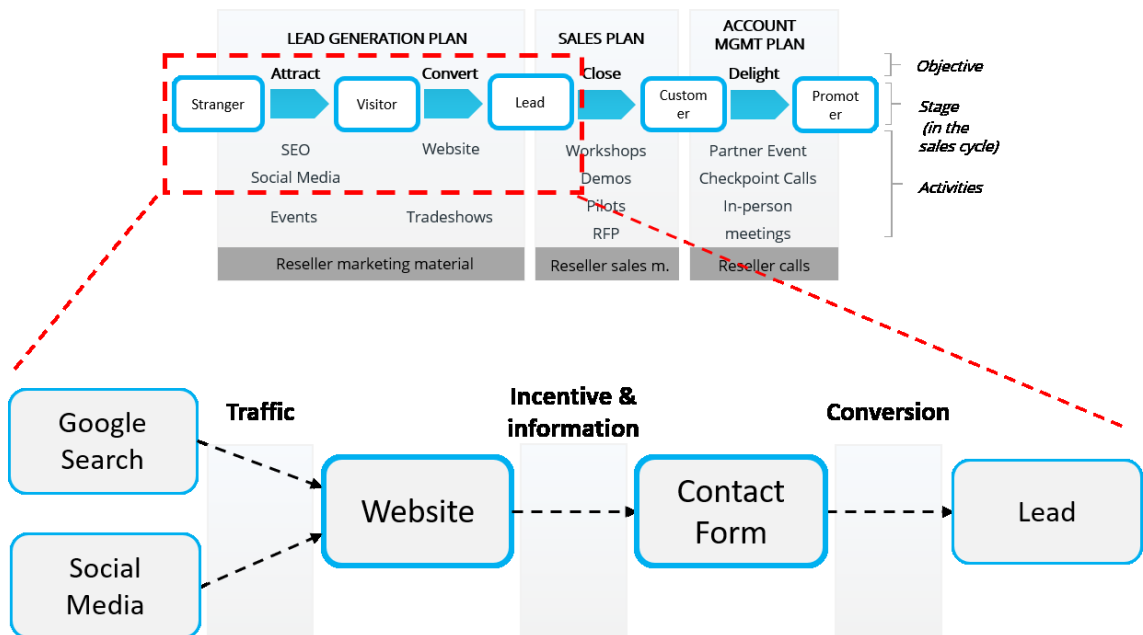
As per section 1.3, this case study will focus on if and how Hibox can improve their conversion rate and the quality of incoming leads with the company website as the principal subject of study. Improving the conversion rate directly translates to an increased number of leads that enables an increase in revenue for Hibox and an improvement of the company's marketing communications.

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the case-company and its fundamentals, its product and service offering, the operating industry and its verticals, as well as the company's marketing and sales strategy. Furthermore, it has defined the importance of lead generation within the case-company's marketing efforts and explained the key role of the corporate website as a conversion-platform in the lead generation funnel. The website has the key objective of providing sales qualified leads for the company's sales team. Chapter 4 will take a more detailed look at lead generation, lead generation through websites, the application of lead generation in B2B markets and how the B2B buying behavior facilitates this type of marketing. Chapter 4 will also focus on what role design plays in the online lead generation process, before chapter 5 will define designing for conversion in more detail. However, before diving into the main topic of this study, the research methodology will be presented in the following chapter.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter will depict the research methodology of this thesis. It will explain the complete research design by depicting the research methods that were chosen to answer the research questions, the type of data collected to analyze the results and how those results were interpreted.

3.1 Case study research

The main aim of this study is to assess what role design plays in the generation of leads through the corporate website. The author of this study has chosen to call the practice of increasing the number of leads generated by a corporate website through design as simply: *conversion design*. Why this exact term was chosen is discussed more thoroughly in section 4.2. The case-company Hibox Systems uses online lead generation to gather sales leads, the company's website works as the primary tool for this endeavor. This study came about as the researcher is an employee of the case-company and improving the company's lead generation efforts is a continuous priority due to its importance in the sales cycle. In addition to the case-company's interest in the topic, the researcher has both a personal and professional interest in the field.

With the objective of improving the conversion rate as a guide for the study itself, the research and the accompanying research questions focus on *how* this objective can be achieved. When a *how* or *why* question is asked about a contemporary set of behavioral events of which the researcher has little or no control, the research falls under the definition of a case study. The case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in an in-depth manner and within the phenomenon's real-world context, the phenomenon being the so-called *case* (Yin 2018, p. 9-15). Järvinen (2012, p. 10-11) similarly classifies the case study as primarily being a *theory-creating approach* of an empirical nature that aims to study reality, and stresses what the definition of reality actually is. However, Järvinen (2012, p. 36-63) also outlines what he calls *theory-testing approaches* and some case studies also fall under this approach depending on the context of the case and the study.

The theory-testing approach aims to analyze if a particular theory, model or framework illustrates a certain part of reality particularly well. In other words, researchers *test* the

theory. The selected theory can be chosen out of numerous contenders that are relevant for the phenomenon of interest. However, in some studies there is no proper theory, meaning that the researchers must build the theory themselves (Järvinen 2012, p. 36). Malhotra (2007, p. 42) defines case studies within qualitative research as being "an intensive examination of a few selected cases of the phenomenon of interest". He also states that the website is an example of such a case.

Due to the available definitions of case studies and the context within which they are used, the case study is a natural fit for this study. The phenomenon of interest is the role of design within online lead generation as per the aim of the study. The case in which this phenomenon is to be tested is represented by the corporate website of the case-company. This particular phenomenon i.e. lead generation and conversion design is very limited in existing theories and research. Virtually no, academic research or literature was found relating to this specific topic. Some related research form other research fields were identified, such as the studies made by Harris and Goode (2010) and Santos (2003) as presented in chapter 4. Educational books on the topic however do exist, although good references these books have been mostly produced by business practitioners and companies, meaning they fall outside of the borders of academia.

The existing theories, models and frameworks suggest that for this study the theory must first be built in order to research the phenomenon of interest, as Järvinen (2012, p. 36) recommends. Yin (2018, p. 34) also suggests constructing preliminary theories or theoretical propositions regarding the study's topic when designing case studies. Therefore, the research must first define how design effects conversions based on existing theories and literature through a literature review.

This is also in line with Hevner, March, Park & Ram's (2004) framework for information systems research, which suggest that IS research consist of two stages; *develop & build* and *justify & evaluate*, see figure 4.

Figure 4: Information systems research framework (Hevner et al. 2004, p. 80).
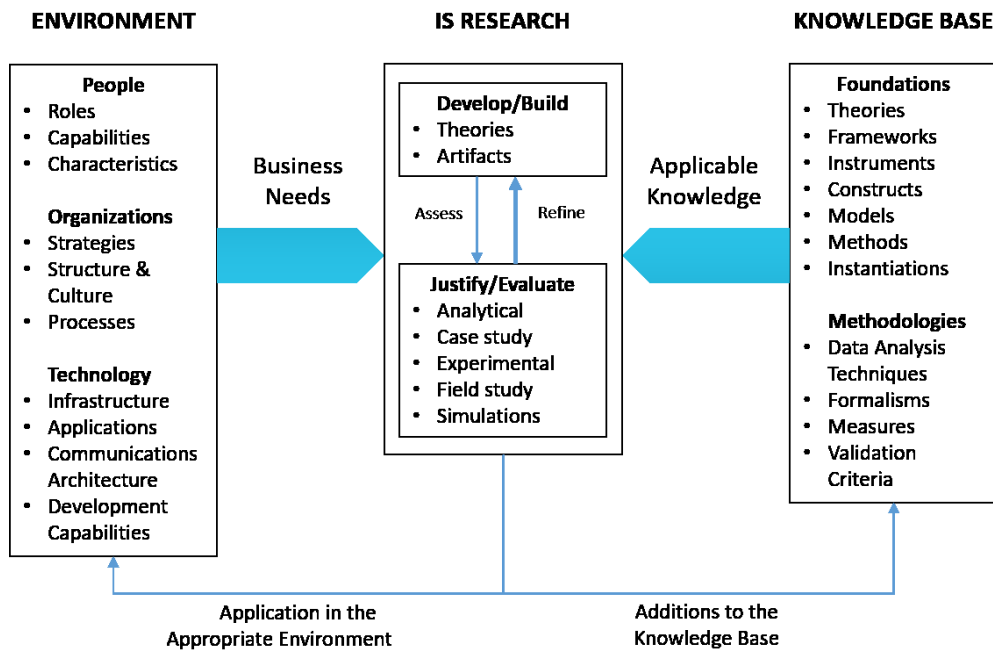
According to this model, the research problem and consequently the phenomenon of interest is defined by the existing *environment*. The phenomenon manifests itself as a tangible *business need*. In turn, the *knowledge base* consisting of existing research, frameworks, theories, data analysis techniques etc. provides the material for carrying out IS research. In this study, the case-company, its website and the importance of lead generation comprise the business need, while existing literature and the researcher's professional expertise make up the knowledge base. With the model by Hevner et al. (2004) as the guiding framework, researchers can aim to develop and build theories for their study, which can then be tested in real-world scenarios through justification and evaluation. In doing so, the research results in an application of some sort to the existing environment (hopefully meeting the initial business need) and a contribution to the knowledgebase, as can be seen in figure 4.

The research design of this study was based on the model by Hevner et al. (2004) due to its appropriate fit for the aim of the study. The environment and business needs are what drove the study in the first place, the knowledge base aided the research that studied how and if those needs could be met. In practice, this meant that through a literature review of the knowledge base, consisting of existing research, theories and methods, a *hypothesized model of conversion design* was created in chapter 4 and 5. After which the model was

tested and analyzed in a real-world environment through a preselected webpage on the case-company's corporate website, as depicted in chapter 6. The effect of the hypothesized model on the conversion rate was measured through relevant metrics. As per the above and following the model by Hevner et al. (2004) in combination with Järvinen's (2012) suggestions of theory building in theory-testing research the study can be broken down into two main steps.

1. Develop and build: Forward a hypothesized model of conversion design through literature review of existing theories and previous research.

2. Justify and evaluate: Test the robustness of the model through application on the subject webpage followed by a qualitative content analysis supported by additional quantitative data.

Step 2 involved actually designing a new version of the subject page based on the hypothesized model and analysis of how that version performed in comparison to the previous version. The subject page's design before the implementation of the model will throughout this thesis be referred to as the *old design*, and the design after the implementation will be referred to as the *new design*.

The model by Hevner et al. (2004) draws similarities with both Järvinen's (2012) and also March and Smith's (1995) model for IS research in the sense that all three models discuss IS research as being a two-fold process of *build* and *evaluate*. Albeit they use different terminology to some extent, the main premise remains very similar. March and Smith (1995, p. 258) refer to the *build* process as the construction of an *artifact*, while the *evaluate* process refers to the creation of criteria for assessing the artifacts performance. The hypothesized model in this study represents the artifact March and Smith refer to. The fact that these three models are fairly similar strengthens the appropriateness of the model by Hevner et al. (2004) for this study and consequently the reliability of the research design.

When it comes to optimizing for more leads, Rabhan (2013, p. 90) suggests beginning with a page in the conversion funnel that most visitors have to go through to convert. Ash (2012, p. 252) also suggest beginning with the best performing pages that generate the most revenue. Additionally, no page on a website is exactly the same as another in terms of design. Some visual elements remain the same in order to portray a coherent and understandable design, but the visual and written content of a page should not be

duplicated to another. Therefore, it is not feasible to analyze the role of design across all pages on the website simultaneously, but rather focus on one page as a subject of study. The page chosen for this study is the main page for the company's hospitality products: https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml. It is a page that arguably all visitors interested in the hospitality vertical go through, as such it is also one of the website's top performing pages in terms of conversions and traffic (see appendix D).

3.1.1 Qualitative literature review

To develop the hypothesized model, a literature review was performed. The literature review is a research method in which the researcher reviews a *body of literature*, represented by the knowledge base as per the Hevner et al. (2004) to immerse himself in the phenomenon of interest and to identify key concepts and methodologies that are relevant to the study (Hart 2018, p. 31). Due to the unquantifiable nature of this literature review it classifies as a *qualitative* research method. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 26-27) defines the qualitative research strategy as being an *inductive* approach that concerns itself with the generation of theory. Which is exactly what this literature review was conducted for; generation of theory presented through the hypothesized model. As such the literature review constitutes the *develop and build* stage of the model by Hevner et al. (2004).

The literature review comprises chapter 4 and 5 of this study and consisted of existing literature and research within the fields of *inbound marketing*, *lead generation*, *user-centered design*, *conversion rate optimization*, *landing page optimization*, and *e-servicesapes*. The review included references from other fields as well consisting of both academical research and other sources, but the ones mentioned above make out the topics and frameworks that were found the most relevant for conversion design. As mentioned previously, the amount of academic research conducted within the context of lead generation and web design is very limited. Out of the various fields mentioned, e-servicescapes and how they relate to *service quality* was one of the few fields that had been properly researched in academic context and did not focus on lead generation, but on purchase intentions withing e-commerce. However, parallels can be drawn between purchase intentions in e-commerce and conversions in lead generation, as will become apparent throughout chapter 4 and especially section 4.2.4. The most prominent

references on conversion design found in the review, were books or guides created by business practitioners and marketing companies, such as Halligan and Shah (2014), Blanks and Jesson (2018), Rabhan (2013), Ash (2012), Goward (2013) Rothman (2014) and Gardner (2018). Other noteworthy references from the academic field would be Chaffey (2015), Chaffey and Elis-Chadwick (2012), Chaffey and Smith (2013) and Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015). However, none of the academic references that were found focus exclusively on conversion design, nor do they treat the subject with the same importance as the before mentioned authors.

The purpose of the literature review was to develop a deep understanding of conversion design and through that understanding put forward the hypothesized model of optimal conversion design and as such it comprises the develop and build stage of this case study in accordance with the model by Hevner et al (2004). To then perform the justify and evaluate stage, a *qualitative content analysis* was performed.

3.1.2 Qualitative content analysis

As was mentioned in section 3.1, the application and testing of the hypothesized model on the subject page involved developing a new design. To thoroughly analyze the new design and to highlight the differences between the old design that was not based on the hypothesized model and the new design in terms of the visual and contextual differences, a visual analysis had to be performed. The primary data source for this analysis was a number of screenshots as will be discussed in section 3.2.1. To clearly evaluate the hypothesized model through the subject webpage and due to the written and visual nature of the case in question, a *qualitative* research method was chosen for this part of the case study as well. The *qualitative content analysis* constitutes the *justify and evaluate* stage of the model by Hevner et al. (2004).

The qualitative content analysis is a technique suitable for analysis of multiple types of data, such as written and visual data (Saldaña 2013). Websites are exactly that type of medium, it is a visual presentation of both written text, images, symbols and graphics. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 289-91) define content analysis as a way of analyzing printed or visual documents and texts through predetermined categories in a very systematic and replicable manner. This consistent approach aids in suppressing possible bias and is not very focused on generating data, rather it outlines an approach to how data (texts and

documents) can be interpreted. As such, content analysis can be used to analyze many different types of media and is especially applicable to various types of unstructured information, such as interviews and qualitative case studies. Websites have also been known to be a fitting subject of study for the content analysis approach. Duriau, Reger and Pfarrer (2007) concluded that the content analysis has a lot of potential in relation to the enormous amount of text, graphic content, audio and video that comprise organizational and corporate websites.

3.1.3 Mixed methods research

The research done in the literature review defined that *theory generating* stage of the case study (develop and build in the model by Hevner et al. (2004)) as being an *inductive* approach. However, the evaluation stage of the case study, the content analysis (justify and evaluate in the model by Hevner et al. (2004)), concerns itself with the testing of the theory built in the literature review, which according to Bryman and Bell (2012, p. 26-27) would classify this part of the study as *deductive* and consequently as incorporating a quantitative research method. This is due to the fact that *theory testing* studies are specifically considered as quantitative. However, the data collected and interpreted in the content analysis, the screenshots, are a qualitative and not a quantitative data source.

Additionally, the research design itself based on the model by Hevner et al. (2004) and with influences from Järvinen (2012) and March and Smith (1995) can also be considered a deductive approach on the holistic level. Namely, the process of deduction is as follows; (1) theory, (2) hypothesis, (3) data collection, (4) findings, (5) hypothesis confirmed or rejected and (6) revision of theory (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 11), which is very much in line with the research design and structure of this case study. Furthermore, to actually measure if the hypothesized model had facilitated the aim of the study, in other words, if the new design had any tangible effect on the number of generated leads, the case study had to consider some quantitative data in addition to the qualitative data. The quantitative data mainly consisted of the conversion rate of the subject page.

All of the above combined with the fact that the study is a case study incorporating both a literature review and a content analysis classifies this study holistically as a *mixed methods research.* This approach occurs when the researcher cannot rely on only one research strategy alone, such as a qualitative or quantitative one, but must validate the

research findings with a method from the other strategy (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 636). Bryman and Bell (2011), Yin (2009) and Järvinen (2012) also speak for the usage of mixed methods research as they advocate the usage of both qualitative and quantitative data in the same study to produce better results. The usage of multiple data sources that come about from a mixed methods research is usually referred to as *triangulation*, which will be explained in more detail in the following section. The study can however be said to incorporate a deductive research design into a predominantly qualitative research method fueled by primary data of a qualitative nature. The study also utilizes quantitative data as secondary data to further confirm or reject the conclusions drawn through the qualitative research. The priority therefore lies on qualitative research while the quantitative data is used in sequence as per Bryman and Bell's (2011, p. 632) classification of mixed methods research approaches.

3.2 Data Collection and analysis

If possible, both qualitative and quantitative data should be used in any case study as the need for using multiple sources of evidence is much greater than in other research methods (Yin, 2018, p. 127). Combination of multiple data points further enhances the reliability of the results and is referred to as *triangulation.* Triangulation is the procedure of observing a research issue from at least two different points (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke 2004, p. 178) and enables researchers to cross-check their findings from one research strategy against the findings from a method belonging to another research strategy (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 397). The benefit of triangulation is that data collected through different means and from different sources produce a wider scope of coverage and may result in a more complete picture of the phenomenon of interest (Järvinen 2012, p. 75). Yin (2009, p. 97-101) also argues that case studies must address multiple data sources in order to prove facts.

However, qualitative data is the dominant data that *theory-testing* research concerns itself with (Järvinen 2012, p. 75). In this study, the qualitative primary data consisted of existing research, theories and business methods for the literature review, but also of screenshots of the subject webpage. Sequentially, the quantitative secondary data was gathered from Google Analytics through a sequential A/B split test.

3.2.1 Qualitative primary data - screenshots

Screenshots worked as the primary data for analyzing the design of subject webpage. Screenshots were taken before and after the implementation of the hypothesized model. Primary data is data explicitly collected by the researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the research problem (Malhotra 2007, p. 42). The screenshots constituted the visual documents of qualitive content analysis as defined by Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 289) in section 3.1.1. The reason for choosing screenshots as the primary data is simple, it is the only way to visually analyze a webpage, other than doing it live in the Internet browser. The latter was not possible for the old design as the live webpage was changed to the new design before the analysis could be made, which left screenshots as the only viable option.

The screenshots of both the old and the new design were taken at the same screen resolution of 1920 x 1080 because this was the most frequently used screen resolution on website visitors' devices (see appendix C). Google Chrome was the Internet browser of choice for the visitors by a clear majority (see appendix E), so all screenshots were taken in this specific browser. Additionally, irregularities in how webpages are displayed are common between browsers, so taking all screenshots in Google Chrome made sure no such irregularities interfered with the research. However, the possibility of such irregularities does raise questions about the reliability of the results of the study when only one Internet browser is taken into consideration although in reality, multiple browsers are used for accessing the case-company's website. However, the differences that might exist in the design were deemed to be so minimal that it would not have had any significant effect on the result of the case study.

For both designs, four screenshots were taken. They portray the page itself and the *lead generation form*, which is not hosted directly on the page but as an overlay. Three out of four screenshots are of the lead generation form to show its different states. The form is an interactive element which means that it changes according to how visitors engage with it, hence the different states. All screenshots of both the old and the new design can be viewed in appendix F and G, respectively. The screenshots of the old design where taken 22.02.2019 and the screenshots of the new design where taken 08.05.2019. The design of the subject page was updated on the 25th of February 2019.

The issue with using screenshots as a primary data source is that they are static, while webpages mostly are dynamic and always include some level of interactivity. Visual data in general has been known to be more difficult to analyze in content analysis research when comparing to text documents (Saldaña 2013, p. 52). Despite this, some level of interactivity was still analyzed in this study, such as the above-mentioned lead generation form, due to interactivity's positioning as a key element in conversion design as will become apparent in chapters 5 and 6.

3.2.2 Coding schedule and coding manual

In order to examine the screenshots and evaluate their design a process of evaluation had to be created and the screenshots themselves needed to be translated into usable data. In this study the above was achieved through the process of *coding*. Coding is a crucial step in the process of performing content analysis. It requires the researcher to assemble a so-called *coding scheme*. A content analysis coding scheme consists of two main parts: a *coding schedule* and a *coding manual* (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 299).

To understand coding, one must first understand the definition of *code* in this context. Saldaña (2013, p. 3) defines code in content analysis as the following; "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data". He continues to state that websites are an example of such visual data. Malhotra et al. (2007, p. 431) states that a code is usually defined as a number and exemplifies this by explaining that e.g. the sex of respondents in a survey can be *coded* with numbers; 1 for females and 2 for males. However as was mentioned in the previous section, visual data is notoriously difficult to analyze. Therefore, Saldaña (2013, p. 52) recommends generating language-based data that accompany the visual data, he summarizes that researchers must use words to articulate their "take" on visual data. Due to this fact, this study used words, phrases and whole sentences to evaluate the screenshots, the screenshots being the visual data referenced above.

The coding scheme been stated to be the main reason as to why content analysis can be considered a safe research methodology. Namely because the coding scheme can be corrected if flaws are detected as the study progresses (Tallerico, 1991; Woodrum, 1984 in Duriau et al. 2007, p. 7). The coding scheme and mainly the coding manual is what

allows for the systematic approach of content analysis as described in previous sections. The coding manual essentially defines a set of rules or instructions so that the gathered data, i.e. code, can be categorized into reasonable groups for practical interpretation (Malhotra 2007, p. 431-433). In other words, the coding schedule is what the researcher uses to document the analysis findings based on the rules set in the coding manual. To further understand the concept of coding, Järvinen (2012, p. 71) offers a very understandable explanation; within qualitative research, "coding is the process of analyzing data".

The coding manual used in this study was based on the hypothesized model presented in section 5.5, it was thus built on the dimensions depicted in the hypothesized model. See appendix H for the coding manual. The evaluation of the screenshots was documented in two separate coding schedules, one for each version of the design of the subject page, these can be viewed in appendices I and J. In this manner the analysis of the subject page combined language-based data (the coding schedules) with visual data (the screenshots) as per Saldaña's recommendation above.

3.2.3 Quantitative secondary data - Google Analytics

The main difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that qualitative approaches focus on providing insights and understanding of the problem at hand, while quantitative approaches seek to quantify data and apply a statistical analysis. Scholars and advocates of both approaches have been known throughout history to quarrel and debate about which one is better, while in fact the combination of both can generate more reliable results and provide valuable insights that can help in creating successful marketing strategies (Malhotra 2007, p. 143). Yin (2018, p. 126) explains that many case studies have relied on a single source of evidence but also states that a single-source approach is not recommended in case study research. He argues that the opportunity to use different data sources is one of the most significant strengths of case study data collection. This is the process of triangulation as discussed in the preceding sections.

The characteristics of the two approaches determine the type of data collected, the quantifiable and statistical nature of quantitative research means that quantitative data consists of numbers, while qualitative data can consist of text, documents and visual data as has been discussed.

In contrast to primary data, secondary data consists of data that is collected for another purpose than the problem at hand (Malhotra 2007, p. 42). The secondary data, when compared to primary data, is in addition to the above; easy and rapid to collect, has a low collection cost and a short collection time (Malhotra 2007, p. 107). In this case study the quantitative secondary data consisted in its entirety of numerical data from the tool Google Analytics. The main data collected was the *conversion rate* of the subject page, which indicates how many website visitors convert into leads. The conversion rate was used to determine the effect of the hypothesized model and thus determine the role of design for the generation of leads. However, other secondary data regarding the subject page was also used to either support or determine various aspects throughout the study, such as visitors' devices, screen resolutions, historical data etc., all secondary data collected from Google Analytics can be viewed in the appendices. All of the secondary data has only been collected from the subject page www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml and only from desktop devices, with the exception of the page performance comparison which includes data from multiple pages (see appendix D).

The subjectivity of the screenshot analysis, although systematically conducted through the coding schedule, multiplied the importance of the secondary data. The screenshot analysis was subjected to the personal views of the researcher, meaning it was subjective in nature. This type of bias was minimized through a proper research design and through the fact that the coding schedule was based on the hypothesized model, but when e.g. analyzing a dimension such as aesthetics, it is impossible to entirely eradicate the subjective views and opinions of the researcher. The only way of doing that would be to design a coding schedule with set rules of analysis, which was the case in this study, however, some factors in design are based on personal beliefs and opinions and even cultural differences, aesthetics being a good example of such a factor. Even though the subjectivity of the screenshots is a weakness in the design of the case study, not leaving any room for this subjectivity would limit the study in other ways and might produce a result that is not representative of the average website visitor. Namely, as the real-world website visitors are individual human beings with their own subjective views, it would not be accurate to eliminate the subjective views of the researcher entirely.

3.2.4 A/B split testing and conversion experimentation

For performing an actual test of the designs, a modified A/B split test was performed. As explained in more detail in section 4.2.5, A/B split testing is common practice in conversion experimentation (Ash 2012; Goward 2013; Rothman 2014). In this case study a sequential test was performed, where the old design was replaced by the new and the difference in conversion rate was assessed over time. Ash (2012, p. 214) recommends parallel A/B tests over sequential ones, however, parallel testing requires specific tooling while a sequential test can be done with simple analytics, such as those provided through Google Analytics (Rothman 2014, p 323; Ash 2012, p. 256). Additionally, the time constraints of this study where such that the sequential method was deemed more appropriate.

The model by Hevner et al. (2004, p. 80) presented in section 3.1 manifested the overall research design of this case study. The sequential A/B split test constituted the *assess* part of the model (see figure 4, section 3.1). Therefore, the A/B test combined with the screenshot analysis were the main tools for evaluating the *develop and build* stage of the model, thus making up the *justify and evaluate* stage. The unique purpose of the A/B test was as such to either validate or invalidate the hypothesized model.

3.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the methodology of this thesis. First of all, it has been concluded that the thesis in itself manifests as a case study, wherein the phenomenon of interest was the role of design in the generation of leads in online lead generation, specifically on websites. The actual case was the corporate website of the case-company from which one webpage was chosen as the subject of study. The research strategy can be classified as a mixed methods research as it incorporates a qualitative literature review and content analysis consisting of qualitative data, while also utilizing quantitative data to cross-check the findings in the qualitative research.

The thesis's research design was based on the model by Hevner et al. (2004) and can roughly be divided into two main stages; a develop and build stage where a hypothesized model of conversion design was created, and a justify and evaluate stage which task was to validate or invalidate the hypothesized model. The structure of the research design can

be considered as a deductive one. The research design also draws on suggestion by Järvinen's (2012) theory-testing methodology to complement the model by Hevner et al. (2004).

In practice, the develop and build stage consisted of an extensive literature review of existing literature and research that resulted in the hypothesized model. Sequentially, the justify and evaluate stage was performed by applying a new design on the subject page, a design that was developed in accordance with the hypothesized model. The old and new design where then evaluated through a content analysis that analyzed screenshots of the subject page's two different designs by the help of a coding schedule that was created for this purpose. To additionally examine the results from the content analysis and to establish whether or not the hypothesized model had had any impact on the conversion rate of the case-company's website, quantitative data from Google Analytics was collected and analyzed.

4 LEAD GENERATION FOR B2B MARKETING

The website and online lead generation have been acknowledged as primary enablers for increasing sales opportunities for the case-company Hibox, and as such have been acknowledged as the principal subjects of study. The purpose of this chapter is to examine lead generation in a B2B marketing context and to define which role the website plays in the lead generation process, as well as what designing for conversion means.

4.1 The evolution of B2B buying behavior and its effect on marketing

Buying behavior within B2B has changed drastically during the last decade. As with many aspects of marketing and business in general; globalization, digitization and the rapid development of the Internet have brought about this change. According to Rothman (2014, p. 11) B2B marketers used to apply so called outbound marketing techniques to put marketing content directly in front of buyers to generate leads and sales. These techniques included advertising, email, TV, radio and print media. These techniques put the marketers in control of what information buyers were exposed to. Today, the Internet with its easily accessible information has enabled a power shift in favor of the buyers, effectively putting the buyers in control of the buying process (Kurvinen & Seppä 2016, p. 13). Buyers can access an abundance of information at any time of their choosing and have increased ability to block and ignore traditional outbound techniques through spam filters and new information sources such as search engines (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 3-8). Figure 5 depicts a modern B2B buying process with six different stages.

Researchers agree that the Internet has become a significant element for B2B buyers in the search and evaluation stages of the buying process (stages 3 and 4 in figure 5), meaning that most buyers today begin the process by researching products and services online (Adamson, Dixon & Toman 2012, p. 54: Holliman & Rowley 2014, p. 285). According to Kaye (2014) the majority of B2B buyers begin their buying process by looking for information with the aid of search engines, and some studies show that as much as 90 % of buyers use search engines at some point during the buying process (Snyder & Hilal 2015).

Figure 5: The B2B buying process (Charlesworth 2018, p. 22). Revised.
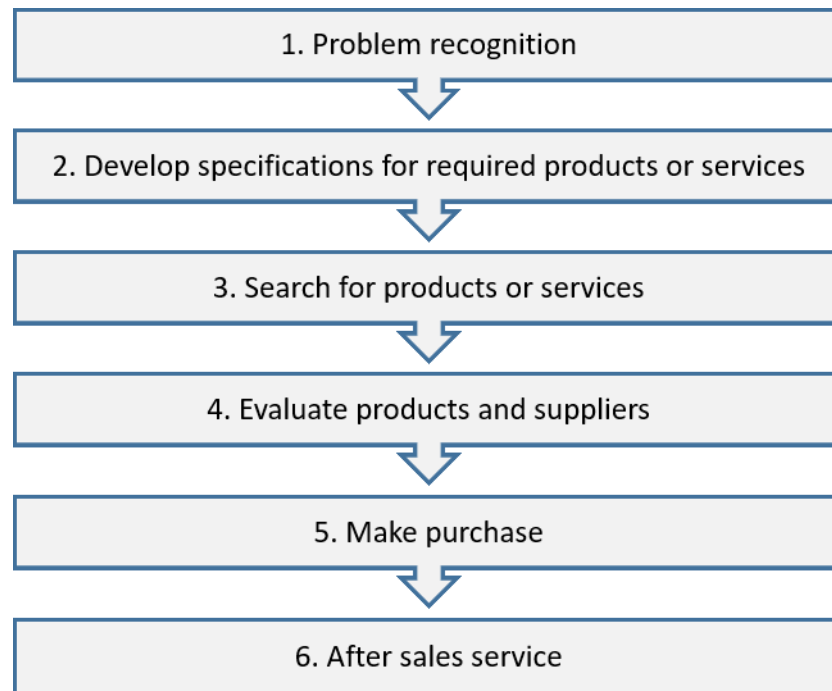
The increased use of search engines highlights the importance of a functional and competitive corporate website. Websites are the tool with which companies generate visibility in search engines and the ultimate source of information that buyers are looking for. They work as the main marketing communications hub for most digital marketing efforts. Ryan (2014, p. 44) considers websites to be the most important digital real estate a business can own, and that eventually all digital marketing activities are channeled back to this single point. The website's critical role in the B2B buying process makes it one of the most important tools for B2B marketers. This has contributed to the development of new marketing tactics that increase traffic to websites and that increase conversions. The main marketing model used by marketers today for this purpose is *inbound marketing* (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012 p. 628).

4.1.1 The rise of inbound marketing

The evolutionary change of the B2B buying process fueled by the technological boom has given birth to new digitally focused marketing concepts. *Inbound marketing* and one of its most prominent sub-components *content marketing*, focuses on earning their

customers by providing valuable content and seeing the buyers as part of the value creation process rather than subjects of marketer-ruled advertisements.

According to Patrutiu-Baltes (2016, p. 66), inbound marketing has the aim of winning the target audiences' interest through digital tools, i.e. to *draw* buyers to products and services through the *conscious decision* of the buyers themselves. It is a digital marketing concept that is performed online through marketing techniques that include content marketing, SEO, social media marketing and branding. It is also the opposite of traditional outbound marketing with the very nature of not being as intrusive as the traditional techniques, but rather attracting buyers through problem recognition and timely solutions of high-quality content that fulfils either an emotional or useful criterion (Opreana & Vinerean 2015 p. 29-32). In other words, inbound aims to win the targeted buyer's interest through well-timed content hosted online that the buyers themselves decide to engage with. Inbound is considered to have a bottoms-up approach to marketing as the focus is for companies to be found by buyers rather than the companies finding the buyers. Table 1 explains the main differences between traditional outbound marketing and inbound marketing and thus gives a good explanation of what inbound is in practice.

The purpose of inbound marketing is to *pull* buyers towards a business (Avery, Dahod & Steenburgh 2009, p. 1; Patriutu-Baltes 2016, p. 62; Pateman and Holt 2011, p. 10), and is largely similar to the concept of *pull marketing*. However, inbound focuses on the entire sales cycle while pull is mostly concerned with the traffic generating aspect of inbound. Yet the adjective pull helps in understanding the tactics of inbound since it describes the nature of attracting buyers to a company rather than the other way around. Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 400) suggest the Internet to be the perfect place for a pull-type marketing strategy where marketers can pull customers to their website trough search engines and social media.

Table 1: The differences between outbound and inbound marketing (Opreana & Vinerean 2015 p. 30). Revised.

	OUTBOUND MARKETING	INBOUND MARKETING
BASIS	Interruption	Organic
FOCUS	Finding customers	Getting found by potential, existing and aspirational consumers
AIM	Increased sales	Creating long lasting relationships by reaching and converting qualified consumers
TARGET	Large audiences	Interested prospects
TACTICS	Print advertisements TV advertisements Outdoors advertising Cold calling Trade shows Email lists	Blogs, Ebooks, White papers Videos on YouTube, Vimeo, etc. Search engine optimization tactics Infographics Webinars Feeds, RSS Social media marketing tactics

Inbound marketing defines a methodology of four pillars, or stages, that describes steps that marketers need to take in order to move buyers along the sales cycle. The four stages are *attract*, *convert*, *close* and *delight*. The sales cycle is geared towards a digital arena as per the definition of the marketing concept itself. The framework is illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: The 4 stages of inbound marketing (Champion 2018; Kurvinen & Seppä 2016, p. 187). Revised.
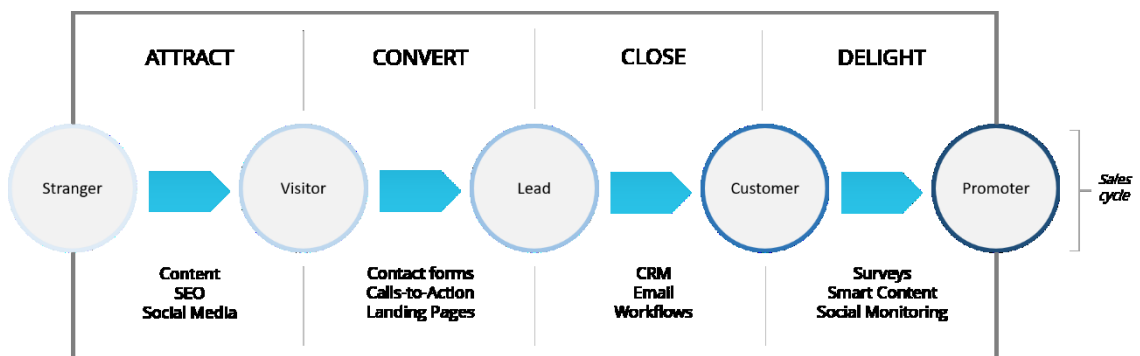
This framework and its stages with their respective outputs is realized through various marketing techniques and tools. The *convert* stage describes the act of taking an online visitor from just a visitor to a sales qualified lead, this stage in the framework embodies the concept of *lead generation* on the web, and thus illustrates where in the sales cycle lead generation primarily takes place. Lead generation, as part of inbound marketing is on a holistic level also concerned with the generation of traffic to the website, meaning that lead generation also concerns itself with the *attract* stage. However, as have been mentioned throughout, this study focuses on the role of the website in the online lead generation process, therefore the *convert* stage is the stage of relevance for the purpose of this study.

In practice, this stage consists of convincing a buyer to click a *call to action* (CTA) in a digital marketing channel that takes the visitor to a dedicated landing page, i.e. a webpage designed to convert the visitor into a lead (HubSpot 2018).

With regard to the B2B buying process described in section 4.1 and illustrated in figure 5, the inbound marketing framework can be understood as beginning from stage 3 of the buying process, the research stage (see figure 5). The way in which buyers use the Internet in the buying process makes lead generation the key objective of modern B2B websites (Charlesworth 2018, p. 153). The importance of the corporate website can therefore not be understated. It is a pivotal element of the lead generation process and in turn a fundamental part of the overall sales strategy of a B2B company.

4.1.2 Lead generation defined

"The true power of inbound marketing lies in its ability to not only stretch the top of your sales funnel (and pull more people in), but also stretch the middle (get more to convert)" (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 109). This is exactly where lead generation comes in, convincing more website visitors to convert into leads. Rothman (2014, p. 10) explains lead generation as being the marketing process of capturing and engaging interest in a service or product with the goal of creating a sales pipeline and eventually new customers. In practice, this means attracting and converting prospects that have shown interest into potential customers (Kolowich 2018).

B2B sales is dependent on a long buying process. Buyers are not likely to acquire something "off-the-shelf" as in B2C. They evaluate options thoroughly before settling on

the provider they feel fits best. Due to this evaluation process, lead generation is essential. Sellers need to acquire leads, i.e. potential buyers, to be included in the buyers' evaluation process, and to be able to affect that process. Due to the way the B2B buying process works and to the behavior of B2B buyers, the creation of a lead is a requirement for an actual sale to take place. Therefore, lead generation is a major part of the B2B marketing and sales mix.

