

How can we make female sexual exploration of pleasure less taboo?

By **Alexia Kraft de la Saulx**

Advisor **Julia Valle Noronha**

Supervisors **Tanel Kärp & Nesli Hazal Akbulut**

Completion of project in June 2020

Interaction Design, Faculty of Design, The Estonian Academy of Arts

<u>Introduction</u>	5	<u>Research</u>	13
Personal journey	5	Dating: an experimental approach to research	14
Goals and objectives	9	Method: Tinder dates	15
		Creating a safe space	17
		Coding the conversations	21
<u>Research outcomes</u>	22	<u>Concept development</u>	32
Social expectations	22	The missing discourse of pleasure and desire	32
Feeling of shame	24	Narrowing the research question	33
Discovering pleasure	25	Giving birth to the idea	37
Sexual assault	27		
Friend's influence	28		
Sex education	28		
On a parallel journey: Buying my first sex toy	30		
<u>Prototyping</u>	40	<u>Testing the idea</u>	56
Principles	40	Testing challenges	58
Content	41	Outcomes and feedback	61
Designing the idea	43		
The creation of a universe	44		
Prototyping challenges: first version	47		
<u>Prototyping 2nd version</u>	66	<u>Reflection</u>	76
Incorporating the feedback	66	Vision and future work	76
<u>A special thanks</u>	78	<u>Bibliography</u>	79

As I embarked on a personal journey of sexual exploration I uncovered a big issue: female sexual pleasure is still a taboo. The lack of education I had around this topic when growing up made this a difficult journey filled with a lot of struggles. Even more, what made it particularly hard was that everything I thought I had consciously decided for myself was in fact influenced by the heteronormative norms that society had imposed on me by default. I was being told how to be a woman and how I should experience my sexuality.

My objectives with this work were to explore how other women were going through the same situation and find a way in which to help them define what sexuality meant for them in their own terms. I wanted to make female pleasure and desire part of everyday conversations again and help build a critical mindset towards the narratives around sexuality that we have inherited since our birth.

To do this I chose an experimental research approach: dating, in order to explore what other women have gone through. Then I analysed my findings using Grounded Theory methodology to uncover common themes and values. Finally, I created an online educational platform for young women who are just beginning their sexual exploration journey. And, tested out the idea through online surveys and interviews with potential users.

The website is an external tool that aims to bring back the missing discourse of desire and pleasure and that opens up the space of conversation in the family, with friends and in relationships. I hope that it will help contribute to break the taboos and empower women to take control over their sexual pleasure.

Seksuaalsete avastuste isiklikule teekonnale asudes mõistsin, et suur osa sellest on siiani varjatud. Naiste seksuaalsed naudingud on endiselt tabu. Minu täiskasvanuks kujunemise ajal oli selle teemaline haridus puudulik ja seetõttu kulgesid seksuaalsed eneseotsingud läbi sisemiste heitluste. Veelgi enam, see, mis tundus olevat minu enda teadlik valik, oli tegelikult mõjutatud heteronormatiivsete tõekspidamiste poolt, mida ühiskond mulle vaikimisi peale surus, muutes kõik veelgi keerulisemaks. Mulle dikteeriti, kuidas peaksin olema naine ja kogema oma seksuaalsust.

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks oli uurida, kuidas on selle teekonna läbinud teised naised ja leida viis, kuidas aidata neid määratleda, mida seksuaalsus nende jaoks nende enda tingimustel tähendab. Ma soovisin muuta naiste naudingud ja ihad osaks tavapärasest vestlusest. Lisaks soovisin aidata neil luua kriitilist mõtteviisi seksuaalsuse ümber käivate narratiivide suhtes, mis käivad meiega kaasas sünnist alates.

Selleks valisin eksperimentaalse uurimisviisi – kohtingu. Kohtumiste käigus uurisin, mida teised naised on oma seksuaalelus kogunud. Seejärel analüüsisin andmeid, kasutades põhistatud teooria meetodikat, et selgitada välja kattuvad teemad ja väärtused. Tulemustest lähtuvalt lõin veebipõhise haridusplatvormi noortele naistele, kes on alles oma seksuaalsuse avastamise algusjärgus. Testisin oma ideed veebiküsitluse ja potentsiaalsete kasutajatega tehtud intervjuude abil.

Loodud veebilehekülg on väline tööriis, mille eesmärk on pere- ja sõpruskonda ning suhetesse tuua tagasi puuduv ihade ja naudingute diskursus. Loodan, et see veebilehekülg aitab kaasa tabude murenemisele ja võimestab naisi võtma kontrolli enda seksuaalsete naudingute üle.

Introduction

Personal journey

Even though I'm here to talk about sexual exploration, I will start with a brief story about how I got into interaction design. This story is the beginning of my reflection on what led me to choose the topic for my thesis. My story is going to be intimate and will be holding a lot of details about the journey I went through. My purpose is to break the taboo about female sexual pleasure and so I'll be the first one to do so. By sharing my story I want to give the opportunity for my readers to empathise with the women I want to design for. And stress that the exploration of female sexual desire is always an ongoing and personal process.

Interaction Design was a big revelation in my life. I remember going to Tallinn with my dad to visit the university and being super excited because the mentors of the master had accepted us to participate in a class. After this class one of the mentors gave me a book that he had written about Interaction Design. He wanted to help me decide if it was something I really wanted to study. I remember finishing reading the book on the plane back home and running to my dad's seat that was located in the back of the aircraft. I was crying with excitement saying to him «Dad, I know this is what I really want to do in my life!». From the very beginning of the course, I can say that it hasn't been a day since I learned something new. My perspective of the world has been constantly shifting, always sticking with the question «why are things as they are?».

The first exciting part was that my teammates in Interaction Design came from different backgrounds and had lived different experiences in their lives. I realized by listening to their stories that I was very interested to understand all the experiences who made them who they were today. The second exciting part was that I was living now in a new country. Estonia brought up my spirit of adventure and exploration.

And what better way to understand the culture than to actually mingle with Estonians? The only problem is that I didn't know anyone apart from my teammates. So that's when I started dating Estonians and that's how my journey began.

In the first year of the master I wanted to discover the country through my dates. I went on amazing road trips to the countryside, on photography trips and many many coffee dates. After some time, one of my dates started developing a growing interest in having sex with me, which at the end made me pretty uncomfortable with the whole situation and I decided to stop the adventure there.

In the second year I decided to take again my spirit of adventure but for a totally different purpose. It had been 3 years already that I was single and I was afraid to forget how to have sex with someone else when the day would come. When I think about it now, of course, I think it's a pretty stupid thought, but at least it made me start this interesting journey.

I remember this exact moment when I was on a date with an Estonian guy. He had taken me to his new apartment on the 5th floor of a beautiful building and we had an amazing view on the city and the lights at night. We had been talking for a long time but suddenly there was a silence. It's at this moment that my heart started beating faster, my palms became sweaty and I thought «Okay Alexia... this is your moment». I looked at him in the eyes and said «I've never done this before...» right before kissing him. Again now I think it's a pretty shabby approach for a first kiss but whatever, I was glad to do the first step. We had protected sex and he later became my «sex friend». What I liked with him was that we could discuss freely about matters of sex.

But I soon wanted to challenge myself to have sex with another date, to see if I was capable of handling multiple partners in a same period of time. Which brought up complications. My first sex friend was afraid of catching an STD because of me. So we both got tested and waited for the results. But going to the clinic to get myself tested made me realize how scary sex can become in an instant, even when using protection we can still catch something undesirable that could stay forever. I was so anxious about getting the results that, from the moment I received an email from the clinic and even if the results were positive news, I still decided to end my sexual relationships.

Sometime later, I began flirting with a Swiss that I met during the summer holidays. We chatted everyday and he called a lot. Until one day I decided to buy tickets to go and meet him in Switzerland. I had seen many YouTube videos of the channel «Yes Theory» and I was inspired to go out of my comfort zone having a 5 day date with a stranger in another country. Of course I asked him, before going

to his place, to check himself for any STD's (lesson that I learned previously). I wanted us to have fun and explore sex together with no fear. We had incredible chemistry and the sex actually turned out to be was amazing. One morning, I even surprised myself when I told him I was still «horny» after he finished, which I never had the courage to say before to any of my sexual partners.

I discovered I still knew how to have sex, that I could have sex with no specific feelings attached to the partner and that I was capable of going to another country to date a stranger for 5 days and have amazing sex. But even after this amazing experience, I still had a feeling that something was missing.

There had been only one time during my last relationship when I had an orgasm. It was one of the most memorable moments of my life and I remember crying afterwards with tears of joy. But from that day on, I have never experienced it again. This was important in the following learnings from this journey, I felt guilty not being able to have orgasms with my partners and I felt different from all my friends that bragged about them having one every time they had sex. Not being able to orgasm with my partners became a subject of interest for me, I wanted to understand why.

My determination got me to the point where, the next day, I asked at the front desk of a library «do you have any books about the vagina or orgasms?». They recommended two books that were very helpful for the following adventure; «The Vagina Bible: separating the myth from the medicine» from Dr. Jen Gunter (2019) and «More orgasms please: why female pleasure matters» from Lisa Williams and Anniki Sommerville (2019).

In one week only I learned so many things. For example that the correct anatomical name of the female genitals is the vulva, that discharge is a product of the vagina self-cleansing to protect it from bad bacterias or that the clitoris wasn't only a little bump and it's main structure is internal and can even be the size of a penis. What's more, I learned that in a 2017 study that looked at the sex lives of more than 50.00 Americans with different sexualities, only 65% of heterosexual women had an orgasm every time they had sexual intercourse compared to 95% for heterosexual men. There was this growing feeling of injustice and a little spark of hate towards man when I read this, but I soon got over it and decided it was not their fault that we didn't know our bodies well enough.

Reading these two books helped me to see a clearer picture of what was going on and what I was going through. I found 3 interesting quotes that have inspired me for the future of this thesis:

«Not knowing your anatomy is disempowering and puts Women at a disadvantage in a sexual relationship.» - Gunter, 2019

« We need to redefine what sex is » - Williams and Sommerville, 2019

« Female sexual pleasure itself is, at worst, shamed silenced, used to sell things or ridiculed, and, at best, seen as a by-product of male sexual pleasure. It is rarely celebrated as something in its own right.» - Williams and Sommerville, 2019

I knew so little about my body. I had received such little sexual education and it felt unfair to discover all of this information only now. I also felt anger towards men by not supporting the fact that our desire and pleasure is as important as theirs. But why was exploring sexuality and pleasure such an important topic for me? Why is it also important for every other woman?

During my years of growth till I became an adult I was hearing about the promise of sex that would make my life happier. But when I started exploring sex it didn't affect me as I was expecting, I was dissapointed, missing in a way the happiness it was supposed to give to me.

“The experience of a gap between the promise of happiness and how you are affected by objects that promise happiness does not always lead to corrections that close this gap. Disappointment can also involve an anxious narrative of self-doubt (why am I not made happy by this, what is wrong with me?), or a narrative of rage, where the object that is supposed to make us happy is attributed as the cause of disappointment. Your rage might be directed against the object that fails to deliver its promise” - Ahmed, 2010, page 42

As Ahmed points out, we should understand that “happiness is about learning to be affected by objects in the right way”. Trying not to be influenced by outside expectations on how the object should affect us will make it easier to feel however we want about this object and in a way to control what happiness means to us.

If sexual pleasure was an object of desire in the pursuit of happiness, it was also influenced by the importance others gave to that object.

In our western societies the importance of sexual pleasure is highly influenced by heteronormative norms. We inherit them at birth and are expected to follow the same path, creating a sort of pressure to be as we are expected to be (Ahmed, 2006).

My journey started to be an exploratory analysis on why this object wasn't bringing me this promised happiness and how could I create a path for myself that wouldn't have this pressure and allowed me to follow my own desires.

These experiences I had lived became the first part of my research for the thesis. In a certain way I offer a new perspective on understanding objectivity in scientific research because I am myself a subject of all these experiences.

“Objectivity is not about (...) taking risks in a world where “we” are permanently mortal, that is, not in “final” control. We have, finally, no clear and distinct ideas” - Haraway, 1998, pages 595-596

After analyzing my experiences I wanted to know about other women's stories to compare our narratives and find if there were any common points that could be interesting to research further in my work.

Goals and objectives

To understand the importance of the topic I first need to explain what sexuality means. The current World Health Organization (WHO) definition states:

“...a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.” (WHO Report, 1974)

Every human is born with a sex either male or female based on it's anatomy (sometimes both). But from the moment we are assigned a sex at birth we are categorized into genders. Already in the early 50's, the writer de Beauvoir came with this new **pshift** of perspectives. Her idea was that we didn't inherit our gender by our biology (male or female) but by the society we lived in (Beauvoir, 1952).

These definitions of gender influence the way we are and behave in the world (Young, 2005).

The thing is that a woman's sexuality doesn't really belong to her, she might think she is free and in control of her own behaviors, desires and sexual thoughts but she isn't. Everything she is has been defined and imposed by disciplinary norms imposed by a patriarchal society where men dominate and hold power over everything. These norms dictate «normality» in what it means to be a woman (Young, 2005).

The shame and taboo there is around women's sexuality or women's pleasure are born from women not following these social and cultural disciplinary norms. These flows of negative emotions have a strong effect on their sexual health.

According to the current working definition, sexual health is:

*“...a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Sexual health requires a **positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.**” - WHO Report, 1974*

Part of these sexual rights are; the rights to information, as well as education and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression (WHO Report, 1974). I believe we still haven't got these rights and, in order to attain them, we need a better education about sexuality.

I believe that a better sexuality education for women needs to address their pleasure and desires in order to confront those social norms and finally become just who they want to be. Leaving behind the old categories of what means to be a woman and what means to be a man and **creating a new definition for ourselves.**

Nowadays we are questioning the patriarchal structures imposed in our western societies. We are coming up with a broader diversified definitions of gender compared to the narrow male-female perspective thanks to the knowledge of queer practices and theories.

My thoughts on the topic were highly inspired from the reflections of M. Young in her book «On female body experience: “Throwing like a girl” and other essays» published in 2005. Reading her was also challenging because she questioned everything that I thought I knew about gender, about being a woman. She also brought a reassuring feeling, like a confirmation that my journey was normal and that it had a deeper hidden purpose that I was uncovering. I think this quote really summarizes what I want to explain and it inspired me the most to find the purpose of my project :

«By destabilizing categories of both biological sex and gender identity, recent deconstructive approaches to feminist and queer theorizing have opened greater possibilities for thinking a plurality of intersecting identities and practices. Moi proposes that we throw over the concept of gender altogether and renew a concept of the lived body.» - Young, 2005, page 1

The concept of the “lived body” is essential to understand the destabilization of sex and gender. Young explains that :

*«The lived body is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation. The person always faces the material facts of her body and its relation to a given environment. Her bodily organs have certain feeling capacities and function in determinate ways. The human actor has specific projects, things she aims to accomplish, ways she aims to express herself, make her mark on the world, transform her surroundings and relationships. “To claim that the body is a situation is to acknowledge that the meaning of a woman’s body is bound up with the way she uses her freedom”. “Woman” and “man” name the physical facticity of certain bodies, some with penises, others with clitorises and breasts, each with differing experiences of desire and sexual feeling»
- Young, 2005, page 16*

I believe that we need to **help women gain knowledge about the power they have to define what it should mean to be a woman for themselves**, creating this new

concept of the «lived body».