In its simplest form, a lead is the output of a certain marketing activity such as a campaign or strategy. According to Morey and McCann (1983, p. 196), a lead is the name of a person or business that can be considered a prime prospect for a company's product or service. This definition still holds true today, but in the age of online lead generation, leads usually consist of contact details rather than just a name. In fact, an email address or a phone number is far more valuable than just a name, because it allows for easy contact to the possibly interested buyer.

A company can actively seek to acquire several different types of leads for different purposes with different tactics. For example, lead generation can be used for list building, newsletter signups, e-book downloads and gathering sales leads. It can be done through both online and offline tactics, such as SEO, newsletters, webinars, cold calls, events or print media (Schultz, Doerr & Frederiksen 2013, p. 195-219). Ultimately, the goal of lead generation is growth, as mentioned above, yet how the leads are gathered can vary greatly. For example, visitors can be asked to provide their personal information to sign up for a webinar or to be allowed to download a free e-book. The most straightforward method for B2B websites, however, is to persuade visitors of the value proposition so that they convert into a lead out of interest for the company.

The case-company of this study uses lead generation for the acquisition of *sales qualified leads* (hereinafter lead), i.e. a potential customer that has shown interest in the case-company's products and services and is therefore susceptible to further marketing and sales efforts by moving forward in the sales cycle, from the *convert* to the *close* stage in the inbound marketing framework. The wanted outcome for a lead is for the lead to eventually turn into a paying customer (Shaw 2018).

The case-company's corporate website that serves as the subject of study for this thesis, resembles Chaffey's (2015, p. 17) definition of a *service-oriented relationship-building website*. The purpose of such websites is to stimulate purchase and build relationships for

businesses that sell products that are not suitable for direct online selling. The main business contribution of these sites is encouragement of offline sales and to generate leads.

4.1.3 The lead generation website

"If you have to absolutely nail one thing for lead generation success, it is your website" (Rothman 2014, p. 99). The corporate website is the main online marketing hub for most businesses where potential buyers come looking for information and in online lead generation it is the single most powerful conversion engine. The website has essentially replaced the traditional B2B marketing brochures, catalogues and trade shows with a digital and dynamic upgrade that is hosted on the Internet (Charlesworth 2018, p. 21). With regard to a piece of content that presents a business and its services or products, nothing has really changed. However, the opportunities a website provides compared to a traditional outbound marketing tool such as a printed brochure are endless.

A website provides marketers with the possibility to measure and develop the user experience in real-time to provide increased value for their visitors, and marketers have complete control to tailor brand messaging and other marketing communication elements. Despite all these obvious benefits, the role the website plays within lead generation is the most valuable aspect for B2B marketers.

The website is a platform for turning potential sales prospects into leads and is a critical stage of the inbound marketing sales cycle. It can be defined as a conversion engine for online traffic, without which all other traffic-generating digital marketing efforts would be in vain because traffic in itself is worthless (Ryan 2014, p. 35). Traffic needs to be converted into leads in order to be moved along the sales cycle and create tangible value for a business, in other words paying customers. Generating leads revolves around the art and science of *conversions*, which is to encourage website visitors to convert from visitor to lead. This is done by helping visitors take a predefined action on the website; in most B2B lead generation cases visitors convert by submitting their contact information through a lead generation form (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 109: Rabhan 2013, p. 38). The *conversion rate* is the proportion of visitors that convert into leads and is usually represented as a percentage. Figure 7 depicts the conversion rate and the website conversion process.

Figure 7: The website conversion process (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 42).

Providing visitors with a website that fulfils their requirements and piques their interest however is not easy. It can take a visitor as little as 50 milliseconds to judge whether to stay on the site or just exit without viewing any more pages on the site, also known as *bouncing* (Lindgaard, Fernandes, Dudek & Brown 2006). According to Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 184) 47 % of visitors also expect a page to load in two seconds or less, additionally emphasizing the importance of creating a good *first impression.* The abundance of information available to the buyers makes them very critical to what content they deem worthy. Even if visitors decide to stay on the site, they have the option of navigating away at any given moment if they lose interest. This provides challenges for lead generation websites since visitors are constantly one click away from abandoning the site, meaning that they can bounce at any stage of the sales funnel. This phenomenon is illustrated in figure 8.

The contemporary sales funnel in figure 8 can be considered to represent a website, it is also an alternative presentation of the B2B buying process (see figure 5). Visitors can enter the funnel at any stage depending on if they e.g. enter the homepage first, or a subpage deeper in the funnel. They might also arrive at the site with the intention of converting and therefore jump directly into the purchase stage, or they might still be in either the search or evaluation phases of the buying process and arrive at the website at the beginning of the funnel. Also, the traffic source from which the visitor is arriving, and a range of other elements affect at which stage of the funnel and buying process the visitor enters the site (Charlesworth 2018, p. 121-123). Important to understand is that visitors can exit and enter the funnel at any stage, as figure 8 shows. Marketers must therefore

carefully consider how the website is tailored towards these different scenarios and various user needs, as well as give clear incentives for visitors as they are guided towards conversion through the funnel.

Figure 8: A contemporary sales funnel (Charlesworth 2018, p. 122). Revised.

The number of possible exits combined with the short attention span of website visitors also highlights the fact that grabbing the visitors' attention already at the point of entry (the first page they see) is of utmost importance, preferably one page would be enough to convince a visitor to convert no matter where in the funnel they are. This means that the visual perception a visitor experiences is a deciding factor in the conversion process.

Charlesworth (2018, p. 21) confirms the hypothesis above by stating that "The B2B website has the key objective of lead generation – making the presentation of information an essential element." This highlights the fact that the visual elements combined with the presented information will affect whether the visitors convert or not. It can be concluded that as the corporate website has become a powerful tool for B2B marketers and a major part of the B2B buying process, the two most important elements of lead generation websites are the content visitors see on the site and the presentation of this content, in other words the *visual design*. There are many design principles to consider when developing lead generation websites. The remainder of this chapter will focus on presenting the most important design methods for increasing conversions through design.

4.2 Conversion design

The previous sections have defined the corporate website's importance within B2B markets, and it can be summarized that the website is; a major part of the buying process, a central channel for all digital marketing communications, the best online conversion tool today, a crucial part of online lead generation, and most importantly; that the design and content presented on the website is a deciding factor in the conversion process. Throughout this study, the term *conversion design* will be used as an umbrella term for all conversion related web design practices, all of which will be described in the following section. Conversion design therefore refers to the practice of developing websites with the aim of increasing conversion rates. The term itself was chosen as there are many different design methods and frameworks marketers must consider when designing for conversions as will became apparent in the remainder of this chapter, so to illustrate the combination of these different design approaches a term was needed. Conversion design was chosen by the researcher due to its holistic angle and it is not a widely used term by practitioners.

As the Internet has evolved, so has the design and usage of websites. Initially visual design was a secondary objective in developing websites, after which they evolved into the commercial space where aesthetic design was so important that it often outshined usability. With the rise of the search engines website development focused mainly on creating search engine friendly sites that rank well. Today SEO is still a major element of web design, and visual design combined with usability are the main focus areas for most websites. However, websites are often made for the companies making them, rather than for the visitors using them, as mentioned in previous sections. Modern, result-driven websites should be developed from a user point of view, with visual design and usability being complemented by content and conversions. Customer-centric web design is still surprisingly rare because most web designers either focus on what management thinks looks best or what their clients, i.e. other companies, think looks the best (Gofman, Moskowitz & Metz 2009, p. 286; Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 35). Obviously, design and usability are mandatory. A beautiful design combined with an easily navigated site provide for a pleasing user experience, but it is arguable that a functional design that focuses on providing customer-oriented content and a clear path for conversion generates measurable growth in sales as well as a good user experience, while e.g. an aesthetically

appealing site alone would not have the same effect on sales growth (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 35-37).

Essentially, a user-centric design approach is needed because a website that simply looks great can only go so far. A good lead generation website needs to have a healthy combination of lead generation tactics, good design and usability to facilitate maximum conversions (Rothman 2014, p. 99-101).

The Power Law of CRO

Conversion design is a sales growth activity with a long run focus. By optimizing the main conversion engine (the corporate website) for a higher number of conversions, the number of leads will grow which in turn will increase the number of sales and the company's revenue. One could think of conversion design as one of the most important business tasks of a web-based business, or a business that uses the Internet as a main tool for lead generation, such as the case-company Hibox. In fact, Blanks and Jesson (2018), authors of *Making Websites Win* and founders of the company *Conversion Rate Experts* present a framework they call: *The Power Law of CRO*. CRO meaning Conversion Rate Optimization which is a term they have coined but is synonymous to conversion design, see section 4.2.2. The Power Law illustrates the achievable sales growth that conversion design facilitates (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 51-56).

It builds upon three benefits as a result from higher conversion rates that together facilitates a disproportionate increase in profit; (1) increase in customers results in an increase of revenue, (2) generating higher conversion rates do not require significant financial investment, meaning that it results in a greater profit increase than many other marketing activities, and (3) with increased profit, marketers have more funding which can be allocated towards increasing traffic to the website and the three benefits repeat themselves. The process of these benefits is illustrated in figure 9 below.

Testing is the "gold standard"

Designing for conversion is also about experimentation. Testing different variants of a webpage to see which one converts the best and has the highest level of interaction from its visitors is a fundamental part of conversion design. It is an iterative design process, which in practice means measuring various KPI's and adjusting the webpage accordingly. By tracking the actions (or inactions) of your visitors when they visit a certain version of

a webpage, you can reliable determine what they prefer, testing is therefore the "gold standard" of conversion improvement (Ash, Ginty & Page 2012, p. 66)

Figure 9: The power law of CRO (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 51-56).

A higher conversion rate results in:

Benefit 1: More conversions give *more customers* for *free,* resulting in *increased revenue.*

Benefit 2: Conversion rate increase results in *profit increase* without *cost increase.*

Benefit 3: Profit increase unlocks *marketing opportunities* resulting in *more traffic.*

If this doubles... → ...then this doubles... (Benefit 1)

VISITORS × CONVERSION RATE × LIFETIME CUSTOMER SPEND = REVENUE

...but then this also can double... (Benefit 3) → ...in which case, this doubles again (quadruples)

REVENUE − COSTS = PROFIT

...and when this quadruples... → ...then these tend to increase relatively less... → ...so this could grow by over ten times (Benefit 2)

For lead generation websites the main KPI is normally the conversion rate (Saleh & Shukairy 2011, p. 10). Experimenting with new elements continuously is essential for improving the conversion rate because it is next to impossible to know beforehand what a specific group of website visitors will interact the best with, it is a sort of trial and error process.

Where to begin when trying to design for conversions can be a daunting task because there are many concepts within marketing literature that touch on the subject of lead generation and web design, and when marketers need to provide for aesthetics, usability, conversion and customer-oriented design it becomes even more complex. These concepts must be laid out so that the actual conversion boosting elements of a webpage can be identified. The following sections of this chapter will aim to briefly go through the main web design and marketing concepts that play a role in conversion design.

4.2.1 User-centered design

User-centered design (UCD) is a design approach that puts the user in the forefront of the design process. It considered the users' needs, desires and perspectives as primary drivers for designing (Ash 2008, p. 60). On the corporate website, this greatly involves supplying

the users with the right information and answering their questions, but in addition to that it is very much about functionality. From a visitor's perspective, a functioning website is the prerequisite for engagement. For example, if a website simply does not function the way it was intended to or hinders the visitors from reaching a goal through a technical error, it will mostly likely experience high bounce rates and close to no engagement. Visitors that have a bad experience on the website might never return and it will also damage their image of the brand behind the website. These examples highlight the two main subjects of user-centered design: *usability* and *accessibility* (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 291).

Usability

Usability can be thought of as the baseline for web design, a web site with poor usability will not convert its visitors no matter how many conversion boosting elements marketers try to apply. In fact, poor usability can have dire consequences because research suggests that visitors' likelihood to ever engage with a company is highly dependent on the visitors' experience on the corporate website and as many as 75 % of visitors say they judge the credibility of a company based on the website's design (Loveday & Niehaus 2008, p. 1). Usability describes how easy a service or product is to use. The underlying premise is to help the visitor in achieving his or her goal by providing a smooth human-computer interaction. Chaffey and Smith (2012, p. 291-292) describe three characteristics for usability of Internet platforms:

- **Effectiveness**: The accuracy and completeness with which specified users can achieve specified goals in particular environments.

- **Efficiency**: The resources expanded in relation to the accuracy and completeness of goals achieved.

- **Satisfaction**: The comfort and acceptability of the work system to its users and other people affected by its use.

To satisfy all these characteristics web designers focus on creating seamless navigation, clear page structures, appealing visuals and consistency in their designs. Often websites can create a negative user experience thanks to lacking usability. If the visitor gets confused by an overwhelming and unclear information structure or gets lost in poor navigation, the visitor is unlikely to engage with the company.

Historically, B2B websites have been known to have poor usability. The Nielsen Norman group, acknowledged experts in the field of user experience research on websites and web applications (Nielsen Norman Group 2019), found in a study (Nielsen 2006) that many B2B sites emphasize internally focused design, meaning that they fail to deliver an appealing user experience and fail to answer the visitors' main questions. Even today this is the norm for corporate websites. However, companies that do not experience a direct return on investment from web usability, in contrast with ecommerce sites for example, are beginning to realize the benefit of good UX (Nielsen 2018).

Accessibility

Accessibility does not require as much theoretical explanation as its counterpart usability, but it is no less important for user-centered design. Web designers and marketers should design websites so that they are equally accessible by all users from all relevant platforms, such as desktop, mobile and different web browsers. Users with disabilities need to be considered, especially visually impaired or blind users. Logical website structures and clear labelling makes the site easier to navigate, for both visually impaired and non-impaired users. Many users with sight-disabilities also use screen-readers to navigate the web which means that sites must be optimized for this purpose (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 293-294).

Beyond usability and accessibility

Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 282), when discussing user-centered design, accessibility and usability, state that commercial site design is based on creating persuasive and compelling experiences that drive engagement from visitors through relevant messages and content that encourages them to stay on the site and return in the future. Also, according to Bevan (1999 cited in Chaffey 2015, p. 538) a website must meet the needs of the visitors to meet the needs of the organization. In accordance with these statements, web design must be user-centric and aim to answer all the questions visitors might have, user-centered design can be considered as synonymous to user experience (Chaffey 2015, p. 538). This goes beyond the practices of merely creating a seamless technical experience which has been the dominating motivator behind web design for quite some time. Of course, these factors are still of significance today, but they are prerequisites rather than differentiators. For generation Y users for example, aesthetics has been shown to be very important and usability has been shown to be taken for granted (Djamasbi, Siegel & Tulis

2010, p. 309). Non-functional sites are simply not tolerated by visitors because there is always an alternative site or company they can turn to.

Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 171) describe that a website must follow professional design standards that portray credibility, reliability, expertise and consistency and that this type of credibility-based design is the number one factor for increasing conversions through design. They define the four criteria of credibility-based design as:

1. **Site speed**: a website must have quick load times.

2. **Reliability**: No broken pages, spelling mistakes or similar errors can be present on the site.

3. **Attractiveness**: The visual design must be appealing and support the content on the site.

4. **Ease-of-use**: Good usability and navigation are required to make content easily findable.

If either one of these criteria are not met than the site in question will most likely lose part of its visitors. The delivery of a superior user experience has evolved to be more complex than just creating a functional website. A truly user-centric website that can deliver results incorporates conversion and business goals into the design, aligns these goals with those of the visitors and leverages basic accessibility and usability best practices.

4.2.2 Conversion rate optimization

When discussing design from a conversion perspective there are two terms one generally comes across. *Conversion-centered design* (CCD) and *conversion rate optimization* (CRO) are essentially two terms for the same practice, which is designing websites for the main purpose of conversion. Both can be thought of as the same concept and are often used interchangeably by marketers, in this and the following chapter, the term CRO will be used when describing either of these. There is also a third concept called *landing page optimization* (LPO) that at its core is very similar to CRO due to the fact that both share the same end goal. LPO will be discussed in the following section.

Conversion rate optimization is the art of persuasion that delivers commercial results (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 284). It is the practice of convincing a visitor to take a predefined action that results in a conversion (Blanks & Jesson 2018; Rabhan 2013; Saleh

& Shukairy 2011). In online lead generation scenarios this action usually consists of completing a form as described in section 4.1.3. Blanks and Jesson (2018, p. 51) also define CRO as web design done right and as the framework that helps a webpage achieve its goal, whether that is to sell, generate leads, generate signups or downloads, or something else. CRO can be applied to any webpage in any industry.

At its core it is a user-centric approach just as UCD, because it focuses on how the visitors can be persuaded to convert, and in order to convert the visitors must be pleased with the experience and information they receive on the website. Therefore, CRO is highly concerned with the user experience a website offers. Everything that constitutes good user-design and was described in the previous section is also considered good conversion design. It is next to impossible to convince a B2B buyer visiting a webpage to convert if e.g. the usability of that page is of low quality.

One could say that user-centered design alone is not as evolved or effective as conversion rate optimization. CRO applies additional levels of optimization that benefit both the visitor and the company behind the website. While most websites are designed for beauty, CRO favors functionality over aesthetics. Meaning that a neat looking design is important but unless that design is geared toward supporting both the visitors and the company's goals, or fails to do so, beautiful visuals are futile (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 67).

Apart from functionality, one other distinct characteristic of CRO is that it aims to achieve the marketer's goal rather than the visitor's goal. Take the definition of a conversion as presented by Gardner (2018, p. 1-11) as an example; from a usability perspective that a lot of non-CRO designers adhere to, a conversion might be a visitor completing a set of predefined tasks in a flow of micro-conversions such as an ecommerce checkout process. Here the aim is to make the flow of tasks as easy and as pain free as possible for the visitor and thus, helping the user complete his or her goal, i.e. to go through the checkout process. With a CRO-design approach however, the mindset is different. Firstly, the aim is to make the visitor complete one task only as opposed to several tasks. Secondly, this task is a purely business-driven action such as converting into a lead, meaning that the focus is not on making the process itself as easy as possible, but creating a persuasive experience that makes sure the visitor converts and thus completes the marketer's goal. The intuitiveness of the process is definitely important, but it is not the main focus.

Compared to most design frameworks, CRO is defined as sales-driven practice since it concerns itself with increasing conversion as others do not. The financial benefits of designing for conversion can also be easily measured, whereas other aspects of web design do not generate direct and measurable business value. To achieve higher conversion rates, CRO combines many tools and techniques of which measurement is the key controller. As will be explained in section 4.2.5, decisions that are taken in CRO are based on research and analysis of the user experience on the corporate website. The statement that CRO concerns itself with achieving the marketer's goal exclusively, as was stated earlier, is not entirely true. The marketer's and the business goals are the motivation behind optimizing for conversions, but when that optimization is based on detailed measurement of what visual elements and what type of content visitors want to engage with, CRO achieves the visitor's goals simultaneously.

Whereas user-centered design focuses mainly on usability and aesthetical aspects such as navigation, color and layout, CRO focuses on symbols, imagery, contrast, call to action, forms, engaging copy and placement of these elements. So called persuasive design combined with psychological triggers are used as devices to increase conversions (Gardner 2018, p. 4). CRO can be adapted to any type of webpage; product pages, home pages or even blog posts, but at the heart of conversion design sits the *landing page*. Just as UCD embodies usability and accessibility in CRO, *landing page optimization*, or LPO, embodies the persuasive design part of CRO.

4.2.3 Landing page optimization

Landing page optimization focuses on conversion design for a specific type of webpage. The landing page is a term used for a type of page that is specifically designed to receive traffic from a predefined source and convert this traffic into leads. In its purest form it can be any page a visitor lands on but within marketing it is usually a page designed with a single business-driven objective in mind and built around one *call to action* that is the enabler for said business objective (Unbounce 2018).

It is a one-stop conversion page and can even be hosted on a separate site and not on a company's main website. These types of landing pages are usually created as part of a marketing campaign our outreach program, e.g. as the destination of an advertisement in a pay-per-click (PPC) campaign. Despite building on similar principles, there is one major

difference between LPO and CRO that affects the design: their purpose. Landing pages are meant to receive targeted traffic. In the aforementioned PPC campaign for example, the visitor would already have clicked on an advertisement showing their interest in the product or service. This allows more targeted messaging and better optimization of the landing page itself, giving marketers a greater possibility of convincing the visitor to convert compared to other pages on a website that receives more untargeted traffic (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 109-124). Other pages must therefore try to facilitate for a larger audience than a landing page, a highly targeted page for untargeted traffic is not likely to convert very well.

Due to the interruptive push nature of the marketing techniques that utilize landing pages, LPO could be considered to be a part of outbound marketing rather than inbound marketing. PPC for example is an outbound technique that is used in search engine marketing. However, landing page techniques can also be applied to keyword-targeted pages which draw organic traffic through the practice of SEO, which in turn is classified as inbound marketing. Despite their categorization in marketing methodology, LPO and CRO have a lot of crossovers and are essentially two concepts of the same technique, just applied in different scenarios. LPO can be considered to be a part of CRO because CRO does not limit itself to a specific type of webpage but is rather a complete concept for generating more conversions on the web.

In landing page optimization, the so-called AIDA model developed by Elias St. Elmo Lewis in 1989 is often applied. The AIDA model is a sales funnel framework that website visitors are said to progress through in sequence, ending in conversion (Ash et al. 2012, p. 39). When applied to a landing page, visitors go through all the stages of the funnel on the same page.

The acronym AIDA stands for:

- Awareness (or Attention)

- Interest

- Desire (or Decision)

- Action

The Action stage is where the actual conversion takes place and Ash (2008, p. 68) states that this is where the design of the landing page plays the most important role, especially

when there is an absence of any other physical or virtual interaction between the company and the visitor, which is often the case on lead generation websites.

As the landing page manages to capture attention and interest, which it must do in the first milliseconds as described in section 4.1.3, the elements on the page must stimulate desire and action in the visitor to ultimately result in a conversion (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, p. 453). In other words, the landing page needs to satisfy all the stages of the AIDA model to result in a conversion, at least theoretically. Where the visitor is in the buying process also makes a key difference and the page as whole must therefore speak to different types of buyers. However, landing pages are generally made for targeted traffic from a specific marketing activity, so the filtering of buyers might also be done in an earlier stage making the page targeted to a specific type of buyer in a specific stage of the buying process, as mentioned above.

According to Leake, Vaccarello and Ginty (2012, p. 141) a landing page must follow expected conventions and resonate with the targeted customer segment, and social and psychological signposts that indicate that the presented service or product is the best possible choice must be applied. By social and psychological signposts, the authors refer to visual ques in form of both imagery and text that provokes certainty and trust in the visitors on the website. For landing pages, the main conversion point, i.e. the call to action is the most important element that visitors should be guided towards with these ques.

Evidently web design has been studied from various perspectives and there are several schools of thought on how optimal web design is performed. In practice, what approach a company should take with their website is largely dependent on the company's business objectives. Within lead generation for example focus is on usability and conversion design which is normally associated with the inbound marketing concept. However, there are other fields of marketing that have had a significant impact on conversion design. One such field that of *services marketing.*

4.2.4 E-servicecapes and service quality

For mainly web-based businesses or companies that perform the majority of their marketing communications online, the corporate website might be the only interaction a visitor has with a business before converting or committing to a purchase. More often than not it is also the first point of communication between buyer and seller, as the buyer

finds the provider in the research phase of the buying process. The website essentially replaces the physical interaction that takes place in a traditional bricks and mortar business which limits the possibilities to influence the potential buyer. Therefore, the experience the visitor has on the website and the overall service quality of this experience is very important for increasing conversions.

The field of *services marketing* concerns itself with assessing the total perceived *service quality* a customer experiences when interacting with the service provider. Grönroos (1982, cited in Santos 2003, p. 234) describes *total service quality* as being the customer's perception of the difference in expected service and the perceived service. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p. 15) further developed service quality by defining it as the consumer's judgement and evaluation of a service's overall superiority in comparison with its competitors. It is highly related to customer satisfaction and the perceived quality results from a comparison of customer expectations and actual performance.

Services delivered through websites are considered as so-called *e-services*, i.e. services delivered digitally and normally online. The website itself forms an *e-servicescape*. There are various types of e-services, but in this study the e-servicescape refers solely to websites. The term servicescape derives from the physical environment in which a customer receives a service. The servicescape has a significant impact on the consumer's perceived service quality (Grönroos 2008). The actual interaction between seller and buyer during which the service is delivered is called the *service encounter*. In the case of e-servicescapes, a more accurate interpretation of the service encounter is the interaction between the website visitor and the website, where the visitor is the buyer and the website represents the seller. The service encounter is a critical moment within the service delivery process (Bitner, Brown & Meuter 2000) and for websites and other e-servicescapes that lack the physical ability of explaining a value proposition in person, the service encounter takes on even greater proportions. The interaction is between the user and a digital system and is, therefore, a sort of self-service encounter (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011). The self-service nature of websites means that the website must be able to facilitate an adequate user experience and deliver a high service quality on its own, in other words through design.

E-services rely in part on other quality dimensions than the physical servicescape because the encounter is almost completely visual, between user and screen. The lack of personnel

and the virtual nature affects how the user interacts with the service. In comparison with traditional servicescapes, factors such as *usability*, *appealing visual design* and *comprehensive user interfaces* have been found to be prominent determinants of quality in e-servicescapes (Grönroos, Heinonen, Isoniemi, & Lindholm 2000).

Service quality has been proven to be a key factor between success and failure in e-services and especially e-commerce (Yang 2001, cited in Santos 2003, p. 234). Furthermore, it has been found that service quality and customer satisfaction are key elements in forming purchase intentions (Taylor & Baker 1994, p. 163). A variety of frameworks for assessing service quality has been created of which the SERVQUAL framework developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) has been regarded as the most prominent (Yang, Jun & Peterson 2004, p. 1151). The framework, originally created in 1985, consisted of ten dimensions but was simplified to the five dimensions *tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsibility*, *assurance* and *empathy* (Parasuraman et al. 1988). These dimensions work as measurement devices of service quality. Despite the considerable recognition of the SERVQUAL framework as a tool for assessing service quality, it has been found not to be adequate for assessing the service quality of websites, because the five dimensions are primarily geared towards customer-to-employee interactions (Yang et al. 2004, p. 1151), which is not applicable in the digital arena that mainly consists of human-to-computer interactions.

New models have been created to facilitate assessment of the service quality of digital services. Among these are e.g. Webqual by Loiacono, Watson and Goodhue (2007) and E-S-QUAL by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Malhotra (2005). Both of these tools, similarly to the SERVQUAL, define various dimensions and determinants for increased service quality and provide good insight into how designers should develop websites for increased conversions.

Most models for measuring e-service quality have been developed through extensive user testing wherein visitors evaluate websites so that researchers can determine which dimensions they seem to value and what the determinants these dimensions consist of. Most models share both dimensions and determinants but differ in balancing the importance and naming of these factors. "Service quality is an elusive and abstract construct that is difficult to explain and measure" (Lee & Lin 2005, p. 161) which is no

doubt due to the fact that all people evaluate websites differently, as they have different expectations of quality and different requirements.

However, marketers can draw valuable insights and conclusions from studying existing models, as they all mostly share the same characteristics. *Trust*, for example, is considered by researchers to be a major determinant for e-service quality, as first suggested by Gummesson (1979, cited in Santos 2003, p. 234). According to Harris and Goode (2010, p. 230), trust between buyer and supplier is the single most important element for increasing purchase intentions on websites. They also provide a conceptual model of which factors are the most important in creating trust, and consequently, increasing purchase intentions. The model and its various factors are portrayed in figure 10.

Figure 10: A conceptual model of e-servicescapes, trust and purchase intentions (Harris & Goode 2010, p. 232). Revised.
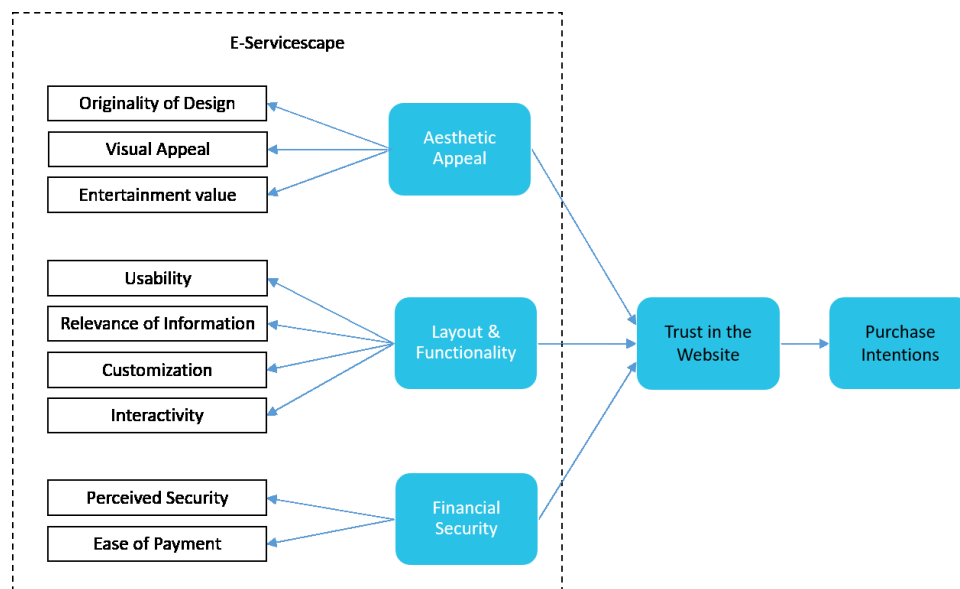
Other researchers also recognize the importance of trust but do not necessarily consider it the single most important element for increased conversion or purchase intentions, rather as one of many dimensions (Loiacono et al. 2007; Lee & Lin 2005; Yang et al. 2004; Zeithaml et al. 2005). Similarly to Harris and Goode (2010), Santos (2003) also presents a conceptual framework for measuring e-service quality. Santos's model includes eleven quality determinants divided between two categories that she calls the *incubative dimension* and the *active dimension*. The incubative dimension deals with the website's design, while the active dimension is defined as support, speed and maintenance. This categorization is based upon time, where the incubative dimension is

related to quality determinants relevant before the website is launched and the active dimension is related to determinants relevant after launch (Santos 2003, p. 238-243). Santos's model and its quality determinants is depicted in table 2. Parallels can be drawn between Santos's incubative and active dimensions and UCD and CRO. The incubative dimension mainly concerns itself with similar elements as UCD, while the elements in the active dimensions are similar to important elements within CRO.

Table 2: A conceptual model of e-service quality determinants (Santos 2003). Revised.

E-service quality

Incubative dimension	Active dimension
Ease of use	Reliability
Appearance	Efficiency
Linkage	Support
Structure & layout	Communication
Content	Security
	Incentive

Other researchers propose similar models for web development with regard to enhancing the service quality of e-servicescapes. Abels, White and Hahn (1998) developed six user-based design criteria for websites which were: *use*, *content*, *structure*, *linkage*, *search* and *appearance*. Yang (2001), in turn, presented *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *access*, *ease of use*, *attentiveness*, *credibility* and *security* as main dimensions for e-service quality.

All models briefly presented here, as well as other models not included in this section, provide valuable insight into how website visitors evaluate their experience. The importance service quality has for conversions and the challenges this importance develops for e-servicescapes, such as the corporate website, requires insights into which elements website visitors consider in their evaluation of e-service quality (Yang et al. 2004, p. 1150). Which elements should be applied in the design of a conversion-centered website is what chapter 4 will aim to decipher by taking a deeper look into the specific

on-page elements that can be used to increase service quality and conversions, but first one crucial element of conversion design must be clarified, namely the art of improvement through measurement.

4.2.5 Measuring conversion design

> "Conversion optimization analyses the behaviour of consumers, focuses on what motivates a particular market segment to react in a certain way to marketing elements and advises companies on how to adjust their marketing and sales mix in response" (Saleh & Shukairy 2011, p. 2).

As the previous quote states and as was briefly outlined in section 4.2, conversion design is mainly about *experimentation* and *measurement* of those experiments. The techniques defined so far in this dissertation are therefore not guaranteed to succeed. However, they are proven methods that scholars and businesses alike have proven to be efficient, but every website and market segment is different. This case study can be defined as a conversion design experiment in itself; it analyses the best practices in the field, applies them on the corporate website and finally measures if the implemented techniques have had any significant effect. If the results were to be negative, then that does not directly indicate that the effort has been in vain. Rather it indicates that some elements were not exactly right for the relevant market segment. So, the experiment continues with a new round of experimentation and testing to find the best converting version, because that is what conversion design is. Once a website has been designed with a user-centric conversion mindset it will also become easier to test and tweak smaller elements that require less effort from the marketer, thanks to the fact that the groundwork has already been laid. As Leake et al. (2012, p. 141) puts it: "The more recent CRO, or landing page optimization, is based on carefully isolating and testing elements of a webpage to provoke more conversions".

Albeit the underlining goal of marketers is lead generation and profit increase, conversion design tests the user experience of websites, while profit increase and other financial measures is the result of that testing. The premise is to understand what visitors engage with on a page. The most commonly used and recommended methods of conversion experimentation and testing is *A/B split testing* and *multivariate testing* (Rothman 2014, p. 321-323).

According to Ash et al. (2012, p. 331), A/B split testing is the most basic version of conversion experimentation and a good starting point. In contrast, multivariate testing requires deeper analysis and consists of a lot more variables than A/B testing. A/B split testing is the practice of creating two or more versions of the same page and splitting the traffic between these versions by randomly assigning visitors. A test usually consists of a *champion* version (the original page) and a *challenger* version (the alternative page). The version that generates the highest number of conversions will become the new champion which in turn will be challenged by another round of tests (Ash et al. 2012, p. 332).

Multivariate testing, however, is inherently much more complex as it involves multiple challenger versions. It allows for testing of multiple combinations of multiple versions of a set number of page elements, while using the same type of random assignment amongst visitors as A/B testing (Goward 2013, p. 288-290). To simplify, multivariate testing lets marketers carry out many A/B tests concurrently, showing a different combination of elements for each visitor and providing data on which combination of elements or which specific elements generated the best result among visitors (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 45). Table 3 illustrates how a multivariate test could work. It assumes that a page has two page elements with two variables (e.g. two versions of a heading and two versions of a CTA). This number of variables results in four possible versions of a page, 2 x 2 = 4. Assuming the original variables are on the champion page the possible combination of all variables would result in three challenger pages.

Table 3: Simplified illustration of a multivariate test.

PAGE VERSIONS	PAGE ELEMENTS	
CHAMPION PAGE	A1	B1
CHALLENGER PAGE 1	A1	B2
CHALLENGER PAGE 2	A2	B1
CHALLENGER PAGE 3	A2	B2

Theoretically, this method could be used for an infinite number of page elements, but understandably it becomes increasingly complex as the elements increase. This type of

testing requires a software solution with automation processes for data gathering and analysis (Rothman 2014, p. 323).

Both multivariate and A/B testing can be used for very granular testing of specific elements on a page or complete page redesigns. Complete redesigns are not uncommon, but they require more time and development to perform and a positive result cannot be guaranteed so it is debatable whether the test is worth performing. Back-to-back testing with incremental granularity changes are better for singling out specific elements, while it also is fast and easy to implement, e.g. changing a heading. However, if a site has a low amount of traffic these types of tests take a significant amount of time. Therefore, if a page has many elements that should be tested under a time constraint, a complete redesign can be the better option compared to fine-granularity tests (Ash et al. 2012, p. 256).

Both Ash et al. (2012, p. 331) and Goward (2013, p. 291) suggests favoring A/B testing over multivariate. Multivariate testing has its benefits, but it is a far larger project to undertake and can therefore generate a significant amount of costs. It is also very complex for most marketers to perform. Due to the high number of possible page versions multivariate testing can facilitate, a test requires a lot of time to gather a reliable amount of traffic for every page version in order to be beneficial. According to Goward (2013, p. 291), multivariate testing can require as many as 60 000 – 100 000 unique monthly visitors per page to generate reliable results.

4.3 Conversion design in practice

Conversion design can be a complex process. The different concepts, the terminology and the various approaches can be confusing. When should marketers think from an LPO standpoint and when from a CRO standpoint? Or when should usability go before a supposedly highly converting psychological que, Or when should a page sacrifice a beautiful design for something that allows for better functionality? Focusing on small fixes is a good, and an easier start, and many scholars and consultants talk about improvements that quickly or easily improve conversions. However, only focusing on "low-hanging fruit" will not achieve the full potential of a website, i.e. it will not generate as many leads as it could (Rabhan 2013, p. 1-2). Knowing which solutions and elements of conversion design to apply when and where requires an educated understanding of the concept itself. Conversion design could be summarized as modern-day web design that

focuses on driving measurable results beyond just marketing, and in actual sales. The website is a tool for lead generation and for many businesses the most important tool in the sales cycle. Naturally, the step forward would be to try and increase the number of leads the website produces, but as has been mentioned many companies do not realize this. They focus on presenting their products from an internal perspective and with a visual focus, rather than focusing on developing a functionally useful customer-centric website (Nielsen 2006; Gofman, Moskowitz & Metz 2009, p. 286; Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 35; Rabhan 2013, p. 111).

The following quote by Leake et al. describes conversion design well. In this case, the authors are discussing the relationship between usability and CRO but the same is true for all concepts within conversion design.

> "While usability and CRO are not exactly the same thing, they are not in conflict, and they are highly related. Marketers can combine these two practices to create efficient copy and design based on principles of usability and then, with CRO, tailor the landing page to the target audience and maximize its effectiveness. In that tailoring, the design and messaging groups need to be flexible and test approaches that do not always follow usability instincts." (Leake et al. 2012, p. 142)

The actual process of conversion design adopts an experimental approach with an iterative design process. Decisions are based on what the previous test or experiment generated as a result. The work process is illustrated in figure 11. The goal (step 2) is usually to increase leads but it can also be other factors, such as making visitors navigate to a specific page or to effect what type of leads are generated. Step 3 is maybe the most significant step in the process since it relates to identifying and designing the on-page elements that will have an impact on the conversion rate. As results are measured the process repeats itself.

An experimental approach is best suited for small and frequent incremental changes because this harbors continuous improvement, which results in an upward trajectory of conversions. More comprehensive redesigns of entire websites can feel like problem-solvers, but in the long-run a new design will encounter the same problems as the old one. Therefore, it is better to continuously improve on what one already has to see positive results (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 67). Small incremental changes are also a lot easier to manage, implement and especially measure.

Figure 11: An experimental process of conversion design.
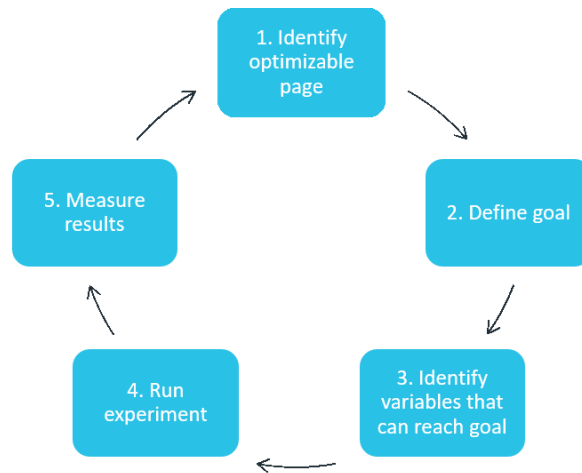
The theoretical concepts presented in this chapter are, as Leake et al. (2012, p. 142) puts it "not in conflict", rather they should work in unison, complementing each other. Conversion design requires a business-driven mindset, it is a combination of web design and marketing that is motivated by return-on-investment. This is what this chapter has described so far. It has provided the fundamentals for understanding what designing for conversion is and how it differs from other approaches to web design.

However, how to perform conversion design in practice is still unclear. To be able to increase conversion rates marketers must understand which variables or on-page elements that visitors' value, thus having an effect on the conversion rate (Yang et al. 2004, p. 1150). This essentially describes step 3 in the work process in figure 11; *identify variables that can reach goal*.

In his book *Designing Web Usability*, Jakob Nielsen (2000) divides web design into three main areas; *Site design and structure, page design,* and *content design*. From a conversion point of view these areas hold true, although they require some development. Site design and structure refers to subjects that are relevant for the entire website, these are subjects such as the design *style*, *organization of content* (information architecture) and *navigation*. Page design refers to subjects thar are related to *layout, title, content, responsiveness* and *on-page navigation.* Content design in turn is concerned with *copywriting* and *presentation of content* including the use of bullet lists and hyperlinks.

Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 291-336) also describe key areas that are relevant for web design, namely *function, form* and *content.* Functions refers to *interaction, navigation* and *structure*, while form refers to aesthetics created by *visual design* including *graphics*, *color*, *style*, *layout* and *typography*. Content, in turn, refers to *copywriting* and *relevancy to target audience*.

Most models found in the field of e-servicescapes that were discussed in section 4.2.4 describe quality determinants that are highly similar to the areas of web design that the authors above discuss. The quality determinants are also very much related to the fundamentals of persuasive design found in the concepts of user-centered design, conversion rate optimization and landing page optimization as was presented in previous sections. Although the concepts presented are considered as separate fields both in academia and business, they are all relevant for businesses that aim to increase their conversion rate through a corporate website. Therefore, common dimensions for conversion design based upon all the various marketing fields and conceptual models described in this chapter must be established so that an in-depth analysis of conversion design on the case-company's webpage can be carried out. As Santos (2003, p. 236) explains "there is a need for web designers to understand consumers and for academic researchers to evaluate the Internet and provide an appropriate framework".

As described in section 4.2.4, most conceptual models for e-service quality share similar quality determinants despite differences in focus and naming conventions. The same is true for all models of web design as the models by Nielsen (2000) and Chaffey and Smith (2013) exemplify. The design frameworks of UCD, CRO and LPO are also quite similar, they simply adapt different approaches and are generally applied in various scenarios of web design. LPO and CRO share the same ultimate goal of increasing long-term sales while UCD focuses on improving the user experience, which is prerequisite of increasing conversions and sales in LPO and CRO.

By borrowing from the conceptual models of e-service quality and the user experience and sales driven mindsets of UCD, LPO and CRO, a hypothesized model for conversion design can be created. Just as e-services define quality dimensions and determinants, the presented model defines *conversion dimensions* and *conversion determinants*. Table 4 defines the relevant conversion dimensions that have been identified through the literature reviewed in chapter 4, while chapter 5 will take a deeper look into these dimensions to

establish the relevant conversion determinants after which the complete model is presented in section 5.5. The conversion dimensions in table 4 have been identified through various sources cited throughout this chapter. However, four models; Nielsen (2000), Harris and Goode (2010), Chaffey and Smith (2013) and Santos (2003) have been used to illustrate the logical categorization of each dimension. The conversion dimensions have been established as *aesthetics*, *usability*, *content* and *credibility.*

Table 4: Dimensions of conversion design based on the various web design and e-service quality models.

Service Quality & Conversion Dimensions			
Nielsen	Site design and structure	Page design	Content design	
Harris & Goode	Layout and Functionality	Aesthetic appeal		Financial Security, Trust
Chaffey & Smith	Function	Form	Content	
Santos	Ease of use, Linkage, Structure & layout	Appearance	Content, Reliability, Incentive	Security, Support, Communication
Conversion design	**Usability**	**Aesthetics**	**Content**	**Credibility**

These identified dimensions define the main components for analysis in this case study as they create the foundation for a converting website. Chapter 5 will aim to break down these categories and identify the specific on-page elements that constitute the conversion determinants of the presented hypothesized model for conversion design.

4.4 Chapter summary

Chapter 3 has discussed lead generation in B2B marketing with a specific focus on the corporate website, and more precisely the design of the corporate website as a lead generation site. The chapter has analyzed this theme through an academical lens by defining the most prominent marketing concepts and theories that are relevant in the development of lead generation websites. It has defined the concept and the role of conversion design as a part of this development. So far, the theoretical concepts that guide

conversion design have been accounted for, but in order to understand how these concepts are applied in practice, the specific elements that can and should be optimized on a webpage must be identified. The following chapter will examine all the elements on a webpage that can have a positive effect on conversions. The chapter is divided into four main parts based on the quality dimensions presented in section 4.3, *Aesthetics, Content, Usability* and *Credibility.*

5 DEVELOPING A CONVERSION-CENTERED WEBSITE

This chapter will analyze the main dimensions of conversion design through the various design frameworks and marketing concepts that were defined in chapter 4. To provide a proper understanding of what on-page elements marketers should focus on when designing for conversions, the chapter will aim to thoroughly explain all dimensions and their respective conversion determinants. Based on the findings throughout this and the previous chapter, the hypothesized model for conversion design will be presented in section 5.5. This model will be applied in the development of a new design for the case-company and will also work as the basis for evaluation of the new and old design of the subject page.

5.1 Aesthetics

Visual design, while creating pleasing user experiences and enhancing usability, has also been proven to be a major quality determinant for most website visitors. In fact, Lindgaard and Dudek (2002) found that visual appeal can be independent from usability, i.e. if the visitors encounter major issues with usability, it will not affect their perception of the visual design. Moreover, they found that a visually good-looking website can even draw attention away from usability problems. However, this does not mean that usability should or could be sacrificed for aesthetics, but it does highlight the influence visual appeal has over website visitors. Lindgaard et al. (2006) also found that the visual appeal is especially important during the very first moments a visitor experiences on a page. This is because the visuals are detected first, before the visitor interacts or engages with the site to judge other aspects such as usability and content. The visual appeal that the visitors encounter during the first impression also influences how they judge the continued

experience on the website. If the first impression is positive, they may rate the following content more favorably, which will inherently drive visitor engagement (Jennings 2002).

This effect of evaluation and enjoyment that visual appeal has, especially through the first impression, is in psychology called the *halo effect*. This is due to *cognitive conformation bias*, which refers to a trait in human psychology that drives people to search "for confirmatory evidence supporting their initial hypothesis while ignoring disconfirmatory evidence" (Lindgaard et al. 2006, p. 115). Consequently, visitors can disregard or downplay negative factors that might occur later if the first impression is good enough. However, conformation bias is not limited to positive first impressions, in fact negative impressions have a great impact on user evaluation as well (Everard & Galletta 2003, p. 60-61). A negative first impression may lead to visitors ignoring potential positive factors, not allowing their opinion to be changed as they continue to browse the website.

When creating visual appeal, marketers must also remember to follow certain guidelines, such as that of *visual hierarchy* for example. Visitors interpret the importance of perceptual elements on a page through their arrangement and size. Usually hierarchically important elements such as the headings are expected to be at the top, simultaneously large elements such as an image or a text block signifies greater importance. By aligning elements properly, visitors can be guided through the page. This allows marketers to guide visitors to important on-page elements such as call to actions, or to mark an important element through visual hierarchy (Djamasbi et al. 2010, p. 308).

Depending on factors such as demographics, visitors also expect certain standards and other familiar elements from websites. Djambasi et al. (2010) found in their study that generation Y web users find visual appeal to be particularly important in the evaluation of websites. These visitors seem to consider usability as a prerequisite, while aesthetics is an expectation (Djambasi et al. 2010, p. 309). The study concluded that generation Y finds characteristics such as *images of people*, *search features* and a *small amount of text* to be very important for visual appeal.

Studies also show that website visitors rank the look of the design and the structure of information as top determinants when judging the credibility of websites (Fogg, Soohoo, Danielson, Marable, Stanford & Tauber 2003, p. 23). Visual appeal develops trust between the visitor and the site, whereas a non-visually appealing site might lead the visitor to question its credibility and the credibility of the business. The correlation

between beauty and trust can be so irrational that visitors make on the spot and intuitive emotional decisions purely on the perception of appearance (Karvonen 2000, p. 87). Apart from judging the website's quality and credibility based on aesthetics, visual appeal has also been recognized as a good predictor for visitors' purchase intentions, which in B2B lead generation context can be considered as intention to convert, and as a predictor of the intention to revisit a website (Loiacono, Watson & Goodhue 2002).

5.1.1 Typography

Typography plays a great role in complementing the visual appeal of a webpage and its contribution to the persuasive power of a website is often underestimated (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 316). When it comes to typography and design there are not that many rules but failing to adhere to common rules may result in a very unappealing website. Generally, text must be clearly readable, visually appealing to the audience and refrain from screaming colors and theatrical effects. A very futuristic typeface in a bright color combined with a blinking effect will probably not appeal to a B2B buyer looking for a multimillion-dollar software investment.

Typography is mainly used for portraying *site personality*, or *visual brand identity*. Personality can be described as e.g. "formal" or "fun". In a B2B context visitors tend to lean to the formal and towards information-intensive websites. The choice of typefaces must also be consistent and sans-serif fonts are considered to work best on the web (Chaffey & Elis-Chadwick 2012 p. 316). However, specific types of fonts can create different emotional responses in visitors such as the formal or fun mentioned above, but also anger, excitement or confusion. Just as size and layout effects the visual hierarchy of a webpage, so does typography. Solid typographical structures provide substance for visitors, thus helping in identifying headings, separating links from copy and finding important information that might e.g. be presented in a bulleted list. A page should be easily scannable, and towards that end typographical structures have a significant role to play (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 124).

According to Chaffey and Elis-Chadwick (2012 p. 317) font sizes are also important for structure and design, the difference in size between different parts of a text can suggest level of importance, but also suggest coherency to neighboring elements. It has been suggested that e.g. elderly website visitors require larger text for increased readability.

However, one study that tested web usability differences among young and senior web users found that the increase of text size did not affect the performance of any age group (Chadwick-Dias, McNaulty & Tullis 2003). Following font-size standards is generally recommended. Italics and underlining can have a negative effect on readability and create confusion. Underlining, for example, usually indicates a hyperlink, i.e. a clickable element. As with most aspects of design, typography requires consistency. It is mainly driven by readability and visual hierarchy and the maintenance of consistency regarding these aspects throughout the website. All practical elements regarding typographical styling should be predetermined and controlled for consistency.

5.1.2 Color and contrast

The impact of color has been studied in virtually every field of marketing, and web design is no different. In virtual environments, the use of color can take even larger proportions than in many offline settings. This is due to the fact that marketers are confined to a virtual environment where only visual elements can be used to communicate with the visitors and affect their senses. Color is especially important for highlighting specific page elements, such as elements marketers want to draw visitor attention towards, and for enhancing readability (Goward 2013, p. 191). According to Chaffey and Elis-Chadwick (2012 p. 317), color on websites should satisfy three sets of criteria; be the *right fit for the target segment*, *fit with the corporate brand* and be *right for both usability and accessibility*. While satisfying all three of these areas, the color pallet must also balance them equally and therefore consist of a set of colors that simultaneously satisfies all three areas while also working well together.

Many studies have been made in the pursuit of deciphering the meaning of colors for website visitors and it has been proven to have a prominent role in website aesthetics (Brian & Phillips 2003). Coursaris, Swierenga and Watrall (2008) studied color temperatures in web design and found that the majority of visitors prefer cool colors over warm ones. The most visually appealing color scheme was found to be a cool color for the top part and primary elements of a page, and either another cool color or a warm one for the secondary elements. Colors have also been known to be associated with different emotional responses. For example, in western cultures red is associated with anger, danger and love, while blue is associated with calmness, reliability and professionalism.

However, associations with color is highly dependent on cultural norms and can be perceived differently by different people (Chaffey & Elis-Chadwick 2012, p. 315). Perceived color associations are also not as important as the clarity of the color combined with contrast, and the design of the actual elements (Goward 2013, p. 193).

In conversion design, it is not always so much about actual colors as it is about *contrasts*. Some suggest that specific colors, such as red, are good for CTA buttons because it commands attention (Goward 2013, p. 193), in fact, it is the contrast of the button that draws visitor attention, not the actual color of the button. For example, a predominantly blue website design will not benefit from a CTA button with another shade of blue, while a green or red button may generate an increase in conversions because then the button would stand out. Despite the significance of contrast, color cannot be deemed irrelevant for conversion purposes, but elements that should stand out are more dependent on the use of contrast between colors than the actual choice of color (Gardner 2018, p. 15).

The easiest way to have the greatest possibility of freedom regarding contrast on a website is to utilize neutral background colors. Light background colors are generally the easiest on the eyes, because a dark typeface on a light background is easier to read than the other way around. The most important thing is to make sure there is a high level of contrast between background and text, regardless of the background color (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 85). The neutral background color is not only healthy for visitors' eyes, it also facilitates a design that is easy to understand, as the visitors clearly comprehend the text and elements on the page as they stand out from the background. A neutral color is also preferred in comparison with graphics or images in the background, since these can make it difficult to distinguish key elements from the background itself (Everard & Galletta 2006, p. 66; Ash 2008, p. 132).

As with all aesthetically focused design elements of a webpage, also color needs to comply with scannability. Reduced contrast between background and other elements affects the site's readability and can cause frustration for visitors (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 85; Everard & Galletta 2006). Furthermore, Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 315) highlight that the use of *white space* is essential for a usable and visually appealing design. White space is basically the empty space between elements on a webpage, it is usually represented by the background color of the page. White space is important for both readability and usability, because it gives an "airy" feel and allows the user to clearly

distinguish one element from another. Websites that do not properly utilize white space tend to be perceived as crowded and can have a negative effect on the user experience.

A final aspect of color that is useful to consider is the brightness of the colors used on the website. Brightness of text for example can look different on different screens depending on external factors beyond of the marketer's control (Goward 2013, p. 192). Visitors can manipulate the settings of their devices, use blue-light filters or similar and even the light in the physical environment that the visitor is in can affect how visible certain elements on a webpage are. Contrast plays a key part here as well, considering that e.g. a bright color on a neutral background might not have enough contrast on all screens to be displayed properly.

5.1.3 Imagery

Most websites incorporate some sort of imagery in their design. Websites with images have been found to have a positive correlation with visual appeal (Cober, Brown & Levy 2004). Djambasi et al. (2010) found in their research that images, especially large images that dominate a page correlate well with most visitors. It has also been suggested that since the virtual environment lacks human contact, this can be substituted with images of people. Images of people spark a psychological connection with the visitors that generates the artificial feeling of human contact and warmth (Hassanein & Head 2007). Including faces and real human beings can also help in personalizing a brand.

In terms of conversion design however, Ash (2008, p. 138) points out that images are a powerful two-edged sword. Images can either complement the value proposition and key elements on the website and support desired visitor actions, or they can work as a distraction that takes focus away from where the visitor is supposed to go. However, when used well, images can have a powerful impact on conversions. Visitors cannot help but to look at images with humans in them and their vision is usually drawn to faces (Ash 2008, p. 138). This is a psychological trait that has been examined through eye tracking studies (Gardner 2018, p. 21). Images can, therefore, be utilized to guarantee increased exposure for call to actions and other prominent elements on a page.

Images can additionally be used as directional ques to guide attention to a specific element. If a page e.g. includes an image with a person looking in a specific direction, the image can be placed so that the model's vision is directed towards a point of interest on

the page. Visitors will instinctively look at the models face and subsequently in the same direction as the model is looking. Gardner (2018, p. 19) calls this the "suggestive power of the eye" and can also be realized through images of animals. Directional ques are not limited to real-life images of people, symbols and icons such as arrows can be used for this purpose as well. Images that portray some sort of pathway, such as a road or tunnel can also guide attention if used cleverly. Goward (2013, p. 182) states that "the placement of images, graphics and copy either guide your reader's eye or block its flow". Despite the suggestive power of images as directional ques and their influence on visual appeal, it is crucial that a webpage advocates clarity and has a suitable balance between all of the elements on the page, including CTAs, text, images, icons and links.

5.2 Content

With the importance of search engines and the rise of content marketing, content is one of the most important elements in all of digital marketing, and therefore equally important in conversion design. Meerman Scott (2015, p. 128) states that "Content is not only king, but president and pope as well". If a website delivers aesthetic appeal and creates a positive first impression while adhering to important usability factors (discussed in detail in the following section), the content is what will convince visitors to convert. This is especially true in B2B where buyers generally require more information than in B2C. Visual ques and persuasion design in itself can obviously not generate leads, at least not leads of good quality. According to Rabhan (2013, p .109), conversion rate optimization is divided roughly into two halves, of which the first is design, layout and other usability related elements, and the other is tweaking messages and words on the page. Redish (2012, p. 1) also neatly describes the importance of content through a metaphor by comparing a website to a simple three-legged stool. The legs represent the critical parts of navigation, usable design and technology, but on their own the legs can't stand upright, they need a seat to be useful and usable. That's where content comes in.

The content on a webpage needs to deliver what the visitors are looking for and it needs to do this quickly (Ryan 2014, p. 30). Web content must be tailored to the audience it is intended for, but it also needs to grab attention, be scannable and written in a clear way. Visitors do not have the patience to read longer texts or dig for a value proposition themselves, if they do not see the value immediately, they will leave (Ryan 2014, p. 61).

Therefore, it is important to deliver the most essential points first, at the top of the page in the so-called *above the fold* area which is the *first screenful* a visitor sees (explained in more detail in section 5.3.2). The first screenful is also responsible for the first impression mentioned earlier.

Deciding what to put at the top of a page is easier said than done. Marketing professionals suggest designing the above the fold area as a mini landing page (Gardner 2018). The mini landing page is built upon the *five-point punch*; (1) a heading with (2) subheading, (3) a benefit statement with benefit list, (4) an urgency or special offer statement and (5) a CTA. The mini landing page method is illustrated in figure 12.

Figure 12: The mini landing page (Gardner 2018).
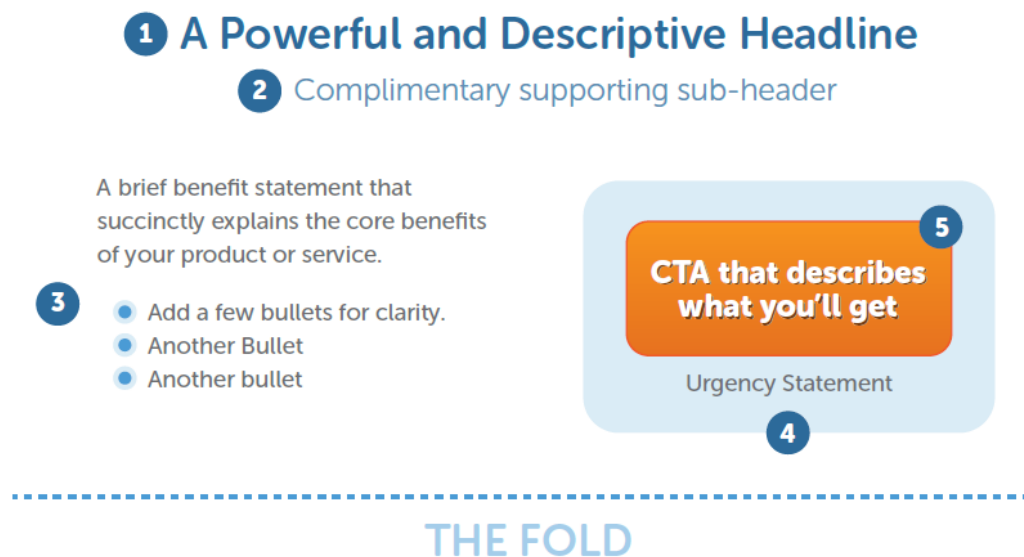
Blanks and Jesson (2018, p. 62-65) advocates a, what they call, *functional approach* to web design when focusing on conversions. They suggest that understanding the visitors and the business, and then designing accordingly is most important. Usually that means a healthy balance between content and aesthetics, but webpages can lean more heavily towards either one, depending on the target segments needs and the business goals. However, Blanks and Jesson (2018, p. 65), do state that designing for function, i.e. designing for the needs stated above in the most functional and intuitive way possible, is more important than beauty. Visual appeal cannot take the forefront in design. Beauty should not be allowed to limit the functionality of a webpage because functionality plays

a greater role in driving conversions. Mostly beauty does not aid in creating quality leads, however, it has been proven to be a significant experience affecting factor as described in section 5.1.

Within web design in general content refers mainly to the written copy of a page, as still today written text and the links between these texts is the core of the web (Ryan 2014, p. 50). Copy defines all the text present on a page, including headings, product descriptions, value propositions etc. (Rabhan 2013, p. 109). When trying to align visitor needs and business goals, copy must be written for the visitor and be persuasive at the same time.

5.2.1 Copywriting

The subject of copywriting is rather large and includes a lot of intricacies. For the purpose of conversion design, copywriting mainly concerns the placement of content, providing the relevant information for the target segment and using persuasive copy to increase conversions. Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 326) suggest the *CRABS* method when creating copy for the web. CRABS stands for; *chunking*, *relevance*, *accuracy*, *brevity* and *scannability*. Chunking, brevity and scannability relate to the visual presentation of the text, which is largely dependent on the fact that visitors indeed scan pages and do not actually read word for word. Relevance and accuracy in turn, represent the customer-centric approach of copywriting, i.e. the copy should be relevant for the visitors' needs and be available at the right time in the right place in a manner of context that is supported by both visual and written elements. Similarly to CRABS, Rabhan (2013, p. 109) state that copy should satisfy three psychological checkpoints for visitors; *relevance*, *credibility* and *value*.

As was mentioned in section 5.1.1, scannability is a major element from a design and readability standpoint. How text is styled, organized and divided helps visitors in identifying the key messages on the page, this is also one of the most important elements to in conversion design, as improving scannability involves e.g. avoiding large blocks of text by the use of headings, subheadings and bullet points (Ryan 2014, p. 61). Various visual elements can also be used to further separate copy and provide context, but the copy should also manage to do this by itself. Bullet lists for example are an efficient way of designing for scannability as these are easy to read and they draw attention. Bullet lists are therefore a good way of maximizing the chance of visitors reading important copy.

Good conversion copy should aim to list benefits and not just features. Specifically, how the visitor benefits. For example, "24/7 support" is a feature while "get help anytime" is a benefit. Both statements emphasize the same thing; that the business offers live support for their customers, but "get help anytime" clearly tells the visitor what benefit they will receive from that support (Rabhan 2013, p. 117).

The study by Djambasi et al. (2010) also suggested that visitors do not like to read long texts on the web, further emphasizing that texts should be kept short and divided into contextual paragraphs. Tullis and Tullis (2007, in Djambasi et al 2010, p. 312) confirmed this as they also found a correlation between the number of characters on a page and the visual appeal of that page. Conclusively, visitors combine visual appeal with a small amount of text.

What is said where is crucial in conversion design. As mentioned in the previous section, the most important content should be situated at the top of a page. Ryan (2014, p. 61) and Leake et al. (2012, p. 156) suggests adapting the *inverted pyramid* technique to webpage copy. According to the pyramid the most important points should be delivered first, and supportive content delivered in a decreasing order of importance down the page, just as many sources has suggested so far. Besides the CTA and benefit lists or statements, the heading is the most prominent part of the top of a page. It is what draws attention right away and what visitors look for to gain an indication of what the page is about. Headings are difficult to perfect because they must satisfy a number of factors, they should e.g. be keyword optimized for SEO, be descriptive of the content on the page, describe how visitors may benefit, have a customer-centric tone, entice and engage the visitor etc., the list goes on. Obviously, a handful of words cannot satisfy all criteria, it is also a matter of context and placement. Every individual element on the page must not by itself increase conversion, the objective is rather to find a balance between important elements and tailoring for visitors' needs. However, as far as attention goes the heading is an element that needs to be thought about carefully. Redish (2012, p. 158) outlines seven guidelines for writing persuasive headings on the web:

1. Use your site visitors' words.

2. Be clear instead of cute.

3. Think about your global audience.

4. Try for a medium length (about eight words).

5. Use a statement, question, or call to action.

6. Combine labels (nouns) with more information.

7. Add a short description if people need it.

Source: Redish (2012, p. 158).

The tone used by businesses in their web copy tends to be very *we* based. Companies focus more on telling visitors that they are the best in their specific field, rather than focusing on the value that visitors will receive (Rabhan 2013, p. 112). Delivering the value proposition is crucial, but there is a difference in saying "we sell the best TVs" and "improve your entertainment experience with the best TVs ". The main notion is to create copy from the visitor perspective, telling them what they will get, rather than presenting what it is the company behind the website does. The difference might be subtle, but the visitor is interested in how the provided service or product will benefit him or her, by making the visitors translate a company-centric copy to why it is valuable for them is a very unnecessary step that can hinder conversions and is easily avoidable by focusing on customer-centric copy in the writing process. This is also in line with something that Ash (2008, p. 134) calls *marketese.* Marketese is a copywriting style that embellishes a product or service by making it appear more attractive and usually involves boasting and unsubstantiated claims such as "world's leading provider" or similar. Visitors do not resonate with this type of language as they have learned to tune out promotional copy over time, a conversational tone that focuses on the visitor is therefore better.

However, how to write where is contextual. When trying to persuade visitors of value, customer-centric copy is relevant, and it is important to talk *to* the visitors, but company-centric copy also has its place. For example, using "we", "I" and "us" aids in developing a conversational tone. Every interaction between a visitor and a website is a conversation begun by the visitor and should be treated as such (Redish 2012, p. 2).

Specific wording has also been proven to have a huge impact on conversion rates. Just by changing the wording of a heading for example has been shown to have both negative and positive effects on completed conversions (Rabhan 2013, 110: Goward 2013, p. 195). Changing specific words that have an impact is usually related to high value elements such as headings or the call to action. Some of the easiest increases in conversion come from changing the copy on a page, because ultimately design goes only so far, while copy persuades visitors (Rabhan 2013, p. 110).

5.2.2 Call to action

"In order for a website visitor to become a lead, you have to tell him where to go and what you want him to do" (Rothman 2014 p. 102). Guiding visitors is achieved through many elements; navigation, layout and visual ques among others, but in conversion design one of the most vital elements is the *call to action* (CTA).

As the single purpose of a conversion-centered page should be to persuade visitors to perform an action, the CTA is the most important design element in fulfilling that purpose. The call to action is usually a link to a lead generation form. Styling CTAs as a button is commonplace but they can also be regular text-based hyperlinks (Goward 2013, p. 194). The CTA should portray the offer that a webpage makes to the visitors, and therefore it needs to stand out. This means it must be visually prominent and should be at the top of a page, major CTAs should always be in the first screenful (Fessenden 2018). CTAs should also be included on all pages of a site (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 136) and should be consistent, at least on a page-level (Ash 2008, p. 149).

Visually prominent buttons are commonplace because they easily draw attention when used correctly, i.e. when used in combination with color, contrast, placement and context. Capsulation is also a common technique for CTAs and forms, it creates an immediate sense of importance as visitors understand the visual que that a bordered area must be of significance (Gardner 2019, p. 63). Creating visually prominent CTAs can be achieved through other visual design elements as well, whitespace and sizes of elements and fonts for example are relevant methods, and the use of imagery and icons with directional ques as mentioned in section 5.1.3 have been proven to increase conversions. Leake et al. (2012, p. 143) also point out that the CTA must follow expected conventions as visitors are used to certain elements being in a certain way, such as the navigation at the top for example. Extravagant designs for CTAs that do not utilize buttons or are presented as simple links might therefore have negative implications. However, animated effects, such as hover effects can help buttons stand out and indicates to the visitors that it is a clickable object (Ash 2008, p. 154).

Even though conversion design should rely on incremental testing and metrics, the visual prominence of CTAs and other high value elements such as headings can also be tested through the *eye-blur* technique (Rabhan 2013, p. 96-97; Leake et al. 2012, p. 143). When squinting so that a person's vision gets blurred, only colors, high-contrast or brighter

elements will be visible. This test gives a good indication of what will draw the most attention on a page, these elements are also what visitors' subconsciousness will process first and thus decides what they will consciously engage with first. The eye-blur technique can be used in the design stage to assess if high value elements are as prominent as planned.

In an eye tracking study of a corporate website that had the goal of increasing submitted lead generation forms, having multiple links to the form on the same webpage resulted in a higher rate of conversions. The links alone did not necessarily cause the increase but when placed within relevant context as part of an intuitive design more visitors found their way to the form and also eventually converted (Boaz, Cueno, Kreps & Watson 2002, p. 162). The emphasis of context suggests that the content, CTA and design must all achieve a state of flow for the visitor, i.e. the content needs an intuitive path and it must feel as a natural step to e.g. press a CTA button. Many CTAs to the same goal are therefore beneficial, but not if they do not provide contextual value. Having many CTAs on the same page is also a matter of attention ratio which is described in detail in section 5.3.2, but in short attention ratio describes the number of distracting actions a visitor can perform on a page that is not directly related to the business goal.

As mentioned previously, the wording in the call to action might have a significant impact on conversions. Which words work best however, is a trial and error process but there are some generic guidelines for what might have a positive impact on the conversion rate. Action-oriented verbs such as *buy*, *share* or *request* clearly state that it is an action. The result of said action can also be included, and the benefit the visitor will receive by performing that action is important. For example, "get your free trial now", is action oriented while translating both the result and the benefit at the same time (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 120). In other words, being too vague and unfocused is a mistake (Leake et al. 2012, p. 143).

Focusing the CTA is also dependent on the visitor's intent. If the main action on the site is to convert into a lead, that from a buyer's perspective means submitting an inquiry for additional information regarding a specific product, then a CTA such as "Request your consultation" is significantly more focused and action-oriented than something such as "how can we help you" (Leake et al. 2012, p. 143). Which exact words that make up the CTA is also affected by the tone of voice, ideally customer-centric, and other individual

words that have a positive correlation with CTA clicks. Among these words *you*, *free* and *get* are good examples that have been proven to perform well (Redish 2012, p. 198; Rabhan 2013, p. 118). Very generic CTAs with text such as "click here" or "read more" should be avoided because they provide none of the value-adding elements mentioned above (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 121). Halligan and Shah (2014, p. 137) also mention the phrase "contact us" as being one of the least converting call to actions.

The message a CTA provides should be compelling. Visitors are skeptical in giving out personal information so if the content is making them consider converting, the CTA must persuade them. Offering additional content with a promise of added value through benefits is a good practice for convincing visitors. This content can be webinars, whitepapers, consultations or demos, anything that the visitors will deem beneficial and thus allows them to convert into a lead (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 135). If a B2B company usually propose demos to potential buyers for example, then offering this value already in the CTA is good practice.

The most educating theory regarding CTAs, and also web usability in general, is epitomized in the book *Don't Make Me Think* by Steve Krug (2014). When visitors arrive on a website, they should not have to think about what to do. They want to be guided, told where to go, what to do and what they will get, and CTAs especially must match this premise.

5.2.3 Visitor needs

When creating content for visitor's needs it is important to recognize that visitors do not always share the same needs. Even if they are in the same target segment, their needs can vary drastically according to each individual's situation. On a broader scale a website is segmented into different content themes by having different pages, and each individual page should be aligned to a business and a visitor goal (Leake et al. 2012, p. 146). However, on the page-level visitors can share a goal but differ in the way they will reach that goal because they are in different stages of the buying process. Some might be persuaded to convert at the top of the page, while others need more information and scroll down, in which case they first need to be convinced that the content below is of value by the above the fold content (Goward 2013, p. 162). On top of that, B2B buyers on the web rarely move linearly between the stages of the buying process. They jump in and out while

researching solutions and evaluating options. One visitor might arrive at a *bottom-of-funnel* product page, then move on to a *top-of-funnel* blog article before deciding to convert on the homepage several days or months later (van den Akker 2019).

The AIDA model which was discussed in section 4.2.3 is, albeit old, a good framework for defining how to structure the contextual hierarchy of content on a webpage (Gardner 2018). The AIDA defines the stages a web visitor goes through before converting; awareness, interest, desire and action (Ash 2008, p. 68). Tailoring the page towards these stages automatically creates a hierarchy. First the page must create *awareness* that the visitor's attention is drawn to and which provides incentive to keep reading, after which the content should match the *interest* and *desire* stages as the visitor scrolls down by providing further information and finally, provoke the visitor to take *action* with a call to action.

This adaption of the AIDA model relies on the visitor converting at the bottom of the page. On the contrary, marketers and authors alike suggest that a CTA should always be present at the top of the page (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 136). Rabhan (2013, p. 102) states that many visitors will never scroll down far enough to see the CTA if it is only at the bottom. However, this is dependent on what works best with specific visitors and should be tested. Different models can work differently between pages and a website does not need to follow a set model throughout all of its pages, e.g. a combination of the AIDA and other models such as the mini landing page model for the first screenful could be a good match on one page, while only the AIDA works better on another. Goward (2013, p. 194) suggests having one CTA at the top and one at the bottom, but also encourages to test what works best. All this being said, most sources seem to agree that a CTA visible above the fold is best practice.

The AIDA is based on a linear progression from the first stage that is at the top of a webpage, to the last which is at the bottom. This is a logical content hierarchy as research minded visitors who scroll down probably want to know more details and is also aligned with the inverted pyramid technique. However, the AIDA does not directly define different types of visitors. All visitors might go through the stages, but they might still have different needs. Which means that the stages must be tailored to various needs and not just one, otherwise some visitors will not move through the stages but jump off as they consider the information provided to be lacking. Therefore, the various stages should

be tailored according to the identified visitor profiles, e.g. some buyers might be more technical than others, meaning that the value proposition in the interest stage for example should speak to both technically savvy and non-technical visitors (Näse 2019).

Rabhan (2013, p. 102-103) further suggests designing each screenful or "foldpage" as a separate page to target various visitor needs. Visitors who scroll are likely to be research-minded and want to explore every detail of the product. Therefore, more detailed content and educative material works better further down the page. Some visitors act on impulse and convert right away, meaning that a CTA such as a button or even short form should be above the fold to satisfy these visitors. Considering each screenful as a segment of its own can also help in the optimization process as marketers can consider how to make each separate foldpage convert better. For example, every foldpage can have its own call to action tailored to a specific visitor profile or customer segment. Rabhan (2013, p. 149) also suggests applying an exit strategy for every foldpage in the form of CTAs or subtle links to more detailed product pages. The point being that if visitors are going to navigate away from the current page, they end up somewhere that brings them closer to a conversion.

5.3 Usability

Usability is one of the key concepts of web design that has a direct correlation with user experience and satisfaction, websites must be designed with usability as a guiding framework (Nielsen 2000). As conversion design aims to apply a customer-centric approach to web design that still has a stronger focus on business goals than user-centered design, usability is one of the main pillars for maintaining a good user experience and improving conversions. Poor usability leads to a negative user experience and might lead to the visitors questioning the credibility of the website (Harris & Goode 2010: Everard & Galletta 2003).

> "The theory behind web usability is straightforward enough: simple, elegant and functional design helps users to achieve what they want to achieve online more effectively. It's about taking the frustration out of the user experience, making sure things work intuitively, eliminating barriers so that users accomplish their goals almost effortlessly. Your goal is to help the user to do what they want to do in the most efficient and effective way possible. Everything else is just web clutter." (Ryan 2014, p. 47).

Nielsen (2012) defines usability as how easy and pleasant the features that a visitor needs are to use, i.e. usability is a top determinant for whether visitors to a corporate website enjoy their experience or not. The virtual environment that constitutes a website also increases the importance of usability in comparison to non-virtual service environments. As Nielsen (2019) confirms, the difference between the physical and virtual world has consequences of great proportion for usability. In the psychical world buyers are unlikely to exit a store just because they are not entirely satisfied with the experience, they will rather complete their goal despite a negative service encounter. On the web however, visitors always have the option of exiting a site whenever they want to (see section 4.1.3, figure 8) and the existing competitors are just a click or two away. Exiting an unpleasing website takes less than a second and more often than not the visitor navigates back to a search engine result page and chooses the next competitor of the list, whilst in the physical world the effort to go to a competitor from the original service provider is far more laborious.