But how is actually the state of things in terms of sexual education for women in Europe?

There has been a study that analysed the quality of sexual education in England and Netherlands using a comparison between the numbers of pregnant teenagers in each country. The study shows that England's sexual education focus was much more diversified, trying to communicate messages of prevention and protection with the government not really acknowledging teenage sexual behaviors. On the other hand in the Netherlands sexual education started at a much younger age, was much more homogenous in their goals and had a broader teaching about sexuality (the topics covered included relationships, consent, parenting, diversity, gender...). The study found that the number of teenage pregnancies was higher in England compared to the Netherlands (Lewis and Knijn, 2001).

By presenting this study I wanted to point out that having a broader view and education about sexuality is important for the future development of women. In this case the study focuses on sexual education as a means to reduce teenage pregnancies but my thought was to go even a step further. To consider it as a means to develop a critical point of view on what it means to be a woman and by this, explore their sexuality and sexual pleasure as they want, being freed from constraints.

One of the reasons why sexual pleasure for women is a taboo topic lies in the fact that they don't have the right knowledge about it. Sharing the knowledge and talking about it will change the narrative around sexual pleasure. Regaining the power over our sexual pleasure it's also a matter of living a healthier fulfilling sexual life (WHO Report, 1974).

Feeling pleasure in it's most honest expression has many benefits; a stronger immune system, improvement in confidence, feeling more well-rested, increase in levels of trust, intimacy and love in relationships...(Pamela Rogers, 2016). Through this I can advocate that there are many positive reasons why women should regain their power over pleasure.

I remember sitting on a couch at university, facing my mentors from the master and telling them : «I have two options I want to work on for my thesis... the first one would be how to get young people's interest in politics... and the second one would be about the exploration of female sexual pleasure...». Their faces expres-

sions turned to surprise, which then turned to discomfort and then to curiosity. So many emotions in a few seconds just because I mentioned sexual pleasure. But this was just the beginning of the panel of interesting reactions I got when I talked about my project with other people. For me, this reaction was the sign I was waiting for. It gave me the strength in the belief that I was uncovering something important.

The aim of my project is to improve the access to information about exploration of pleasure for young women through an educational website.

In the next chapter I will briefly explain how my research was constructed.

Research

To begin with the research I started with an exploratory design methodology: dating. By exploratory I mean that I explored this new methodology myself. There wasn't much research done on dating as a methodology to get qualitative data so I couldn't really guide my method with other existing ones.

Each date was then transcribed, analyzed and coded to reveal common themes and values to each one of their stories based on the Grounded Theory methodology. The themes gave me a more general perspective on the topic of my research. After analyzing the conversations of the dates I decided to conduct a quick online survey to narrow the scope of my research by rephrasing my initial question. I soon decided on the concept, prototyped the website with the content and illustrations and tested it to get some feedback from potential users. Finally I gathered all the feedback from the interviews and prototyped a second version of the website. To make it more clear here is a sketch of the structure for my work:

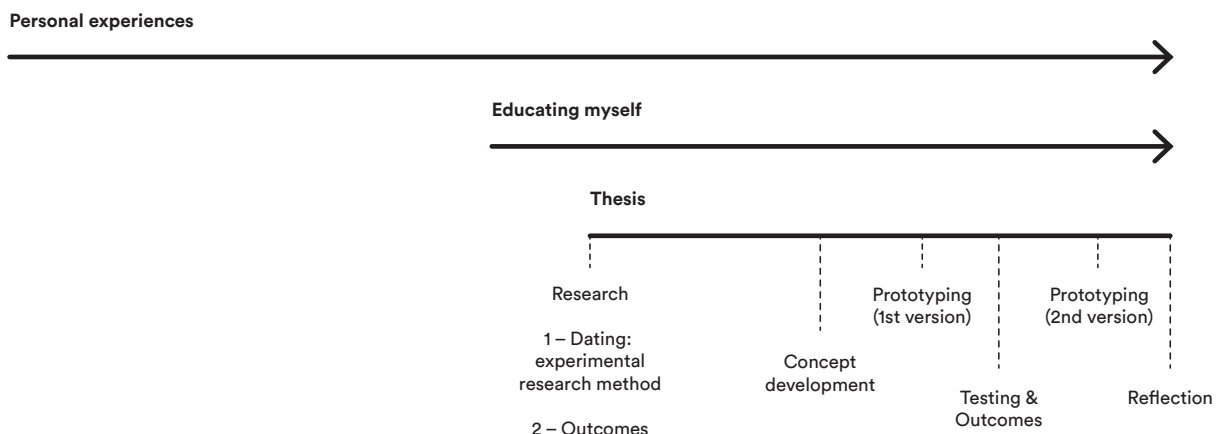


Figure 1 (sketch of thesis structure)

The next part usually comes in the introduction of a paper but in this report you will find different literature reviews spread throughout the process. This is because the process of my project was planned to be organic, guided by thinking and methods in design. Each literature inspiration was accompanying me on the process of each new step. After having settled down the literature reviews for the research, I needed more sources for the creative part of this project.

With all these new beliefs and knowledge that I gained through my personal experiences I wondered: Are other women of my age going through a similar journey? How are they exploring and discovering pleasure?

I've decided to do my research through qualitative methods of data recollection since the topic is highly subjective. My aim was to understand the backgrounds, journeys, feelings and emotions of different women of my age about sexual exploration and pleasure. I was hoping to find common themes that would help me narrow my research. You may wonder how I did the interviews? Obviously, I went on dates!

Dating: an experimental approach to research

I went on the internet first to check if anyone before me had done qualitative data recollection through dating. I was expecting to find a lot of research on the topic but surprisingly there wasn't so much. It was exciting to know that maybe I was providing some valuable contributions to this type of methodology.

My main challenge was myself. **I was a foreigner living in Estonia**, meaning that I didn't really know anyone else of my age apart from our team in the master and that my only language of conversation could be in English. Fortunately Estonians are very skilled for many things and English is part of those things. Nevertheless they have a reputation to be very private and reserved when it comes to social skills. So the final challenge was to actually **make them share their experiences and overall journey of sex exploration.**

I wanted to interview women of my age to compare at first our experiences. Talking about such topics required them to be above sexual consent age and **it also required that they would have had already lived sexual experiences.** My second criteria was **proximity**, as I live in Tallinn and had no other means of moving

around the country than the public transport, they would have to be living in the city.

This is the part where dating comes in. I had previous dating experiences with the mobile app Tinder and I thought it could provide me with some of the criteria I needed in order to find women to have a conversation with. **This dating app was useful for choosing gender, age range and potential sexual interest from the users.** I chose to have a conversation with women of my age to find out if we had similar struggles during our sexual exploration journey's. Let us analyze more in depth the method I decided to use.

Method: Tinder date

One of the most famous dating apps around the world among the young people, the core of Tinder's user base are between 18 and 24 years old. This mobile dating application matches users to other users based on their geographic proximity, age selection and gender. The main reasons this app is used for are; to find a partner, to have a sex free relationship or sometimes just to find friendship. The core values of the app were fitting perfectly the research I wanted to do.

The first step was to create a profile. I wanted to make it as clear as possible that I was a real person and that I was doing research. You might wonder, why did she say «a real person»? Well, the first step on Tinder is to create a profile (figure 2), and sometimes people create fake profiles that lure other people into dating them. I myself came across these profiles sometimes in the past and I didn't want my potential interviewees to think I was a fake account. I knew what I had to do, upload lots of pictures of me smiling and write a fun and interesting bio description. My aim was to make it look as real as possible, fun and approachable.

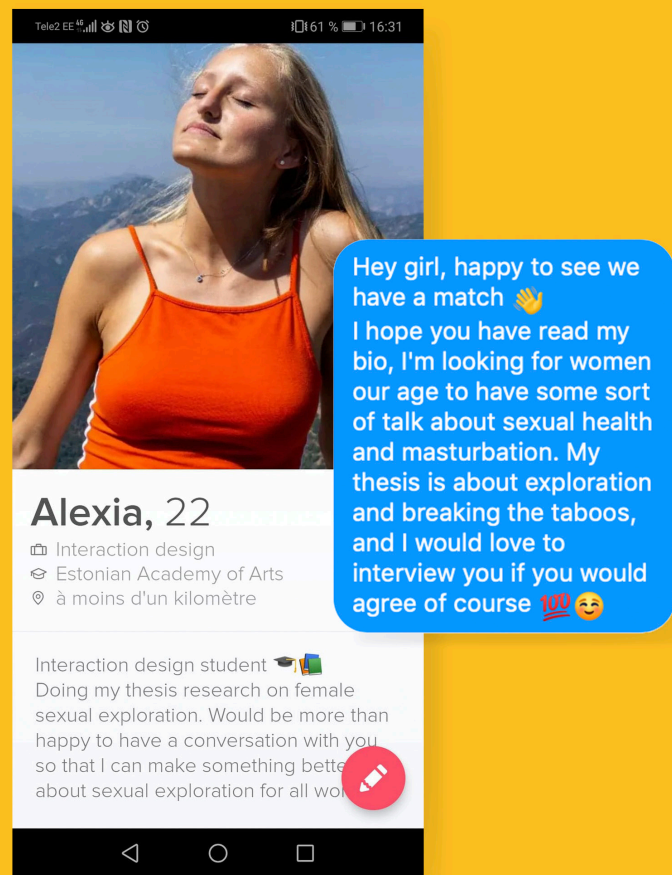


Figure 2 (Personal Tinder profile)

I'll explain shortly how the app works for those who are not familiar with it. At first users create their profile (with pictures and bio). Once they are finished they have access to other profiles in the gender, age and proximity they have previously selected. The popularity of the app comes within its simplicity. Users see profiles one by one and can swipe right (if they like the profile) or left (if they don't like the profile). If another user has previously «liked» your profile and you have also «liked» theirs, you have a match! This means you can start a conversation with them and agree on a possible date.

As this research touches upon personal and intimate matters, ethical issues related to it must be exposed and discussed. The main one was that I was looking for women to interview, while my potential interviewees were looking for women to date. I was hoping to make it clear I was making research by being the first one starting the conversation upon matching with them. One of the examples of the first message I sent is above (in blue), next to my profile.

Surprisingly, most of the replies were positive and they seemed to be comfortable to talk about the topic with me (Figure 3).

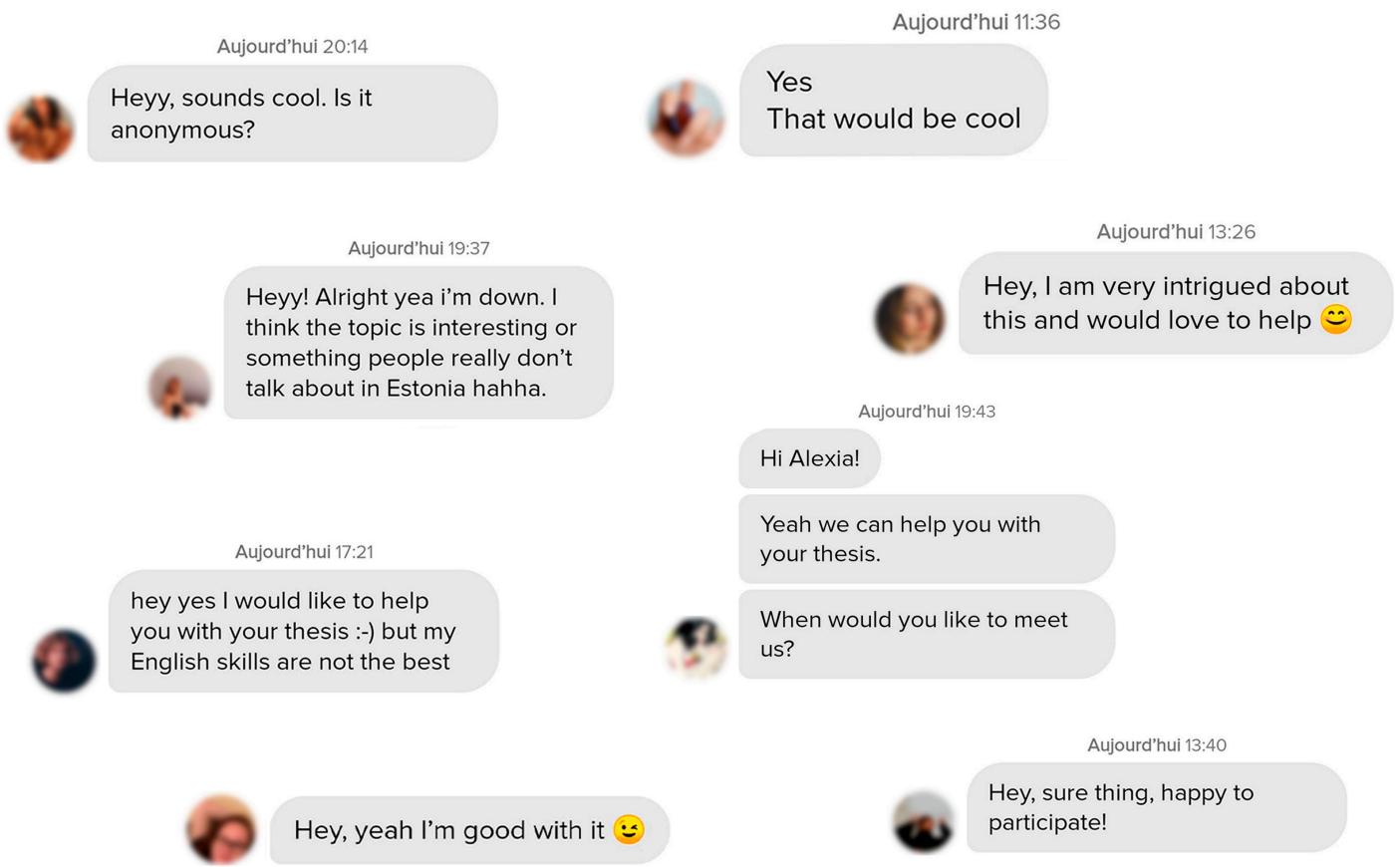


Figure 3 (Tinder answers)

Next step was to decide on the date, time and place. I wanted them to be in a place where they would feel comfortable enough to talk about their sexual experiences and at the same time to be in a public place. **Creating a safe space was very important in order for them to confide their own experiences.** So I thought that by giving them the choice to pick a place they already knew, they would feel comfortable enough to tell me their stories and also that by talking in a public place, it would feel less creepy for them.

Creating a safe space

Picking places to date was easier than I would have thought. These are pictures (Figures 4, 5, 6, 7) of the exact 4 places where I met with all of them (Pierre Chocolaterie, 2 Reval Cafes in the Old Town and the EKA Building).