In the model developed by Harris and Goode (2010) based upon visitor trust in websites, usability and visual appeal where the top two determinants for developing trust. Also, Chaffey and Smith 2013, p. 311-328) state that aesthetics and ease of use are the key factors for making visitors return to a website. This shows that usability is not only important for user satisfaction, but that usability is an evaluation criterion in deciding whether or not a visitor will engage further with the company behind the website, meaning that the implications usability has on conversions is undeniable.
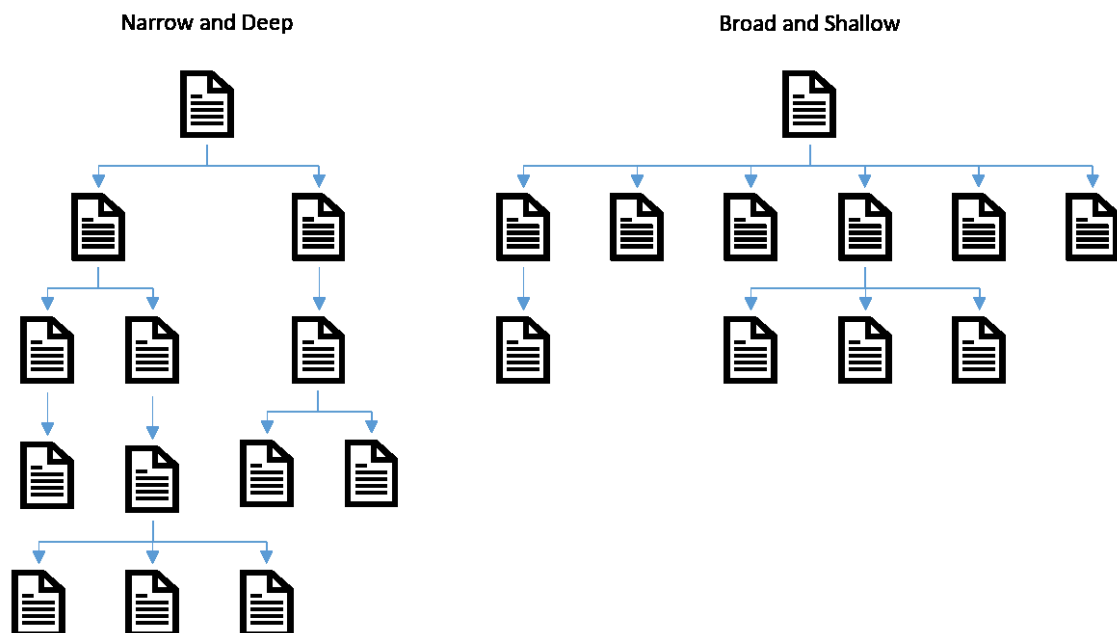
5.3.1 Navigation

One major factor for achieving optimal usability and ease of use is navigation (Chaffey 2015, p. 560). Chaffey and Elis-Chadwick (2012) define navigation as "how easy it is to find and move between different information on a website. It is governed by menu arrangements, site structure and the layout of individual pages". Since navigation represents how visitors move around a site or page, it can be broken down into both site-wide navigation and on-page navigation. Therefore, it encompasses elements such as menu items, links, flow and layout (layout will be analyzed in more detail in the next section). Navigation builds on website structure, or *information architecture*, which is the technical term. Information architecture represents how content (i.e. pages, documents

and files) are grouped on the website and how they relate to one another. The architecture requires techniques such as *card sorting* or *blueprints* to be established. A thought-out architecture with understandable hierarchies allows visitors to form a *mental map* of the site, making sure they do not become lost (Chaffey & Smith 2012, p. 328).

Chaffey (2015, p. 560-561) defines two different approaches to architectural hierarchy on websites. These are the *narrow and deep approach* and the *broad and shallow approach,* see figure 13. Narrow and deep means that there are few links per page, but the hierarchy goes deep, meaning that most pages have a link to a subpage. An architecture such as this facilitates clean pages that do not become cluttered with links, because every page only needs one or two links to the next level down in the hierarchy. The broad and shallow, in contrast, has more links per page and thus a shallower hierarchy. The benefit of this approach is that visitors are required to make fewer clicks to reach a specific piece of content, which can be beneficial since some suggest that visitors should be able to find the content they are looking for in a maximum number of three clicks (Chaffey & Smith 2012, p. 329).

Figure 13: The narrow and deep approach compared to the broad and shallow (Chaffey 2015, p. 561). Revised.

Exceptional navigation can aid in achieving a so-called state of *flow* for visitors. Flow is defined as seamless interactivity between human and machine characterized by an intrinsically enjoyable experience. It also generates a loss of self-consciousness and self-

monitoring (Novak, Hoffman & Young 2000, in Seonjeong & Miyoung 2012, p. 47). Flow has been identified to increase purchase and revisit intentions among website visitors (Agarwal & Karahanna 2000; Luna, Peracchio & de Juan 2002), meaning that generating a state of flow through navigation and web design will have a positive impact on conversion rates. In fact, navigation has been found to be imperative for achieving flow (Rettie 2001). Chaffey and Smith (2012, p. 329) also describe flow as the "degree or power a consumer has over the site". A satisfiable degree of control results in an enjoyable experience. Allowing the visitors to feel in control is dependent on navigational elements such as buttons and links to help them easily find the information they want. More often than not, a navigational element is also a point of interactivity, i.e. an element that allows the visitor to perform any type of action. As such, interactivity is also important for a state of flow. Interactivity will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.3.

Creating a good navigational experience can be difficult when you want to satisfy user intents, buyers in different stages of the funnel, visitor goals and business goals. Some elements are also expected of the audience, such as placing the main navigation menu at the top of a page, including tabs for "home" and "about", and the company logo in the upper right or left corner (Rabhan 2013, p. 147; Leake et al. 2012, p. 157). Navigation is highly dependent on visual ques and labels such as the ones described above, also called *signposts*.

Nielsen (2000, in Chaffey & Smith 2012, p. 330) states that highlighting where on the page the visitor is located is important so that the visitor does not feel lost among the content. This can be achieved through highlighting items in the main navigation menu or implementing a *breadcrumb-navigation trail* that shows through which pages the visitor has navigated to arrive at the current page. However, this is not purely restricted to navigational elements such as menus. The website should constantly communicate what is going on to the visitor. Headings of pages, for example, should resemble the wording in the menu to create context, and the use of progress bars, loading indicators and thank you pages is highly recommended (Esparza 2015). In conversion design, these elements are especially important in the lead generation form to create a state of flow and avoid confusion.

Visitors also expect the same menu for every page of the website (Rosen & Purinton 2004), which is in contradiction with some LPO principles that suggest removing the

navigation all together to direct the visitor's attention exclusively towards converting. However, this approach is recommended for pages that serve as a tailored landing page for advertisements, meaning that the visitors do not navigate from the main website to a page that is missing a navigation menu. Usually these pages are on a different site all together (Ash 2008, p. 100), but they still run the risk of generating a confusing user experience if the overall design is similar to the main website. For example, a visitor might have seen the navigation menu on the main site only to return at a later time to a landing page that does not have the menu which they expect to be there (since the visual design is otherwise the same). Moreover, research indicates that the main navigation should have no more than seven items. Simplicity in navigation, as in all usability design, is paramount (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 330). In short, navigation should make sure that everything on a website is easily accessible and that the visitors enjoy the experience of finding the information that they need (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 328).

5.3.2 Layout & Simplicity

The layout of a webpage has a direct effect on visitor retention. Not only is the layout a usability and accessibility factor, but it is also related to the first impression the visitor gets from the website which is one of the most crucial elements, both for conversions and retention. By first impression, marketers mean the very first things the visitor sees when they arrive at the site. This does not only involve the visual impression per se, but factors such as site speed for example also has an affect (Rosen & Purinton 2004, p. 793). The first impression might be very negative if the webpage loads very slowly. Based on the first impression, visitors decide within milliseconds whether they will stay, or leave the site to look for an alternative. The first impression emphasizes the importance of the very top of a webpage. In conversion design, this is called *above the fold* and represents the first screenful of a page as has been described.

The visual layout above the fold is a primary component that effects the first impression. The information processing that goes on in the visitor's mind is entirely based on visual ques such as shapes and colors at first, after which the visitor will scan the page and finally rest their attention on the first area of focus (Goward 2013, p. 232). The aesthetic appeal is therefore crucial as a first quality determinant and retention building factor. The

above the fold layout and content is exclusively responsible for the first impression and therefore decisive for conversions and page engagement.

Some pages are structured so that important content or design elements are further down the page, but this does not make the above the fold content any less important. Example: a page has many segments of content in a hierarchical order and the aim is to make visitors scroll and convert them at the bottom of the page according to the AIDA model. The bottom of the page is therefore very important from a conversion standpoint, but the first impression will still determine whether the visitors will make it to the bottom in the first place (Goward 2013, p. 233).

The term above the fold derives from the newspaper industry in which it early on was identified that the best place to position important adverts or notices was above the folded part of the cover page, as this is the area that most people are likely to see. There has been an emerging trend in web design of creating longer pages, surely related to the *mobile first* phenomena, which suggests the above the fold content has lost its importance. However, extensive eye tracking, heat map and scrolling research still suggests that what the visitors first see is very important in most cases (Rabhan 2013, p 224). This does not mean that all the content must be placed at the top, rather that the various sections of the page should be tailored to different needs as suggested in section 5.2.3, and the above the fold content is very much a part of that. Content prioritization is needed to define the most important content that needs to be at the top of the webpage (Fessenden 2018) and the mini landing page model explained in section 5.2 is a good tool for defining the above the fold content.

In a study by Santos (2003, p. 240), it was also found that visitors prefer websites that can fit into one screen. This indicates that visitors do not prefer long webpages which support the statement above, that the area above the fold is important. The above the fold area is exactly that which fits into the very first view of the visitor's screen, meaning that its effected by the screen resolution of the visitor's device.

In addition to the first impression, user research has also suggested that most website visitors do not engage in scrolling, i.e. they do not scroll further down the page. This can be concluded from Santos findings regarding the "one screen fit", and is also confirmed by Goward (2013, p. 79). Other studies also display the same results. A very recent eye tracking study by the Nielsen Norman Group on desktop monitors, showed that visitors

do scroll more than they used to, but that they still spend the most time at the top of a webpage. The study showed that visitors spend 57 % of their time above the fold and 74 % in the first two screenfuls. Compared to a similar study the group made in 2010, the above the fold viewing time was significantly lower in 2018, 80 % in 2010 versus 57 % in 2018 (Fessenden 2018). However, both studies show the same pattern of decreased visitor attention after the first fold. The results of the 2018 study are illustrated in figure 14.

The improved tendency to scroll is most likely a result mobile first, as well as responsive and minimalist design principles. Despite this, it is clear that visitors still prefer content at the top and do not engage in too much scrolling. The study even found that when only analyzing the above the fold screenful, visitors designated more attention to the information at the top of the screenful than to that at the bottom. Failing in providing a good first impression or not giving visitors visual signifiers that there is more content below can have an increasingly negative effect on scrolling (Fessenden 2018).

Figure 14: Percentage of viewing time in the eye tracking study by the Nielsen Norman Group (Fessenden 2018). Revised.
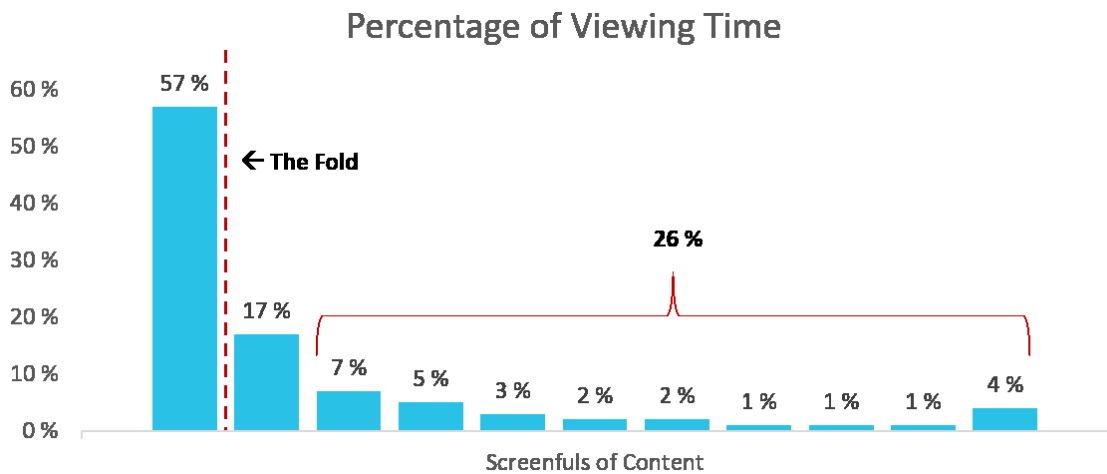
Visitor behavior indicates that content needs to be prioritized from the top down in the layout of a webpage. Another important element regarding the layout is that of *simplicity.* Rosen and Purinton (2004) found simplicity to be one of the most important elements of consideration when designing websites. Due to short attention spans, visitors do not like sites that are confusing and messy. Sites need to be clean and easy to navigate, especially for first time visitors. Simple designs were also found to be more visually appealing to

visitors. Simplicity also has a positive effect on the first impression since it generates a straightforward and understandable design, additionally it also facilitates faster loading times. Simplicity in content is also very important and too much content, especially above the fold will overwhelm visitors (Goward 2013, p. 235).

With regard to simplicity, conversion design outlines something called *attention ratio*. Attention ratio is the ratio between all the actions that can be taken on a webpage and the one single business driven action conversion design wants visitors to perform. In practice all the actions that can be taken are all the clickable links (or other elements) on the page. If a page has 57 links and one CTA then the attention ratio is 57:1 (Gardner 2019, p. 10-12). Marketers should strive to minimize the attention ratio, preferably to be 1:1. An ideal attention ratio of 1:1 is obviously not practical for normal webpages such as a homepage or product page, because all pages need navigational links, but for landing pages an attention ratio of 1:1 is achievable. Normal pages should still strive towards a minimum number of distractions for the sake of simplicity and ultimately user experience.

Gardner (2019, p. 17) also outlines an exception to a 1:1 attention ratio for landing pages, that is highly relevant for product pages. If a page has multiple links that strive towards the same goal, then the attention ratio can be higher. For example, a call to action can be repeated many times on the same page, thus increasing the attention ratio but maintaining, if not increasing, the potential for conversion as visitors are still guided towards the same business driven action. If the information architecture has been strategically planned, then most links will also take the visitor to additional relevant content that can increase his or her chance of converting, rather than decrease it. However, this process needs to be carefully thought out through content prioritization. Unnecessary links are considered leaks that disrupt the conversion funnel which should be a predefined path that visitors follow. Goward (2013, p. 232-233) also discusses that an abundance of visual and contextual distractions increases the potential for visitors to bounce because it generates confusion as the visitors try to localize where the most important information is placed and what the message of the page is.

There are many models for designing the layout of pages. Among the most common ones are the Gutenberg Rule (or diagram), the F-pattern and the Z-pattern. All these models are based on how readers visually scan pages and consume the page content (Eldesouky 2013, p. 152). Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 83-84) describe the Gutenberg Rule as

the optimal tool for webpage layout design. The Gutenberg Rule states that by default a reader's vision will begin by scanning at the upper left corner of the page and continue diagonally towards the lower right. During this process the upper right receives the most attention after the upper left, while the bottom left receives the least amount of attention as the vision path terminates in the lower right. However, the Gutenberg Rule is generally only applied to western cultures that read from left to right. See figure 15.

The F-pattern was developed by Jakob Nielsen as a result of eye tracking studies in the early 2000's. It identified that readers scant text in an F-shaped pattern, beginning from the top right in a horizontal movement. As they go along vertically downwards, they scan less and less to the right, decreasing the width of the horizontal movement incrementally (Pernice 2017). See figure 15.

**Figure 15**: The Gutenberg Rule and the F-pattern (Eldesouky 2013, p. 152-155).
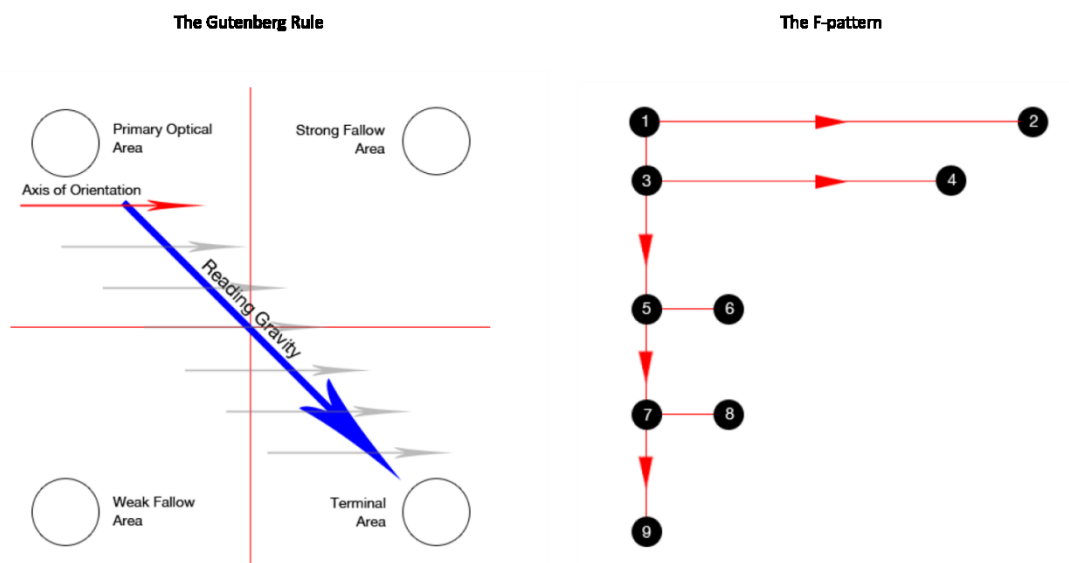
Interestingly, the Nielsen Norman Group (Pernice 2017) found in their research that the F-pattern also applies to right-to-left languages and is not restricted to western cultures, but it is mainly relevant when there is a lot of unformatted text on a page. Unlike the Gutenberg Rule, the F-pattern is not a suggested model for layout design per se. It rather emphasizes a negative aspect of how visitors consume large chunks of text, such as a blogpost for example. When visitors scan in the F-pattern they might easily miss content of value if it is not placed along the f shaped path. Similarly, businesses miss out on the opportunity to convey their value proposition. Therefore, the F-pattern defines that the

top part and especially the top left is the most attention receiving position of a page, but also that designers should negate the F-pattern through visual design and web formatting to avoid not communicating key messages. Specifically, through the following tactics:

1. Include the most important points in the first two paragraphs on the page.

2. Use headings and subheadings. Ensure they look more important, and are more visible, than normal text so users may distinguish them quickly.

3. Start headings and subheadings with the words carrying most information: if users see only the first 2 words, they should still get the gist of the following section.

4. Visually group small amounts of related content — for instance, by surrounding them with a border or using a different background.

5. Bold important words and phrases.

6. Take advantage of the different formatting of links and ensure that links include information-bearing words (instead of generic "go", "click here" or "more"). This technique also improves accessibility for users who hear links read aloud instead of scanning the content visually.

7. Use bullets and numbers to call out items in a list or process.

8. Cut unnecessary content.

Source: Pernice 2017.

The final pattern, the Z-pattern suggests that visitors' eyes follow a Z-shaped pattern, beginning in the upper left and terminating in the lower right. The Z-pattern has also been developed into the Golden Triangle pattern and the Zig-Zag-pattern (Eldesouky 2013, p. 153-155). The Golden Triangle is formed of the first horizontal and diagonal lines of the Z-pattern and closes these two with one vertical line. Additionally, the Zig-Zag-pattern suggest that vision flows in a number of consecutive Z-patterns. All variations are illustrated in figure 16.

Figure 16: The Z-, Golden Triangle- and Zig-Zag-patterns (Eldesouky 2013, p. 153-155).
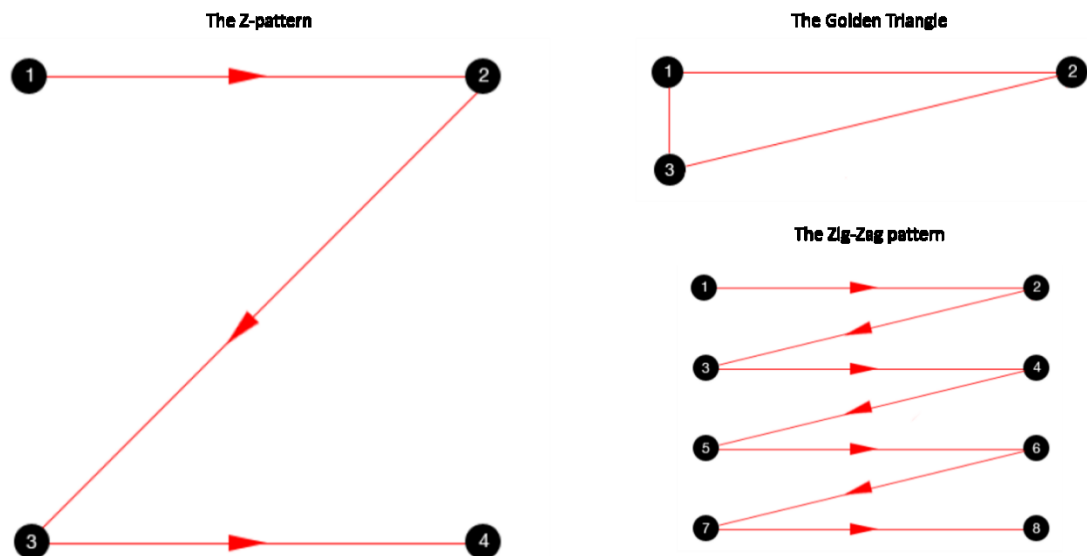
All of these models suggest that the most important elements of a page or screenful should be placed along the patterns path or in the different areas specified in the Gutenberg Rule (Eldesouky 2013, p. 154: Frick & Eyler-Werve, p. 83-84). These elements include call to actions, headings, lists, forms and other important elements that aid in conversion. Which specific model marketers apply is highly dependent on the content, visual design and visual hierarchy, information architecture, value proposition etc. No model is therefore a definite framework, but they aid in designing usable layouts that facilitate conversion. One page can utilize one specific model, but it can also use a combination of models either divided by folds or even within the same fold. As with most elements in conversion design, rigorous testing helps in defining the best method for a specific webpage and target segment. However, as a general rule, the top of the page should be reserved for high-priority content such as key business and visitor goals. Secondary or related information can be accommodated in the lower parts of the page (Fessenden 2018).

5.3.3 Interactivity

"The goal of interaction design is to make it as simple and intuitive as possible for visitors to take action on your site" (Frick & Eyler-Werve, 2015, p. 79). Web site interactions can be defined as any number of actions that a visitor can take on a webpage. The most basic interactions are acts that all visitors perform every time they visit a page. These can be as simple as mouse clicks and drop-down menu selections, or slightly more advanced such

as search function interactions or drag and drop features (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 333). Interactivity also includes larger themes on websites such as navigation schemes, blogs, shopping cart checkout processes, contact or support forms and social media integrations (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 79).

Basically interaction, as the word is defined, could be as simple as a visitor viewing a page and navigation around the page or site, thus the visitors "interacts" with the web site. Chaffey and Smith go on to claim that interaction is not necessarily only between the website and the visitor but also between automated systems and human interaction facilitated through two-way communication. However, they also state that interaction in web design is related to the amount of control and involvement the visitor has over his or her own user experience (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 333). This is also in agreement with Steuer's (1992, p. 14) definition of interaction; "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time". Laurel (1991, p. 29) defines interactivity as the visitors "feel" of being involved in the ongoing action, while Wardrip-Fruin (2009, p. 75) describes interactivity in virtual environments as the changes a visitor can make that effects the state of the system or what influence a visitor has over future outcomes as a result of a specific interaction. To summarize, interaction and the design of it in web design can be seen as allowing the user to take various actions on the webpage, just as the beginning quote of this section states. Visitors reading a piece of content is therefore, in web design terms, not interacting. It is engagement, but interaction is reserved for conscious tasks that involve an action from the visitor.

According to Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 333-336) interaction-design can also facilitate the buying process of visitors by moving them along the funnel. Interactive elements can especially be useful in the *learning, deciding, buying* and *after-sales support* stages of the funnel. Examples of interactive elements in these stages are animations and simulations of product features, downloadable content, chats, on-site search engines, location selection tools, feedback questionnaires etc. The presence of interactive elements combined with an intuitive design of such elements that together improve the user experience has been proven to have a positive effect on how visitors engage with a site (Hoffman & Novak 1996) and that interactivity also plays a role in assessing the credibility of a website (Harris & Goode 2010). In fact, Bauer, Grether & Leach (2002) concluded that interactivity is a core subject when discussing online exchange in business contexts.

Lead generation forms

For corporate websites operating in B2B lead generation, the main point of conversion is the lead generation form, a form is the most common and intuitive way to capture information on potential customers online (Rabhan 2013, p. 38). The importance of these forms cannot be understated because it is the last stage of the conversion process and the ultimate business driven action marketers optimize their websites for and want visitors to perform. All conversion design variables such as calls to action, aesthetic appeal and credibility signals lead to this conversion point, so success here is extremely important (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 191). The failure to apply a smoothness between the navigation to the form and the steps of interactions taken on the form, in other words a failure of flow, may result in visitors not taking action and moving to a competitor site (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 79). Chaffey (2012, p. 403) suggests that forms need to achieve flow in order to deliver results. Evidently, the usability, intuitiveness, presentation of content and design of a lead generation form is critical. All other conversion design efforts are in vain if the form or forms have a high abandonment rate.

For corporate websites, the lead generation form might also be the most prominent interactivity feature on a site, due to the fact that it is entirely dependent on visitor action. Research suggests that this interaction should be made as easy and quick as possible. Multiple academic sources and industry best practice summaries claim that forms should ask for as little information as possible because longer forms can hurt conversions, especially for lead generation purposes (Rothman 2014, p. 113; Frick and Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 191; Gardner 2018, p. 8; Ash 2008, p. 100; Santos 2003). This is mainly due to the fact that long forms are overwhelming and require a significant investment of time from the visitor (Rabhan 2013, p. 41). With visitor attention spans become shorter by the day, this is an understandable argument. Long forms have also been found to limit flow (Rettie 2001). There are many alternatives to long forms, and these can have different benefits depending on target segment, market and type of service a company offers. Rabhan (2013, p. 40-51) outlines five main types of lead generation forms; *Long capture, short capture, short-to-long capture, multistep* and *smooth capture.*

Long capture forms typically consist of six or more data-entry fields, the number of fields is essentially unlimited. As mentioned above, long forms generally have a negative effect on conversions, but they can e.g. be used if companies want to screen out non-serious

buyers. Because the assumption is that serious buyers will not have a problem with filling out all of the fields. *Short capture* forms are the opposite, they can be as simple as a signup form with two data-entries. Generally, they can be from one to six fields and should ask for the minimum amount of information required for follow-ups. The latter is true for all variations of forms, as mentioned above. Ash (2008, p. 100) recommends asking the question: "Is this information *absolutely necessary* to complete the *current transaction?*" Despite the high conversion rates short forms typically have, the information they capture might not be enough. Depending on the size of, and resources allocated to the company sales team, more information might be required.

A *Short-to-long* form is a short form followed by a longer form. These forms might cause frustration among visitors, but they have also been proven to deliver higher conversion rates (Rabhan 2013, p. 49). The next variation of such a form is the *multistep* form. The multistep form is a long form divided into multiple steps. Multistep forms require step indicators for usability so that the visitor knows how far a long in the process they are. These types of forms have been shown to increase conversion rates as well compared to long capture forms (Taylor 2018). However, the multistep form according to Rabhan's definition, is an outdated version that requires the visitor to navigate between separate webpages, airline checkout processes and more complex registration processes are good examples of this. The modern multistep form is what he calls the *smooth capture* form. This is a form that does not require the visitor to navigate between pages, it achieves the same effect of a multistep form through smooth animations that gives a sense of continuation of the same process rather than a new step, while hosted on one single page. Many companies involved in online lead generation apply this approach and the normal term for these forms today is that of the *multistep form*. In this dissertation the term multistep form will be used when referring to a form with the same characteristics as Rabhan's smooth capture form. In short, the multistep form is a long form divided into many short forms and uses animated transitions to facilitate the various steps which results in a more intuitive process.

Overall forms should prioritize clarity and friendliness (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 191), feel easy and simple to complete (Hunt 2011, p. 197) and they should have clear and concise title that describes the benefit the visitor will acquire by completing the form. The title works as an additional persuasive incentive (Ash 2008, p. 100). Ash also states that all descriptive labels and explanatory texts should be minimized and that forms

should not include any optional fields because these do not adhere to the "ask for the minimum amount of information required for follow-up" rule. Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005, p. 298) say that the instructions should be comprehensible and utilize terminology that the visitor understands, but they also emphasize that the form should be brief and adhere to brevity in the copy. Leake et al. (2012, p. 152) concur with minimizing forms by stating that all "business-side ease" and "nice-to-have" questions should be avoided, while also stating that sensitive information such as revenue and similar should not be asked for in the form but inquired in the follow-up stage by the sales team if necessary. Leake et al. (2012, p. 152) also suggest testing alternate versions of various design elements such as submit button dimensions, colors etc. Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005, p. 297) provides an extensive list of guidelines for designing usability-friendly and converting forms:

- Meaningful title.

- Comprehensible instructions.

- Logical grouping and sequencing of fields.

- Visually appealing layout of the form.

- Familiar field labels.

- Consistent terminology and abbreviations.

- Visible space and boundaries for data-entry fields.

- Convenient cursor movement.

- Error correction for individual characters and entire fields.

- Error prevention where possible.

- Error messages for unacceptable values.

- Marking of optional fields.

- Explanatory messages for fields.

- Completion signal to support user control.

Most of these guidelines have been touched upon to an extent already, but the visual appeal, use of white space and boundaries, and the logical grouping are noteworthy.

Shneiderman and Plaisant also mention the importance of error messages. According to Goward (2013, p. 215) visitors can feel a sense of stupidity due to poor form design and arcane and stark (usually red) error messages, making visitors feel stupid or blamed obviously leads to a negative user experience. Forms should accommodate visitors in a friendly way, and they should be allowed to recover from errors easily as this will result in improved conversion rates. Additionally, Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 192) suggest always left aligning both fields and copy in forms, responsive form design for a wide range of devices and avoid cluttering forms with unnecessary design elements.

5.4 Credibility

Many marketing practitioners (Goward 2013; Hunt 2011; Leake et al. 2012; Rothman 2014) highlight the importance of *visitor trust* in conversion optimization and lead generation. Service marketing professionals (Harris & Goode 2010; Santos 2003; Karvonen 2000) argue that trust is one of the most important quality determinants in customers' assessment of service quality. In fact, trust is said to be the fundamental principle for creating conversions, and that the role of trust in e-servicescapes such as websites is far more important than in physical servicescapes. This is due to the lack of human-to-human interaction in e-servicescapes (Harris & Goode 2010; Ribbink, van Riel, Liljander & Streukens 2004).

New approaches are needed to build trust between seller and buyer in the digital world because the regular trust building practices such as human contact are at best impractical, but normally completely absent (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 176). Companies must therefore manage to persuade visitors of their credibility merely through the design and content of their websites. The trust needed to convert is not only related to the visitor trusting that the service provider is truthful and has good intentions, they also need to be convinced of the value the service provides. Consequently, the corporate website must satisfy issues related to legitimacy and visitors' privacy, but also satisfy or exceed expectations of service or product quality.

Visitor trust can be interpreted as a reflection of company credibility, because trust is evoked in the visitor through the credibility of the website, i.e. a credible site builds visitor trust (Everard & Galletta 2006, p. 60). Fogg and Tseng (1999) describe this credibility as

a mix of *trust* and *expertise*, where trust refers to the *goodness* and *accuracy* of the company and expertise refers to *knowledge*, *experience* and *competence* of the company.

Harris and Goode (2010, p. 232) state in their model that *trust in the website* is the constitutional link between all design elements and visitors' purchase intentions (see section 4.2.4, figure 10). Ojasalo and Puhakainen (2004) also concluded that if visitors experience a lack of trust on the web, they are unlikely to perform any transaction or to engage with the business in question further. Moreover, Everard and Galletta (2003) found that flaws in the design has a strong correlation with declining purchase intentions on websites. By flaws, the authors refer to technical factors such as *errors* and *incompleteness* in the design, but also to *poor style* which they define as interfering graphical elements, inconsistent copy styling and improperly formatted tables. Flaws diminish the perceived service quality of the site which in turn leads to diminished trust and a low intention to purchase. These findings also correlate with the study done by Fogg et al. (2003) which revealed that website visitors value the look of the design and the structure of information when judging credibility, as discussed in section 5.1.

The link between usability, aesthetics and credibility is evident, and it is safe to assume that if the design and content of a website does not portray credibility and consequently does not evoke trust, then the chance of conversion is minimal. Important to remember is that visitors are wary of their privacy on the web and by completing in a lead generation form for example, they are putting their own personal privacy at risk (Rothman 2014, p. 115). Therefore, visitors must be convinced that the value they will receive outweighs the trouble of converting, and that the website is secure enough to risk giving up their personal information.

It is arguable that B2B buyers are not as sensitive with their personal information as B2C consumers since they are operating in the name of their employer rather than as private individuals, i.e. they would have a lower threshold for converting. However, no such evidence has been found, B2B and B2C visitors display an equal amount of prejudice and skepticism towards online services as the individual's values and beliefs stay constant. However, the rationale for this attitude can vary. B2C-consumers greatest concern tends to be personal security. B2B buyers, while cautious of personal security, also want to avoid any and all risks of a business venture failing, which includes the careful selection of possible service providers (Leake et al. 2012, p. 144). Also, Leake et al. (2012, p. 19)

explain that both business and consumer branding efforts are dependent on trust between buyer and seller, meaning that trust in a brand is highly relevant for B2B buyers. Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 160) further state that people trust well-known brands and that some brands are even trusted more than governmental institutions.

The importance of brand trust is evident for overall company credibility and for a business that mainly markets itself through online channels and a corporate website, the website is the main channel where brand trust can be influenced. Expressing credibility through the corporate website therefore has far reaching implications for online businesses and is not only relevant for the practice of optimizing website conversions, a lack of visitor trust can result in buyers generating a negative perception of the brand as a whole. Additionally, creating a trustworthy website aids in SEO efforts. Search engines use mainly *site popularity* and *trust* to determine if a website is credible or spam (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 52). The trust that search engines refer to is based on visitor engagement with the site and how many other websites link to the site in question. Meaning that the trust of the visitors is needed to generate search engine trust.

Creating trust through design is affected by multiple factors, e.g. brand names, complete sites without obvious flaws, privacy and security statements, online communities and refund policies help in building trust (Everard & Galletta 2006, p. 60). Many factors are related to the content, design and usability of the site. Goward (2013, p. 217) goes as far as stating that; "You can make all the conversion-optimization improvements imaginable, but if there are technical glitches on your website, all credibility is lost". This highlights the importance of a functional website in the creation of trust, but credibility is also largely dependent on meeting visitor needs. Questions such as *does it have a proven track record*, *do others use it,* and *will you deliver*, are typical questions that visitors go through when researching a site (Hunt 2011, p. 164).

Visitors need reasons that confirm they are moving in the right direction, and effectively reasons that answer questions such as the above. Hunt (2011, p. 164) calls these reasons *affirming positives*, signs that reassure the visitor of the value proposition and credibility of the company, thus persuading the visitor of the fact that this is the right provider for him or her. This is mainly achieved through copy. The style of writing can inspire credibility, but the copy can also talk about specific topics such as guarantees, achievements and awards to do this, or provide proof of concept through testimonials and

endorsements (Rabhan 2013, p. 110). Specific symbols such as icons or images can also contribute to credibility. The following sections will discuss various credibility signals that can be used in copy and design of corporate websites to increase credibility and evoke trust.

5.4.1 Social proof

Kim and Kim (2003) describe *social influence* as the social effect other people's opinions have on you when determining whether or not to adopt a new technology or purchase a product. In fact, many social psychology studies have shown that people can change their mind or beliefs based on the opinions of others (Goward 2013, p. 129). In marketing, this has been acknowledged for a long time and the fact that people tend to be drawn to things that other people like or value is not new. For this reason, marketers try to provide evidence that other people have purchased or are satisfied with a product and/or service, this evidence is commonly known as *social proof* (Goward 2013, p. 128). Due to the general distrust of websites and resulting importance of credibility combined with the short attention span of visitors, social proof is very important in conversion design.

Social proof creates a level of authentic believability that gives visitors an impression of high quality as others have deemed the quality provided to be adequate (Gardner 2018, p. 34). This is the essence of persuasion in conversion design, most visitors will not take a company's word at face-value unless it is a trusted brand, so messages and symbols that indicate social proof must be present on a webpage. Many credibility signals can be classified as social proof, essentially all types of third-party validation such as reviews, social shares, testimonials, security certifications etc. are a type of social proof because they are indications of credibility bestowed on the seller by others, hence "social". In short, social proofing is "based on transferring goodwill from other people or companies to yours" (Ash 2008, p. 92).

Customer ratings and *reviews* are two good versions of social proof. "Incorporating star ratings and comments can add authenticity to a site and help increase conversion rates" (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 334). Especially e-commerce sites should incorporate reviews as visitors want to know the personal experience of others before they purchase a product. In B2B however, reviews per se are not necessarily that applicable, it depends on the character of the service. While B2B e-commerce sites would surely benefit from reviews,

B2B lead generation websites that are bound to a longer sales cycle may be better of using *testimonials*, *endorsements* and other social proof signals.

Client *testimonials* usually take the form of a quote on a webpage. Clients make a positive statement regarding the value they have received which can then be added to the copy of the webpage. Today, many companies also incorporate testimonials in videos through client interviews. A testimonial is similar to a review with the exception of being a direct and short quote regarding a specific product or service. A review tends to be a free-form opinion on something specific and can be both negative and positive as it is an evaluation. In contrast, a testimonial is specifically written to highlight something positive and is as such not an evaluation but a praise. Testimonials should persuade others of the value proposition, and preferably they should be written by peers in the same industry as the webpage visitor. People are persuaded by others who they like or that are like them, so endorsements from people known to the target segment or people that the target segment can relate to have the greatest impact on credibility (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 185). Especially buyers in B2B want the affirmation that others within their industry are using the business in question and that it has a strong reputation in that industry (Leake et al. 2012, p. 30-31).

Goward (2013, p. 130) also points out that using client logos, either in addition to, or in place of testimonials is a good way to showcase existing clients to visitors. Logos are generally better than merely listing brands, due to the brand credibility a logo embodies. Goward (2013, p. 126-127) also describes *case studies* as the most powerful tool for creating credibility on websites. With case studies, marketers can demonstrate how existing clients have benefitted from a service or product. When visitors see how a seller's product or service has solved the problems of their industry peers, they can envision how it could work for them as well. Case studies are normally presented in a written format or through slides on the web, but the increase in popularity of video consumption makes video with dedicated client interviews a very good option for case studies.

Finally, *social media* is a good social proof tool due to its reliability. People can directly see the profiles of others who engage with a corporate social media account, making their statements more credible. Testimonials on the website for example are not as genuine because there is no way for visitors to tell if they are true or not (Goward 2013, p. 30). However, with regard to the corporate website itself, social media can be utilized by e.g.

displaying number of social shares, having a live feed to a social media account or sharing recommendations and reviews originally posted on social media.

5.4.2   Performance and security indicators

Performance indicators are a good way of portraying the quality of a service. Hunt (2011, p. 171-173) emphasizes the importance of providing details through numbers and showing evidence when designing for credibility. Numbers and statistics have been proven to increase credibility, and evidence that support a value proposition is a lot better than just a statement. Good evidence can be various types of social proof such as testimonials, as explained in the previous section. However, it can also be other elements of third-party validation or statistics that only the company behind the website can provide. For example, *number of customers* or similar can boost credibility because humans tend to think that "if many others use it, it must be good" (Goward 2013, p. 124-134). Third-party validation such as *media mentions* gives the site some of the media's brand credibility because it shows that the media in question has trusted the company. *Awards* can indicate that the company is an industry leader or give credibility to the value proposition. Additionally, *professional reviews* from media or respected industry leaders, or symbols for other third-party validation standards such as *TRUSTe* or *Fair Trade* shows credibility, and in many cases indicate security (Goward 2013, p. 124; Hunt 2011, p. 174-175).

Visitors are inherently skeptical on the web due to the insecurities the web presents with its high number of privacy invasions, identify theft and various types of fraud or scams (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 161). Therefore, they need *security indicators* that signals that the site is secure, i.e. it can be trusted with personal information and it is not a scam or fraud. This might well be the final hurdle to overcome in the conversion funnel as visitors might think twice before completing the form even though they have been convinced of the value. Having a clear and accessible *privacy policy* is important at this stage to reassure the most skeptical visitors. Adding a link to the privacy policy directly in the lead generation form increases the likelihood of visitors converting into a lead (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 121-122). This type of promise of handling personal information with care from seller to buyer should always be present when asking for visitors' details (Hunt 2011, p. 174).

Both Hunt (2011, p. 174) and Harris and Goode (2010, p. 238) also mention that the presence of a simple phone number makes visitors feel more secure because it indicates that there are real people they could call if needed. As mentioned in section 5.3.1, visitors also expect the company logo to be present on every page. This is not only relevant in a usability context but in a credibility context as well. Visitors need to be assured of the fact that they are still on the same website to avoid confusion and feelings of insecurity that can lead to distrust. This is also achieved through context and consistency in the design (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 330-331). Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 323) also point out that visitors spend most of their time on other sites and not yours, meaning that they expect all sites to be similar to the ones they visit most often. Deviations in common design can therefore lead to a loss of credibility. Not having the logo at the top as mentioned above is an example of such deviation. Apart from other common usability practices, visitors expect to find security indicators such as contact information and the privacy policy in the footer of every webpage (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 147; Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 320).

Harris and Goode (2010) also found that *financial security* is one of the main categories that lead to trust and increased purchase intentions. Financial security, as Harris and Goode define it, is mainly related to webpages where a financial transaction takes place, such as an e-commerce website. However, other scholars also highlight security in general as a quality determinant and trust enabler in e-servicescapes such as websites. To visitors, security means that they are free from danger, risk or doubt and is related to both financial security and security of sensitive personal information (Santos 2003; Yang et al. 2004). Some security symbols are expected by visitors, and are also web development standards, such as a valid SSL certificate for example. Visitors that provide payment details can also expect a padlock or other type of security certification symbol (Hunt 2011, p. 176). Google also requires websites that contain input fields to be served over https, otherwise a "Not secure" warning will be shown in the url address field to visitors who use Google Chrome, while sites that Chrome deems secure have a padlock icon in this position (Lawrance 2016).

Visitor trust is evoked from credibility throughout a website, meaning that it is affected by all elements throughout conversion design. Tangible benefits such as the value proposition itself, features, offers and other incentives for example play a role in painting a credible picture. Professionalism in both aesthetics, content and usability matter as well,

while rich information provided through content marketing adds to a brand's identity as a leader and innovator (Goward 2013, p. 118-125). Credibility is therefore an integral part throughout lead generation and conversion design, but it can also be influenced by the specific elements listed in the sections above.

5.5 The effect of design on the conversion rate

Based on the findings in this literature review, a hypothesized model was put forward (see figure 17). The model works as the basis for the content analysis of the designs on the subject page which will be presented in chapter 6. It takes influences from the *E-Servicescapes* model developed by Harris and Goode (2010, p. 232) that was presented in section 4.2.4 (see figure 10).

The model builds upon the four main dimensions for conversion design that where depicted already in section 4.3 and that have been researched in detail throughout this chapter: *aesthetics, content, usability* and *credibility.* The dimensions have now been developed further by the addition of separate conversion determinants for each dimension. These determinants depict specific on-page elements of a webpage that visitors have been found to consider when evaluating a site, that enhances the user experience and that have been proven to increase conversions.

Aesthetics refers to elements that generate *visual appeal* for the visitors. These elements revolve heavily around visual hierarchy that indicate the level of importance of different pieces of information. The main conversion determinants for creating visual appeal are *typography*, *color & contrast*, and *imagery.* Through the placement, structure, styling and hierarchy of these elements, webpages can generate visual appeal and a positive first impression.

The *content* on the page, including the *copy*, *CTAs* and *visitor tailored content* should *satisfy the visitors' needs*, i.e. answer all questions visitors might have, while it also should facilitate the business goal. The content on the page is what ultimately convinces potential buyers to convert. In order to do this the presented content should provide relevance, credibility and value for the visitors and should be presented in a manner that facilitates readability, scannability and a logical structural hierarchy through e.g. headings, paragraphs and lists.

Usability is related to the *ease of use* of the website. Logical and clear *navigation* that constantly communicate to the visitor where in the information architecture he or she is must be developed. The *layout* should be structured so that high-value content, from both the visitor and the business perspective, is easily identifiable and presented quickly through the use of e.g. the Gutenberg Rule. The layout and navigation should also adhere to *simplicity* to not create a confusing user experience. A website should also incorporate features of *interactivity* that makes the visitors feel in control of their actions. The *lead generation form* is one of the most critical interactivity components of a usable lead generation site. The ultimate goal of usability is for visitors to easily navigate, understand and find information on the page, thus achieving a state of flow.

Credibility relates to evoking visitor *trust in the website* and subsequently trust in the company. All categories in the model relate to portraying a credible image, e.g. a visually appealing design can have a positive effect on credibility, but certain elements such as *social proof* that mainly consists of third-party validation, and *performance and security indicators* can be leveraged in the design to increase credibility and provide a sense of security for visitors. Figure 17 illustrated the hypothesized model of conversion design including all the conversion dimensions and determinants mentioned above.

Figure 17: Hypothesized model for conversion design of corporate websites.
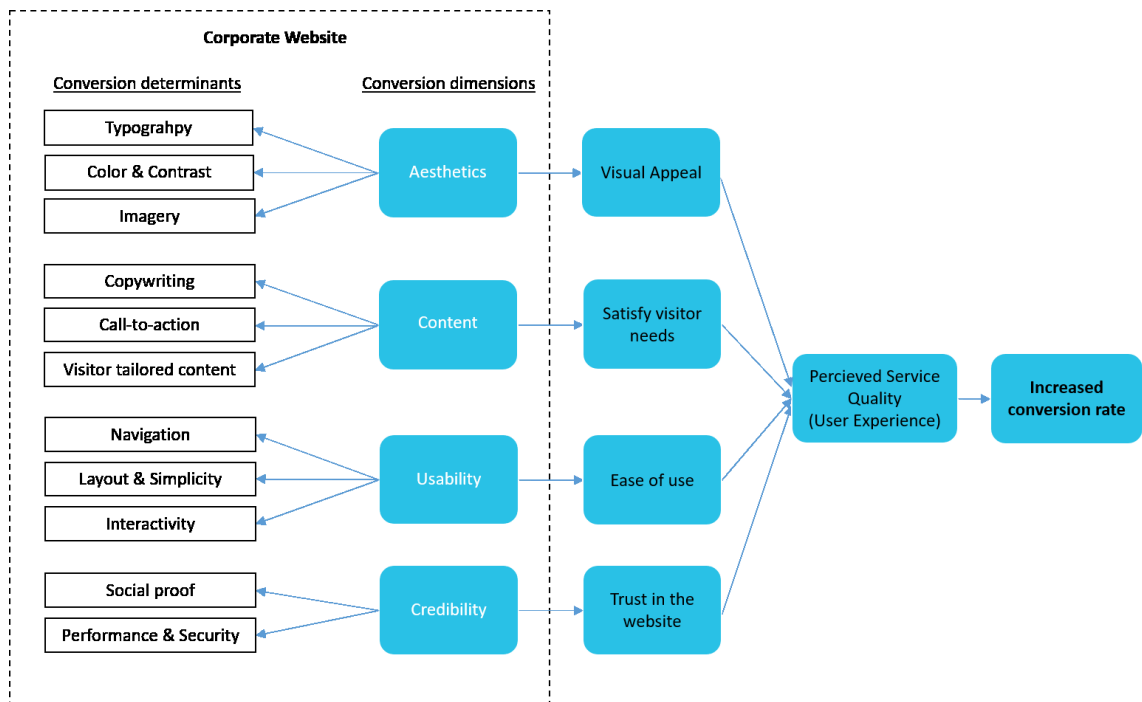
The aim of a conversion centered website is firstly to achieve the set business goal, which in this case is a submitted lead generation form which translates into an *increased conversion rate*, but secondly conversion design should also achieve the visitor's goal. The visitor goal is a prerequisite to the business goal. By incorporating the conversion determinants in the design, marketers can enhance the user experience and thus the *perceived service quality* of the website. When achieving this improved level of quality, the business goal of an *increased conversion rate* can be achieved.

Balancing the business goal and the visitor's goal can theoretically be confusing. However, to clarify, conversion design practices and usability are not the same, but they are also not in conflict, as was explained in section 4.3. They are highly related to one another. Enhancing the user experience through usability and efficient copy can by itself have a positive impact on conversions, but adding conversion design principles in the design process aids in tailoring the page to the target audience and in maximizing the page's effectiveness, both regarding conversions and improved service quality (Leake et al. 2012, p. 142).

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has taken an in-depth look at design and usability factors that affect the conversion rate of the corporate website. Through a literature review of existing literature and research related to web design, servicescapes, CRO, LPO and UCD, presented in this chapter and chapter 4, a hypothesized model was created that uses the fundamental dimensions of conversion design depicted in section 4.3 as a basis. The model (presented in section 5.5) further elaborates these categories by defining the main on-page elements and quality determinants that constitutes optimal conversion design as conversion determinants. With this model as the guiding framework, the *coding manual* (see appendix H) was created so that the old and new design of the case-company webpage can be analyzed to determine how well they incorporate the conversion design principles of the hypothesized model.

6   DESIGN OF THE CASE-COMPANY WEBSITE

This chapter will present the case study results by beginning with a detailed look into the evaluation of the case-company subject page. Firstly, the evaluation results of the old design will be presented, and secondly the results of the new design. Both versions have been evaluated through the coding manual (see appendix H). In conclusion, the main differences and possible improvements between the two designs will be summarized, and the actual difference in conversion rate will be presented by the use of quantitative data consisting of web analytics metrics from Google Analytics.

6.1   Evaluation of the old design

This section will present the evaluation results of the old webpage design based on the findings in the *coding schedule of the old design* (see appendix I). The presentation of the findings will only focus on the most important conversion determinants that the analysis has identified to avoid repeating what was established in the literature review in chapters 4 and 5. Therefore, the results presented here and in the evaluation of the new design (section 6.2) will not go through every aspect of conversion design mentioned in earlier chapters, nor will it go through everything from the coding schedule. It will, however, focus on the most essential elements of the old design that are of relevance from a conversion standpoint. Complete screenshots of the old design can be seen in appendix F.

6.1.1   Aesthetics

Aesthetically the visual design is very pleasing. It is simple and elegant and does not include elements that distract the visitor's attention from the main elements of the page. The webpage design is based on *material design* principles which facilities a very usable visual hierarchy (Turajlic 2018). The visual hierarchy is well balanced overall. Headings are clearly distinguishable from copy and the product images on the page are proportionally large to mark their hierarchical importance. They draw visitor attention to the offered products and give the visitor a preview of what the products might look like. Vector illustrations are also used to illustrate the features of the service offering which makes the content more understandable for the visitor. The imagery in general supports
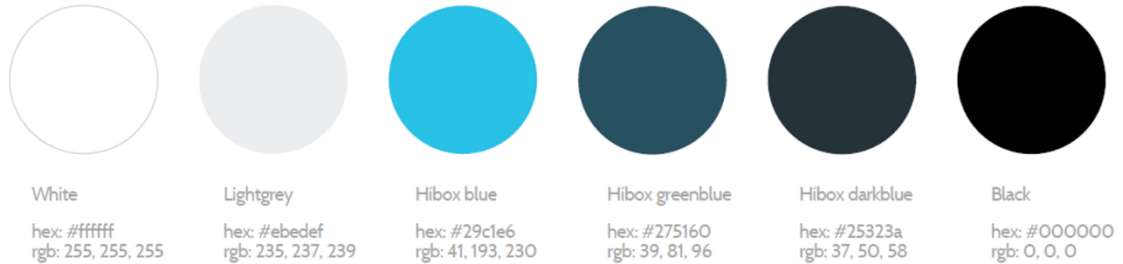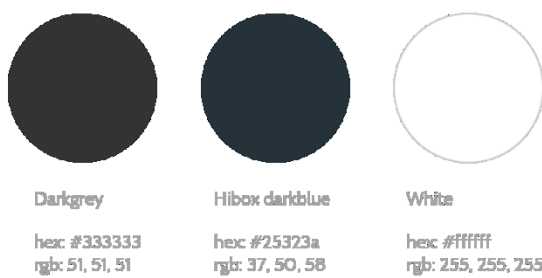
the value proposition of the page, which is the main reason for the use of images in conversion design, and it also makes the service offering more tangible for the visitor (Goward 2013, p. 186). However, the imagery does not make use of other directional or visual ques apart from the product images.

The typographical structures also enhance the visual hierarchy and appeal of the design. The sans-serif typefaces *Montserrat* and *Roboto* are the two fonts used. Montserrat is reserved for headings and high value elements such as links, while Roboto is used for the copy on the page. Both typefaces make the content of the page clearly readable and understandable. The use of font-sizes and capitalization for certain elements also improves readability and makes the content scannable, as the visitor quickly and easily can separate headings from copy and thus choose what content to engage with further.

From a purely aesthetical standpoint, the first impression of the page is good. The design and color choices are visually pleasing, comprehendible and indicates professionality. However, the excessive use of white space and low amount of content in the first screenful fails to deliver the value proposition to its full potential. The first screenful is the greatest weakness of the old design due to the lack of content and high value elements. Because the issues mostly regard the readable content and missing elements from the first screenful it will be evaluated more thoroughly in the next section, 6.1.2, the layout of the first screenful will also be touched upon in section 6.1.3.

Colors and contrasts

The webpage consistently uses the brand colors as the main color palette for the design, with the only additional color being a very dark grey (#333333) for some parts of the copy. The colors used on the webpage are illustrated in figure 18. The brand color palette is made up of cool colors, which is in line with Coursaris' et al. (2008) study and are also fitting for a B2B company aiming to portray a professional and credible image. The background colors vary from light to dark, specifically, white (#FFFFFF), light grey (#EBEDEF) and dark blue (#25323A) are used as backgrounds. The shade of the dark blue is somewhat different from the one presented in figure 18, as it has a small amount of transparency to portray a static background image that scrolls with the content (see appendix F: 3, 10).

Figure 18: The color palette used on the old webpage design.

On-page elements (brand colors)

White	Lightgrey	Hibox blue	Hibox greenblue	Hibox darkblue	Black
hex: #ffffff	hex: #ebedef	hex: #29c1e6	hex: #275160	hex: #25323a	hex: #000000
rgb: 255, 255, 255	rgb: 235, 237, 239	rgb: 41, 193, 230	rgb: 39, 81, 96	rgb: 37, 50, 58	rgb: 0, 0, 0

Text colors

Darkgrey	Hibox darkblue	White
hex: #333333	hex: #25323a	hex: #ffffff
rgb: 51, 51, 51	rgb: 37, 50, 58	rgb: 255, 255, 255

The background image gives a nice visual effect when the visitor navigates the page. However, having a background image for purely aesthetical purposes is debatable. In conversion design form should follow function (Goward 2013, p. 182), and a background image that is purely aesthetical and does not support the value proposition or aid in the visitor's goal is not in line with this notion. There should be a balance between aesthetics and functional design (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 62), the background image used in the old design does not violate that, but it is noteworthy that it does not have any functional purpose for achieving the visitor or business goal. Additionally, a neutral background is preferred to images because images can avert the visitor's attention from the content on the page (Everard & Galletta 2006, p. 66).

The use of the dark background color (#25323A) in some sections of the page works well as it helps in separating the blocks of content from one another and the darker blocks are not too long, which is good because large blocks of light text on dark backgrounds can create eye fatigue. The font-size is also adequate, which is important because if the lighter text is too small it can have a negative effect on readability (Goward 2013, p. 193).

The level of contrast between on-page elements is also satisfactory, elements are clearly separated from one another and there is no section that limits readability or scannability

due to a lack of contrast. The light blue color (#29C1E6) is used as a highlighter to emphasize certain elements on the page, which supports the overall design. Of all the colors in the palette the light blue is also the most obvious choice for this purpose. With regard to highlighting high value elements, the use of the light blue should be revised as it is not reserved exclusively for this purpose (see appendix F: 3, 4, 5, 7). As the highlighting color, it should be reserved for CTAs, links and headings or other elements that the visitor's attention should be guided towards. The one negative aspect of the light blue itself, is that it is fairly similar to the generic blue used for hyperlinks across the web, which can confuse visitors as it is more difficult to separate links from copy.

6.1.2 Content

The greatest flaw of the written content on the page is the lack of it. The existing content is not in any sense poor, but the majority of the page, especially the first half, which consists of the first screenful and the product presentation area (see appendix F: 1, 2, 3), is mainly visual and not that contextual. The positives of the low amount of content is that it is easily scannable and readable, but so are the portions of the page that has more content, i.e. more content would not hurt either scannability or readability but might instead improve the communication of the value proposition and provide more additional incentives to convert. Listing additional benefits would be easy through e.g. bulleted lists.

The copy does have a balance of both customer-centric and company-centric tone-of-voice but does tend to lean more to the company-centric, presenting the service offering for its features rather than focusing on the benefits the buyer will gain from the service. The first half of the page feels like a product brochure, which can work for some visitors, but is a waste of digital real estate when considering the potential that the page has. The presentation of the content is however, disregarding the issues mentioned above, properly divided into comprehendible paragraphs and headings, the headings support the content and the copy sounds professional but not too stiff.

First screenful and first impression

Even though the visual design is pleasing, the first impression a visitor can have is that the first screenful is very empty. This can generate a feeling of incompleteness or that the page has little to offer, causing the visitor to bounce off the page. Simplicity is important

in visual design and the first screenful facilitates that, but simplicity in content is not necessarily equally good. The first screenful of the old design can be seen in figure 19.

Figure 19: The first screenful of the old design at 1920 x 1080 screen resolution.
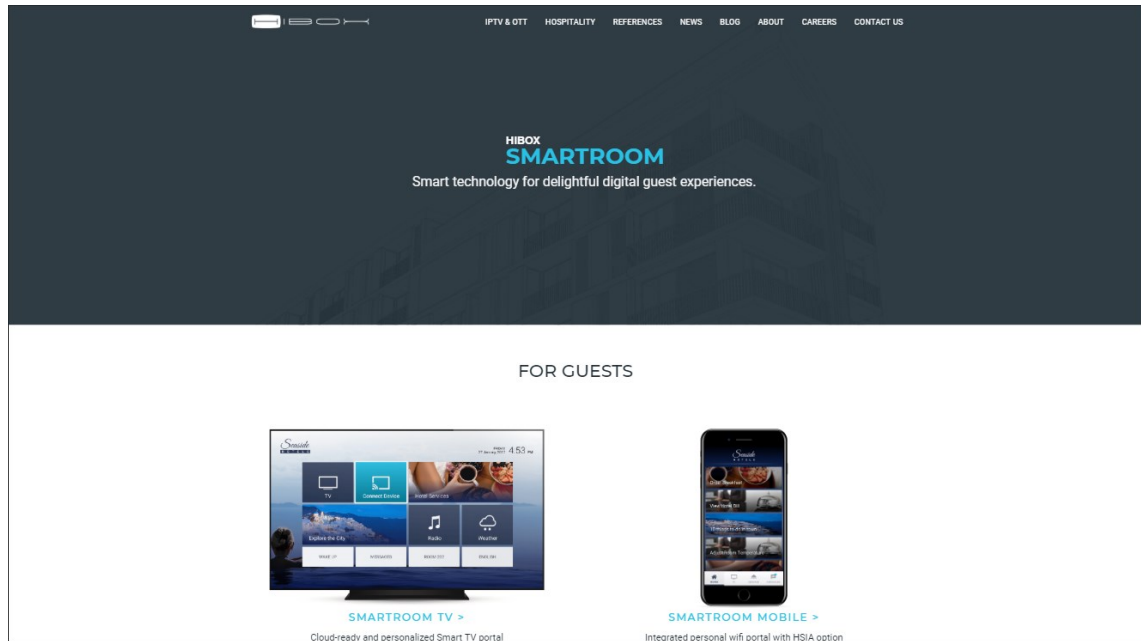
Simplicity in visual design should facilitate the business and visitor goals by focusing attention on the right elements. The first screenful does achieve that, or it does focus attention on the main elements visible in the viewport, but that does not mean that the elements presented are the "right" elements. For example, the first screenful does not include any benefit statements for the visitor, rather it presents the products, as mentioned. It does not include a call to action, except for the 'Contact us' button in the navigation menu (see appendix F: 6), which uses very generic copy and is not highlighted to stand out of the design through color, contrast, encapsulation or any other technique. The main heading is the brand name of the product, which does not give any real value to the visitor because the brand name itself is not very descriptive of what the page is about nor the benefit the visitor might receive from engaging further. Analyzing the first screenful according to Gadner's (2018) mini landing page model and the so called five-point punch, the first screenful of the old design only satisfies one of the five elements, which in this case is the sub-heading (see figure 19 above and figure 12 in section 5.2).

The first screenful needs to deliver the most important information at first glance to the visitor in order to convince them of; a) staying on the site in the first place, b) converting,

or c) researching the service offering further by scrolling down. The old design does not achieve this. The content that is presented is decent; the sub-heading describes what the content is about, it includes images with explanatory copy, it indicates for whom the products are meant ('For guests'), it utilizes the light blue as a highlighter and the content is clear and scannable. However, the first screenful is the most crucial of areas on any webpage and from a conversion design standpoint there are a lot of improvements that could be made.

Call to action

As stated above, the topmost call to action is the 'Contact us' button in the navigation menu. Having a call to action in the navigation menu is very good as it is constantly visible while the visitors navigate the page, but it should also be highlighted in some way so that it stands out and it should avoid very generic copy. The navigation menu call to action in the old design fails on both of these accounts. In addition to the navigation menu call to action, a CTA should also always be included in the first screenful.

The main CTA of the page is at the bottom. This CTA area, including client logos as social proof and a light blue highlighted CTA button is a good representation of a webpage call to action, see figure 20.

Figure 20: The call to action area at the bottom of the page in the old design.
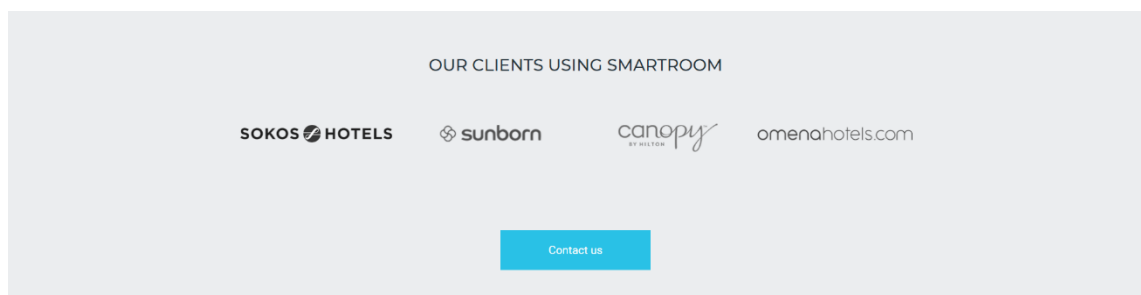
However, this call to action has room for improvement as well. Call to actions should strive to describe the benefit the visitor will receive from converting and what the action of converting will result in from the visitor's perspective. This is mainly achieved through persuasive copy: action-oriented verbs, descriptive headings, benefit descriptions or lists etc., combined with placement of this copy in relevant context so that the flow of content forms a natural path from first landing on the page, to converting. The CTA area illustrated in figure 20 does not fulfill these criteria. The combination of client references

and the CTA button is good, but as with many elements of the old design, the CTA area does not live up to its full potential.

Visitor needs and content placement

The old design does a relatively good job of facilitating multiple visitor needs and journeys. The AIDA model can be identified from the page as the content gets more detailed the farther down the visitor scrolls. At the top the various product segments are presented which create *interest*, after which the design tries to evoke *desire* by communicating the company's unique selling points as well as the benefits of the product's and company's technical solution (see appendix F: 2, 7, 10). The CTA area at the bottom of the page represents the *action* stage where visitors hopefully convert (see appendix F: 8). Having a CTA at the bottom of the page can create great leaps in conversion rates, and it is also good practice to greet visitors that have spent the time to read through the whole page with a logical and business driven exit strategy instead of a generic footer that just forces the visitors to scroll back up (Rabhan 2013, p. 150). Despite the good use of the AIDA, the initial stage, i.e. the *awareness* stage, is inadequate due to the issues of the first screenful, as mentioned throughout. The fact that the first screenful does not provide the most important information briefly, means that the needs of potential quick converters are being neglected.

The design is neatly separated into blocks through the use of different background colors which helps visitors scan and find the specific piece of content that is most relevant to them. The content also facilitates research-minded visitors as the content gets more detailed further down the page and speaks to both technical and non-technical visitors, but the degree of importance and the placement of the various content pieces is not optimal. The *inverted pyramid* model suggests beginning with the most important content and then adding content in a decreasing manner of importance (Ash 2012, p. 133). In the old design the most important and valuable content is in the second half of the page, effectively flipping the pyramid back to its original and flawed axis.

This is obviously subjective, to some visitors the content in the first half of the page, the product presentation (see appendix F: 2), can be more important than the content in the second half. The fact that the products are listed is therefore good, because many visitors are interested in the tangible products that make up a large portion of the service offering. The product section also gives a good overview of the products, making it easy for visitors

to quickly scan and find the products they are most interested in. It also makes sense from a marketing perspective to place the product offering high up on the page. However, when analyzing the content on a page-level, thus disregarding the links to more detailed product pages in the product section of the page (see appendix F: 3), then the most informative and valuable content from a buyer's perspective is in the second half. This is due to the same issue mentioned regarding the first screenful, i.e. the lack of information. The first half of the page essentially forces visitors to navigate to the more detailed product pages if they want to know more, meaning that they cannot convert on the subject page. Some visitors might be convinced by a little additional information that could easily be hosted on the page. To summarize, the issue with the page-level content is not directly related to what content is placed where, rather to the fact that the second half is significantly more informative than the first.

Of course, the objective of the product section might be to direct visitors toward the detailed product pages, but that does not negate the fact that the subject page is inadequate from a conversion design point of view. The business goal is to make visitors convert, and the fewer steps they need to take to achieve that, the better. It is noteworthy though, that the links to the product pages are part of an orthodox exit strategy that is in place in the old design. Every page should have an exit strategy that guides visitors to the next step they need to take to reach a conversion point (Rabhan 2013, p. 149), in the old design the main exit points are the call to action button and the product page links. For many research-minded and product interested visitors the links are a step in the right direction.

6.1.3 Usability

Many usability aspects, such as layout and simplicity have already been discussed in section 6.1.1 and 6.1.2. However, the above sections have examined these factors from the perspective of content and aesthetics. When focusing on usability alone, the perspective becomes one that focuses on ease of use and user experience.

Layout and simplicity

The old design is simple, elegant and clean. It does not include any distractions that takes away from the copy or high value elements on the page. The attention ratio of the page is 39:3 which is good considering that 24 of the link leaks on the page are either in the navigation menu or the footer. The attention ratio of the unique page content is therefore

6:1 (one of the CTAs is in the navigation menu and one in the footer). However, all outgoing links from a page should be considered as equal leaks, so limiting the navigation menu items and links in the footer could benefit the user experience and make the page more focused for its visitors.

With regard to the layout of the page, it has already been established that the page follows the AIDA model and that the visual hierarchy, sizing of elements, visuals, headings and paragraphs facilitate scannability and good readability. The block design separates content and foldpages from one another (see appendix F: 7, 8, 10). Additionally, the AIDA model is good for generating a state of flow. As a visitor scrolls down the page and goes through the various steps of the AIDA, eventually reaching the CTA at the bottom of the page and terminating at the lead generation form, the visitor can feel a state of control over the user experience.

Except from the AIDA, the old design does not seem to incorporate any of the recommended content structures in the layout. The Gutenberg Rule or mini landing page model could significantly increase readability, provide valuable content to the visitors and more effectively drive business goals, i.e. conversions. The most notable area that could be developed with this in mind is the first screenful.

The design does do an adequate job of negating visitors' tendencies to read in the skipping manner of the F-pattern. The short paragraphs and low amount of written text facilitates this. Not to say that the low amount of content is an overall positive, as has been mentioned multiple times.

Navigation and interactivity

The webpage itself is relatively short in length so navigating around the page is not an issue. The whole site is also relatively small when compared to larger websites that can have hundreds of pages. The website utilizes a broad and shallow information architecture which is suitable for its small scale, but it also results in the navigation menu having 8 items, 9 if you count the clickable logo on the far left (see appendix F: 11, 12), which is a high number of menu items. The clickable logo, however, is a positive since it assures the visitors that they remain on the same site. Having the logo visible at all times also makes sure that visitors do not become lost as they can always navigate back to the homepage. The navigation menu, including the logo, sticks to the top edge of the visitor's viewport and is clearly distinguishable from the rest of the page, meaning that it is

constantly and clearly visible as the visitors scroll and thus improves navigation. The menu is visible and has the same design on every page of the website which is good for a consistent user experience when navigating. It also includes expected items such as the mentioned logo for the homepage but also an 'about' and 'contact' item.

Figure 21: The navigation menu of the old design.
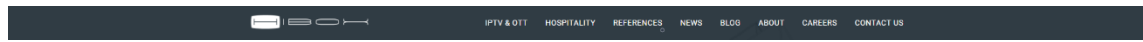
The fact that the site uses a broad and shallow approach is good with regard to visitors not having to dig very deep int the page hierarchy to find what they are looking for. However, the fact that the main navigation only lists top-level pages that are at the highest level of the information architecture (see level 1 in appendix K) forces possible sub-pages (see level 2 and 3 in appendix K) to be linked on-page. This can contribute to sub-pages and specific information being difficult to find and consequently to a confusing user experience for visitors, especially if there are many links on a page.

In the case of the old design there are six sub-pages linked from the subject page, out of which one is hidden behind an interactive scroll menu feature, meaning the visitor must manually use the scroll feature to find the link (see appendix F: 7). It is debatable how intuitive these sub-page links are, i.e. is the page layout clear enough so that visitors intuitively understand how to navigate to the sub-pages to access further information. This combined with the use of the light blue for both highlighting elements and links as mentioned in section 6.1.1 can make navigation more difficult. However, it can be concluded that the product page links (see appendix F: 3) are intuitive enough but that there is room for improvement, especially due to the lack of content in this area as discussed in the previous section. The fact that sub-pages are not findable through the main navigation increases the importance of the on-page navigation and layout to facilitate a pleasing user experience. Apart from clearly separating various pieces of content within the same context and marking links for intuitive flow in the design, a secondary navigation menu could assist in the on-page navigation.

Furthermore, the page does not indicate where on the website the visitor is located, i.e. there are no communicative elements such as a breadcrumb navigation trail or a menu item highlighter that shows the visitors where they are. This is especially bad for navigation flow after a visitor has navigated deeper into the information architecture. If a
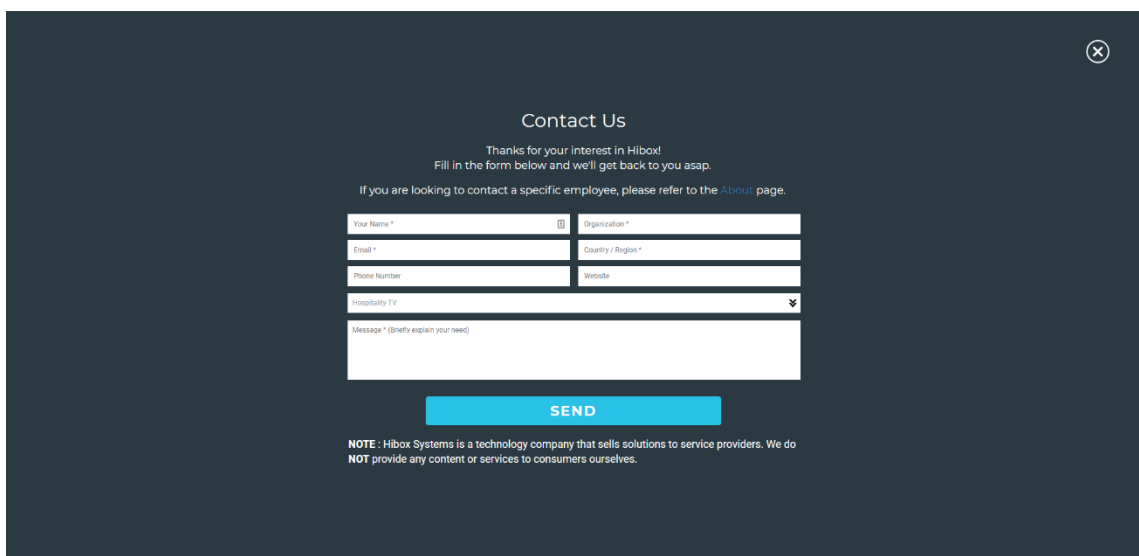
visitor has navigated to a sub-page of a sub-page of the main page for example, he or she has no indication that reassures that he or she is still within the same subject page category of content.

The scroll menu mentioned above is a nice interactivity feature that can increase engagement from visitors. As Santos (2003, p. 239) describes, webpage visitors value animations, which includes moving elements. Stacking content horizontally instead of vertically also diminishes the page length, which in turn facilitates the lack of scrolling displayed by website visitors (Fessenden 2018). The CTA button at the bottom of the page (see appendix F: 5) is also well designed with an interactive hover effect that adds some transparency to the button when hovered on with the mouse. This combined with the button shape of the CTA clearly indicates that it is a clickable element.

Lead generation form

The lead generation form is not constantly visible on the page, it pops up over the entirety of the viewport at the click of any of the CTA buttons (see appendix F: 5, 6). The form has the dark blue background color (#25323A) combined with white (#FFFFFF) text and input fields to make it stand out from the background, the light blue (#29C1E6) is used for the button. This focuses attention on the form itself as there are no un-related distracting elements present on the page which would be the case if the form was hosted directly on the page. Having the form pop up also eliminates the need for encapsulation or other techniques designed to make the form stand out. The contrast of the background and the input fields already achieve this.

Figure 22: The lead generation form of the old design.

The structure and design of the form generates a clear path for conversion, there is no uncertainty regarding what a visitor is expected to do. The topmost input fields ask generic questions which allows the visitor to begin with something easy. As it continues into more difficult questions regarding the visitor's interest in the product offering, the form provides interactive dropdown menus which makes it intuitive for the visitor to fill in the relevant information.

The first dropdown menu has a preselected option based on which webpage the visitor has navigated to the form from. In the case of the subject webpage that preselection is *Hospitality TV* (see figure 22 and appendix F: 23). This design component has a positive intention but is flawed in its execution. The preselection is presumably designed to decrease the actions that the visitor must complete to convert. However, an additional feature of the first dropdown is that it triggers a second compulsory dropdown once the visitor has selected something in the first one, see figure 23.

Figure 23: The selection in the first dropdown triggers a second dropdown.

This automated trigger is not launched due to the preselection, resulting in an error message upon completion of the form because the visitor has missed a compulsory field. A field that the visitor has never even seen. Even the error indicators and messages that appear as the visitor tries to convert fail to clearly indicate which field is incomplete as the secondary dropdown is still not showing, see figure 24. Errors are otherwise shown with clear red markings that indicate which fields still needs to be edited and the form has polite error messages that ask the visitor to complete the missing steps (appendix F: 13, 14).