Figure 4 (location EKA Building)



Figure 5 (location Pierre Chocolaterie)



Figure 6 (location Reval Café)



Figure 7 (location Reval Café)

I made sure for every date to arrive in advance so that I could get the feeling of the place and choose a table where music wasn't too loud or where there weren't too many people around. I prepared a set of questions in my notebook that guided me through the conversation and helped me to not forget any topic. Which does not exclude the fact that the conversation had a natural flow and we did talk about many other things not mentioned in the notebook. You can see that I added a drawing of the clitoris anatomy (Figure 8) in case the topic would come up or in case they wouldn't know about it so that we could discuss it. Since it's the main pleasure organ I wanted to have an insight on their level in female anatomy of sexual pleasure. With each new interview I uncovered new topics that I have then added to the set of prepared questions.

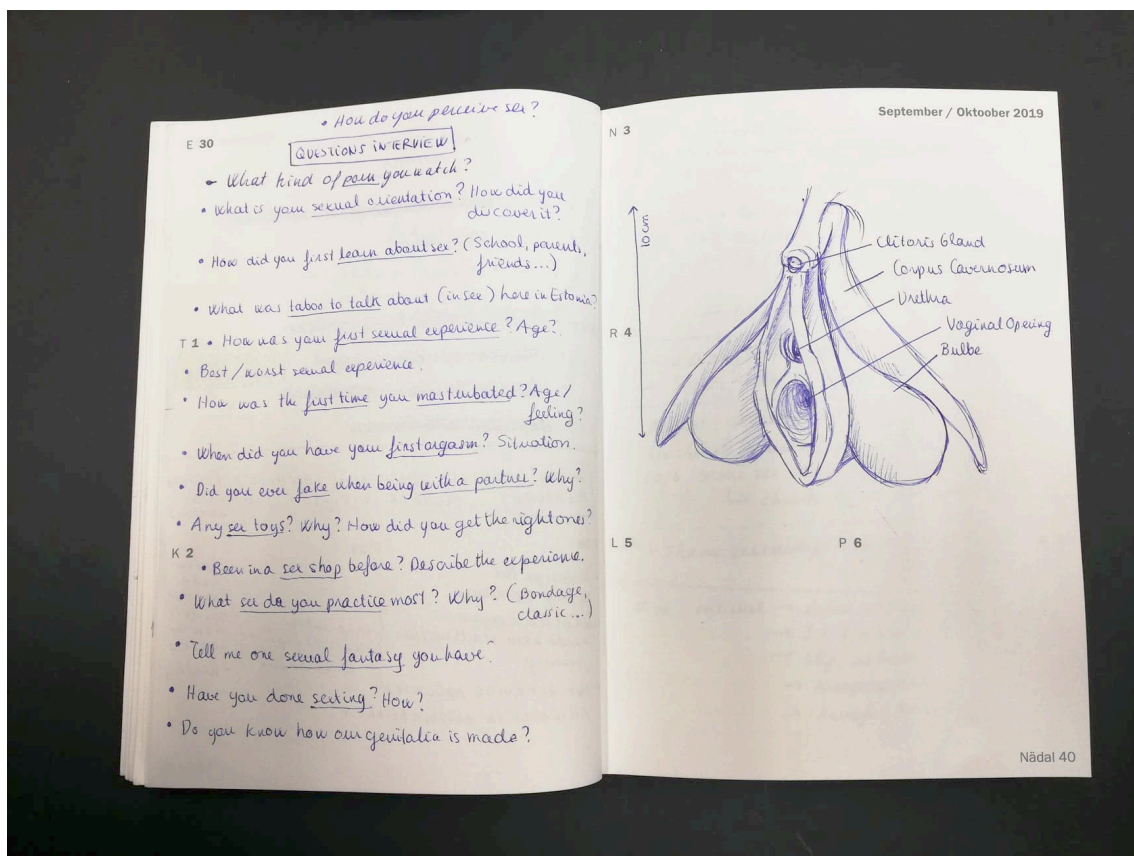


Figure 8 (personal notebook with prepared questions)

When they arrived I greeted every one of them with a hug. The way we greet each other influences the conversation that will happen next (Forsell, 2010). I hoped that by hugging them they would feel more comfortable and so that they could trust me to talk about their experiences. Since I grew up in Spain it was a natural way of greeting for me, but as I mentioned previously, Estonians are reserved people that don't use a lot of body contact. Surprisingly again, they all

welcomed the hug. I would then ask if they wanted anything to drink or eat, and then we would sit to start the conversation. I presented myself followed by the aim of my project and then I asked them if they were okay with me recording the conversation, which they all have accepted.

From the 6 dates I went on, all of them happened in the afternoon between 13h30 and 18h30 and lasted about one hour. Bellow is a list of the nationalities, ages and names of the interviewees:

1st Interviewee : Estonian, 21 years old. No signed agreement.

2nd Interviewee : Estonian, 21 years old. No signed agreement.

3rd Interviewee: Irish, 21 years old. No signed agreement.

4th Interviewee : Brazilian, 26 years old. No signed agreement.

5th Interviewee: Estonian, 23 years old. No signed agreement.

6th Interviewee: Finnish, 25 years old. Signed Agreement.

You may notice there is only one woman that has signed the agreement. Well as any human, we sometimes make mistakes. I didn't know until the last date that I had to make them sign a special agreement of confidentiality. I have selfies with some of them but unfortunately can't share them on my report because there was no signed agreement for that.

It's only with the last date that I have brought up the agreement form. She was the only woman from all the dates that had deleted our match on the day we had to meet. This made it complicated for me because I used to check their profile pictures again to recognize them before the meeting, and in this case I couldn't recognize her. To enhance the stupidity of the situation I have to say I am very bad with remembering names, and I confess to not remembering hers before the meeting. Which led to a weird situation where I was sitting in the cafe where we agreed to meet previously and I was looking intently at different women in the hope they would recognize me. Finally I decided to step up and ask women around if they were there for the «interview», and I managed to find her after 2 attempts.

Signing the agreement didn't seem to make a difference in the quality of the conversation afterwards. The challenge for me was more specifically to handle and explain the « Policy agreement » since it was the first time I did it and I hadn't decided yet the way the content of the interviews would be used for. I have kept the signed document and asked her to make a picture of it in case she would change her mind. Which I now know, is not the right way to do it.

I use the concept of dates because they are not the same as interviews. Dating holds a level of intimacy that interviews might not have and I needed to build this intimacy in order for them to share their feelings and emotions.

Coding the conversations

My next step was to transcribe the interviews (Figure 9) I had recorded on my phone, which took a terrible amount of time. At first I decided to write down only the parts that I thought were interesting, and as I was transcribing the rest of them I started writing everything down (the exact words they used, the silences, the feelings, the expressions...). My aim with the transcription was to analyze them with the Grounded Theory methodology. This method is used in social sciences and tries to build a new theory from the data that has been recollected (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). I had to find common concepts, ideas, values and group them into themes that later guided me towards the rephrasing of my initial question.

A: Okay. And how did that go, do you remember?

N: Uh...I...I Think we met online. 'cus we had like similar interests like about photography and movies and music and this kind of stuff. And then we started talking and that was most definitely when I was pretty comfortable with being a bit boyish and you know...but she was straight when we started like hanging out. But then I kind of came onto her and she was like « oh cool, okay, sure »

A: So she was curious also...And so you like dated for some time, it wasn't even dating it was friendship stuff...?

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah... and then I don't remember how it got to the point that we like were official, "official" dating.

A: Okay and uh...so it was with this girl that you had your first intercourse?

N: Uhum. (yes)

A: Could you describe the experience if you'd like?

N: Aaaaaamm...very awkward.

A: Of course. No one would say that their first time would be normal (laughing, she laughs too)

N: No, no. Nono. But like I completely expected that because it was both of our first time.

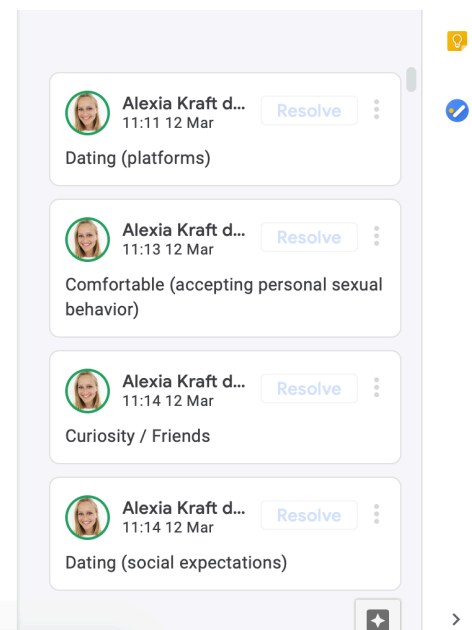


Figure 9 (Coding the conversations)

Research outcomes

After going through each transcription and having carefully coded each one of the 6 conversations, I found out the following themes:

- 1 – Social expectations
- 2 – Feeling of shame
- 3 – Discovering pleasure
- 4 – Sexual assault
- 5 – Friend's influences
- 6 – Sexual education

To summarize each theme I decided to show you the quotes that exemplify them the best.

1 - Social expectations

This theme reveals unspoken rules and expectations of society concerning one's sexuality. One of the interviewees has questioned gender roles and belonging and never associated herself with being of any of the two genders.

“I Think because for a while in my like early teenage years I didn't feel like I was a woman but I didn't really feel like I was a man either. So because I found myself in between those two genders then...uhm...I think I realised that genders are a social construct and a cultural thing. So I just fall in love with people I just find attractive regardless of their gender”

In this next quote another interviewee speaks about the fear of her partner sharing their sexual life with his friends, the stigma of anal sex and the fear of others judgment. This particular type of sex is seen as dirty and women are not expected to practice it. She felt afraid of exploring new sexual behaviors because society expected her to act and to be a certain way.

“I think a part of it was that I didn't want to do it with him because uh...yeah I was his first so I was afraid that our sex life wouldn't always be between the two of us but that he would talk to his friend about it so I dont want to be that girl who is like having butt sex all willingly. Because then it's a stigma kind of...because yeah then the guy would have high fives and the girls would be

like « oh, she's dirty »..”

Additionally, one mentioned that she felt women are expected to be good sexual partners and in this particular example, give good oral sex. Sex is learned as a performance because it would appear that they fear the partners judgment.

“...but it's something that you are supposed to know, you are supposed to be the one giving amazing head to a guy...and guys are not going through any kind of like trial and error period with giving oral to women”

“I was like, 18 or 19 something like that so I was exploring myself so like okay maybe at that time I was more exploring like how to... be...good in bed with others...than to focus on how I feel. But yeah so self exploration on itself”

Porn is one of the main educators for sexual behaviors. It teaches young women that sex starts with an erection and ends with ejaculation. It gives a very narrow view on sexuality and influences the expectations that they have of sex.

“Yeah... But it's also like, due to porn like...uhm...what I dont like about it is that sex begins with an erection and it ends with the guy coming. So it's like even sex in this world is like male dominant in that way, that you are supposed to like « oh you came, now lets cuddle and fall asleep..”

Another has learned that her sexual desire is less important than a mans sexual desire. They felt it is unfair that men get to decide when to have sex or how to do it, while her feelings and desires weren't taking into account. But also that family has a big influence on one's sexual behavior.

“I think you wanting to have sex was the most taboo. When I was 10 I was told that I can't have sex with a man even if he wants to. We never talked about if I want to do it, wasn't even an option. It's something we are supposed to give men. My mom and my grandma told me this”

“...he was complaining about having to put on his condom because he said that he couldn't feel pleasure like that. But I made him still put it on. And it was just absolutely non pleasurable. It was just like 2 minutes like okay you are done then I'm done”

This next interviewee felt pressured to have orgasms every time she had sex with someone else and didn't like that feeling.

“Some people just have to have orgasms, but I just want to have fun. It can be a mental pleasure”

2- Feeling of shame

Unfortunately sex seems to come with a big feeling of shame. The next quote talks about how religion has strict rules about experiencing pleasure, masturbating is a sin and shouldn't be practiced.

“I was feeling so anxious about it, everytime I masturbated afterwards I prayed to God because it was a sin for me”

Sex shops are amazing places to discover many different ways to explore pleasure. These two women were curious. Here she was ashamed to go in with her friend because she felt afraid of other people seeing her coming in the shop.

“Because there was like one sex shop in that town where I lived in Finland and it's like in the middle of the fucking walking street and it's like...2 sixteen year old are going to walk in that, bitch... and then « ouuuh »...I mean no”

This next interviewee overcame her feelings of shame and embarrassment because of her curiosity. Sadly she wasn't satisfied with the answers she got and relied on the internet to find her own answers. She also mentions the struggle of deciding which sex toy to buy.

“When I was 18 my wish was to go to a sex shop just to look what was in there. I bought a chocolate dick which was surprisingly delicious. I was embarrassed to enter the shop and not buy anything so I bought that yes. After a while I would check the internet to see what new things they had because I wasn't satisfied. I was struggling to decide if I really needed it or not, stressing myself out”

This young woman talks about how insecurity and shame about her own body influenced her sexual desire.

“I was in this weird place where I felt very insecure about my body. I wanted to have sex with her but in the end we were sort of just friends. But then I didn’t want to feel intimate with anyone. I even didn’t have my period anymore for 1 year, and no sex drive at all”

3 - Discovering pleasure

This next interviewee found out that what gives her pleasure is to take a dominant role when having sex with her partners. Watching porn made her realize the sexual roles expected when having sex. She tried breaking that pattern in her own sexual intercourses but finds it hard to take the dominant role.

“Because usually they are like, really tall and muscular and like they take a dominant role and yeah...that kind of ...”

“Yeah exactly. ‘cus I think if you’d then would go to the other extreme than you would have to be a dominatrix or something if you would be the dominant one as a female”

Following on pleasure here they talk about masturbation. Some masturbate to relax and others do it when they are relaxed. They felt orgasms during masturbation were different than orgasms during sexual intercourse with a partner usually because of the pressure from the partners to give them an orgasm (previously mentioned in the social expectation theme). This pressure made some of them “fake it” to give satisfaction to their partners. When masturbating they felt no pressure because they were in control of their pleasure.

“It’s completely different actually when I’m having sex then it’s more intense and kind of like an active feeling...uhm...but when I’m masturbating it’s more of a...relaxing thing. Unless if the sex would be like super personal and emotional and slow than I think it would be the same but like yeah... I think orgasms during sex and masturbation are very different”

“I feel it’s kind of a reward for my partners. When someone is very focused on giving me an orgasm I can’t have one, It just doesn’t work like that for me.”

“For me it’s usually that they don’t go long enough. Like uhm...I had this one partner and ...uhm...when I was like trying to instruct him and like open my-

self up with him like try to orgasm with him...uhm...I think at one point he got frustrated and he said to me « you should learn how to orgasm quicker »”

Sex toys seem to be annoying because they need high maintenance after usage.

“I’m fucking lazy too (laughs loudly), I dont want to like take the lube and like wash it after...”

Here she talks about the need to trust her partners in order to try out new sexual experiences. The culture of sex with no attachments seems not to be helpful for sexual exploration.