Figure 24: Error messages and indicators shown due to the incomplete secondary dropdown. The secondary dropdown is still failing to appear at this stage.
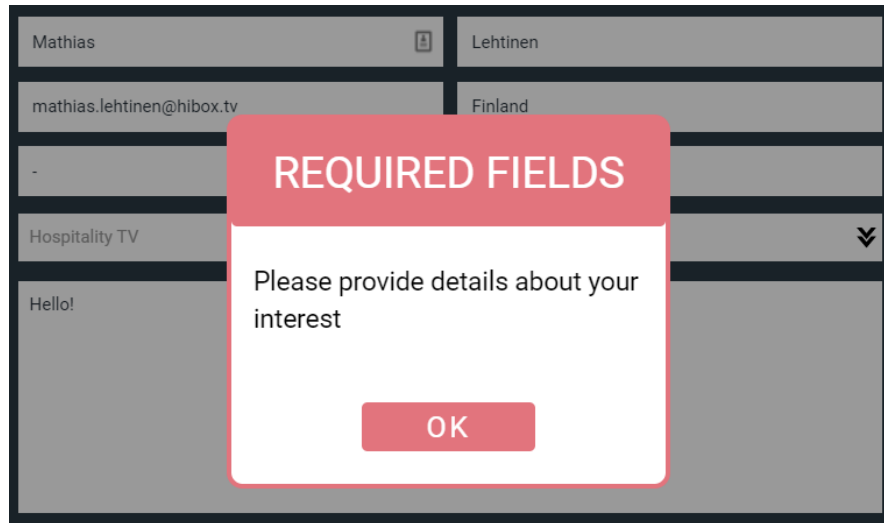
Only when a visitor actively clicks the primary dropdown and selects another option than the preselected one, will the secondary dropdown appear. Clicking the same preselected value ('Hospitality TV') will not trigger the secondary dropdown, only an actual change from the preselected value will trigger it. This is a significant bottleneck to overcome for visitors as it creates a direct barrier for converting, only by the visitor's conscious action to manually solve the problem will the conversion be allowed to follow through. It is arguable that many visitors will in fact change from the preselected value right away, thus eliminating and never noticing the problem, but assuming that is the case would totally ignore the visitors that do encounter this barrier.

Despite adequately communicating user errors, the form does not communicate correct completion of the fields to the visitor. Arvola (2014, p. 120) explains that a form should actively signal to the user when the form is correctly filled out.

When comparing to Shneiderman and Plaisant's (2005, p. 297) list for user-friendly and converting forms, the form in the old design ticks many boxes as has been partly explained. From a design perspective it has a visually appealing layout and clear boundaries between input fields, and with regards to the content, it incorporates a friendly, polite and customer-centric voice, comprehensible instructions, descriptive input field labels and consistent terminology. The content surrounding the form itself could be improved. For example, both 'Contact Us' in the title and 'Send' in the CTA button are very generic in their wording and does not provide any benefit statement or incentive (see

figure 22 or appendix F: 15, 16). 'Contact Us' for example, does probably not correlate with what Shneiderman and Plaisant's (2005, p. 297) defines as a meaningful title. The word *send*, however, is an action-oriented verb as recommended by Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 120), but it does not include what benefit the visitor will gain by performing the action. That lack of communication regarding received value and benefit for the visitor is also apparent throughout the form and not only in the CTA button. Additionally, the explanatory content above and below the form could be simplified and shortened to provide more value as well as more focus on the form itself. The 'About' link (see appendix F: 24) for example directs visitors away from the form, rather than focusing their attention on converting. The content is also missing incentives such as social proof or performance or security indicators that would help validate the benefit and value provided through converting.

According to Rabhan (2013, p. 40-51) and Ash (2008, p. 100) among others, a lead generation form should also try to ask for as little information as possible. The form in the old design consists of 9 input fields, which according to Rabhan's (2013, p. 40) classifies as a *long capture* form. Long capture forms have been shown to decrease conversions, but there is a fine line between asking too much and too little. Asking less will logically increase conversions because it requires less from visitors, but the quality of those leads might degrade as the conversion rate increases due to this same reason; it requires less effort and it fails to qualify leads thoroughly. It is still worth noting that the old form is rather long and has a couple of input fields that are not necessarily needed. For example, additional information regarding the visitor such as multiple forms of contact such as email and phone number, or website address could be followed-up by the sales team after the lead has come in.

An additional interactivity issue with the old form is that when the form is open on top of the underlying webpage, the scroll function in the browser stays active, meaning that the visitors are able the scroll the underlying page even though the form is open. This creates an illusion of being able to scroll the form, when in fact, it is the page below that scrolls and the form stays static. This results in a confusing user experience for a couple of reasons; 1) the visitor is under the impression that the form should scroll and that the form page is longer than what is visible in the viewport, 2) if the visitor has scrolled the underlying page while on the form, the page will not be in the same position when the visitor navigates away from the form as it was when he or she navigated to the form in

the first place which disrupts flow and generates a feeling of being lost as the visitor does not necessarily recognize the visible content.

6.1.4 Credibility

The overall design and the copy portray a credible image of the case-company. Most noteworthy is the 'Why Smartroom' section in the middle of the page (see appendix F: 10), that convinces the visitor of the company's expertise, customer support and value proposition. The most noteworthy credibility signal when disregarding the written copy are the client logos at the bottom of the page, they are strong signals that support conversions. Showcasing existing clients is one of the best types of social proof since it shows visitors that others have used the service and the clients' brand equity rubs off on the case-company. In accordance with the statements made by Frick and Eyler-Werve (2015, p. 147) and Chaffey and Smith (2013, p. 320), the contact information and the privacy policy are located in the footer (see figure 25). The footer also includes a third-party validation signal that improves credibility; the 'Code from Finland' logo (see figure 25 or appendix F: 19) and it features the case-company logo.

Figure 25: Footer of the old design.
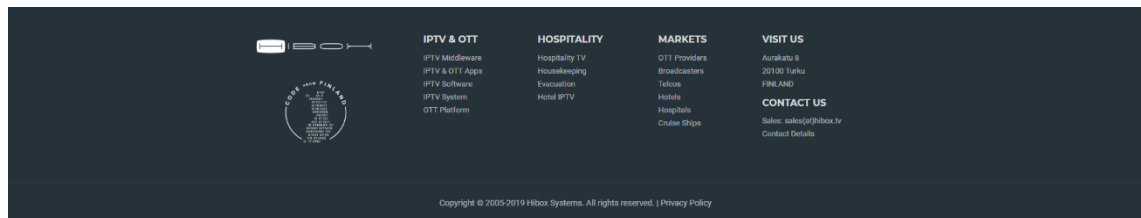
The company logo is also constantly visible in the viewport due to its placement in the navigation menu, as explained in section 6.1.3. While improving usability, this also improves credibility as visitors are assured that they remain on the same website. The link to the 'About' page in the navigation menu (see appendix F: 22) is a good element that creates trust and credibility as this page contains images and names of all employees, showing the actual people working in the company which personalizes the company brand and makes it more relatable for visitors.

Visitors are also presented with a link to the privacy policy when they first land the page through a cookie consent pop-up, which is displayed at the bottom edge of the viewport, see figure 26. Today, this is expected by visitors and might feel trivial, but in fact, a

webpage that does not inform visitors of the use of cookies and how it handles visitors' personal information can feel unsafe and lead to distrust. Customers have raised expectations in the online world and websites must deliver clear service promises through privacy statements, guarantees on security and customer service response times (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p. 174).

Figure 26: Cookie consent pop up displayed when visitors first land on a page.
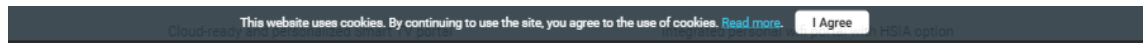
There are many positives regarding credibility, but there is still much potential for improvement. All credibility signals are at the bottom of the page and no testimonials or performance indicators are used, both of which would have a great impact on credibility. The client logos are very good and are cleverly placed in context with the CTA, but alone they are not enough to convince every visitor as there is no indication that these clients have been pleased with the service offering, they are not equally convincing as a testimonial or an endorsement for example. As mentioned in the previous section, signals of credibility should also be used in the lead generation form as suggested by Hunt (2011, p. 174), because security is a critical determinant for visitors when giving up personal information. The form in the old design does not include any credibility signals (see appendix F).

6.2 Evaluation of the new design

As the previous section (6.1) presented the evaluation results of the old design, this section will present the results of the new design as per the *coding schedule of the new design* (see appendix J). However, this section will focus more on highlighting the changes between the old design and the new, rather than repeating an identical evaluation as the previous evaluation of the old design. This makes sense because the new design is based upon the hypothesized model created in this study and has been developed with the old design as a starting point, theoretically the new design should be an improvement from the old. Focusing on the differences also helps in avoiding repetition of elements that have already been discussed in detail in section 6.1. For example, the brand color scheme has not changed in the new design so there is no need to examine this in detail as in section 6.1.1, figure 18. A complete screenshot of the new design can be seen in appendix G.

6.2.1 Aesthetics

From an aesthetical point of view, the new design has maintained the same visually pleasing style and simplistic design as the old design. However, there has still been some significant changes, especially in the use of imagery and the use of colors. The new design creates a good first impression due to aesthetical elements, but also due to changes in three other conversion dimensions as will become apparent in the following sections.

Imagery

The greatest change in aesthetic appeal between the old and the new design is the use of imagery. The new design incorporates a large image in the first screenful that supports the value proposition of the page by portraying a happy couple using the hotel TV as can be seen in figure 27.

Figure 27: First screenful of the new design at 1920 x 1080 screen resolution.
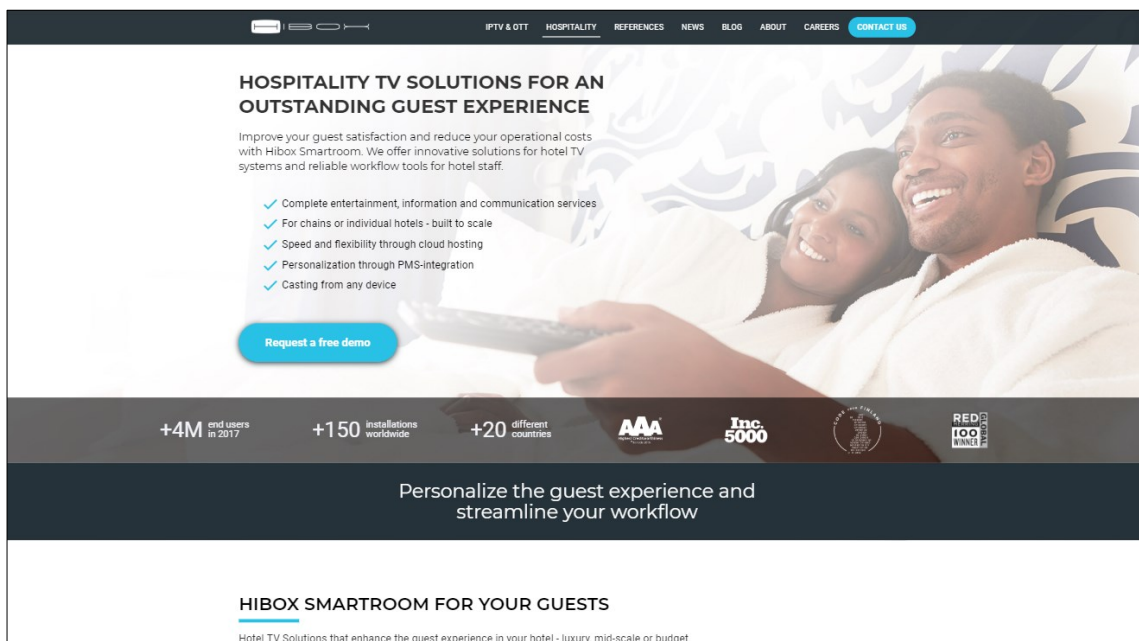
The image also utilizes directional ques by having the models focus their attention through both gestures and vision towards the main CTA area. The CTA area includes a benefit statement and benefit list along with the CTA button itself. Using images with models to drive attention is the most powerful type of directional que because images with peoples' faces subconsciously draw visitors' attention whereafter people automatically look towards what the people in the image are looking at (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 142).

The whole first half of the page in the new design is vastly different from the old, which means there has been changes in visual hierarchy and use of colors. Regarding hierarchy, the product images are roughly the same size as before, but with the added content for every product description (see figure 28 or appendix G: 11) every product area has a greater role on the page than in the old design.

Figure 28: The product area for 'Smartroom TV', the first product under the 'Hibox Smartroom for your guests' section of the new design.
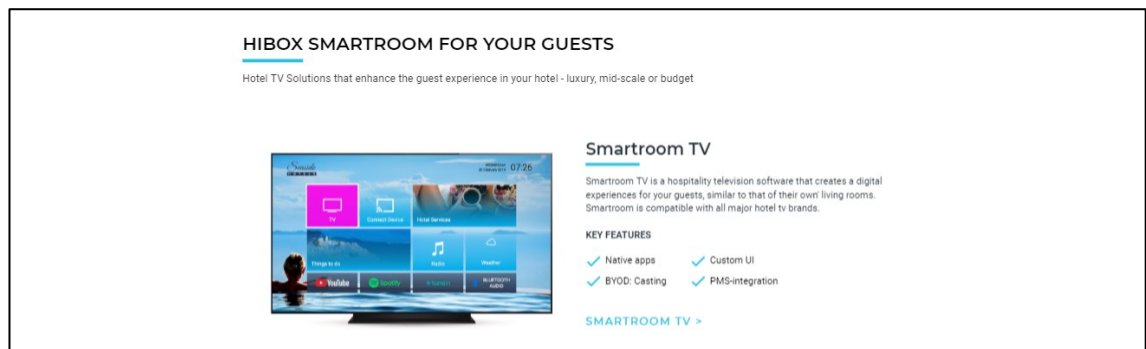
The structure of the different product segments ('Guests' and 'Staff') are more clearly separated by the use of background color. The guest-specific products have a white (#FFFFFF) background, while the staff-specific products have a light-grey (#EBEDEF) background (see appendix G: 19, 7). Furthermore, the potentially attention averting background image that scrolled throughout the page has been removed in the new design.

Colors and contrasts

The colors used on the page are the same brand colors as in the old design, however the placement and prioritization of those colors have changed slightly. The light blue (#29C1E6) has now been reserved for CTA buttons or for highlighting certain elements. For example, the product links, product feature lists and the testimonials are highlighted with this color (see appendix G: 1, 3, 5) which guides focus towards these elements, while other elements that used to be in the light blue in the old design have now been changed to darker colors so they do not interfere with the visitors focus on the high-value elements. Some other elements in the design are highlighted as well, such as the product links, but these were already highlighted in the old design. In the new design the light blue is not being used for anything else than highlighting, so the color is used more sparingly than in the old design, but its new purpose helps high-value elements stand out and draw the visitors' attention.

Color and contrast have also seen development in the form of transparency and gradients. The background image in the first screenful is covered with a gradient combination of white (#FFFFFF) and black (#000000), allowing the image itself to show through while the text on top of the image remains clearly readable and distinguishable from the background. The transparency of the black row with the various credibility signals also helps the signals stand out.

Typography

The typefaces used in the new design remain the same as the old; *Montserrat* and *Roboto*. Some minor changes in font-size have occurred that creates a good balance between headings and copy which improves the readability as well as how visitors interpret the structural layout of the page. The testimonials further down the page are in italics which highlights them more clearly as quotes.

6.2.2 Content

A significant issue with the old design was the lack of content in the first screenful and entire first half of the page. In the new design these areas also the areas that have received the most attention and improvements, and an increase in written content is the most noticeable change between the two designs.

Visitor needs, content placement and first impression

A major improvement in the new design is the added content in the first screenful. From having very little content, the first screenful now has a more detailed heading with explanatory sub-heading that works as a benefit statement, a benefit list and a CTA button. This is an almost exact interpretation of Gardner's (2018) mini landing page model with the only completely missing element being an urgency or special offer statement. Additionally, the sub-heading and benefit statement should, according to Gardner's model, be two separate elements. If the model were to be utilized fully, an additional benefit statement should be added in combination with the benefit list while the sub-heading would be an independent element.

The elements mentioned above give visitors a sense of the page and its value proposition immediately when they enter the page. The new CTA button also draws attention right away. Together these elements create a clear path of conversion as visitors can easily

grasp what the page is telling them to do. The business and visitor goals are now better facilitated with this added content. It is clearly geared towards the business goal while simultaneously facilitating the visitor goal, not only through content, but through conversion determinants such as imagery, relating to the *aesthetics* dimension.

When looking beyond the business and visitor goals, the first screenful and resulting first impression have been improved in other ways as well. The menu item highlighter in the navigation menu is one example of an improvement. It instantly communicates where on the website the visitor is located when they enter. New credibility signals have also been added that assures visitors of the case-company's credibility and value proposition immediately, and the overall design is professional, simplistic and visually pleasing. Therefore, conversion determinants from all four conversion dimensions can be identified in the first screenful.

After the first screenful, the product area has seen the greatest increase in content in the new design. Each individual product listing utilizes the same layout structure as in the first screenful: a heading, benefit statement and benefit list. The first screenful uses this model to point out the most important parts of the value proposition for the product offering as a whole, while the product presentations do the same thing but for each individual product that is categorized under the complete product family.

As in the old design the AIDA model can be identified from the new design as it begins by creating *awareness* through benefits in the first screenful, *interest* through the more detailed descriptions in the product area, *desire* through the unique selling points of the product offering and finally ending in *action* with the CTA area at the bottom of the page (see appendix G: 14, 3, 19, 7, 20, 17). Compared to the old design, the awareness and interest stages have improved thanks to the added content in the areas relevant for these stages, i.e. the upper parts of the page and especially the first screenful. The first half of the page as a whole now offers more incentive and value for the visitor. It provides more information, thus allowing the visitors to grasp the value proposition quicker and to understand if the service offering is what they are looking for. In short, the whole page can be said to better facilitate the visitor needs and goals, as well as the business goal better than the old design. Beginning from the first screenful, every screenful aims to aid the visitor in finding the information they are looking for while providing incentives to convert.

Copywriting

Most of the new content is rather still rather *we* based. The longer benefits statements (see appendix G: 14, 37) incorporate *you* and tries to communicate with the visitors as if talking to them, but there is still something missing. The overall feeling of the page just presenting and selling a product that was so prominent in the old design, has not been diminished with the new design. The benefit and feature lists make it easier for visitors to digest the content and listing the core features for every product can be of value to the visitors, however the tone is very company-centric here as well due to the fact that it focuses on the products themselves. The features are, as the word suggests, features of the product and not benefits that are relevant for the visitor. The copy should list benefits and not features (Rabhan 2013, p. 117).

Call to action

The call to actions have been improved in the new design. There are now three call to action buttons in total (see appendix G: 2, 4, 6), in contrast to the old design's two. The new and third button is the one in the first screenful. As there should always be a call to action in the first screenful this is a major improvement. The supporting content above and around the CTA button, made up of the mini landing page model (Gardner 2018) constitutes a complete *CTA area*, meaning that there are multiple elements that visually and contextually guide visitors towards performing the business action on the page. The CTA area in the first screenful utilizes the main features of persuasive copy through descriptive headings, benefit statements and lists, structured through relevant placement of these elements.

The only call to action that was visible in the first screenful of the old design was the 'Contact us' item in the navigation menu. This CTA is still present in the new design, so the first screenful now has two CTA buttons. The CTA in the menu has been updated to take the shape of a light blue (#29C1E6) button such as the other CTAs on the page. This makes it stand out in the menu and as the menu is constantly visible since it is a static element, visitors always know how to convert. Even though the menu CTA has been improved it still uses the generic copy, but the other CTA buttons on the page have been updated to use more action- and benefit-oriented copy; 'Request a free demo'.

The bottom CTA has also been altered slightly; it now has a heading of sorts above it; 'The digital hotel experience redefined' (see appendix G: 25) which works as a persuasive

phrase to entice visitors to convert. The heading above the client reference logos have also been changed to a more customer-centric style of copy from the old company-centric version. Together, the heading, logos and button work as a CTA area, but it applies different persuasion techniques than the CTA area in the first screenful. Both CTA areas use persuasive copy, action- and benefit-oriented verbs and placement in relevant context, the main difference between the two is that the bottom one uses client logos as social proof while the top one focuses on benefits. Using multiple persuasion techniques on a page is encouraged and especially in proximity to CTA buttons to make up a complete CTA area.

6.2.3 Usability

From a usability perspective the user experience has improved in a number of ways in the new design. The main changes have occurred in the layout, which affects the on-page navigation and state of flow that the page generates for visitors but there have also been changes across the entire usability spectrum.

Navigation

One of the first things the visitor notices when entering the page is the navigation menu. In the new design the menu structure remains unchanged. There are still 8 items and the clickable logo in the menu, which is a substantial number, although the 'Contact us' button has been separated from the rest of the items, making the menu less bland. The menu is also static in relation to the page, meaning that as the visitor scrolls the menu remains visible at the top. The greatest improvement in the menu is the highlighter under the active menu item, indicating to visitors where on the website they are located. The menu item highlighter is portrayed as a gray underline (see appendix G: 16). A system designed for any type of human to computer interaction should communicate the status of the system and the highlight is a way of doing that.

The menu item highlighter is relevant, both from a site-wide navigational standpoint, and an on-page navigational standpoint. It helps visitors navigate between pages while it also helps visitors navigate a specific page due to the constant status communication. With regard to on-page navigation, the page has also become significantly longer due to the increase in content in the first half of the page. From a content perspective this is a good thing, but from a usability perspective it can have negative implications. A longer page

means that the visitors must scroll more to see both the guest- and the staff-specific sections (see appendix G: 7, 19), as well as the entire page for that matter. The worst-case scenario is that this would disrupt the state of flow on the page. However, the added content has a logical and hierarchical structure and is relevant in the context of the products presented, so it could actually be argued that the added content benefits flow in comparison to the old design. When visitors navigate the page, the added content helps guide them along, giving them a clearer perception of the page and its value in relevance to their own needs. The old design with its very limited content, however, did not provide as much information, thus forcing visitors to make an effort to understand what the page is about as opposed to the page just communicating that clearly.

Layout and simplicity

Another risk of making the page longer is that website visitors do not engage in scrolling and if they do not find something relevant to them directly upon entering the page, they will most likely bounce (Fessenden 2018). Furthermore, it could be argued that the old design allowed visitors to more quickly grasp the entirety of the product offering due to its short and compact nature. However, the structure of the added content provides a logical path for the eye to follow and has not impaired the layout or navigation on the page. Designing for lack of scrolling is especially important in the first screenful and the new design facilitates that as it clearly reveals that there is more information further down the page by showing the top of the product area, see figure 27 in section 6.2.1. The rest of the page layout is also structured so that visitors are encouraged to scroll as much as possible by having the layout designed so that every content section reveals that there is more content underneath. The layout also facilitates the AIDA model through the content structure as mentioned in the previous section. One visual design aspect in the layout that can have a negative effect on scrollability however is the use of straight shapes and tiles with different background colors to separate content sections from each other. They work well for this purpose but as a visitor navigates the page these shapes create visual brakes in the content rather than illustrating a clear path for a state of flow. Having most content on the same background color or not making the background tiles extend all the way to the ages of the viewport (see appendix G: 7, 20, 17, 7) or using diagonal lines instead of horizontal lines are all good ways of making the content more "airy", making it seem to continue further down the page and to not seem so segmented visually.

Despite the great changes in design, the new design has managed to maintain the elegance and the simplicity of the old design. The greatest change in layout has occurred in the first half of the page, while the second half has remained almost identical to the old design with the exception of some changes in color and headings. The first screenful has taken the Gutenberg Rule (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 83-84) into account by placing the heading at the top left instead of in e.g. the center of the viewport. As the visitors' vision flows towards the bottom right in accordance with the Gutenberg, the visual cues in the background image and the pointing remote as described in section 6.2.1 (see figure 27 and appendix G: 10) guides focus back to the benefit list and CTA button. In combination, these elements maximize the possibility of a visitor allocating their attention towards the CTA area, and thus makes sure that visitors' do not miss the most important information of the first screenful. The mini landing page model (Gardner 2018) used, as described in the previous section has also improved the layout of the first screenful.

The attention ratio of the new design is 40:4 compared to the old design's 39:3. The attention ratio of the new design is slightly better than that of the old design mathematically, but the placement of the CTAs is also remarkably important and the added CTA button that makes up the increase in attention ratio is in the first screenful. As this is the most important place to have a CTA the new attention ratio cannot only be judged by mathematics. Due to the placement of the new CTA, the attention ratio of the old design is disproportionately better than that of the old.

Interactivity

Interactive elements on the page help in keeping the visitors engaged and incentivizes action on the page as they feel more in control of their own experience (Chaffey & Smith 2013; Laurel 1991; Steuer 1992). The new design has the same interactive horizontal scrolling menu (see appendix G: 17) as in the old design, but the new CTA button design and navigation menu creates more interactivity. The CTA buttons' rounded corners distinguish them more clearly as buttons that invite to click. They also have a nice hover effect that reinforces their clickability in the eyes of the visitor. The menu item highlighter that was mentioned previously is also an interactive element as the highlighter changes color when hovered on. The underline that makes up the highlighter also has an animation that makes it expand from the middle when hovering on the menu items that aren't active

currently, improving the overall navigation on the whole website and not just the subject page.

The interactive elements have as such improved form the old design, but with regards to interactivity in general, the number of interactive elements on the page is still relatively low. However, since interactions are described as the number of actions visitors can take on any given page, having a low number of possible interactions is not necessarily a bad thing. Conversion design wants to make visitors focus on actions that matter, in other words business-driven actions as exemplified through the *attention ratio*. So, a low number of actions is good as long as some (or most) of those actions are business driven, which is the case in the new design of the subject page.

The lead generation form

The only conversion point on the page is the lead generation form, and as such it is also the main business-driven action and combined with all of the preceding CTA buttons, the greatest interactive element visitors can engage with. As in the old design, the form is still rendered as a pop-up over the page as a visitor clicks a CTA and it utilizes the brand color scheme in the same way as previously. From a functional perspective the new form is exactly the same, i.e. it is a single-page form with same number of input fields that the visitor must complete to convert. The changes that have occurred, can mainly be found in the written content of the form combined with some minor visual design changes.

Figure 29: The lead generation form of the new design.

The heading, sub-heading and CTA button now describe the value proposition, the benefit that a visitor will receive from submitting the form and what the action will result in (a request for a free demo). Compared to the very generic 'Contact us' and 'SEND' in the old design, this is a significant improvement. The explanatory content with the link to the About page has been moved under the form and CTA button to not draw as much attention. Guiding visitors that might not be looking to submit the form, but rather just to contact an employee is good in terms of user experience but is not of so high priority that it should be placed in the most prominent area of the form. The descriptive labels have also gone through some minor changes to have a slightly more polite and customer-centric tone.

The preselection issue in the old design (see section 6.1.3) has been fixed. The preselection now automatically triggers the secondary dropdown, so it is visible when the visitor navigates to the form, thus removing the problem. However, the scroll function of the underlying page is still present and as in the old design, can lead to a confusing user experience when navigating away from the form.

The form is still rather long as it includes all the same fields as in the old design. There are 9 input fields, and counting the button press that visitors must perform to actually send it in, there are 10 manual actions to perform. From a visitor perspective that can be quite a lot of work to simply establish contact, work that can result in many visitors abandoning the form, hence the reason why it is recommended to keep a form a short as possible. Additionally, now new credibility incentives in the form of social proof, performance indicators or security indicators have been added to the form.

6.2.4 Credibility

The old design managed to portray a professional and credible image through its design, but it had a fairly low number of credibility signals on the page. The new design has maintained the credibility elements from the old design, such as the constantly visible logo, footer elements, about link in the navigation menu, privacy policy pop-up, client logos and professional copy, while also adding new elements that paint a credible picture of the case-company.

Overall sense of credibility

The new design inspires more credibility than the old design. There are a couple of reasons for this, but from a perspective of the overall feeling a visitor can experience when viewing page, is that the case-company is one of professionalism, knowledge and seriousness. Credibility is a mix of trust and expertise (Fogg & Tseng 1999) and the added content especially portrays expertise, whereas the old design generated a feeling of the opposite with its lack of content. The added content helps visitors identify themselves and solutions to their needs, which reassures them they are moving in the right direction.

The visual design is also aesthetically pleasing, which is an important part of a webpage's overall credibility as visitors have a tendency to trust pages that they deem appealing more than pages they deem less appealing. The improved layout and structure also affect the perceived credibility (Fogg et al. 2003).

The design does also not include any technical errors such as the dropdown issue in the old lead generation form, nor does it have any incomplete elements, interfering graphics or inconsistent styling that could have a negative effect on visitors purchase intentions (Everard & Galletta 2003). The page being functional is a prerequisite for generating credibility and trust, so not having any glitches is very important.

Performance and security indicators

The old design had either a low or non-existent number of security and performance indicators, which have been partly attended to in the new design. The first screenful incorporates performance indicators, which immediately communicates the credibility of the case-company to the visitor and that the service offering is of a high and reliable standard. In practice the indicators are visualized in a black transparent banner under the main content in the first screenful, see appendix G: 21 or figure 27 in section 6.2.1. The banner includes numerical statistics on the case-company's performance. Numbers and statistics have a greater impact on credibility than mere statements explaining the same thing, and they support the value proposition by describing number of served customers and depicting the global status of the case-company. Through this they fortify the level of product and service quality. However, no new security indicators have been added, but the existing security indicators from the old design remain. The number of security indicators is as such relatively low.

Social proof

The new design incorporates the same social proof as the old design, i.e. the client logos in the bottom CTA area. However, other elements that inspire authentic believability have also been added to the page. In the same black transparent banner with the performance indicators in the first screenful, there are two awards and two third-party logos that work as social proof (see appendix G: 30, 31). Both the awards and the logos work as third-party validations that utilizes the brand credibility of others to assure visitors that people are willing to vouch for the case-company. In other words, they convince visitors that others have deemed the case-company as trustworthy and that their service offering adheres to a high standard.

Under the product area, roughly in the middle of the page, the new design also has two testimonials (see appendix G: 1). The client testimonials are quotes from the case-company's customers that visitors can easily relate to because the quotes are from customers that most likely are in the same customer segment as the visitors. The testimonials generate authentic believability because people are persuaded by other people that they deem to be their peers. All credibility signals on the page, and most prominently the testimonials, show visitors that the case-company has a strong reputation within the industry, which is very important to B2B buyers (Leake et al. 2012, p. 30-31).

It is important to remember, that visitors are inherently skeptical on the web (Chaffey & Smith 2013, p. 161). So even if these credibility signals would not manage to convince visitors to convert, they reassure them that they are dealing with a real, credible company that others have interacted with before them. Trust is a prerequisite for conversions as argued by Harris and Goode (2010) among others, and indicators such as these are prerequisites for communicating that essential sense of credibility that in turn evokes trust in the company and brand.

6.3 Differences between the designs

The previous section focused on depicting the main changes and improvements in the new design compared to the old. This section will summarize those changes in a more concrete presentation through table 5. Identified conversion determinants that have remained unchanged from the old design are similarly summarized in table 6. In other words, table 6 depicts the positives and negatives regarding conversion design that were

already present in the old design and that have not been addressed in the new. By showing both the changes between the designs and the unchanged conversion determinants, this section provides a clear description of the current state of conversion design on the subject page, and as such presents the results of the redesign as a whole. Both tables are categorized according to the conversion dimensions that were defined in the hypothesized model in chapter 5, and that has worked as the basis for the entire analysis throughout chapter 6. The +/- column indicates whether the conversion determinant is of a positive or negative nature within the context of conversion design.

Table 5: Changes in conversion determinants that have occurred between the old and new design.

Conversion Dimensions	+/-	Conversion determinant changes	Area of page
Aesthetics	+	Added image	First screenful
	+	Directional ques utilized	First screenful
	+	Effective use of background colors	First half
	+	CTAs and other important elements highlighted through color	Whole page
	+	Transparency and gradients focus attention	First half
	+	Scrolling background image removed	Whole page
	+	Font sizes and italics optimized to distinguish content better	Whole page
Content	+	Added content	First half
	+	Benefit statements and lists	First half
	+	CTA above the fold	First screenful
	+	Most important content at top (inverted pyramid)	First half
	+	Improved AIDA model	First half
	+	Facilitates both visitor and business goal	Whole page
	+	Mini Landing page model used	First screenful
	+	Improved CTA areas with multiple persuasion techniques	First screenful + bottom of page
Usability	+	Menu item highlighter	Navigation menu
	+	Layout of added content	First half
	+	Scrollability encouraging layout	First screenful + whole page
	+	Gutenberg rule accounted for	First screenful
	+	Attention ratio improved	Whole page
	+	Form value proposition is clearer	Lead generation form
	+	Form tone politer	Lead generation form
	+	Form preselection issue fixed	Lead generation form
	-	Longer page	Whole page
Credibility	+	Added content for portraying expertise, professionalism and reliability	First half
	+	Improved aesthetics and layout	First half
	+	Reduced technical errors	Lead generation form
	+	Added performance and security indicators	First half
	+	Added social proof (logos and testimonials)	First screenful + second half

As can be seen from table 5 a lot of improvements have been made to all of the conversion dimensions. The only negative change is that the added content in the *content* dimension has resulted in a longer page, which can have a negative effect with regard to the *usability* dimension. Web visitors have been proven to not engage in scrolling (Fessenden 2018), which means that a longer page can result in fewer visitors finding the content further down the page. However, if the content manages to keep visitors engaged by facilitating all of the conversion dimensions, this development is not that significant in its negative nature. The improvements made across the board do definitely facilitate visitor engagement better than the old design.

With regard to the page layout, the improvements have mainly taken place in the first half of the page, specifically int the *first screenful* and in the following *product presentation* area that together constitute the first half. The fact that the first half of the page has seen the most significant changes was to be expected since that area was the most lacking in the old design.

Aesthetical improvements, added content, usability elements and credibility signals are all factored into the first screenful, resulting in an improved first impression. The significance these improvements have on the overall conversion design is worth emphasizing. The first impression visitors have when they arrive on a page is what determines whether they will engage with the page or bounce, a positive first impression may also result in the *halo effect*, increasing the holistic perception of quality among the visitors (Lindgaard et al. 2006). The above the fold content is what determines their first impression, therefore, the first screenful of any given webpage is the most important area from a conversion design perspective (Ryan 2014, p. 61; Goward 2013, p. 162).

Conclusively, the first screenful and first impression have been affected by all conversion dimensions. This is of course true for almost all areas of the page as the conversion dimensions and their determinants work in unison to achieve an optimal level of perceived service quality. It would be rather limiting to analyze conversion design based on different areas in the page layout exclusively. However, the importance of the area above the fold for the first impression, and the fact that the most important information for the visitor should be communicated quickly (read: top of the page) to keep the visitor engaged, as well as models such as the *AIDA* (Ash et al. 2012, p. 39) and the *inverted pyramid*

technique (Leake et al. 2012, p. 156) suggest that placement of copy and certain elements in the layout is crucial in conversion design.

This is why this analysis has chosen the hypothesized model and the conversion dimensions as a basis, while additionally indicating where on the page the changes have taken place as illustrated in both table 5 and 6.

When looking at the specific conversion dimensions many of the presented conversion determinants in the hypothesized model have been addressed. The *aesthetics* dimension has improved in its use of multiple conversion determinants. Specifically, the use of color, imagery and directional ques facilitates a converting page by focusing attention towards conversion elements such as CTA buttons and areas, as well as other high value elements.

The added content in the first half of the page, added CTA areas with multiple persuasion techniques including buttons and benefit statements and lists, as well as social proof, improved AIDA model that facilitates visitor needs and the use of the mini landing page model has constituted major improvements in the *content* dimension.

With regard to the *usability* dimension, improvements in layout, attention ratio, lead generation form and navigation have been identified and can be said to improve the state of flow that visitors experience when interacting with the site.

The *credibility* dimension in turn, has seen changes with regard to social proof, performance indicators and security indicators. The added content from the *content* dimension has also played a role in portraying a more credible picture of the case-company as it adds expertise, professionalism and reliability.

The new design did not address all of the conversion determinants in the old design, nor did it have to, most unaddressed conversion determinants already had a positive effect on conversions. Table 6 depicts the conversion determinants that have remained unchanged from the old design to the new.

There are however unchanged negative determinants in all of the conversion dimensions except for one as table 6 shows. This indicates that there is still room for improvement in the conversion design of the subject page. However, such is the experimentative nature of conversion design. It is a continuous process of experimentation and it is good practice to focus on smaller incremental changes (Blanks & Jesson 2018, p. 67), which means marketers should not try to improve everything at once. In this regard, the study

performed in this thesis is unorthodox as it focused on a complete webpage redesign. However, this depends on the circumstances surrounding the experiment and what the actual goal is. In this thesis for example it was suitable to perform a quite extensive redesign to facilitate the aim of the study.

Table 6: Conversion determinants that have not changed from the old design to the new.

Conversion Dimensions	+/-	Determinant description	Area of page
Aesthetics	+	Visually pleasing design	Whole page
	+	Balanced visual hierarchy	Whole page
	+	Images and vectors utilized	Whole page
	+	Various typefaces and capitalization utilized	Whole page
	+	Satisfactory levels of contrast	Whole page
Content	+	AIDA model utilized	Whole page
	+	Copy facilitates scannability, readability	Whole page
	+	Facilitated to multiple visitor types and needs	Whole page
	+	Orthodox exit strategy	Whole page
	+	CTA at bottom of page	Bottom of page
	-	Company-centric copy	Whole page
	-	Generic copy in navigation menu CTA	Navigation menu
Usability	+	Simplistic design	Whole page
	+	Facilitates the F-pattern	Whole page
	+	Static navigation menu	Navigation menu
	+	Pop-up form focuses attention	Lead generation form
	-	Sub-pages only linked on page	Whole page
	-	Low numbers of interactive elements	Whole page
	-	Form scroll issue	Lead generation form
	-	Long form with many input fields	Lead generation form
	-	Many items in navigation menu	Navigation menu
	-	Excessive number of outgoing links	Navigation menu + footer
Credibility	+	No inconsistent styling or graphical elements	Whole page
	+	Contact information and privacy policy in footer	Footer
	+	Company logo in navigation menu	Navigation menu
	+	About page link in navigation menu	Navigation menu
	+	Cookie consent pop-up	Bottom of viewport
	-	Low number of security indicators	Whole page
	-	No credibility signals in the form	Lead generation form

6.4 Effect on the conversion rate

The new design has clearly made multiple changes and improvements on the subject page. However, the changes have so far only been analyzed subjectively according to the hypothesized model. To analyze if the changes have had any tangible impact in terms of online lead generation for the case-company the changes need to be analyzed through a

relevant metric. In this case, that metric is the conversion rate. The conversion rate consists of the percentage relation between the number of website visitors and leads generated, i.e. the number of leads divided by the number of visitors. It indicates what portion of the visitors actually convert into leads.