“I’m very vanilla. For me something like bondage is with someone I would trust and since I’m just having these random hookups I wouldn’t try it”

Tinder has become a popular app, frequently used to fulfil sexual urges in specific times. Sex toys have proven to help satisfy her needs when she is in this situation, instead of trying to find a sexual partner on Tinder. Similar to the story above it seems that sex is defined as just an urge to be satisfied on the moment, such as something to get over with as soon as possible.

“It works for me (sex toys)...yeah...I definitely feel like I don’t have to reach for Tinder when I have these midnight urges of something. That I don’t need to seek for someones hot company to be a bit more fulfilled”

Online information about women’s pleasure can be misleading, confusing or unreliable. It is not a well enough researched topic and it is not well enough communicated. One of them was confused about the type of orgasms that really exist (vaginal or clitoral) and another one didn’t even know what an orgasm was. These women had experienced pleasure in different ways but didn’t understand what they felt and needed to know what it was.

“I read that if a woman uses a lot of vibrators or other methods for masturbation, that she might not be as sensitive to a penis or whatever...”

“When I try to have sex with other people it’s like uh... I never like...okay... maybe sometimes you have like a clitoral orgasm but it’s never like a vaginal orgasm. I feel like at least that’s the case for me. So I thought maybe with a vibrator I could explore, and see like « do I work even ?», « does it even hap-

pen to me? », because there are like some researchers that say that some women dont orgasm vaginally or clitoraly and like it's confusing”

“I was reading some articles about “Is it healthy?”, “Am I going to die?” (laughing). Because for men they say that it is okay but for women...”

“It was so weird. I was shaking... I was scared... I searched what was an orgasm on the internet”

4 - Sexual assault

The majority of the interviewees had a sad story to tell about sex, which was very hard to hear. They have mentioned the topic of learning how to say «no». The assailants were people they knew from school and other friends. They have felt shame, responsibility for what happened to them and difficulty to talk about it with other people.

“We went to his room, we were talking and then he came in for a kiss and then I told him that I didn't want it. He was so pushy that at one point I just gave in. I gave him a blowjob and left. I sat outside crying and called my friend.”

“We went to his place and smoked a lot of weed, and I was like kind of passing out. But it had been like agreed that kind of something would happen. I think I was like passed out a bit, I was aware that it was happening but I wasn't completely responsive to it”

“He came with me, locked the door and started talking to me, to make me do something I didn't want. But then he put his hand in my pants and forced a finger in my vagina while he was getting his dick out of his pants. He wanted me to do something with it. Luckily someone came at that time and knocked on the door to see if everything was fine. Of course that experience affected me for years after that. I knew he was obsessed with me, but we were still friends...and he didn't care about what I was feeling at that moment. But of course when you are mentally ill is understandable.”

5 - Friend's influence

Masturbation is not mentioned between friends, it seems to be too much of an intimate topic. While sex with partners is much normal to talk about. Talking about masturbation with friends helped make the topic less taboo.

“it's like so normal to talk with your friends about Tinder dates and the sexual experiences with others but it's like I never had my friends come to me and would be like « yeah, I masturbated yesterday and it was so good »”

“I can talk about sex with my friends but I guess the most taboo topic was masturbation for women. I was doing it already but I didn't know until my best friend talked to me about it”

Friends have had a big influence on their sexual exploration behavior.

“A friend of mine has like a collection of sex toys. She offered me one day to come with her to the sex shop, she told me that it was life changing and I needed to try”

“Mmmm...yeah I think so. Mmm...I remember now my best friend, at the time she wasn't my best friend, she said something about like...she...often watches porn or something and then I was like « wow, okay if she is able to admit that to like a person which she is not so good friends with » then I was like « Okay cool, that's freaking cool »”

6 - Sex education

Their stories about what they remembered of sex education at school was mostly a scientific biology class about reproduction. One of them only remembered details about penis erectile function. But there was definitely no memory of a talk about sexual pleasure.

“It was just like... « Yeah that's called a vagina, that's the uterus, man have this and that, this is how reproduction occurs », okay we also had « this is how you put a condom on », so that's about it. It was not about how you actually have sex. It's more like « here you see Suzie here is Dan, they are on a date, reproduction occurs, she is pregnant that's it ». I Think their logic is just

like in Biology we dont think about cows having pleasure when they have sex (laughs) so like why should we do that with humans? Especially because like nobody really knows how everyone experiences pleasure as an individual so it would be difficult for everyone to understand”

“Some years later, in secondary school, we learned about reproduction in biology class. That’s when I learned about erections. I didn’t understand it could be flacid too”

This story is about schools having a problem with the pace at which they are teaching sexual education classes.

“But also during that age there was a problem at school, the toilets were getting stuck all the time and they tried to figure out who was doing it. They found out it was because girls were throwing their tampons and pads in the toilets. Nobody told them to put them in the bin. So our teacher had to talk to us about periods because so many people didn’t understand. The talk about sex was supposed to happen the next year”

Finally here she talks about parenting behavior regarding sexual education. **In this situation her parents had a hurtful reaction which influenced the way she viewed sex later on.**

“One time I was at a guys place for dinner, it was nothing, just philosophy night. He was a feminist and I thought it was an interesting topic as friends. I went there, we ate dinner, watched a movie about feminism and then I came back home and told my parents about it. They told me I was a slut...and I was like, uh...excuse me we didn’t do anything, not even hug! So now I don’t tell them anything anymore”

On a parallel journey: buying my first sex toy

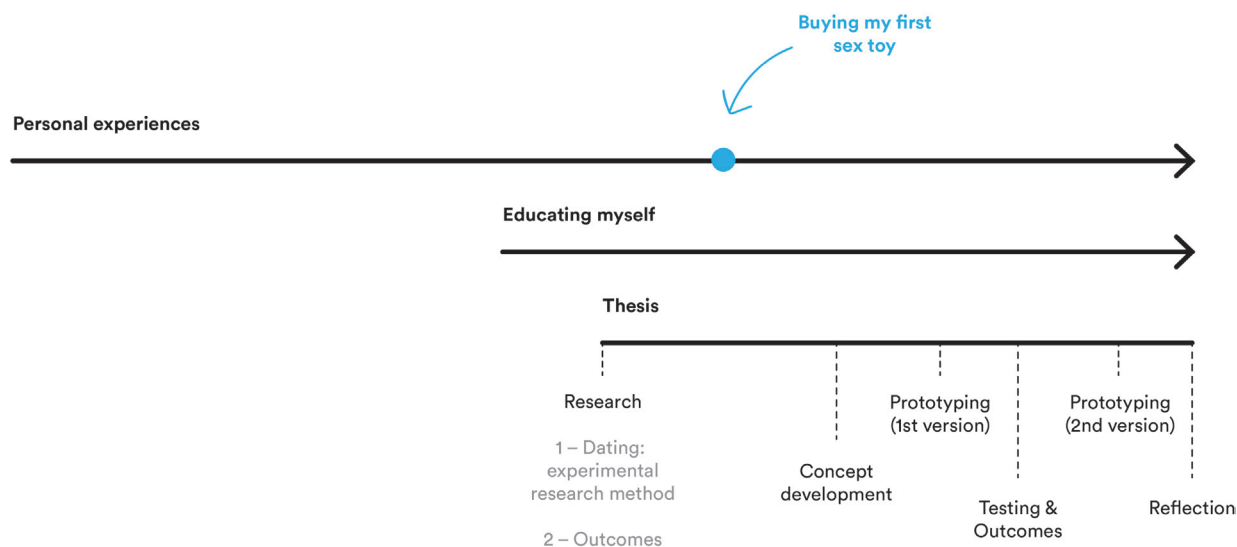


Figure 10 (parallel journey)

I had heard stories of these women struggling to enter sex shops and buy sex toys and it made me curious to experience this journey. Sex toys were also something I had never tried before or even thought about. I was in Spain at that time with my parents and we live in the middle of the mountains far from modern society. The only sex shop I found, as expected, was in the nearest big city. I didn't have my driving license and I really wanted to live this experience so I asked my mother if she would accompany me on this adventure. At first she laughed, she knew I was doing my thesis about sexual exploration of pleasure, but she became also curious and we drove together to the sex shop.

Now was the big moment of revelation. Entering in the sex toy center was...very overwhelming (Figure 11). The place looked like a labyrinth of alleys with infinite possibilities disposed literally everywhere and we were the only ones in there. So right after our shy entrance, a women that was working in the sex center came to ask if we needed any advice, to which I gladly answered «yes, please!». She walked us through all the sex toys she recommended for beginners and of course everytime she was pointing at one I had to check the price. Business is business, and I didn't know anything about sex toys before, so I knew they would try to sell the most expensive ones.

Oh my god, I got a big surprise, everything was so expensive!



Figure 11 (Sex toys center)

After 20 min of advice, the women made us test a special vibrating lube. She took a little drop and asked us to put it on our lips. We were very intrigued and decided to follow the instructions. After 1 minute you could see my mother and I looking at each other with our mouths wide open in an expression of surprise and making noises such as «oohh...», «wooooo...». It was such a memorable experience to feel our lips vibrate! We were convinced right away. I also picked a pink bunny sex toy.

I thought about the cost of everything we bought on our way back home and a thought got stuck in my head « How can young women explore pleasure if the expensive prices make sex toys so inaccessible?». On the same night, I tried using my new sex toy for the first time and the results blew my mind away. I had an orgasm after 3 minutes!

Concept Development

The missing discourse of pleasure and desire

Listening and analyzing the conversations I had with these 6 women made me first realize the complexity of the topic of sexuality and sexual exploration. They all went through similar struggles and I could find some common stories with my personal journey. The idea that came out stronger from the research was that their sexual explorations were influenced by many factors such as the type of sexual education they received at school, the ability to talk freely about the topic with their mothers, the influence friends had on their sexual curiosity, the medias around (magazines, books), religion, sexual abuse...

The women I interviewed that shared their sexual explorations more openly and saw them in a positive light were the ones that had received better support in their sexual education from their families.

The type of sexual education they have received didn't seem to address their needs and feelings. This leads them to discover the answers for themselves without proper guidance. The consequences of not having proper guidance when exploring sexuality for young women are many; such as being exposed to sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies and a bigger probability to experience sexual violences (G. Phipps, 2008).

I believe the real problem behind each story seems to be the missing discourse of desire in sexual education. The conversations we are having about sexuality in schools are turning around victimization and danger overviewed by heterosexuality norms (Fine and Weis, 2003). In order to understand how I came up with the concept of my project I wanted to share the following quote :

«A genuine discourse of desire would invite adolescents to explore what feels good and bad, desirable and undesirable, grounded in experiences, needs, and limits. Such a discourse would release females from a position of receptivity, enable an analysis of the dialectics of victimization and pleasure, and would pose female adolescents as subjects of sexuality, initiators as well as negotiators» – Fine and Weis, 2003, page 43.

Narrowing the research question

The amount of possibilities to tackle was huge and I needed just a little spark of inspiration and guidance to finally narrow my research and start ideating. I knew I was interested in specific themes like sex education at school and at home, sex toys and masturbation. I wanted to know more about those topics without having to go through interviews again. It had already taken a lot of time to code the previous conversations, so the best way I could see to get some information about these themes was to do an online survey.

I wanted to open my spectrum of answers since Tinder might have brought possible limitations in the type of information I had received. I wanted to get a variety of different experiences from a variety of different women. Typeform was the perfect tool to create the survey, very easy to use and I could quickly share it on my social media. Here below are the questions I wrote down in the survey :

1 – What do you use to explore your sexual desires and why (ex: a special erotic book, an app podcasts, Tinder...)?

2 – Tell me a story you remember about sexual education at school. Did you feel that education helped you explore your body and desires?

3 – How many sex toys do you have ? Why did you/did you not decide to buy any sex toys?

4 – How did you feel when you were looking for a sex toy? Please describe your journey through this experience

5 – Describe what sex means to you in 3 words

6 – Describe what masturbation means to you in 3 words

7 – If you were the designer here, what do you think could be done better in the topic of women sexual explorations?

After a couple of days I gathered all the answers from 29 female participants, grouped them together under each question in a document and decided to create an affinity diagram. I am more of a visual person and using this method helps me see things in a new perspective (Figures 12, 13, 14).



Figure 12 (Post-its mapping)



Figure 13 (meaning of sex)



Figure 14 (meaning of masturbation)

The first interesting thing that came out of the survey was the notable difference in the words used to describe sex and masturbation. It seemed clear that sex meant connection, love and trust while for masturbation there was much more of conflicted opinions and less unity. Masturbation was the only one that had negative words or connotations, for example describing it as a «cute sin», «uncomfortable by myself» or «lonely». These differences gave me a first hint. Maybe there were negative and conflicted opinions about masturbation because these women didn't receive a proper education about the topic.

On the other hand, their sexual education stories had the same patterns. Most of them remember it was a class about prevention and sexual diseases and that there was definitely no mention of sexual pleasure or masturbation. It seems to be that the ones unsatisfied with their sexual education went to find out about it by other means, such as talking to friends or doing some research on the internet. This gave me my second hint. There was a general dissatisfaction about their sexual education but they were still curious about the topic and they would look for answers elsewhere.

I wanted to gather some insights on what they thought could have been done better for them in the past, in order to feel more freedom to discover their bodies and desires. Kind of a common ideation. The answers I gathered from this question were better sex education, like a «cake recipe, not like a crime», to encourage women to go «inward rather than outward» (discovering their own bodies and desires first before having a partner) and to normalize the topic of masturbation by giving them open and fun tools. These 3 insights have helped reframe my research question into the following way:

How might we highlight about sexual exploration of pleasure in a fun and accessible way for young women that are starting their personal journey?

Since sex education in schools doesn't meet these young women's needs I wanted to research if there were any other solutions existing out of school that could help them answer their questions, so I conducted a competitive research.

On the next page, I expose, compare and contrast some of the existing services and see where my future solution could place itself compared to those I found (Figure 15).



Short, sexy audio stories that set the mood and spark the imagination.