To analyze the change in conversion rate, quantitative secondary data consisting of the precalculated conversion rate of the subject page was gathered during the time period 01.01.2018 - 31.12.2019. The new design was published on the 25th February 2019, meaning that the new design was live for the majority of 2019, making it optimal to compare monthly conversion rates year on year to analyze the effect on the conversion rate between the old and the new design. Consequently, the conversion rate percentages of the subject page presented in table 7 have been divided into two columns; 2018 and 2019, wherein the data collected during 2018 represents the old design, and the data collected during 2019 represents the new. Furthermore, it is relevant to use datasets of relatively long time periods to maximize the amount of collected data and thus increase the reliability of the results.

All data in table 7 have been collected from Google Analytics and only includes desktop traffic to the subject page www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml as per the methodology and limitations of the study.

Table 7: Monthly change in conversion rate for desktop traffic over time (Google Analytics).

Desktop traffic conversion rates for www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml			
Month	2018 (old)	2019 (new)	Change %
January	2.08%	3.67%	+76.44%
February	1.26%	1.39%	+10.32%
New design published 25.2.2019			
March	3.21%	3.96%	+23.36%
April	1.20%	2.96%	+146.67%
May	1.31%	2.20%	+67.94%
June	3.27%	2.70%	-17.43%
July	3.94%	2.57%	-34.77%
August	2.99%	3.28%	+9.70%
September	1.22%	3.88%	+218.03%
October	1.75%	3.83%	+118.86%
November	2.00%	2.30%	+15.00%
December	1.95%	2.01%	+3.08%
Averages	**2.18%**	**2.90%**	**+53.10%**
Difference	**+32.73%**		

All months of 2019 have seen an increase of conversion rate except for June and July. The average monthly increase between 2018 and 2019, June and July included, is 53.10 %. When looking at the yearly average conversion rates, 2019 has seen an increase of 32.73 %, meaning that during 2019 the subject page converted 32 % more leads than in 2018.

June and July of 2018 had exceptionally high numbers compared to the historical average of these months, 2.28 % and 2.39 % respectively on average for the previous three years, 2015-2017 (available data for the website dates back to January 2015). It can be argued that since the summer period of the year is historically a calmer period with regard to traffic and thus conversion rates, the summer months of 2018 were an anomaly, and as such does not devalue the overall increasing trend of conversion rate during 2019. Historically, the average conversion rates for June and July during the lead generation forms entire lifespan (2015-2019) are 2.56 % and 2.74 % (see appendix L for all-time monthly conversion rates and monthly averages), further supporting the argument that the negative drop in conversions in the summer months of 2019 are not a result of issues with the new design, rather the data is affected by the unproportionally high conversion rates of June and July 2018.

The subject page was already experiencing a positive trend during January and February of 2019 before the new design was implemented, which could suggest that the changes in design were not the only aspects contributing to the increase in conversions. Other factors beyond the scope of the study in this thesis might have benefited the number of leads as well, such factors could be increase in traffic due to other marketing activities, which is highly plausible since the case-company's marketing activities were not put on hold for the duration of this experiment. However, it should be noted that no marketing activity or campaign was performed with a direct intention to influence the subject page during this time.

There are seemingly sizable fluctuations in monthly change in conversion rates throughout 2019. However, these year on year fluctuations are not in any way exceptional as also this is subject to external factors that dictate the amount and intent of visitor traffic coming into the website in the first place. Seasonal changes, visitor intent, visitor stage in the buyer's journey and differences in traffic sources (organic search, referral, direct

etc.) all might have an effect on the number of conversions over time. The main interest is whether or not there is an upward trend in conversions, which there is.

Based on the results presented in table 7, it is reasonable to conclude that the changes in design summarized in section 6.3 have had a positive effect on the conversion rate of the subject page. Which indicates that the conversion dimensions including determinants identified as core elements of conversion design in the hypothesized model are sound.

6.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of the conversion design evaluations of both the old and the new design. The results were based on the coding schedules for respective design as presented in appendix I and J respectively. Section 6.3 summarized the main differences between the designs to contrast the in-depth results depicted in sections 6.1 and 6.2. Section 6.4 presented what effect the changes in design has had on the conversion rate of the subject page, concluding that the new design has contributed to an overall increase in the conversion rate of the subject page. The hypothesized model created in chapter 4 and 5 can therefore be deemed a success. As such, the results of the study support mainly three conclusions; (1) the conversion rate of the case-company's subject page has been improved through design, meaning that (2) the hypothesized model developed in chapter five and presented in section 5.2 works and due to this, (3) the case-company should consider implementing conversion design as a major practice of their online lead generation processes. These conclusions are what the following and final chapter is centered around.

7 CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter will discuss the observations made throughout the research. It will answer the research questions, discuss the hypothesized model created in chapters 4 and 5, give recommendations to the case-company and discuss implications of the results. Furthermore, it will present suggestions for future research within the fields of conversion design and lead generation.

7.1 Answering the research questions

This case study thesis set out to research one main object; the role of design on the corporate website, as it refers to the generation of sales leads. The research aim was facilitated by using the case-company's corporate website as a subject of study. Through the website, the researcher could test whether the conversion rate could be affected through design. Two research questions where established; (1) *How can the conversion rate of a corporate website be increased through design?*, and (2) *how has the new design of the case-company's subject page affected the conversion rate?* The following sections will answer the research questions based on the findings throughout this thesis.

7.1.1 How can the conversion rate of a corporate website be increased through design?

Design has a major role in increasing conversions on corporate websites. There are multiple frameworks from multiple fields of marketing and business that touch on the subject of conversions. Out of these, *user centered design*, *conversion rate optimization*, *landing page optimization* and *e-servicescapes & service quality* have been judged as the most important methodologies to consider when designing for conversion. *Conversion design*, as this author has chosen to call the combination of all these methodologies, considers four main categories as the most important to increase the conversion rate. These *conversion dimensions* are *aesthetics*, *content*, *usability* and *credibility* (see chapter 5). They derive from creating an optimal experience for the website visitor. Each dimension has a set of *conversion determinants* that describe certain tangible elements on a website or page that can and should be optimized for stimulating conversions.

Within the *aesthetic* dimension marketers should focus on applying typographical structures and type-face choices that improve readability and scannability of the webpage content, use imagery that supports the value proposition and that directs attention to desired areas of the page. The use of colors and contrast also play a key role in generating an aesthetically pleasing design and focusing visitor attention. Creating content that consists of customer-centric copy, facilitates the visitors' needs and provides clear actions for the visitors to perform constitutes the *content* dimension. Creating a state of flow through logical and conventional navigation methods, well-structured layouts, simplistic designs and interactive elements that engage the visitors constitute the *usability* dimension. In turn, the *credibility* dimension seeks to evoke credibility and trust towards the company by applying certain visual credibility signals such as testimonials, reviews, performance numbers or security symbols.

Many determinants in conversion design are based on persuasion techniques such as third-party validation, visual ques and elements that drive attention, but conversion design is as much related to meeting visitors' needs and providing an excellent user experience in terms of usability and interactivity, as well as making it possible for visitors to achieve their goals as efficiently as possible. The dimensions and their determinants derive from generating *visual appeal*, *visitor satisfaction*, *ease of use* and *trust* among visitors, with the end goal of improving the visitors' perceived service quality (see section 5.5, figure 17). Conversion design is therefore very concerned with the website visitor, making it a customer-centric practice. If the visitors perceive the quality of the presented service to be of adequate standard and there are no visual elements or usability issues hindering them, then the chance of conversion is very high.

The individual determinants within the four dimensions do not all have to be perfected to influence the conversion rate. Individual improvements to any of the dimensions can also have a positive effect. Which dimensions have the greatest impact is highly dependent on market and target audience, as visitor behavior and needs vary across cultures and business landscapes. With that said, the dimensions also work in unison to create a holistically better user experience that improves the perceived quality of the website and consequently of the product and company, meaning that marketers should strive to attend to all conversion determinants while keeping the holistic experience in mind. To incrementally improve the conversion rate of a corporate website, marketers should run continuous data-driven testing on their pages. This involves applying small changes to a

relevant conversion determinant and analyzing how it changes visitor behavior and engagement on the page. Examples of changes could be changing a heading, replacing an existing color or adding a new piece of content.

7.1.2 How has the new design of the case-company's subject page affected the conversion rate?

The answer to this research question was effectively answered in section 6.4 so it would be redundant to go through the intricacies of the effect on the conversion rate again. To summarize the results, the new design, developed with the hypothesized model and its conversion dimensions as a guiding framework, did have a positive effect on the conversion rate of the page. The new design was tested throughout the year of 2019 and compared against data from the previous year, during which the old design of the page was active. The old design had not been developed with a conversion design framework. The data from 2019 indicated an average increase in conversion rate of 32.73 % and only two months of the year showed a decreased conversion rate compared to 2018. The average monthly increase in conversion rate was 53.10 %.

The positive effect on the conversion rate indicates that the hypothesized model can successfully be used as a model for increasing the conversion rate of corporate websites and that the conversion dimensions it depicts are relevant components within conversion design. It can also be concluded that the case-company's website can indeed be optimized towards a higher conversion rate through design, and that conversion design is a tactic worth pursuing further as part of the company's online lead generation.

7.2 Recommendations to the case-company

The aim of this research was two-fold; *"research the role of design on the corporate website as it refers to the generation of sales leads. Upon completion of the study the case-company will be able to draw conclusions regarding whether or not the design of their website should be pursued as a type of lead generation tactic."* Based on the discussion in the previous section and in chapter 6 regarding the former part, the following can be concluded regarding the latter; yes, conversion design is a lead generation tactic worthy of further investigation and consideration by the case-company. The findings of this case study both in theoretical terms, i.e. the definition of conversion design combined

with its benefits, and in terms of the results of the experiment performed on the subject page, this author can with confidence recommend that the company implement conversion design practices into their marketing efforts. Together with traffic generating practices such as SEO and content marketing, conversion design should be a core element of the marketing mix.

7.2.1 Incorporating conversion design into marketing strategy and lead generation

The case-company Hibox already deploys a sales and marketing strategy that includes a lead generation plan, in which the corporate website plays a decisive role for gathering sales leads (see section 2.3.1). The website is, in fact, the main lead acquisition channel for the company but has not been designed with a conversion design approach (Turajlic 2018). In its current form the lead generation plan is completely missing a strategy for improving conversions on a page level. The lead generation plan only includes the main steps; visitor lands on website, navigates to form and submits enquiry (see section 2.3.1, figure 3), but there are no practices in place for how the company actually can influence the number and quality of leads. A systematic and structured conversion design approach could remedy that.

Due to this fact and based on the results of this case study, conversion design should take a central role in Hibox's marketing strategy. As the company's marketing strategy and lead generation plan is primarily based online, there are two main premises responsible for the success of the strategy: (1) generating traffic to the website and (2) converting that traffic into leads. Making website visitors convert is essentially the most important task of the corporate website, highlighting how important conversion design is for Hibox.

Conversion design is not only about improving the conversion rate through visual changes and persuasion, it is about facilitating the visitor, i.e. answering their questions, speaking their language and providing solutions to their problems. It is about "making it as easy as possible for the user to get their work done, as quickly as possible, and as painlessly as possible" (Leake et al. 2012, p. 142). Conversion design is customer-centric and by improving the visitors experience on the website and tailoring the companies messaging regarding value propositions and benefits, Hibox increases the chance of converting better leads. With all of the above in mind, the benefits of conversion design apply to a far

greater scope than simply generating sales leads. The leads can be considered to be the positive output of an optimal website, a website that has been made optimal for the visitor and not only for the company through the principles of conversion design. Conversion design therefore creates a positive user experience, improves brand equity and increases long-term sales. These realities indicate that conversion design is a must for companies that perform that majority of their marketing activities and lead generation online, where the corporate website works as the main communication hub, brand identifier and lead acquisition platform.

Additionally, optimizing the corporate website for conversions is a very cost-effective practice with a high return on investment. Compared to ad expenditures such as pay-per-click, social media ads, display advertising etc., conversion design has zero costs. Blanks and Jesson (2018, p. 53-54) explain this as one of the three benefits that make up *the power law of CRO* (see section 4.2), namely that if marketers double their conversion rate their marketing expenditure remains the same while their revenue doubles. This results in a disproportionate increase in profit. With Hibox's limited marketing budget and the company's focus on always maximizing return on marketing investments, conversion design is a perfect fit for the company's marketing strategy.

Blanks and Jesson (2018, p. 67) also suggest, as discussed in section 4.3, that conversion design adapts an experimental approach to facilitate continuous improvement which results in a steady upswing of conversions. Therefore, Hibox should begin applying the conversion design principles identified in this research incrementally while testing which conversion determinants work best for their unique visitors. Changing internal process and incorporating new marketing tactics can be a difficult process, piloting A/B tests on specific conversion dimensions and determinants is, therefore, a good starting point for developing a conversion design program as part of the marketing strategy and lead generation plan. It is also fairly easy to conduct simple A/B split tests by only changing one specific element while leaving all other variables the same. Small changes can have a surprisingly significant effect on the conversion rate (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 113). Questioning common assumptions regarding determinants on the website and testing elements even though they perform well already should be common practice within a conversion design program (Leake et al. 2012, p. 145-146). Focusing on the various conversion dimensions separately can help in structuring processes and tests. For example, Hibox could strive to first measure the usability of the website to make sure that

the visitors can interact with the website according to usability best practices, before focusing too much on advanced conversion optimization testing such as benefit statement phrasing or CTA button placement.

Furthermore, Hibox should review their corporate website to make sure that it does not include any redundant information or elements that either are not relevant for the visitor or are not tailored towards the visitor or business goal. In conversion design form should follow function, and if an element on a page does not have a clear function, it is probably wasting digital real estate and disrupting visitor attention. It is also important that the company begin by targeting the best performing pages in terms of traffic and conversions, as these have the highest potential of improvement with minimum effort, and it is logical to begin with the pages that most visitors go through to convert (Rabhan 2013, p. 91).

7.2.2 Adapting to the B2B buying process

To further develop their lead generation plan and conversion design practices, Hibox should focus on enhancing their content strategy by creating buyer personas and facilitating the entire journey throughout the B2B buying process. This will allow them to tailor the on-page content to desired target segments and to visitors that are in different stages of the buying process, which makes sure that the site facilitates as many relevant audiences with different needs and goals as possible. In fact, this should be a prerequisite for running tests regarding content, but simultaneously these tests will inform the buyer personas and inform what content works best in which stage of the journey. So, utilizing conversion design testing in the development of target audiences is advised, but beginning with rudimentary personas and buyer funnels will provide a better basis for a conversion design program. Rabhan (2013, p. 22-34) suggests to always begin by creating a funnel in order to understand the buyer's journey and finding areas on the corporate website to improve.

To increase the sales opportunities even more, Hibox should also consider providing more interaction points and ways of converting in addition to the current lead generation form. Visitors that are still top-of-funnel or in the middle stages of the buyer's journey need other ways of showing their interest in the case-company because a sales inquiry is too bottom-of-funnel. These visitors are not quite ready to convert into a sales lead but are still interested in the service offering and might be a very good lead further down the

road. If a corporate website does not capture contact information from these visitors as well, then these potential leads might be lost forever Rabhan (2013, p. 37). So called *microconversions* for this purpose could consist of offering exclusive downloadable content or access to online demos in exchange for contact information, or allowing visitors to sign up to a newsletter. Secondary conversion points such as these would increase the value for visitors while they also would facilitate a broader audience of visitors, because not all visitors that are interested in the products and service offering are ready to engage in a conversation with the sales team just yet.

Visitors in the earlier stages of the buyer's journey are still in research mode and want to know more to better justify their ultimate decision, i.e. choosing the right vendor. Due to this the corporate website needs to provide the visitors with the right material, such as the ones mentioned above (Leake et al. 2012, p. 150-151). Microconversions such as these should also ask for as little information as possible, because visitors higher in the funnel might have a higher threshold for giving up personal information, an email address is essentially all one needs to pursue a lead. It is better to provide visitors with options to engage at whatever level they are comfortable, which can range from handing over only a name and e-mail address for a newsletter to completing a longer form for a white paper, webinar, or demo (Halligan & Shah 2014, p. 134).

Currently there is only one type of conversion that visitors can perform on the site, which is to submit a sales inquiry. The fact that neither the content on the site, nor the conversion points are tailored to different stages of the buyer's journey is probably also a contributing reason to why many of the incoming leads never continue the discussion after an initial response to their query (Komarov 2019), they are simply not in a stage to enter a business relationship yet. Similarly, the company's experience has been that the website generates a lot of low-quality leads (Granholm 2018), which is also in part a result of the website and conversion points not being tailored to those visitors the company considers as being high quality leads.

Having microconversions for visitors higher up in the funnel would allow Hibox to convert leads that they might otherwise loose, and thus generate a larger lead database segmented according to leads' funnel stage and the varying intents of the different visitors. Such segmentation could be to divide leads into *marketing qualified* and *sales qualified* leads. Currently the case-company only facilitates sales qualified leads. By also

capturing leads higher up in the funnel and segmenting them as marketing qualified, the company would be able to create targeted campaigns through e.g. email marketing in order to convert more website visitors into paying customers in the long run.

Tailoring content and microconversions to a funnel that represents the buyer's journey has quickly become common practice within inbound marketing as B2B buying behavior has moved online as was discussed in section 4.1. B2B marketers need to engage website visitors through content and hopefully capture their contact information. In fact, the modern B2B buyer expects to receive informative and valuable content from the corporate website, so much so that research predicts that 80 % of the buyer's journey will occur without any direct human interaction by 2020 (Butterworth 2019). This means that buyers will move very deep into the funnel before wanting to be in contact with a sales representative, in other words, before converting. To facilitate this Hibox must be able to provide enough value through their website to satisfy the buyer's journey and buyers' need for research regarding the service offering. Studies show that over half of B2B buyers view as many as eight pieces of content during their purchase process, and over 80 % view at least five pieces of content (Andersen, Archacki, Bellefonds & Ratajczak 2017: Demand Gen Report 2014).

7.2.3 Additional observations within the conversion dimensions

A lot of positive changes were made to the design of the subject page during this case study, but as was discussed in section 6.3 the new design of the subject page did not attend to all conversion determinants, nor did it perfect the design. Some negative elements still remain and the experimental process of conversion design urges marketers to keep testing new ideas and alternatives, regardless of whether a determinant is seen as having a negative or positive effect on the conversion rate (Leake et al. 2012, p. 145-146). Some additional things that the case-company should consider going forward are tailoring content to visitor needs and optimizing the lead generation form more.

Visitor needs

By adapting conversion design to the buyer's journey and buyer personas that represent the target audience as described in the previous section, the case-company will also be able to better identify the visitors' needs. The new design facilitates this better the old, but the company-centric communication could still be improved. Creating content should

begin from the visitors' needs, challenges and goals to truly embody user-centered design in a conversion design setting. The new design aims to do just that and is in many ways successful, but it is still a presentation of the various products and features of the product offering and the case-company, as opposed to a page that puts itself in the shoes of the visitor and is written directly from their point of view. Every interaction is a conversation begun by the visitor (Redish 2012, p. 2) meaning that they have unspoken questions, and the site's job is to answer them in a conversational you-tone.

Additionally, the case-company should focus on performing actual user research when it comes to optimization of the website. Conversion design in itself is a form of user research, but in order to analyze whether or not visitors are finding what they are looking for, or if they deem the website content valuable or to identify usability issues, the easiest way is to ask the audience. Not to mention the fact that without unbiased research, marketers can interpret audience's behavior incorrectly (Frick & Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 28). This can be done through focus groups and surveys for example, but they can be difficult to organize. A far easier way to begin would be to gather feedback directly through the website by implementing small interactive forms on the site.

Lead generation form

In the new design, only some changes were made to the lead generation form as the primary focus of the study was on the overall design of the page. However, as the only conversion point on the case-company's site, the lead generation form is arguably the most important element in the entire design. The changes that were made consisted mainly of content-based changes that focused on incorporating the value proposition, action-oriented wording of the heading and CTA that also described the benefit of performing said conversion. Additionally, the layout of the form was improved by decreasing the number of disturbing elements around the form itself. All of these changes, however, were paramount from a conversion design point of view, but some improvements could still be made with regards to the length and interactivity of the form.

Regarding the length of lead generation forms it is recommended to always ask for as little information as possible (Rothman 2014, p. 113; Frick and Eyler-Werve 2015, p. 191; Gardner 2018, p. 8; Ash 2008, p. 100; Santos 2003). However, external factors affect the amount of information a company needs to capture in order to qualify a lead. In Hibox's case, the sales team is small and capturing as much information in this early stage

as possible is very important for internal resource efficiency, i.e. the more info the sales team has to go on from the beginning, the more efficient their work process (Öhman 2018). Balancing this with a user-friendly form is therefore very important. The captured information must be sufficient for the sales team, but not too much for the user. Also, if the forms must be relatively comprehensive, the importance of other variables such as intuitiveness, design and appeal are multiplied.

If shortening the form is not considered a possibility then redesigning it into a multistep form or providing additional interactive features for communication, such as a chatbot, could be an option that facilitates those visitors that deem the form too cumbersome. Which also is aligned with adapting to the B2B buyer's journey as described previously. After all, refraining visitors from converting in the first place is not desirable. Another possibility to convince visitors to fill out the long form would be to add more incentives such as credibility signals or additional benefits that generates trust and convinces the visitor that completing the form is worth the effort.

Having indicators such as checkmarks or similar for an approved value in every input field would benefit the user experience by instantly communicating the status to the visitor, thus making the whole process smoother and more enjoyable. It would also help in improving the error indication, as fields would be checked for errors directly after input there would not be a need to check all fields simultaneously when the visitor hits send as it does now, resulting in the visitor being able to actually complete the process when clicking the CTA as he or she expects instead of getting an annoying and intrusive error messages at such a late stage in the process.

7.3 Revisiting the hypothesized model

Throughout this thesis, it has become apparent that there is a substantial gap between academic research and business practices within the field of lead generation and consequently conversion design for corporate websites. The e-servicescape has indeed been studied within the frameworks of service quality by the likes of Bitner et al. (2000); Grönroos et al. (2000); Santos (2003) and Harris and Goode (2010) to name a few, but the e-servicescape is not synonymous with or limited to the website as a forum and there are other avenues within lead generation to consider than just service quality, most of which have been discussed in this thesis. The research performed in service quality mostly

concerns e-commerce websites and not lead generation, and research on service quality and purchase intentions do not directly connect that field to lead generation although many parallels can be drawn between the two.

Simultaneously, there is an abundance of academic literature on various types of design such as *web design*, *user-centered design* and *interaction design*, all relatively similar but still different in certain key areas or approaches and are all considered as legitimate design frameworks. These approaches only touch upon the subject of conversions, generally sidelining its importance to make way for more user focused subjects. Therein lies a misconception of conversion design; that it is too business driven and not user centric. However, based on the extensive literature review that resulted in the hypothesized model and the conversion experiment conducted throughout this thesis, it has been argued that conversion design is predominantly about the website visitor. It is true that the main goal of conversion design is to generate business driven actions that lead to new business opportunities and an increase in revenue (Gardner 2018) but focusing on the user is a perquisite for generating business driven actions. Therefore, conversion design should be considered as an equally legitimate framework as any other design framework.

Conversion design as a design framework is a product of increased competition in the digital marketplace where the battle for visitors and their purchasing power grows more intense as the web grows. As such it is a design framework created and adopted by business practitioners such as marketing professionals such as Gardner (2018) and Blanks and Jesson (2018), which is probably a contributing reason as to why it has received so little attention from academia. Most concepts within conversion design, such as *conversion rate optimization* (Blanks & Jesson 2018) and *landing page optimization* (Ash 2008) have been proven through trial and error in the hopes of creating more leads and sales. Conversion design is therefore based on the analysis of visitor data and adapting to visitor behavior interpreted from that data.

The hypothesized model presented in section 5.5, figure 17 has attempted to bridge the gap between academia and business by acknowledging theories, frameworks and concepts relevant for conversion design from both fields and has to a degree been successful in this embargo, as proven by the A/B split test performed on the case-company's webpage. As such this study has, with the hypothesized model, contributed to the existing knowledge base of online lead generation and through the application on the

subject page it has facilitated the business need of the case-company Hibox in accordance with the model by Hevner et al. (2004). The study has also defined conversion design on the corporate website as having a central and critical role in B2B online lead generation.

Additionally, the term *conversion design* as a universal term is not in wide use today. Conversion design as a framework has in part been created throughout this study and the term conversion design was coined by the researcher as a holistic term for designing for conversion. Conversion design as it has been defined here, includes and applies methodologies from all discussed fields; *e-servicescapes & service quality*, *landing page optimization*, *conversion-centered design*, *conversion rate optimization* and *user-centered design*. It is therefore suggested that the term conversion design would be adapted for wider use amongst scholars, marketers and business practitioners. Some of the mentioned design frameworks, such as CRO and CCD are already used in this manner today. However, they do not incorporate frameworks and methods from all other relevant fields as the hypothesized model of conversion design does.

Additional models that define conversion design from a broader perspective would benefit the field of lead generation as a whole. Currently, conversion design does not have a distinct position within lead generation and mapping that position in relevance to other lead generation practices would help marketers and businesses to prioritize their lead generation efforts.

It has become apparent that many of the quality determinants presented in this model are associated with one another. They can be said to apply to multiple, or all of the dimensions, regardless of the categorization in the model. For example, *navigation* is an important factor for *aesthetics* and not only *usability*, and the design of a *lead generation form* must adhere to the principles of all the dimensions. *Usability* and *aesthetics* have also been identified to affect the trust visitors have in the website and consequently the company and service behind the website (Harris & Goode 2010), meaning that is not only the *credibility* category that is relevant when trying to evoke visitor trust, rather credibility can be portrayed throughout the design of all dimensions. In short, the determinants are antecedents rather than separate components within the perceived service quality. That being said, all dimensions and determinants can have an individual effect on the conversion rate, but they can also affect the conversion rate in combination with other determinants irrelevant of the categorization presented in the model.

It is however suggested by this researcher that conversion design is a subject in need of additional academic research to analyze how lead generation on the corporate website can be enhanced further. The current state suggests that many resources from the marketplace are based on the individual experiences of certain practitioners and companies that have been successful within the field. These experiences remain reliable and valuable, but to push conversion design and online lead generation into the wider field of marketing as a generally excepted and acknowledged framework that e.g. would be taught in universities, academical backing is required. As Santos (2003, p. 236) explains "there is a need for web designers to understand consumers and for academic researchers to evaluate the Internet and provide an appropriate framework". With regard to the hypothesized model, studies on which conversion dimension is the most critical could be performed, additional dimensions and determinants might be discovered.

7.4 Limitations of the study and guidelines for future research

This study was limited to the corporate website of the case-company and to only one specific subject page. The subject page was completely redesigned in order to showcase a large variety of the conversion dimensions and determinants presented in the hypothesized model and to facilitate the aim of the study. The subject page was designed with the hypothesized model as a guiding framework.

A complete redesign was suitable for this study, but as many scholars suggest, marketers should focus on performing smaller incremental changes of one conversion determinant at a time. Multiple experiments of different conversion determinants can of course run simultaneously, but every experiment should be confined to only one determinant increase the reliability of the results. When testing multiple determinants at the same time it is difficult to determine which determinants have contributed to the greatest change, regardless whether the results are positive or negative. It can for instance be concluded from this study, that the hypothesized model facilitates a higher conversion rate. However, it does not explain which conversion dimension(s) or determinant(s) marketers should prioritize, which indicates that further research could be conducted to improve the model. The model does not either directly incorporate placement of specific on-page elements. The above the fold area was recognized as being the most important and frameworks such as the AIDA indicate that placement should be thoroughly considered

when designing. The model does discuss the above factors and more regarding layout and flow, yet placement was found to be of such importance that its priority and position could be re-evaluated in future research.

Additionally, the A/B split test was performed as a sequential test, despite the fact that parallel testing generally generates more reliable results. When performing conversion experiments of this kind, parallel A/B testing or even multivariate testing would be preferred. Furthermore, conversion experimentation is not limited to the sole metric *conversion rate*. The conversion rate is the ultimate judge on how well a website manages to convert its visitors, but this is highly contextual, as every site, company, industry and brand have different conversion rates and they are not really comparable amongst each other. Alternative metrics, data and analysis tools that are relevant for conversion experimentation can be e.g. *scroll depth*, *heat maps*, *CTA clicks*, *time spent on page*, *bounce rates* and many others that measure how visitors interact and engage with a webpage. With such research tools there would not be a need to use screenshots for analysis because visitor behavior could be tracked in real-time. That data would form the basis of analysis, which would eliminate the need for a subjective and theoretical comparison between page and conversion principles.

As discussed in section 3.2.3, the subjective nature of the qualitative content analysis, with the screenshots as primary data, can be considered a weakness in the research design. However, as was already concluded in section 3.2.3, eliminating this subjectivity completely would not have aided the study in this specific case. Ideally, the screenshots of the designs would have been evaluated through e.g. a focus group to utilize the opinions of real users. This would have drastically improved the validity of the results.

In accordance with performing multiple smaller and incremental tests, future research would benefit from diving deeper into specific conversion determinants within the specific dimensions. This study focused on creating a holistic model, which resulted in a model that is slightly lacking in depth with regard to the individual effect of specific conversion determinants. Granular studies on how the conversion dimensions and determinants relate to one another and how their importance varies on different markets and among visitors with different demographics would be a significant contribution to the understanding of conversion design. An experiment focusing on one determinant with multiple parallel A/B split tests or multivariate tests would give valuable insight into how

each conversion determinant relates to increasing the number of leads and how the determinants relate to each other, i.e. if one is significantly more important than another. Furthermore, these types of experiments would give insight into which determinants have the greatest impact on lead quality and not just lead amount. The quality of generated leads could be compared between determinants upon the completion of determinant-specific tests. However, studying lead quality is a field of its own and would require its own dedicated research and tests for proper analysis.

One of the fundamentals of conversion design is to facilitate both the visitors' goals and the business goals, meaning that the webpage content should be tailored towards the visitors and what they want from the page while simultaneously facilitating the business goal. The importance of understanding the visitor and their needs cannot be understated. Marketers should perform user research through surveys, feedback forms, focus groups, persona creation and empathy mapping to be able to define the visitors' goal(s) and needs before the design process begins. This as well, however, is a research field of its own and can be argued to be beyond the scope of conversion design, but conversion design is a very broad and complex practice, as has been described throughout this thesis. It incorporates multiple design practices and methodologies, of which user research is one. Unfortunately, no extensive or detailed user research was performed in preparation for this study. This did not affect the reliability of the results in any way but would undoubtedly have helped in creating a better design for the subject page and would probably have resulted in even greater improvements in the conversion rate.

SUMMARY IN SWEDISH – SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Leadgenerering på internet inom B2B-marknadsföring – konverteringsdesignens roll på företagswebbplatsen

Introduktion

Leadgenerering på internet är i dag en av de viktigaste metoderna för B2B-företag att anskaffa nya potentiella kunder, d.v.s. leads. Företagswebbplatsen spelar en central roll för att dessa potentiella kunder för det första ska hitta företaget i fråga, och för det andra för att de ska konvertera till leads. Trots detta är det få företag som optimerar sina webbplatser för att främja konverteringar, m.a.o. utnyttjar de inte s.k. konverteringsdesign. Företagswebbplatser är ofta väldigt företagscentrerade och är således inte skräddarsydda för webbplatsens besökare. Skräddarsydda webbplatser är i regel mera framgångsrika inom leadgenerering än de som inte är det (Blanks & Jesson 2018, s. 36). B2B-företag bör därför sträva efter att prioritera en optimal användarupplevelse för sina besökare och tillgodose deras behov så att de vill konvertera. Att konvertera en maximal mängd av leads är särskilt viktigt för B2B-företag eftersom dessa företag är bundna till en väldigt lång köpprocess (Gillin and Schwartzman 2011, s. 7). Dessutom visar studier att majoriteten av företag som får mindre än 50 leads per månad inte når sina inkomstmål (HubSpot Research 2016).

Ett företag som förlitar sig på leadgenerering på internet som en huvudsaklig kundanskaffningsmetod är Hibox Systems Oy Ab. Hibox fungerar som uppdragsgivare för denna avhandling. Företagets webbplats är den preliminära kanalen för lead generering och för företagets digitala marknadsföring i sin helhet. Trots webbplatsens onekliga betydelse i leadgenereringsprocessen har webbplatsen inte utvecklats med konverteringsdesign som ett vägvisande koncept. Syftet med denna avhandling är således att med Hibox Systems webbplats som fallstudieobjekt undersöka konverteringsdesignens roll för att generera mera leads.

Avhandlingen kategoriseras som en fallstudie eftersom den utgör en fördjupad undersökning av ett samtida fenomen, d.v.s. ett *fall*, i fenomenets verkliga kontext (Yin 2018, s. 9-15). Fallstudien utnyttjade i först hand en kvalitativ forskningsmetod men använde sig också av kvantitativa data för att styrka slutsatserna i den kvalitativa

undersökningen. Kombinationen av multipla forskningsmetoder och data leder till s.k. *triangulering* som framställer ett pålitligare forskningsresultat.

Inom den kvalitativa undersökningen utfördes en litteraturanalys av primära kvalitativa data som bestod av relevanta källor såsom forskningsartiklar, böcker och artiklar på internet. Källorna omfattade således både akademiska undersökningar och källor från yrkesvärlden. Litteraturanalysen producerade en hypotetisk modell för konverteringsdesign som användes för att utveckla en ny design av en förbestämd sida på Hibox webbplats. Den nya designen speglades sedan mot den gamla genom att analysera skärmavbilder på bägge designer. Skärmavbilderna evaluerades utifrån en kodningsmanual som också utvecklades genom litteraturanalysen (se bilaga H, eng. *appendix H*).

Leadgenerering inom B2B

Orsaken till att webbplatsen har erhållit en central roll inom leadgenerering är att en stor del av köpprocessen inom B2B har förflyttats till webben. I takt med internets framfart har B2B-köpare börjat använda verktyg som sökmotorer för att finna leverantörer som passar deras behov. Tack vare detta kan köpare värdera och jämföra produkter och tjänster på egen hand, utan att kommunicera med en enda försäljare.

Förut bestod marknadsföring i rätt hög grad av s.k. *pushstrategier*, även känt som *outbound* marknadsföring. Marknadsförare använde olika medel för att för att komma inom köparnas synfält, man så att säga "tryckte" ut sitt meddelande genom bland annat tryckta medier, tv, radio och telefonsamtal. Då hade marknadsförarna kontroll över vad köparna såg och hur de kom i kontakt med det de såg. Idag är det köparna som har kontrollen tack vare den oändliga mängd information de har tillgång till via internet. Dagens marknadsföring går därför till stor del ut på *pullstrategier*. Denna typ av marknadsföring baserar sig på att locka till sig köparna genom att vara synlig där köparna finns, t.ex. i en sökmotor, och övertala dem att av egen vilja kontakta säljaren, vilket inom leadgenerering på internet oftast betyder att konvertera genom en webbsida.

Pullstrategier är alltså väldigt lämpliga för internet (Chaffey & Smith 2013, s. 400) och en strategi som många B2B-företag utnyttjar är s.k. *inbound marknadsföring.* Inbound marknadsföring är i viss mån synonymt med pullmarknadsföring, men till skillnad från pull så skildrar inbound ett komplett ramverk genom vilket en köpare går från att vara

totalt obekant med ett företag och dess produkter eller tjänster, till att vara en betalande kund.

I centrum av detta ramverk finns konverteringsprocessen där köparen går från att vara medveten om företaget och ha skapat ett intresse för dess produkter eller tjänster till att konvertera till ett lead som vill ha mera information och möjligtvis påbörja förhandlingar om det som företaget i fråga erbjuder. Det är här som leadgenerering och företagswebbplatsen kommer in. Webbplatsens uppgift är att presentera värdet för köparen genom incitament och att skapa en så pass god användarupplevelse att köparen medvetet vill ta steget att inleda en diskussion med säljaren. Leadgenerering på internet av denna typ karaktäriseras av att köparen inte har någon människokontakt innan hen konverterat. Således sker konverteringen i ett självbetjäningssyfte. Detta faktum betonar vikten av webbplatsen och dess förmåga att konvertera köpare i leadgenereringsprocessen.

Konverteringsdesign på företagswebbplatsen

För att definiera konverteringsdesign som koncept bör man analysera alla former av webbdesign som på ett eller annat sätt berör konverteringar. De mest relevanta ramverken, forskningsområdena och koncepten inom marknadsföring idag är *användarcentrerad design*, *konverteringsgradsoptimering*, *landningstidsoptimering* och *tjänstekvalitet* i det *virtuella tjänstelandskapet*, d.v.s. webbplatsen (Nielsen 2000; Chaffey & Smith 2013; Blanks & Jesson 2018; Ash 2008; Harris & Goode 2010; Santos 2003). För att förstå hur konverteringsgraden kan påverkas måste marknadsförare förstå vad besökare värdesätter (Yang et al. 2004, s. 1150) och således identifiera vilka element på en webbsida som är relevanta för att öka konverteringsgraden.