DIPSEA

Gina & Faye

Sexual wellness App
Audio stories for women to get off (innovative erotic sexual content for women). Each story has hotness levels and gender categories (hetero, queer, group situations...) Target : women in their 20's. Subscription fee 8.99 \$ per month



HAPPYPLAYTIME

Tina Gong

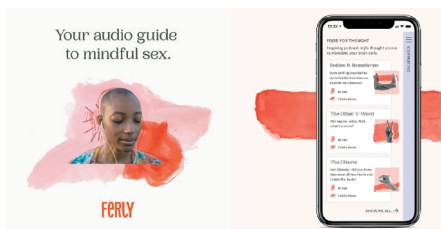
Educational masturbation App
Friendly vulva that teach women to be happier with their orgasms through interactive games and screen stimulation techniques (Fight the stigma and shame around female masturbation). Target : young women. Free. Apple rejected the app saying it was pornographic



OMGYes

Lydia Daniller & Christina Vasiliou

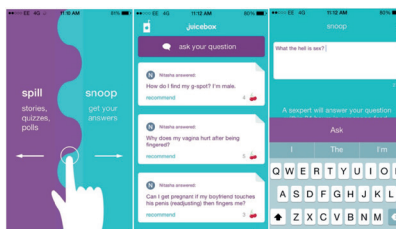
Educational masturbation Website Teaches specific masturbation techniques through virtual reality games of vaginas and touchscreen techniques (no score but verbal feedback). Based on big scientific research about women masturbating End goal is orgasm, women featured have beauty standards, looks like porn. Target: women of all ages. Subscription fee: 29\$ per month



FERLY

Dr. Anna Hushlack & Billie Quinlan

Sex positive App with a community of female identifying individuals to make female sexuality less taboo. Audio guides sessions, workshops, quizzes and sexy stories. Help women explore and understand how they feel about sex (different than heteronormative sexual definitions taught at school). Has also a free slack channel. Target : Millenials. Subscription fee : 10\$ per month



JUICEBOX

Brianna Rader & Lindsey Alami

Sex education App
Personal chatbot sex coach in your pocket that answers all of your questions about sex, relationships and dating. Target: Young teenagers needing answers that schools dont provide with their sexual education system. Free for the basic version. Many more sexual education apps for general questions about sex



SEXPLAIN

Amelia Jenkinson

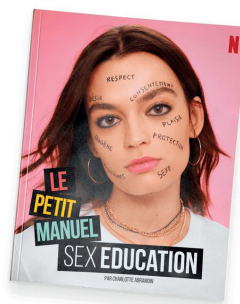
Sex education workshops in schools in the UK. Talks about gender, healthy relationships, sex, porn, consent, sexting...It's an intersectional, non binary, feminist and sex positive workshop. Teaches to new sex educators and volunteers at university as well. Target : young people in schools and universities.



CLIMAX

The Climax team

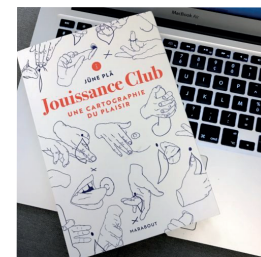
Educative series of 19 episodes to teach women new masturbation techniques to practice alone or with their partners. 1 Episode for free Basic episodes at 35€.



LE PETIT MANUEL

Charlotte Abramow

For the second season of the series Sex Education Charlotte decided to give free access (<https://sexeducation.fr/>) to a younger target audience for her manual about sex. She talks about consent, desire, anatomy, stereotypes, periods, protection, orgasms and masturbation.



JUISSANCE CLUB - UNE CARTOGRAPHIE DU PLAISIR

June Pla

This book is a manual with tips and beautiful illustrations of different techniques to please your partner. It's for all genders, fun and sex positive. Target: young people that want to know more specific ways to please their partners or themselves. Cost: \$29.67

It was interesting to put myself in the place of these young women that were looking for answers.

I found out some common pain points. Almost all of them are accessible only through a subscription or another form of payment, which restrains the access for young women to get this information. **I believe if a solution wants to empower women to reclaim their sexual pleasure it is contradictory to make them pay for it.** Furthermore they all seemed to tackle something more specific in the education of sexual pleasure, for example :

- How to masturbate
- How to get in the mood for masturbation or sex
- How to understand how you feel about sexuality
- How to get answers to any questions about sex
- ...

Finding all these solutions gave me hope to see that there was already something being done about the topic of female sexual education and exploration of pleasure. But in my eyes the content is very specific and only teaches about one of the many possibilities pleasure can be or experienced.

Giving birth to the idea

With all the research I had done along my personal journey of sexual exploration I started thinking that I had already a well developed point of view on the topic. I was particularly interested in the beginning of the journey of sexual exploration of pleasure for women. All these solutions were great and if they were added all together they would provide great content about female pleasure, so I asked myself «would it be a way to condense all this knowledge in one solution?».

As Peggy Orenstein mentions on her YouTube TED talk about «what young women believe about their sexual pleasure»; we «need to educate young women on their capacity for and entitlement to pleasure». Providing a better education about female sexual exploration and entitlement to pleasure can help women be fulfilled with themselves, others around and redefine what pleasure means to them.

I wanted my idea to be like opening a door towards the infinite beautiful possibilities that sexual pleasure can offer (Figure 15, 16, 17).



Figure 15 (drawing, metaphore door a little but open)

Where most young women are now. In a place of ignorance and frustration.
But with the door open that shows their curiosity about sexual pleasure.

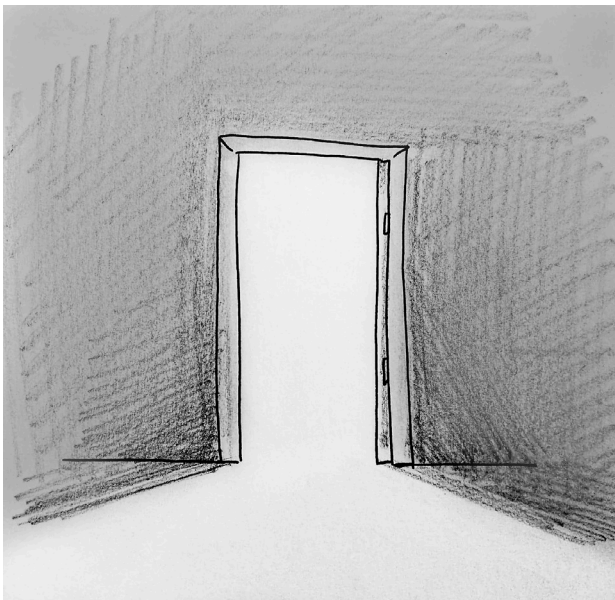
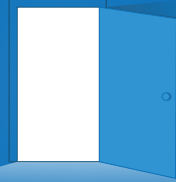


Figure 16 (drawing, metaphore door wide open)

Where I would like them to be. In a place of enlightenment with the door always
opened to a new perspective of sexuality.



Beginning of
exploration journey

Sexuality

Prototyping

Principles

To develop my idea of this educative tool that would empower women to regain their entitlement to pleasure I needed to define clearly my design guidelines :

- 1 – Create for the near future.
- 2 – Make it fun and positive
- 3 – Empower them to explore their personal pleasure
- 4 – Use the right words
- 5 – Make it free and accessible to the large majority

1 – Create for the near future because it is now that young women need better access to sex education about pleasure.

2– Make it fun and positive because sex education at school too often communicates a negative and preventive message (talking about protection, STI's, sexual assault, learning how to say no...). I want them to learn that sexual exploration is something fun and liberating, and that it doesn't need to be scary.

3 – The solution I propose for fun and liberating sex is introducing them to the practice of masturbation. It is the safest way to explore sexual pleasure.

4 – Teaching the right anatomical and scientific words to give them the power to know their body better and to express their desires better.

5 – The content had been decided so it was time to decide on the format. I had analyzed the existing available options on the market and most of them were in the form of an app. After reflecting over that format **I realized that using a smart-phone application would enhance the idea of privacy and in a way of shame around the topic I wanted to inform about. My idea was to take out the shame by confronting them to see the content on a larger, less private media.** The point was «this is something normal you are learning and you shouldn't be ashamed of it». Nevertheless, the prevailing thought was to make it accessible to a large majority of women, which naturally led to the idea of making it into the form of a website.

Content

Now that I had a clear idea of what I wanted to do, it was time to decide about the actual content. What should be the content of a positive sexual exploration of pleasure education? And how could I find this content and communicate it?

I looked into what a good sexual education should be like and I found a guide published by SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) in 2004 that summarized the «key concepts, topics, and messages that all sexuality education programs would ideally include» for children from 3 all the way to 18 years old. I chose to inspire myself from this guide because I previously had read about it in other studies (Meda V., S. Rusu, 2015). The guide's 6 key concepts for an ideal sexual education are the following:

1 – Human Development (sexual and reproductive anatomy, physiology, puberty, reproduction, body image, sexual orientation, gender identity)

2 – Relationships (families, friendship, love, dating and romantic relationships, marriage and lifetime commitments, raising children)

3 – Personal Skills (values, decision-making, communication, assertiveness, negotiation, looking for help)

4 – Sexual Behavior (sexuality throughout life, masturbation, shared sexual behaviour, sexual abstinence, human sexual response, sexual fantasy, sexual dysfunction)

5 – Sexual Health (reproductive health, contraception, pregnancy and prenatal care, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV & AIDS, sexual abuse, assault, violence and harassment)

6 – Society and Culture (sexuality and society, gender roles, sexuality and the law, sexuality and religion, diversity, sexuality and the media, sexuality and the arts).

I was surprised to see that all of this information was required since I myself never received such an education and, from the stories I had gathered previously, it seemed other women of my age didn't either.

Moreover, the guide places parents as being their children's main educators in terms of sexuality education. But again, from the stories I had heard it didn't seem to be the case that parents took the role of main sexual educators for their children. I looked into the topic and found out a more recent study published in 2015. As I expected they mention the poor impact that schools have on young people's sexual behavior and the responsibility of the parents to take the role of main sexual educators. Nonetheless they also mention the lack of skills parents have in order to provide a proper sexual education and the idea that we should also educate them (Pop, Meda V., and Alina S. Rusu, 2015).

If we think about it, it's true that our parents haven't received the same sexual education as we have. Nowadays sex education is still not teaching everything it should but imagine the education our parents have received in their own time, much more incomplete and diversified than ours. Our parents might even be less educated and open about sex than we are, and they might need more guidance to take their roles of main sexual educators. This brings up the lack of communication skills parents have to teach their kids about sexual education. It will be important to remember this in order to understand the goal of my solution. Aiding in the communication of sexual education between mothers and daughters.

After acknowledging the key concepts that an ideal sexual education should provide (at school and at home) I decided to include the following content:

1 – The basics of female anatomy of pleasure (The main components of the vulva and the clitoris and their role in our body)

2 – Orgasms (Body and mind reactions when having an orgasm, it's also a subjective experience, statistics)

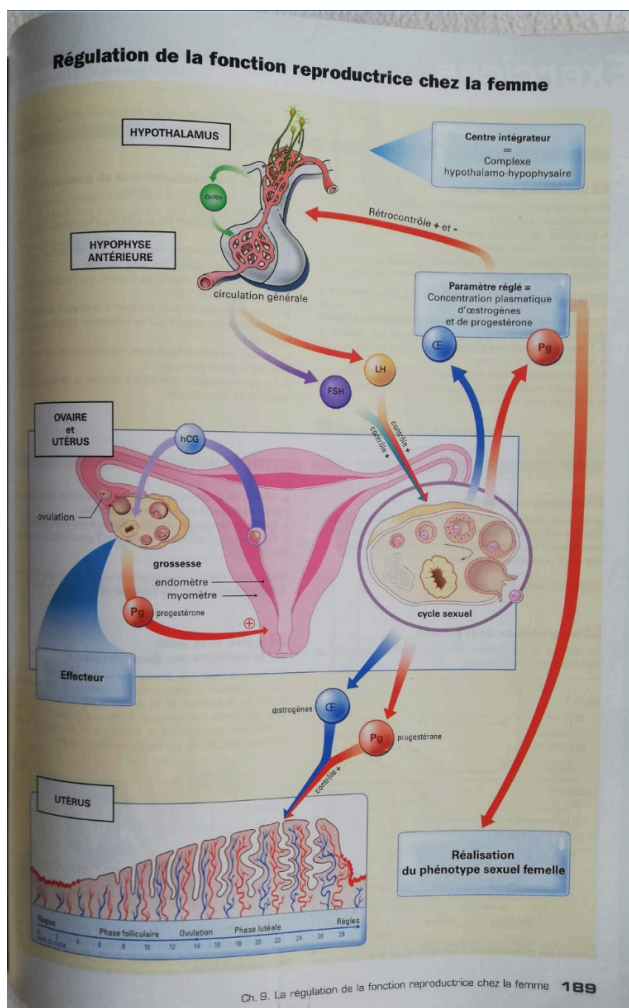
3 – Masturbation (Benefits and techniques to start masturbating, sex toys for beginners)

5 – Tools they could use to get in the mood for sexual exploration (Music, series, podcasts, books, feminist porn...)

Designing the idea

The first part of the content was going to be the anatomy of the vulva and the clitoris, it was naturally the first content to teach women before talking about orgasms. While I was looking for inspiration to show the anatomical content, I found myself thinking about the content I had received and seen myself as a teenager in my biology textbooks.

Most of us see the first images of genitals through text books at school. And I was curious to see how female genitalia was pictured in my old biology text book from when I was 17 years old. I was sure to still have it somewhere in the house hidden in the dark and forgotten, so I decided to look for it and reveal it's contents. As I expected when I found it, the only information about female genitalia was this (Figure 18):



No picture of the vulva, no mention of the clitoris and of course no mention about sexual pleasure. Female genitalia were basically pictured as a reproductive system looked from the inside.

I was curious to see how the text books had changed till today. So during the testing of the prototype I had built (which I will talk about later), I asked my old biology teacher (that was still working at the same school, Alicante's French Lyceum Pierre Deschamps in Spain) to make a picture of the new text book they had, in order to compare the two of them (Figure 19).

Figure 18 (old biology textbook)

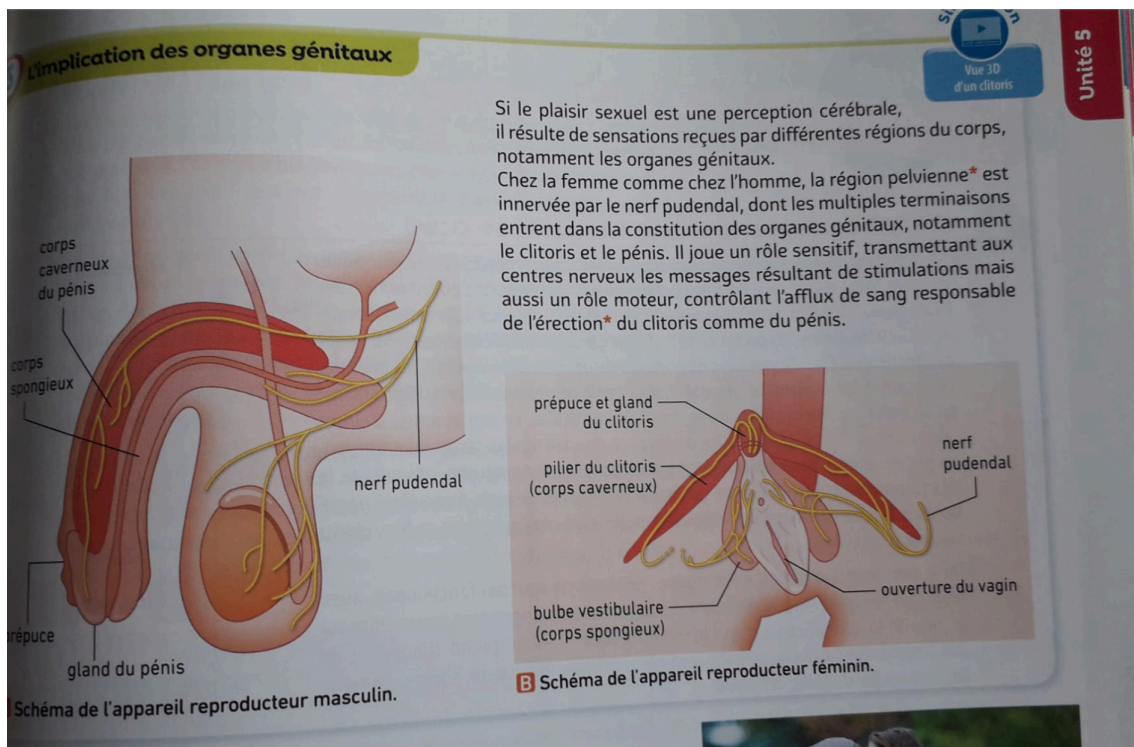


Figure 19 (new biology textbook)

From what I could see from the picture of the textbook, it mentioned sexual pleasure and even showed a drawing of the clitoris. Which is already a great progress. However this is the only representation of the vulva they have in their book. It's pictured as a line and a whole with no apparent surface. How is it that it shows the complete anatomy of the clitoris and nothing about the anatomy of the vulva?