Bland alla de koncept som nämndes ovan kan man hitta diverse gemensamma nämnare för virtuella tjänstelandskap i form av dimensioner som skildrar de helheter som bör bearbetas för att förbättra tjänstekvaliteten, användarupplevelsen och mängden konverteringar. Dessa *konverteringsdimensioner* utgör alltså de viktigaste områdena inom konvertertingsdesign. Konverteringsdimensionerna är *användbarhet*, *estetik*, *innehåll* och *trovärdighet* (se tabell 4 i kapitel 4.5). Utifrån dessa dimensioner kan man ytterligare definiera diverse *konverteringsdeterminanter* som skildrar de specifika element på webbsidan som marknadsförare bör optimera för att nå en maximal mängd

konverteringar. För varje dimension finns det två till fyra determinanter. Dimensionen estetik utgörs av determinanterna *typografi*, *färg och kontrast* och *bilder*. Innehållsdimensionen utgörs av *skriven text*, *handlingsuppmaningar* och *innehåll skräddarsytt för besökaren*. Dimension användbarhet utgörs i sin tur av *navigering*, *layout och stilrenhet* samt *interaktivitet*, medan den sista dimensionen trovärdighet består av *socialt bevis* samt *prestanda och säkerhet.* Tillsammans utgör dimensionerna och determinanterna den *hypotetiska modellen för konverteringsdesign*. Modellen illustreras i figur 17 (se kapitel 5.5) och är utformad efter Harris och Goodes (2010) konceptuella modell för ökad köpintention inom virtuella tjänstelandskap. Genom optimering av determinanterna tillfredsställs varje konverteringsdimension vilket följaktligen leder till att besökaren upplever *visuell tillfredsställelse*, att innehållet *uppfyller besökarens behov*, att webbplatsen är *lätt att använda* och att den framkallar *förtroende* mellan besökaren och säljaren. Tillsammans påverkar allt detta besökarens *upplevda tjänstkvalitet* som förbättrar *användarupplevelsen*, vilket enligt den hypotetiska modellen leder till en ökad konverteringsgrad.

Förutom konverteringsdimensionerna och dess determinanter, är ett specifikt område på alla webbsidor särdeles viktigt inom konverteringsdesign, nämligen den *första vyn* som besökare ser (Goward 2013, s. 162). Med första vy menas den initiala vy av en webbsida som en besökare ser, d.v.s. den allra översta delen av sidan. Den första vyn är ytterst viktig eftersom det är här som besökarna väljer ifall de tänker stanna på sidan eller navigera vidare till nästa webbplats. Den första vyn måste därför kommunicera värdet, möta besökarens behov och indikera att det finns mera relevant information längre ner på sidan. Alla konverteringsdimensioner kan sägas vara av relevans i den första vyn p.g.a. dess betydelse för besökaren.

Resultat

Den gamla designen (se bilaga F, eng. *appendix F*) på den förutbestämda sidan på Hibox webbplats visade sig vara bristfällig ur en konverteringsdesignsynvinkel. I sin helhet hade sidan en logisk och tydlig struktur, den presenterade relevant information och inkluderade grundläggande konverteringsdeterminanter som t.ex. handlingsuppmaningar. Men det var tydligt att den gamla designen inte tillfredsställde de flesta dimensioner i den

hypotetiska modellen, och även de konverteringsdeterminanter som kunde identifieras på sidan var bristfälliga och uppfyllde inte sin fulla potential.

Den nya designen (se bilaga G, eng. *appendix G*) på Hibox webbplats däremot, kan konstateras ha förbättrat webbsidan ur en konverteringssynvinkel. Förutom att själva designen har många tydliga förbättringar i både enskilda konverteringsdeterminanter och dimensioner, ökade också konverteringsgraden som ett resultat av den hypotetiska modellen. Jämfört med den gamla designen har den nya designen signifikanta förbättringar på hela första halvan av webbsidan. Särskilt den första vyn har genomgått markanta förbättringar genom det nya innehållet som finns där. Den gamla designens största svaghet var nämligen den översta delen av sidan. Den förbättrade första vyn ökar chanserna för att skapa ett gott första intryck hos besökarna och således ökar chansen att besökare hålls kvar på sidan och tar del av det presenterade innehållet.

Även om sidan utvecklades med den hypotetiska modellen som guide så finns det ännu utrymme för förbättring. I alla dimensioner förutom estetikdimensionen finns det ännu negativa konverteringsdeterminanter på webbsidan. Oberoende så är den nya designen en signifikant förbättring av den gamla.

Den hypotetiska modellen bevisades också vara en lämplig modell för konverteringsdesign genom ökningen av konverteringsgraden. Konverteringsgraden mättes över en period på ett år (2019) och jämfördes sedan med föregående period (2018) då webbsidan ännu hade den gamla designen. Av de 12 månader som mättes var det endast två som upplevde en lägre konverteringsgrad än föregående period. Den genomsnittliga ökningen för hela perioden var en ökning på 32,73 %, från en konverteringsgrad som låg på 2,18 % för 2018 till 2,90 % för 2019. Den genomsnittliga månatliga ökningen år 2019 var 53,10 %.

Slutsats

Avhandlingens resultat visar att företag verkligen kan öka mängden leads genom design och att företagswebbsidan spelar en central roll i leadgenereringsprocessen samt B2B-marknadsföring. Den hypotetiska modellen bevisades vara ett lämpligt ramverk för att utveckla konverteringsdesignen av en företagswebbsida och således öka konverteringsgraden. Under studiens lopp framgick det att det finns en signifikant klyfta mellan den akademiska världen och företagsvärlden när det handlar om

konverteringsdesign och leadgenerering. Företagsvärlden har utvecklat diverse ramverk, modeller och koncept för att öka konverteringsgraden på företageswebbplatser, något som drivits framåt av ökad konkurrens på digitala marknader. Akademisk forskning ligger däremot efter och väldigt få studier finns att hitta angående konverteringsdesign, leadgenerering och inbound marknadsföring överlag. Marknadsförare bör förstå sina konsumenter, men akademisk forskning bör evaluera internet och bistå med lämpliga ramverk (Santos 2003, s. 236). Därför är fortsatt forskning för att utveckla den hypotetiska modellen att rekommendera. Modellen som presenteras i denna avhandling har skapat en tillräcklig helhetsmodell ur ett holistiskt perspektiv, men de specifika dimensionerna samt determinanterna bör undersökas på djupet. Hur dimensionerna och determinanterna förhåller sig till varandra, vilka av dessa som har störst inflytande på konverteringsgraden och hur deras betydelse skiljer sig från varandra mellan besökare från olika marknader eller med olika demografiska och kulturella särdrag är goda exempel för fortsatt undersökning. Ytterligare borde konverteringsdimensionernas möjliga påverkan på kvaliteten av leads undersökas, d.v.s. hur marknadsförare kan öka kvaliteten av leads och inte bara mängden genom design.

För uppdragsgivaren Hibox del har avhandlingen bevisat att företaget kan öka sin konverteringsgrad genom design. Därför rekommenderas att Hibox inkluderar konverteringsdesign som ett grundläggande koncept och praxis i sin marknadsföringsstrategi, och att företaget strukturerar sina leadgenereringsprocesser för att möta den moderna köpprocessen inom B2B.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A: Conversion and lead data for 2018

2018	Average conversion rate	Average monthly leads
Hibox.tv	1.46%	34,67

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 01.01.2018 – 31.12.2018.

The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the case-company's website.

Appendix B: Subject page traffic by device

The below table visualizes the devices used by users visiting the subject page during the year previous to the publishing of the new design. The new design was published 25.02.2019.

Device	Sessions	Percentage of total
Desktop	3,725	71.58%
Mobile	1,261	24.23%
Tablet	218	4.19%
Total	**5,204**	**98%**

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 25.02.2018 – 24.02.2019.

The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the subject page https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml.

Appendix C: Subject page traffic by screen resolution

The below table visualizes the top ten screen resolutions used by users visiting the subject page during the year previous to the publishing of the new design. The new design was published 25.02.2019.

Screen resolution	Sessions	Percentage of total
1920x1080	1,059	28.43%
1366x768	649	17.42%
1440x900	277	7.44%
1536x864	251	6.74%
1680x1050	161	4.32%
1280x720	150	4.03%
1600x900	149	4.00%
1280x800	144	3.87%
1920x1200	121	3.25%
2560x1440	117	3.14%
Total	**3,725**	**82,64%**

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 25.02.2018 – 24.02.2019.

The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the subject page https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml.

Appendix D: Top performing pages during 2018 in terms of traffic and conversions

The table only illustrates the path of the URL, as all pages are under the same domain name; hibox.tv. The complete URLs are structured as the following example: https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml. The table is ordered according to sessions. The subject page is highlighted in green.

Landing page	Sessions	Conversion rate
/ (homepage)	8,274	1.27%
/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml	3,403	2.15%
/IPTV-software.shtml	2,899	0.52%
/hotel-IPTV.shtml	2,708	3.62%
/IPTV-system.shtml	2,708	1.18%
/middleware_platform.shtml	839	2.15%
/TV-Solution.shtml	795	2.01%
/Hotel-Housekeeping-System.shtml	786	1.40%
/company.shtml	785	0.89%
/IPTV-middleware-and-OTT-platform.shtml	641	2.81%

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 01.01.2018 – 31.12.2018.

The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the case-company's website.

Appendix E: Site traffic by Internet browser

The below table visualizes the top ten Internet browsers used by users visiting the subject page during the year previous to the publishing of the new design. The new design was published 25.02.2019.

Browser	Sessions	Percentage of total
Chrome	2,538	68.13%
Firefox	461	12.38%
Safari	233	6.26%
Internet Explorer	199	5.34%
Edge	198	5.32%
Opera	64	1.72%
Mozilla Compatible Agent	12	0.32%
'Mozilla	8	0.21%
(not set)	7	0.19%
Sogou web spider	2	0.05%
Total	**3,725**	**99.92%**

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 25.02.2018 – 24.02.2019.

The (not set) category refers to data that Google Analytics has not been able to track. The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the subject page https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml.

Appendix F: Screenshots of old design

Appendix G: Screenshots of new design

1 "The Hibox Smartroom solution has proven to be extremely adaptable to new features and offers all the necessary components for a large chain that operates multiple hotel properties. "

GUNNAR SVEINSSON, ICELANDAIR HOTELS GROUP

"Hibox provided the best quality-to-price ratio. Also their rapid development and knowledge in IPTV impressed us. "

KENNETH KRONSTRÖM, IT PROJECT MANAGER, VIKING LINE

20 **24** WHY SMARTROOM?

12 Innovation

We are TV experts. Hibox was the first company in the world to install HTML-based solutions in hotels with Samsung, Philips MediaSuite and LG WebOS TVs. This is no coincidence. We enjoy spearheading new technology and utilize our experience to create exciting solutions. Your project will inspire us.

Integration

We are TV engineers. We create a new integration every month on average, and eat technical specifications for breakfast. Our rock-solid competence in current TV, server and web technologies guarantee a smooth integration with your systems.

Global lifetime support

Never become obsolete. As a Hibox Smartroom customer, you're entitled to updates as long as your subscription is active. You even get access to new features and adaptations to all new TV models. At some point, you may need to update the in-room equipment, but Hibox Smartroom will always be up to date.

Flexibility

The choice is yours. Hibox Smartroom offers unmatched flexibility in all aspects of the deployment: In-room equipment, connectivity, servers, business model and integration.

17 In-room equipment   Connectivity   Server placement   TV Channels   Business model
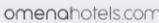
13

In-room equipment

You can freely choose between all major hospitality TV brands, or add a set-top box if you need to keep your existing TVs.

List of compatible hospitality TV models > **18**
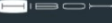
25 THE DIGITAL HOTEL EXPERIENCE REDEFINED

7 Join our existing clients and upgrade your guest experience

SOKOS HOTELS   sunborn   canopy BY HILTON   omenahotels.com

6 Request a free demo

33 HIBOX

31

IPTV & OTT
IPTV Middleware
IPTV & OTT Apps
IPTV Software
IPTV System
OTT Platform

HOSPITALITY
Hospitality TV
Housekeeping
Evacuation
Hotel IPTV

MARKETS
OTT Providers
Broadcasters
Telcos
Hotels
Hospitals
Cruise Ships

VISIT US
Aurakatu 8
20100 Turku
FINLAND

CONTACT US
Sales: sales(at)hibox.tv
Contact Details

32

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Appendix H: Coding manual

This coding manual is used for evaluating conversion dimensions and determinants on the subject webpage of the case-company website. The screenshots of both the old and the new design were evaluated using this document (see the following appendices). The evaluation document is based on the hypothesized model developed in chapters 4 and 5 and presented in section 5.5.

<u>**Aesthetics**</u>

First impression:

- Evaluate the first impression of the website with a focus on visual appeal.

Visual hierarchy:

- Are visual elements used to highlight importance and create a logical hierarchy of information?

Typography:

- Do typefaces and font sizes support readability and clarity in the design? Are the type-faces standard size? Are sans-serif fonts used? Is capitalization or similar used?

Color:

- Does the color match the brand? Is the color palette warm or cold? Is color used for highlighting important elements (CTAs, headings, benefits etc.)? Is whitespace utilized?

Background colors:

- Does the page use neutral background colors? Are they dark or light and how do they fit with primary colors on the page?

Contrast:

- Is contrast used to highlight important elements (CTAs, headings, benefits etc.) and is there decent balance in the use of colors and contrast?

Imagery & directional ques:

- Are there images or other illustrations that support the value proposition and evoke desired visitor actions (business driven goal)? Are images of high quality?

<u>**Content**</u>

Above the fold:

- Is the value proposition delivered directly to visitors? Is there benefit statement with accompanying CTA in the first screenful?

Tone-of-voice and copy in content:

- Is the text customer- or company-centric? Is the tone professional or is it too selling (marketese)? Does it focus on benefits instead of features? Are headings and navigational signposts descriptive of the rest of the copy? Is the copy placed in relevant context (benefit statement vs CTA)?

Text presentation:

- Is the copy suitable for scannability and readability? Are paragraphs kept short?

Call to action:

- Where on the page are the CTAs placed? How many are there? Do they pass the eye blur test?

Visitor needs:

- Does the page aim give the visitors what they are looking for? Is it tailored for different visitor groups? Is there and exit strategy in place? Does the copy go into more detail further down? Is the copy written with a certain tool in mind (CRABS, inverted pyramid, AIDA)?

Usability

Navigation:

- Is the information architecture broad and shallow or narrow and deep? Is the main navigation at the top and does it include expected items? Are there any communicative elements (location highlighting, thank you pages, loading bars etc.)? How many items are there in the main navigation? Are links and other clickable items marked well?

Layout:

- Is the first screenful tailored for various screen sizes? How do various frameworks apply to the page (Gutenberg, F-diagram, AIDA, mini-landing page etc.)? Does the layout indicate that there is more content below the first screenful? Does the layout support scannability (paragraphs, visuals, hierarchy)?

Simplicity:

- Is the design simple and clean or cluttered and overwhelming? What is the attention ratio of the page? Are there visual distractions that do not support the design and visitor flow?

Interactivity:

- What interactive elements are on the page, what actions can the visitor take? Can the visitor control their experience?

Lead generation form:

- What type of form is it? Does it adhere to all conversion determinants described? Does it adhere to brevity and avoid unnecessary input fields? Is it clear and does it describe what value the visitor will receive by completing the form?

Credibility

Professionalism & Expertise:

- Does the copy and design evoke a credible image of professionalism? Does it indicate that the case-company is an expert within their field that visitors can trust to be knowledgeable?

Social proof:

- What type of social proof (testimonials, endorsements, social shares, case studies etc.) is included on the page and is it placed in relevant context?

Performance indicators:

- What type of performance indicators (numbers, awards, media mentions etc.) are included on the page and is it placed in relevant context?

Security indicators:

- Is there third-party security validation included on the page? Are contact details present? Is there a privacy policy linked?

Appendix I: Coding schedule of the old design

Webpage: https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml

Object of analysis: Screenshots of the old design of the subject webpage, see appendix F. The numbers in the coding schedule represent various on-page elements marked in appendix F.

<u>**Aesthetics**</u>

First impression (first screenful):

(+) Simple and elegant design. The brand name and product description are clearly visible [1].

(+) No distracting visual elements.

(-) Excessive whitespace. There is room for adding elements that are beneficial for the visitor.

Visual hierarchy:

(+) Product images with links to more detailed pages are clearly dominant on the page [2].

(+) All on-page elements are well balanced size-wise.

(-) Heading in the first screenful is very small in comparison to available space [1].

(-) Visitors are immediately ushered to navigate to a more detailed product page due to the emphasis on these links [2].

Typography:

(+) The chosen typefaces are sans-serif fonts and clearly readable.

(+) Standard font-sizes are used ranging from 13 – 38 px.

(+) Headings are clearly separated from copy through font-size and capitalization.

(+) Text is clearly separated from other visual elements through color and contrast.

Color:

(+) The color palette is based on brand colors which portray a professional image.

(+) Colors are well balanced with each other.

(+) The page uses a cool color theme.

(+) Color is used to highlight some important elements, the light blue highlights the CTA, feature list icons and some headings and links [3, 4, 5].

(+) Whitespace is used appropriately.

(-) Not all high-value or converting elements are highlighted with color (navbar CTA) [6].

(-) The light blue is not used only as a highlight color to draw attention, is also used e.g. in the feature bar in the middle of the page [7].

(-) The light blue is close to the hyperlink blue.

Background colors:

(+) The background colors are neutral ranging from both dark to light.

(+) The use of various background colors clearly separates the different sections from one another.

(-) The gray background color is rather bland [8].

(-) The great variation in background colors can be interpreted as messy and confusing.

Contrast:

(+) The color palette includes color with stark contrasts. The light blue, darker blues and whites are clearly separate from each other.

(+) The light blue is clearly distinguishable from the other colors.

(-) The gray background color at the bottom of the page is not as distinguishable from the white background as the other colors and combined with greyscale logos at the bottom of the page appear rather flat due to the lack of contrast but is still readable [8].

Imagery & directional ques:

(+) The page utilizes product images [2].

(+) Icons and vector illustrations are used to support the value proposition and placed in relevant context [4, 9].

(-) There are no images of people.

(-) The number of icons and symbols is low.

(-) No directional ques that draw attention to high-value or converting elements.

(-) The moving background image is a nice design feature but draws visitor attention away from important elements.

<u>**Content**</u>

Above the fold:

(+) The sub-heading gives indication of what the page is about [1].

(+) The content presented is clear, readable and straightforward.

(-) Remarkably little content in the first screenful, which results in the visitor not receiving the most important information quickly.

(-) The design does not include or highlight any high-value elements.

(-) There is no clear benefits statement.

(-) The value proposition is not delivered to its full potential due to the small number of content.

(-) No call to action in the first screenful apart from the navigation menu [6].

(-) The CTA in the navigation menu is not highlighted in any way [6].

Tone-of-voice and copy in content:

(+) Professional tone without too much marketese.

(+) Headings are supportive of presented content.

(+) Good mixture of company- and customer-centric tone in the copy.

(-) Focus is more on the company, products, features than on the customer and what benefit the customer will receive.

(-) The copy focuses more on features than benefits.

Text presentation:

(+) Copy is properly divided by the use of headings and paragraphs.

(+) Text is mostly scannable.

(+) Paragraphs are short.

(-) No lists to quickly deliver benefits are used.

Call to action:

(+) There are two CTAs on the page, at the bottom and in the navbar [5, 6].

(+) The bottom CTA utilizes a button and is highlighted with the light blue color and through its size.

(+) The bottom CTA has supporting client logos as social proof [8].

(-) The bottom CTA does not include a benefit statement.

(-) The CTAs uses very generic copy 'contact us'.

(-) The navbar CTA is not highlighted from the other menu items in any way.

(-) No CTA at the top of the page apart from the navbar.

Visitor needs:

(+) The page balances copy for both technical and non-technical visitors [7, 10].

(+) The copy gets more detailed further down the page.

(+) The AIDA model could be said to apply to the design of the page from top to bottom.

(+) The links to more detailed product pages facilitates visitors who are looking for a specific product and works as an exit strategy [3].

(-) Most important information visitors might look for is in the second half of the page.

(-) Very little content and no CTA at the top for visitors that are looking to convert fast.

<u>Usability</u>

Navigation:

(+) The clickable company logo is visible on every page, making sure the visitor does not get lost [12].

(+) The information architecture is broad and shallow, making it easier to navigate.

(+) The navigation menu is at the top, clearly distinguishable and the same on every page [11].

(+) Excepted items in the navigation menu; 'about' and clickable logo for 'home'.

(+) Most clickable elements are marked well for intuitive use (color, menu, button) [3, 7, 5].

(+) Good flow through the AIDA model down to the CTA button and eventually form.

(-) The light blue brand color used for highlighting can make can confuse visitors as it is more difficult to separate a link from design [3].

(-) There are no communicative elements that indicates where on the site the visitor is currently located.

(-) URL does not match the label for the page in menu item, nor does it match the heading on the page or other content in the first screenful.

(-) The navigation menu is limited to one page per menu item and thus the highest level in the hierarchy, sub-pages deeper in the information architecture are then linked from these top priority pages. This results in sub-pages being more difficult to find since they are not included in the main navigation. The visitor also gets lost more easily due to this, see appendix K.

(-) There are 8 items in the navigation menu [11].

Layout:

(+) The page layout is similar to the AIDA model.

(+) The visual hierarchy, sizing of elements, visuals, headings and paragraphs facilitate scannability and good readability.

(+) Good use of block elements to separate sections and foldpages [ex: 7, 8, 10].

(+) The layout does inspire desire to scroll.

(-) For smaller screens the layout of the first screenful does not work very well, looks cut of and incomplete.

(-) The first screenful or other separate foldpages are note tailored to any specific model (Gutenberg, F-diagram, mini-landing page).

Simplicity:

(+) The design is very simple, elegant and clean.

(+) Attention ratio is 39:3.

(+) The design does not take away from the most important elements and interesting copy, meaning that the visitor does not get distracted.

(-) The first screenful is too limited and simple, especially in the number of copy and information. It is underwhelming rather than overwhelming.

Interactivity:

(+) The horizontal scroll menu is an intuitive and elegant interactive element that entices visitors to engage with the page [7].

(+) The CTA button at the bottom is a clear interaction element with a nice hover effect when toggling the button, invites to be pressed [5].

(-) Low number of interactive elements.

Lead generation form:

(+) The purpose and use of the form is clear and straightforward in both design and copy and the form is visually appealing.

(+) The structuring of input fields is logical and does not put pressure on the visitor, as it begins with easy and generic questions.

(+) Includes interactive dropdown fields that increases the sense of control for the visitor [23].

(+) The copy is relatively brief.

(+) Descriptive labels are short and required fields are marked.

(+) CTA button is clearly marked.

(+) Includes error messages with clear color markings indicating which fields need to be filled out [13] and the messages are polite in wording [14].

(+) Has a loading icon when being sent and a thank you page when sent.

(+) Tone of voice is polite and customer-centric.

(-) The scroll function of the underlying webpage stays active in the browser.

(-) The preselection function in the dropdown is flawed [23].

(-) The form is quite long (9 input fields).

(-) Does not include any extra incentives such as social proof, performance or security indicators or benefit statements.

(-) The expected value of converting for visitors is not directly communicated.

(-) The 'about' link is a leak [24].

(-) Error messages are polite but a bit blunt in design and copy as the color combined with the error popup feels intrusive and aggressive [14].

(-) An abundance of optional input fields.

(-) 'Contact us' and 'Send' is very generic copy and not meaningful or action-oriented title and call to action [15, 16].

(-) The explanatory texts around the form is, although relatively short potentially overwhelming and takes visitor attention away from completing the form, especially when placed above the form where the visitor's attention is first directed [17].

(-) Is both email and phone number absolutely required or are they more of a nice to have nature [18].

Credibility

Professionalism & Expertise:

(+) The copy and design do portray a professional and serious image.

(+) The copy gives the sense of credible expertise.

Social proof:

(+) Client logos are used as testimonials in the bottom CTA [8].

(-) No other form of social proof and only at the bottom of the page.

Performance indicators:

(-) There are no direct performance indicators present on the page apart from the copy in the 'Why Smartroom' section [10].

Security indicators:

(+) Third-party validation logo used in the footer 'Code from Finland' [19].

(+) Privacy policy, cookie policy and contact information in footer [20].

(+) Cookie consent popup in first load.

(+) The brand logo is present at the top at all times [12], it is also in the footer [21].

(+) The link to the 'About' page is present in the navigation menu at all times through which visitors can see images, contact, details and social media profiles of the employees [22].

(-) Small number of security indicators.

Appendix J: Coding schedule of the new design

Webpage: https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml

Object of analysis: Screenshots of the new design of the subject webpage, see appendix G. The numbers in the coding schedule represent various on-page elements marked in appendix G.

<u>**Aesthetics**</u>

First impression:

(+) The design looks professional and clear and is visually pleasing.

(+) There is a clear structural layout and both the Gutenberg model and mini-landing page model can be identified from the page.

(+) Visitor attention is guided towards the main CTA through the structure, coloring and directional ques [4].

(+) Benefits of the service are presented immediately [3, 14].

(+) Performance and security indicators create trust and credibility [21].

Visual hierarchy:

(+) All on-page elements are well balanced size-wise.

(+) Differences between headings, paragraphs and high-value elements indicates hierarchy between the elements.

(-) The inconsistency in the design between different section and e.g. headings can have a negative effect on hierarchy and be confusing [ex: 14, 22, 23, 24, 25].

Typography:

(+) The chosen typefaces are sans-serif fonts and clearly readable.

(+) Standard font-sizes are used ranging from 13 – 32 px.

(+) Headings are clearly separated from copy through font-size and capitalization.

(+) Italics are used for emphasizing the testimonials [1].

(+) Text is clearly separated from other visual elements through color and contrast.

Color:

(+) The color palette is based on brand colors which portray a professional image.

(+) Colors are well balanced with each other.

(+) The page uses a cool color theme.

(+) The light blue brand color is reserved for highlighting of high-value and converting elements (CTAs benefit lists, testimonials product page links) [2, 3, 4, 5, 6].

(+) Whitespace is used appropriately.

(-) The light blue is close to the hyperlink blue.

Background colors:

(+) The background colors are neutral ranging from both dark to light.

(+) The use of various background colors clearly separates the different sections from one another.

(-) The gray background color is rather bland [7].

(-) The great variation in background colors can be interpreted as messy and confusing.

Contrast:

(+) The color palette includes color with stark contrasts. The light blue, darker blues and whites are clearly separate from each other.

(+) The light blue is clearly distinguishable from the other colors and only used for high-value elements.

(+) Paragraph text is either white or black and combined with either dark or light backgrounds which results in appropriate contrast for readability.

(-) The gray background color combined with greyscale logos at the bottom of the page appear rather flat due to the lack of contrast but is still readable [7].

Imagery & directional ques:

(+) The first screenful has a large high-quality image with people that complements the value proposition [8].

(+) The image works a strong directional que to the main CTA in the first screenful both through the models' vision and hand gesture [9, 10].

(+) The page utilizes product images [11].

(+) Icons and vector illustrations are used to support the value proposition and placed in relevant context [12, 13].

<u>Content</u>

Above the fold:

(+) The content presented is clear, readable and straightforward.

(+) The first screenful includes CTA, benefits statements and lists and value proposition [3, 4, 14].

(+) The title and sub-title immediately deliver a benefit statemen for the visitor [14].

(+) The benefit/feature list is scannable and quickly gives the visitor the main value proposition factors [3].

(-) The information presented can be too much for some visitors.

Tone-of-voice and copy in content:

(+) The first screenful is especially customer-centric in tone.

(+) Good use of "you" and action-oriented text.

(+) Professional tone without too much marketese.

(+) Headings and subheadings are very descriptive of presented content throughout the page and is focused on benefits and value.

(+) Good balance of company- and customer-centric tone in the copy.

(+) The copy lists features and benefits.

(-) The copy focuses more on features than benefits.

Text presentation:

(+) Copy is properly divided by the use of headings, paragraphs and lists.

(+) Text is very scannable.

(+) Paragraphs are short.

Call to action:

(+) There are 3 CTAs on the page [2, 4, 6].

(+) All CTAs use the unified light blue highlight color and are very attention grabbing.

(+) The navbar CTA is constantly visible on the page [2].

(+) In the first screenful attention is immediately drawn to the CTA buttons and benefit lists thanks to color, imagery and placement [3, 4].

(+) The bottom CTA has supporting client logos as social proof [6].

(+) The main CTA button in the first screenful and the bottom CTA button have action-oriented wording 'Request a free demo' that tells the visitor what they will receive from the interaction [4, 6].

(+) The content in the CTA areas describe benefits, value or provide social proof [3, 7, 14, 25].

(-) 'Contact us' in the navigation menu CTA is very generic [2].

Visitor needs:

(+) The copy gets more detailed further down the page.

(+) The copy does facilitate many types of visitors; fast converters (first screenful), research minded, technical and non-technical.

(+) The AIDA model could be said to apply to the design of the page from top to bottom and the mini-landing page model applies to the first screenful.

(+) The links to more detailed product pages facilitates visitors who are looking for a specific product and works as an exit strategy [3].

(+) There is descriptive copy and benefit/feature list for each product presented.

(+) The most important information visitors are looking for is at the top and delivered right away.

(+) The testimonials in the middle of the page works as an added incentive as visitors scroll through the content [1].

Usability

Navigation:

(+) The clickable company logo is visible on every page, making sure the visitor does not get lost [25].

(+) The information architecture is broad and shallow, making it easier to navigate.

(+) The navigation menu is at the top, clearly distinguishable and the same on every page [15].

(+) Expected items in the navigation menu; 'about' and clickable logo for 'home' [15].

(+) The navigation menu highlights the menu item associated with the current URL through a gray underscore [16]

(+) All clickable elements are marked well for intuitive use (color, menus, visual ques, buttons) [2, 4, 5, 6, 17, 18].

(+) Good flow through the AIDA model down to the CTA button and eventually form.

(-) The light blue brand color used for highlighting can confuse visitors as it is more difficult to separate a link from design [5].

(-) The navigation menu is limited to one page per menu item and thus the highest level in the hierarchy, sub-pages deeper in the information architecture are then linked from these top priority pages. This results in sub-pages being more difficult to find since they are not included in the main navigation. The visitor also gets lost more easily due to this, view appendix K.

(-) There are 8 items in the navigation menu [15].

Layout:

(+) The page layout is similar to the AIDA model.

(+) The first screenful utilizes the mini-landing page model.

(+) The first screenful and the whole page is designed responsively.

(+) The visual hierarchy, sizing of elements, visuals, headings and paragraphs facilitate scannability and good readability.

(+) The layout of the product descriptions is informational and clearly distinguishes between 'guest' and 'staff' product lines [7, 19].

(+) Good use of block elements throughout the page to separate sections and foldpages [ex: 7, 19].

(+) The layout does inspire desire to scroll.

(-) The page is quite long.

(-) Areas with a dark background might be mistaken for a footer [20].

Simplicity:

(+) The design is very simple, elegant and clean.

(+) Attention ratio is 40:4.

(+) The design does not take away from the most important elements and interesting copy, meaning that the visitor does not get distracted.

(-) The product page links might be buried with regard to scannability.

Interactivity:

(+) The horizontal scroll menu is an intuitive and elegant interactive element that entices visitors to engage with the page [17].

(+) The CTA buttons are clear interaction elements with a nice hover effect when toggling the button, invites to be pressed [2, 4, 6].

(+) The menu item navigation highlight effect has an interlective animation when toggling the menu items and switches between light blue and gray in color [16].

(-) Low number of interactive elements.

Lead generation form:

(+) The purpose and use of the form is clear and straightforward in both design and copy and the form is visually appealing.

(+) The heading, sub-heading and CTA text are all descriptive of the value proposition, the benefit the visitor will receive by submitting the form and what the submitting action will result in [35, 27].

(+) The structuring of input fields is logical and does not put pressure on the visitor, as it begins with easy and generic questions.

(+) Includes interactive dropdown fields that increases the sense of control for the visitor and are partly preselected base on which page the user navigates from, maintaining the interactivity but simplifying the process for the visitor [26].

(+) The copy is very brief.

(+) Descriptive labels are short and required fields are marked with a star '*'.

(+) CTA button clearly marked with the unified coloring scheme and design [27].

(+) Includes error messages with clear color markings indicating which fields need to be filled out [36] and the messages are polite in wording [28].

(+) Has a loading icon when being sent and a thank you page when sent.

(+) Tone of voice is polite and customer-centric.

(-) The scroll function of the underlying webpage stays active in the browser.

(-) Does not include any extra incentives such as social proof, performance or security indicators.

(-) An abundance of optional input fields.

(-) Error messages are polite but a bit blunt in design as the color combined with the error popup feels intrusive and aggressive [28].

(-) The 'about' link is a minor leak but tolerable at the bottom [29].

(-) Is both email and phone number absolutely required or are they more of a nice to have nature, same goes for website.

<u>Credibility</u>

Professionalism & Expertise:

(+) The copy and design do portray a professional and serious image.

(+) The copy gives the sense of credible expertise.

Social proof:

(+) There are testimonials in the middle of the page [1].

(+) Client logos are used as testimonials in the bottom CTA [7].

Performance indicators:

(+) Performance numbers included in the first screenful [21].

(+) Two awards in the first screenful; 'Inc 5000' and 'Red Herring' [30].

(+) The performance indicators support the value proposition.

Security indicators:

(+) Two third-party validation logos used in the first screenful: 'Code from Finland' and 'Triple A' [31].

(+) One third-party validation logo used in the footer 'Code from Finland' [31].

(+) Privacy policy, cookie policy and contact information in footer [32].

(+) Cookie consent popup in first load [37].

(+) The brand logo is present at the top at all times, it is also in the footer [25, 33].

(+) The link to the 'About' page is present in the navigation menu at all times through which visitors can see images, contact, details and social media profiles of the employees [34].

Appendix K: Site architecture
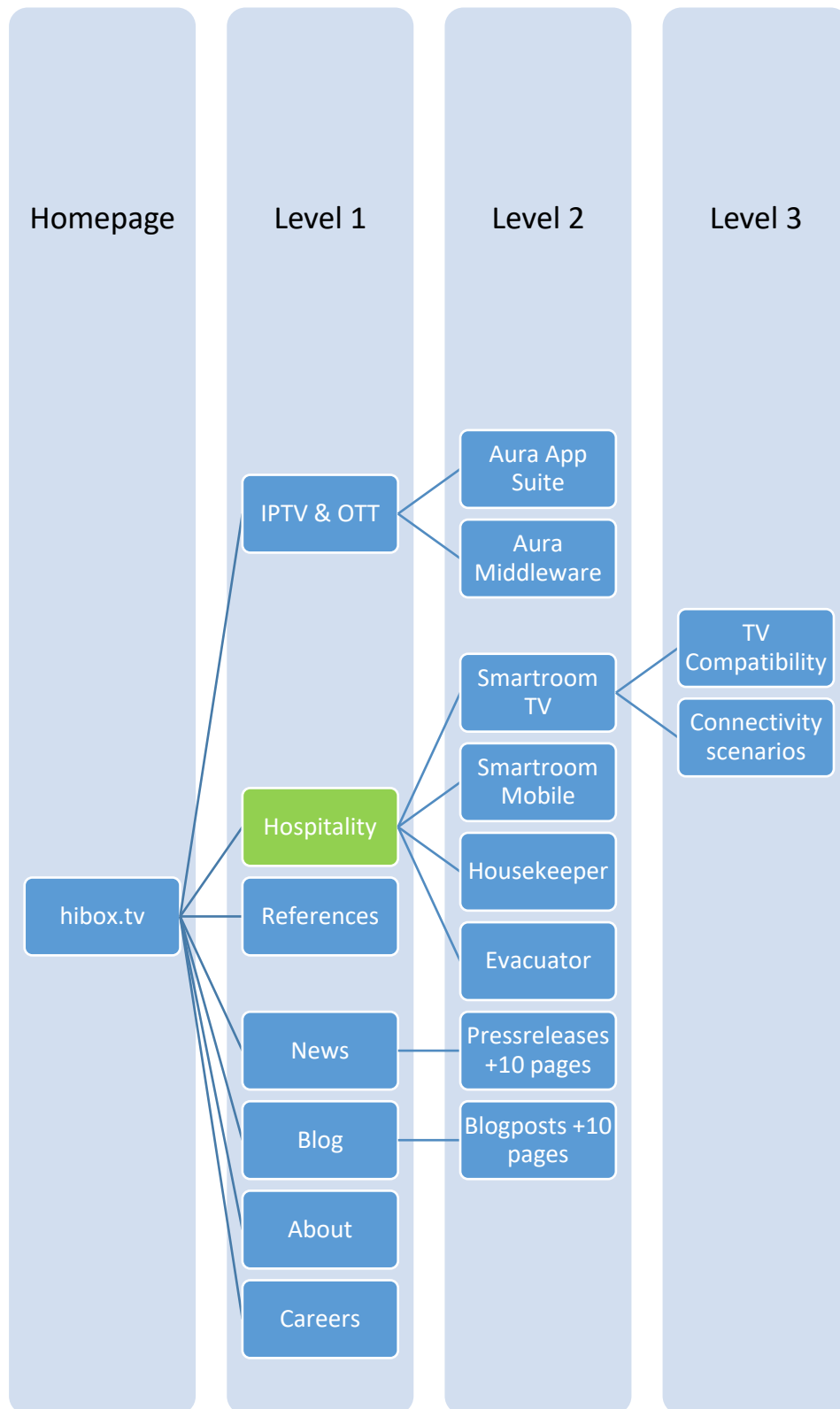
The above diagram illustrates the information architecture of the website, the subject page is highlighted in green. The architecture did not change during the experiment.

Appendix L: Historic conversion rate data

The below table visualizes the monthly conversion rate over five-year period. The earliest data available dates from January of 2015, meaning that the table gives a complete overview of all-time monthly conversion rates for the subject page.

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Averages
January	1.98%	3.59%	3.50%	2.08%	3.67%	2.96%
February	2.94%	0.80%	2.65%	1.26%	1.39%	1.81%
March	2.73%	2.60%	2.53%	3.21%	3.96%	3.01%
April	1.59%	1.59%	2.73%	1.20%	2.96%	2.01%
May	1.49%	0.75%	2.45%	1.31%	2.20%	1.64%
June	1.82%	2.33%	2.68%	3.27%	2.70%	2.56%
July	1.57%	3.41%	2.20%	3.94%	2.57%	2.74%
August	3.41%	2.10%	1.96%	2.99%	3.28%	2.75%
September	5.88%	2.66%	3.55%	1.22%	3.88%	3.44%
October	0.75%	2.19%	1.04%	1.75%	3.83%	1.91%
November	2.14%	2.18%	4.38%	2.00%	2.30%	2.60%
December	1.42%	2.23%	2.12%	1.95%	2.01%	1.95%

Source: Google Analytics, time period: 01.01.2015 – 31.12.2019.

The data only includes traffic from desktop devices to the subject page https://www.hibox.tv/Hotel-TV-Platform.shtml.