She also mentioned giving access to websites where they had the clitoris and the female reproductive system in 3D so that students could better visualize what they look like (Fillod, 2017).

The creation of a universe

I wanted to create the concept of opening a door to a new world of sexual discovery that would look fun to explore and to communicate this positive idea of a universe of sexuality.

I have chosen this metaphor of the universe because it communicates the extent of unlimited possibilities of space and things that we can explore.

I first came up with the concept of a personal sexual exploration box, like a spe-

I was hoping to figure out more things about the design when I would start actually building it visually with Illustrator. I was very intrigued by the way the designing process went. I hadn't a very clear idea of how the final design would be, I just had the first concept of the box. Interestingly, all the other ideas burst from my imagination like I had no control over what I was doing.

After finishing the first prototype, I started analyzing the elements (Figure 23, 24, 25, 26) that came up and I started understanding what was behind my mind. I wanted to create an exploration of a new world of sexuality, which I merged with the idea of space exploration with infinite and exciting possibilities. Hence, I also wanted to communicate the idea of sexuality by being something always changing like a fluid, which I visualized with a fluid colorful background.



Figure 23 (illustration planet masturbation)

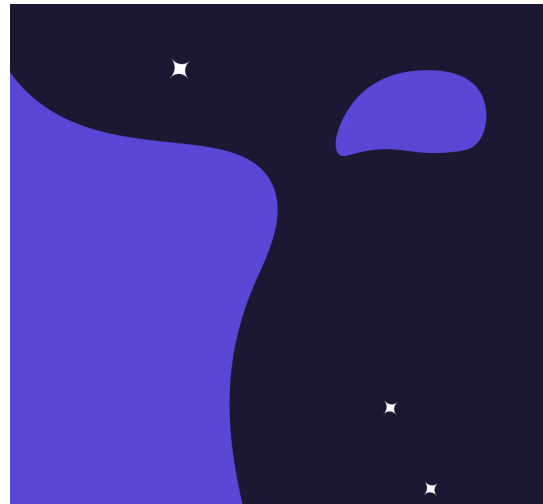


Figure 24 (illustration liquid)

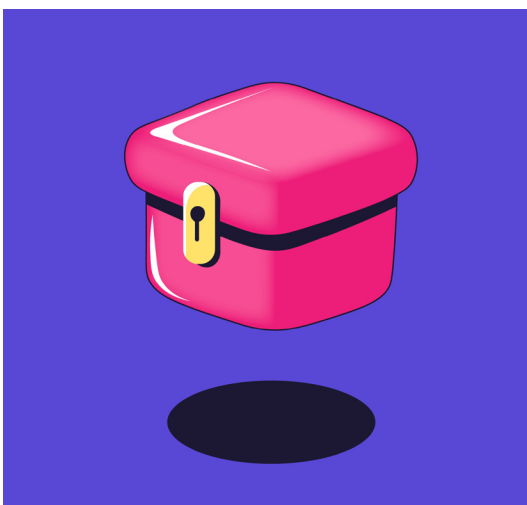


Figure 25 (illustration box)



Figure 26 (illustration planet orgasm)

Colors are very important to communicate the idea of playfulness and positiveness. Each color plays a role in the general feeling of the website (Figure 27):



Figure 27 (color palette)

Prototyping challenges: first version

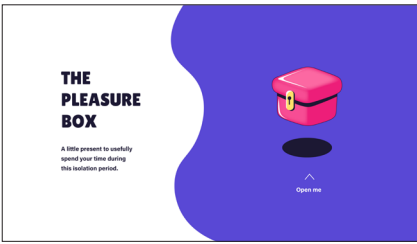
I had decided previously about the content ideas for the website, but finding some reliable information and deciding what to use was more complicated than I thought. I had to read many scientific papers, research and articles about female sexual pleasure, orgasms and masturbation (which will be mentioned in the upcoming pages).

To show you an example of how I chose the different information I'll explain the first part of the design with the anatomy of the vulva and the clitoris. I relied on the book «The Vagina Bible - The Vulva and the Vagina: Separating the Myth from the Medicine» from Dr. Jen Gunter because she is a professional gynecologist herself. I had already read the book at the very beginning of my personal journey and I thought I could use it's very useful knowledge. I learned that each component of our genitals play an important role in keeping them healthy and clean and I wanted to educate women about this. It was important to demystify the myth of vulvas being dirty.

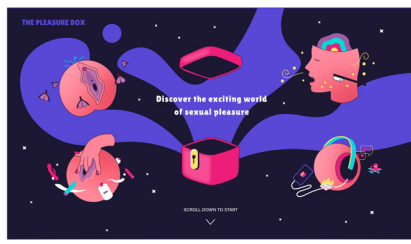
I was super excited about the idea and I was already imagining how the animations would be, the type of sounds it would make when they press the buttons, the way the pages would transition to one another like a fluid...

I had started already building the first page interactions and animations when I came to realize the fact that I had spent 2 entire days trying to build only the landing page and it was a tremendous amount of work because I was learning everything from scratch. I seemed to have forgotten that I had only 2 weeks left till the final presentation. Fortunately my mentors advised me to get over the animations for the moment and start the final phase of the project to actually test the idea and see if it was even worth it.

The following pages will present the first version of the website's visuals and content.



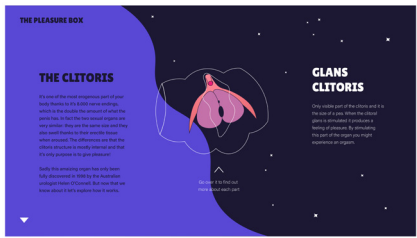
Page 1



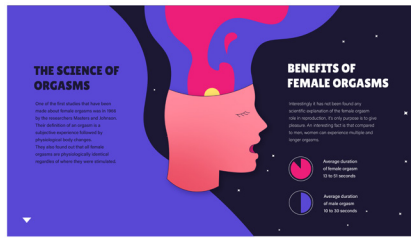
Page 2



Page 3



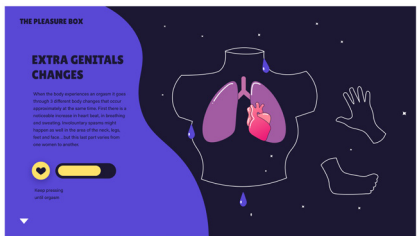
Page 4



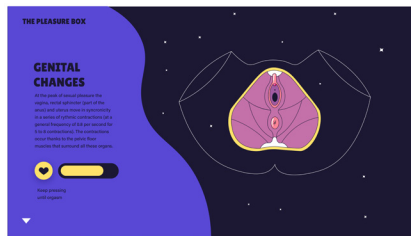
Page 5



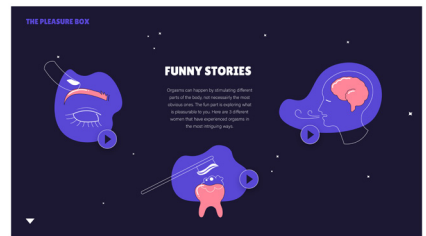
Page 6



Page 7



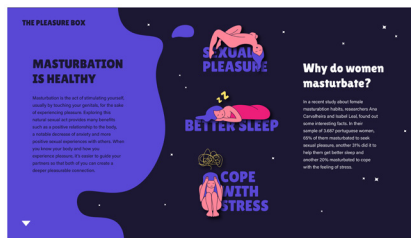
Page 8



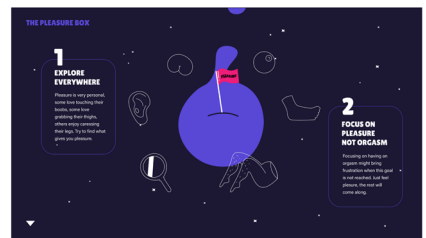
Page 9



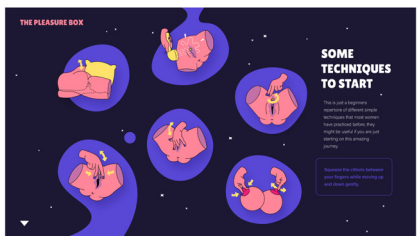
Page 10



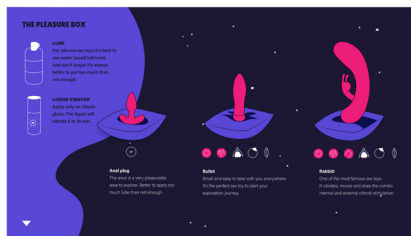
Page 11



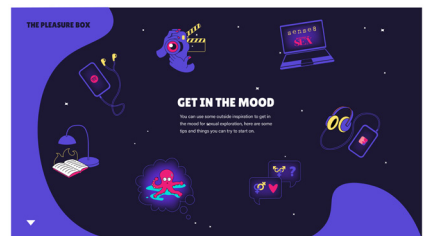
Page 12



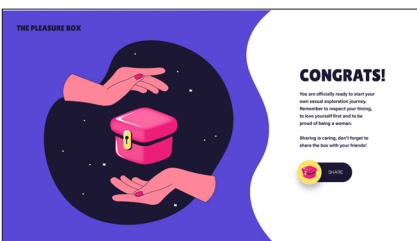
Page 13



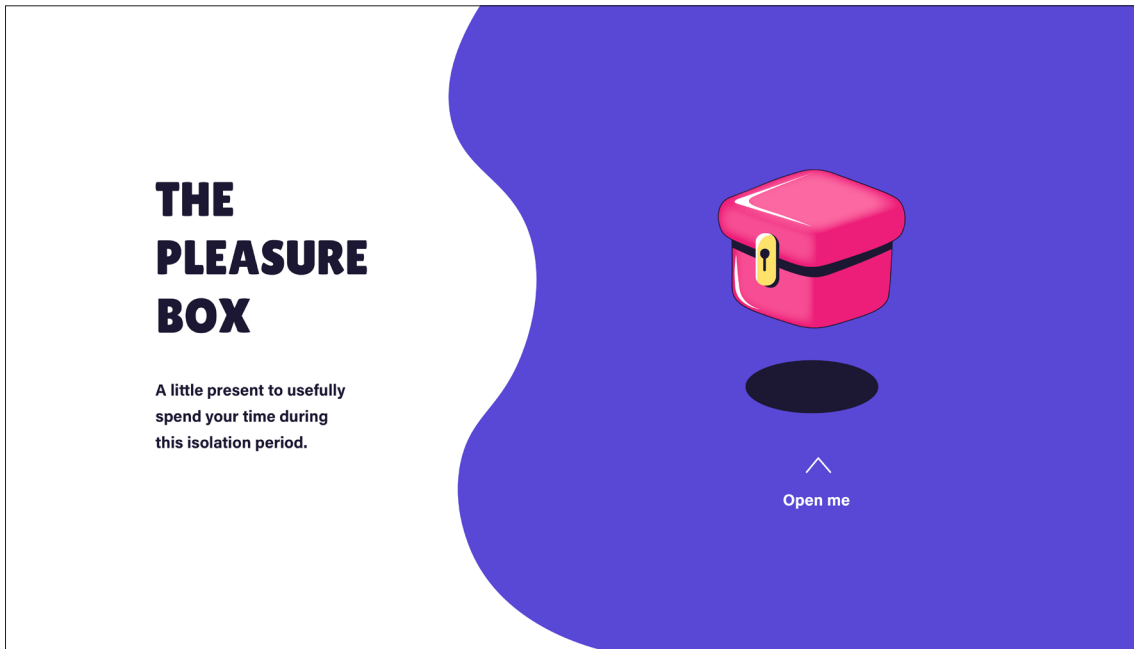
Page 14



Page 15



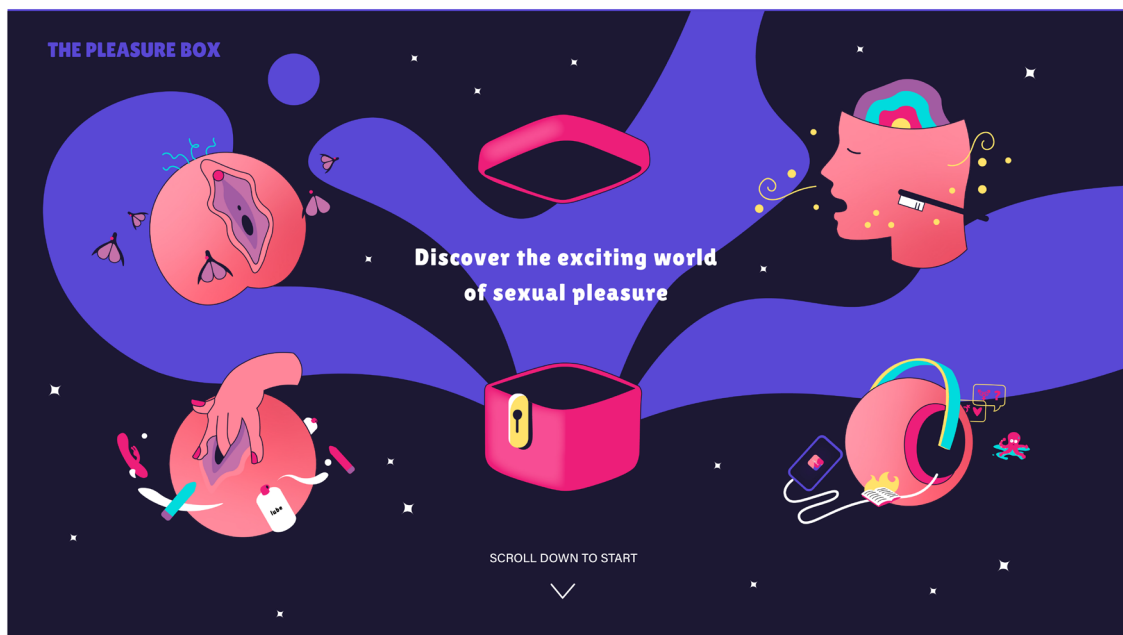
Page 16



Page 1

Landing page: The pleasure box

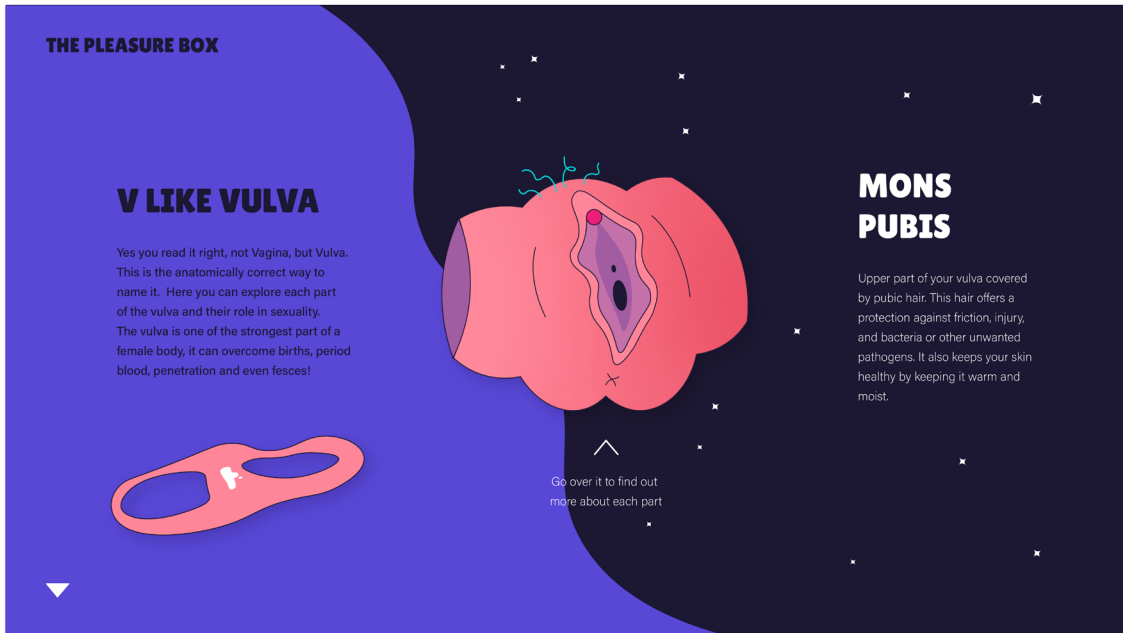
Teaser sentence and animation of the box.



Page 2

Revealing what is inside the box

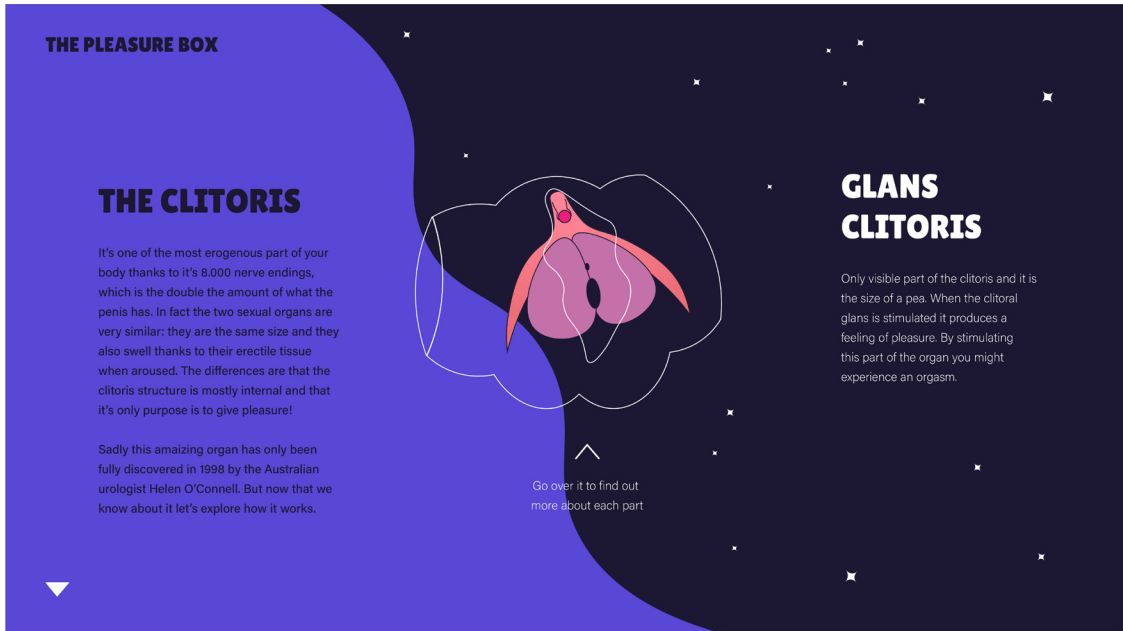
Reveal the real purpose of the website in one sentence and show 4 stages they will explore. The website would guide them through the sexual anatomy of pleasure first, then the orgasms, then masturbation and finally tips to get in the mood for exploration.



Page 3

Part 1: The vulva's anatomy

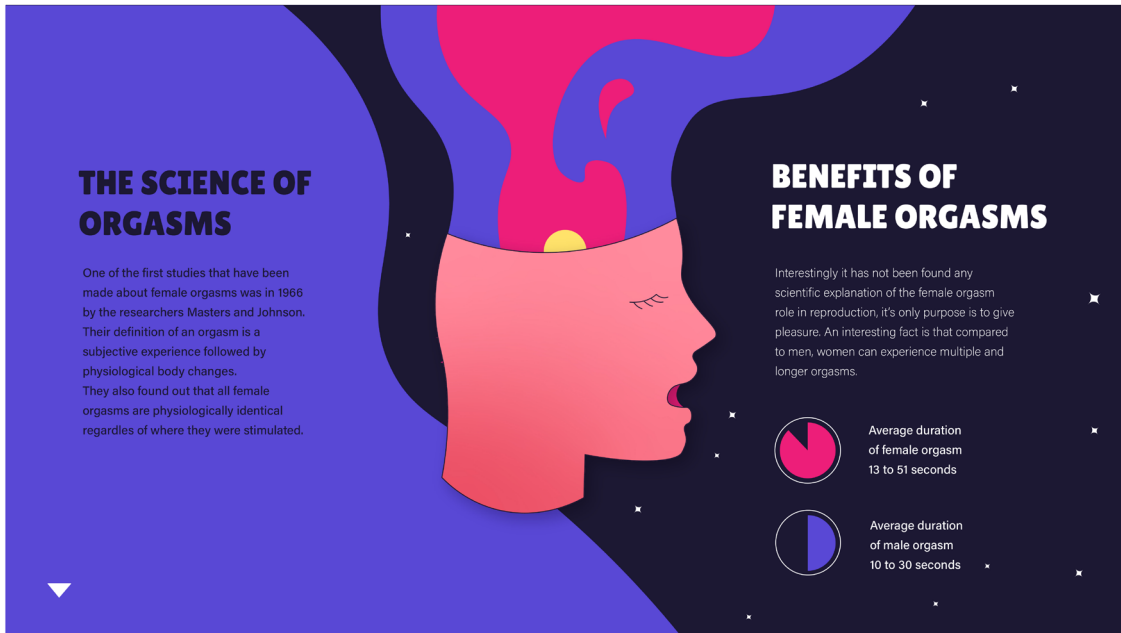
A general description of the vulva and demystifying the myth of it being dirty. Hover over the vulva to uncover the role of each part (Gunter, 2019).



Page 4

Part 1: The clitoris anatomy

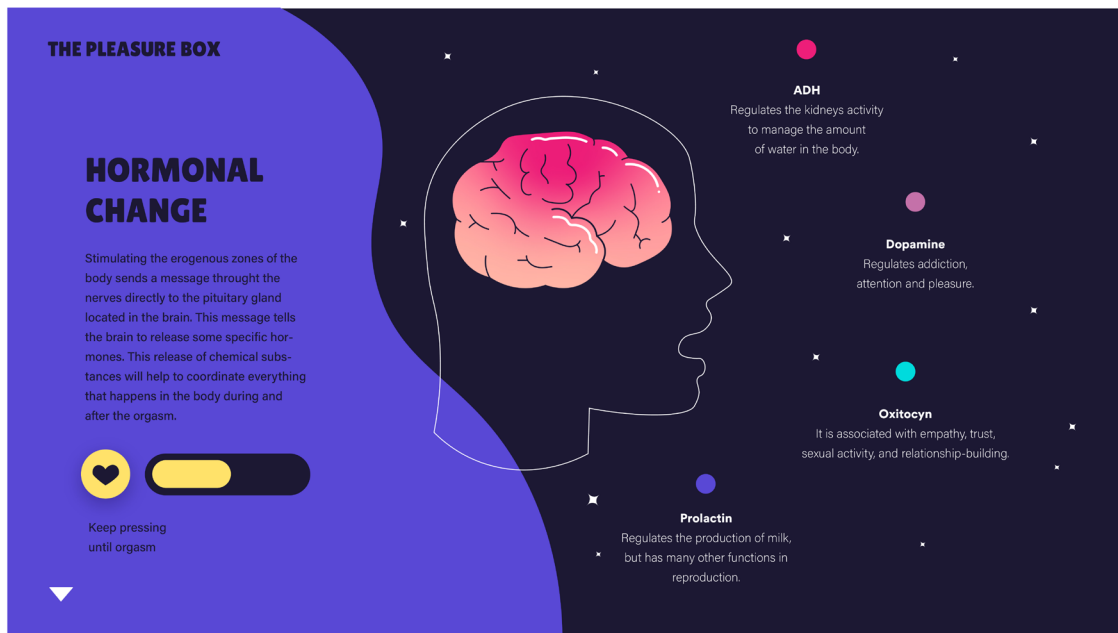
Description of the clitoris. Hover over the illustration of the clitoris to uncover the role of each component (Gunter, 2019).



Page 5

Part 2: The science of orgasms

Description of an orgasm, benefits and differences between male and female orgasms (Masters, Johnson, 1966), (Barry R., Whipple, 2005), (McIntosh, 2018),(Meston, Cindy M., J. Levin, L. Sipski, M. Hull, 2004).



Page 6


Part 2: Hormonal changes

What happens in the body when we have an orgasm specifically the release of hormones and their purposes (Mitrokostas, 2019), (Leeners, Brigitte, Kruger, Brody, Schmidlin, Naegeli, Egli., 2013).

THE PLEASURE BOX

EXTRA GENITALS CHANGES

When the body experiences an orgasm it goes through 3 different body changes that occur approximately at the same time. First there is a noticeable increase in heart beat, in breathing and sweating. Involuntary spasms might happen as well in the area of the neck, legs, feet and face...but this last part varies from one woman to another.



Keep pressing until orgasm

Page 7

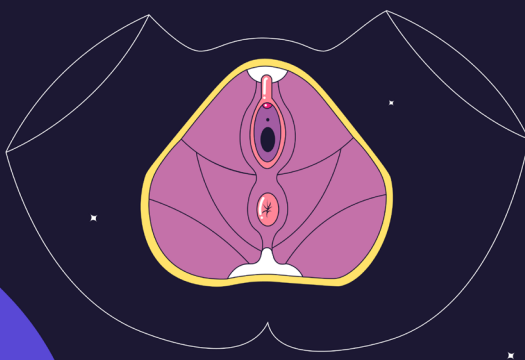
Part 2: Extra genitals changes

Physiological changes during an orgasm inside and outside the body (Kinsey, B. Pomeroy, E. Martin, H. Gebhard, 1998).

THE PLEASURE BOX

GENITAL CHANGES

At the peak of sexual pleasure the vagina, rectal sphincter (part of the anus) and uterus move in synchronicity in a series of rhythmic contractions (at a general frequency of 0.8 per second for 5 to 8 contractions). The contractions occur thanks to the pelvic floor muscles that surround all these organs.



Keep pressing until orgasm

Page 8

Part 2: Genital changes

Physiological changes in the area around the genitals (Kinsey, B. Pomeroy, E. Martin, H. Gebhard, 1998), (Gunter, 2019).



Page 9

Part 2: Funny stories

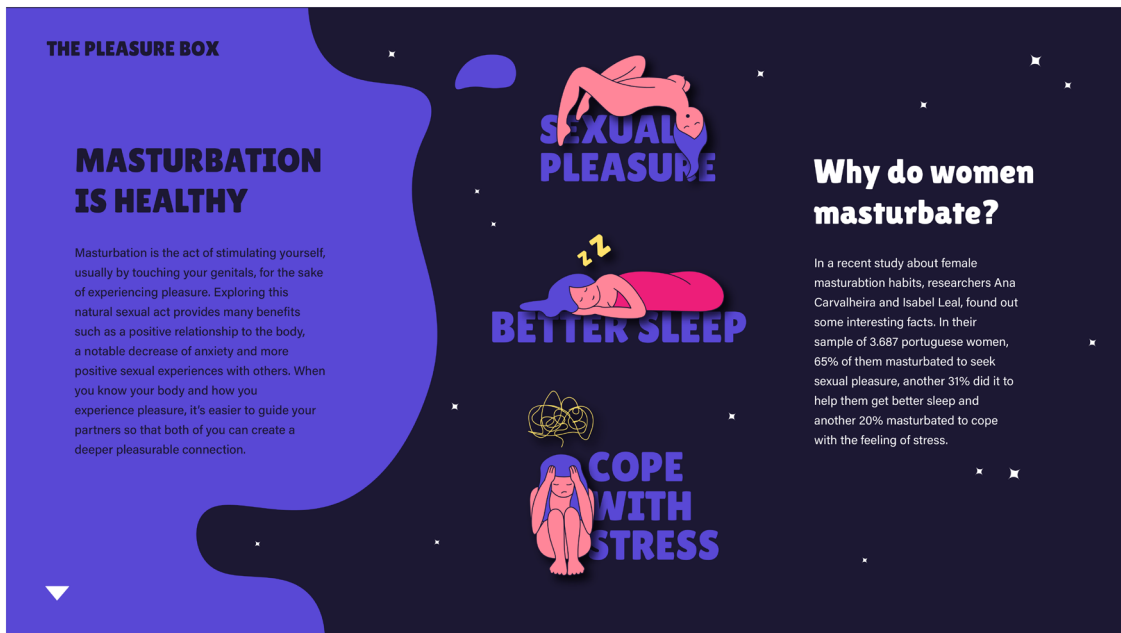
Audio stories of women having **orgasming** in different ways. Show it's a subjective experience (Chuang, Yao-Chung, Tsu-Kung Lin, Chun-Chung Lui, Shang-Der Chen, and Chen-Sheng Chang, 2004), (Hunter, 2010), (Kinsey, B. Pomeroy, E. Martin, H. Gebhard, 1998).



Page 10

Part 2: Interesting statistics related to orgasms

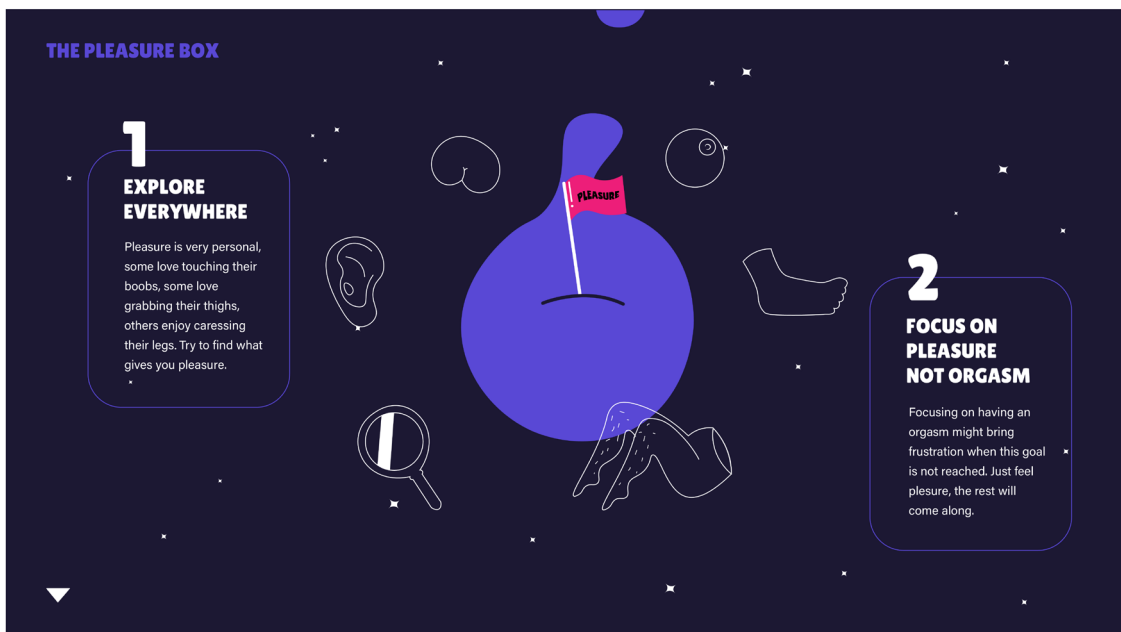
Such as the orgasm gap between heterosexual women and men for example (Williams, Sommerville, 2019), (Meston, Cindy M., J. Levin, L. Sipski, M. Hull, 2004).



Page 11

Part 3: Masturbation

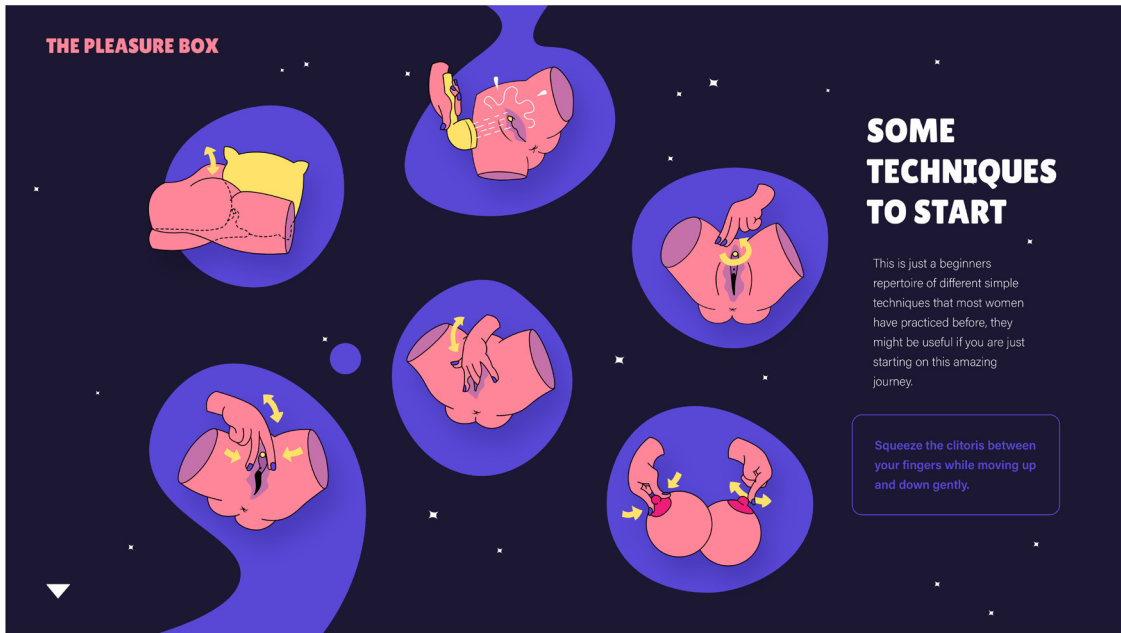
Description of the behavior, benefits and statistics (Carvalheira, Leal, 2013), (Nichols, 2020).



Page 12

Part 3: Begin the journey yourself

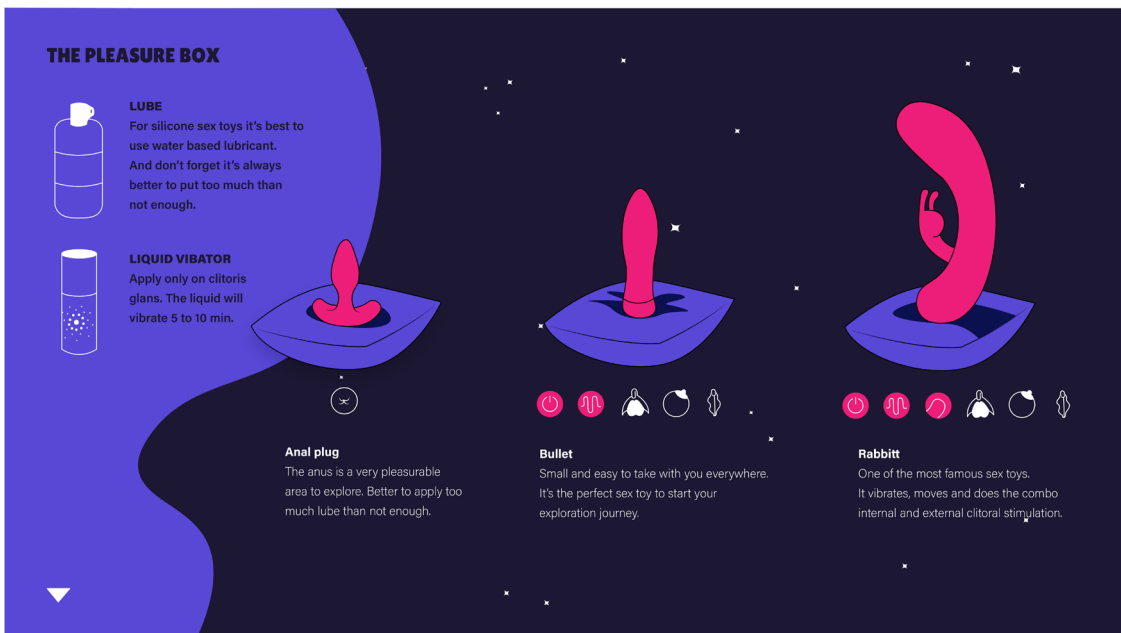
Encouraging to explore all parts of the body (not only the genitals) and to focus on feeling pleasure (not aiming for orgasm).



Page 13

Part 3: Beginners techniques

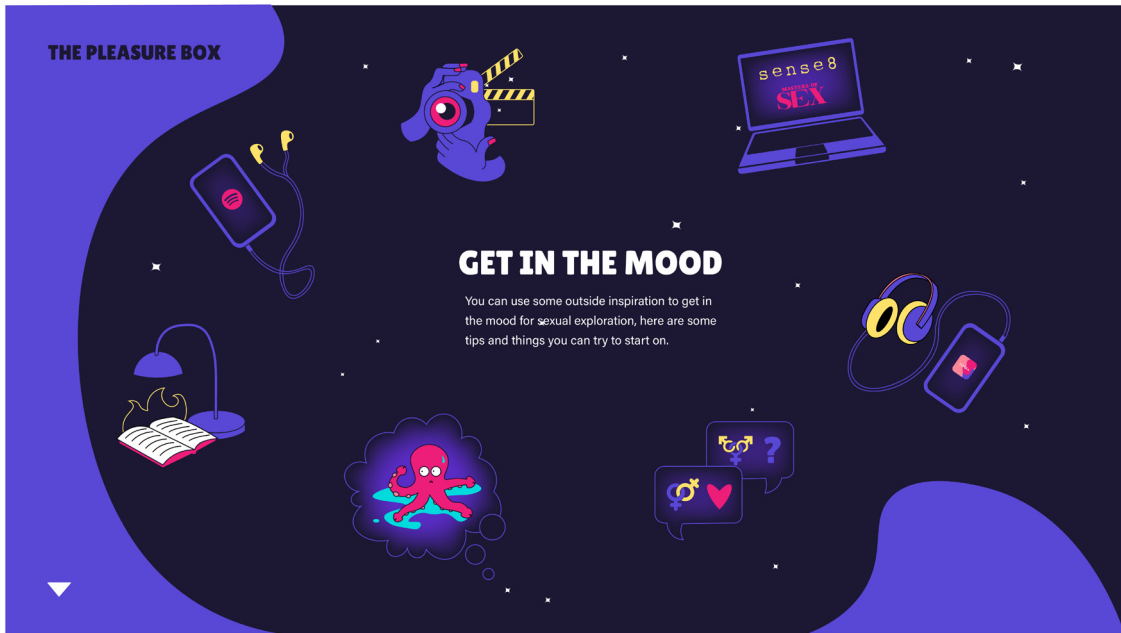
6 basic ways to start masturbating along with a description of the technique every time they hover over an illustration.



Page 14

Part 3: Beginners sex toys

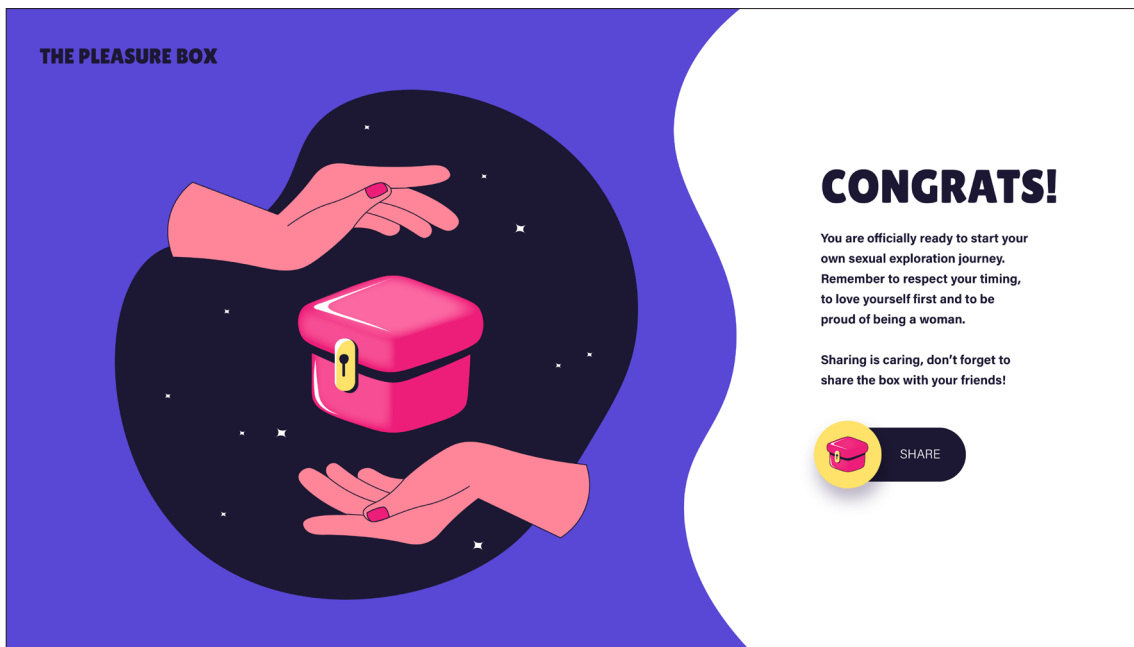
3 sex toys to start exploring pleasure. Each one of them has buttons as they would have in real life that would animate what the sex toys would do.



Page 15

Part 4: Get in the mood

It's sometimes difficult to get in the mood for sexual exploration, so here are some tips to help them (hot stories, playlists, hot podcasts, series...).



Page 16

End, share with friends

Congratulating them for starting this journey, remind them to love themselves first and share it with friends.

TESTING THE IDEA

I just finished the prototype and now it was time to see how people actually feel about it. I didn't really think before building the prototype about the exact age of the women I was designing for. I imagined they would be young teenage girls but I had to define clearly the age range. Here is a list of people I wanted to test the idea with in order to get some feedback from my design:

1 – First I needed the main target audience, young girls between 14 and 22 years old.

2 – Then I needed the mothers feedback and approval in order to test it with their younger daughters.

3 – I also needed advice from teachers (they would provide an expert point of view on the content, the target group and they could compare what they teach at school with the content of the website).

4 – I was also seeking professional advice from people working in the field or that would have studied about it.

I wanted to get feedback on their feelings, emotions and reactions so I have decided to conduct interviews through video calls (via WhatsApp, Zoom or Messenger, it really depended on the interviewee preferences). I prepared a PDF with the visuals of the website that I would send them if they agreed to do the testing. There were only 3 weeks left and I wanted to be done with the feedback in 1 week, in order to start the second version of the prototype.

On the other hand I am very lucky to have a mother that shares my passions, ideas and projects with literally everyone she knows. I knew she had lots of friends that could potentially test my idea so I asked for help. I also contacted some friends of mine to see if they could ask around them as well. After the first day of sending out the requests I had already so many answers! It was very exciting to see people reacting and being generally interested in the topic.

To each tester I sent an introductory message that summarized the project and goals of the testing. Once they accepted to do the test I sent them the PDF by email. They usually replied back with a message on the spot whenever they had

finished reading everything and I would call them right away. I had prepared a set of questions again to guide my interviews :

- How did you feel when reading the website?
- Where did you view it (laptop, smartphone, tablet...)?
- With whom did you view it and did it spark a topic of conversation?
- What parts did you not understand? Why?
- What parts were uncomfortable to read ?
- Have you ever talked about this topic with your mother? How did you feel about it?
- How would you feel if your mother were to give you the link to the website?
- Where do you find information about questions you might have regarding the topic of sexuality or pleasure?
- Would you share it with your friends?
- Does it make you feel comfortable enough to start your own sexual exploration?

The first interview wasn't so much structured. It was the first time for me actually testing something I had fully designed. But it helped me get a clearer idea of how to rephrase the initial questions to get better feedback on the next interviews.

Testing challenges

The first big challenge was to reach younger girls between 14 and 16 years old. I needed their mother's approval and testing of the project first in order to conduct the test with them. Luckily all the mothers I have contacted answered positively to the testing. There has been only one mother that struggled to motivate her 12 year old daughter because she was too shy.

The second challenge was to make respondents view the PDF on a computer, since the prototype is designed in a website format. Unfortunately there was one 16 year old girl that viewed it on her smartphone, which made it complicated for her to read the texts.

Moreover, the people I would test with were associated to my personal circle of contacts which means that they came from specific cultures; Belgian, French and Spanish. It was interesting to have testers from such different countries because each culture views sexual education in a different way. However I have been brought up in these 3 cultures so I could understand the context and connect better with the respondents in their own language. Furthermore there have been

some complications with the language in which the prototype was designed for. The 3 countries have a bad reputation for their english level which made it sometimes complicated for the testers to understand some specific vocabulary. Since I had more French respondents I decided to design another version in French.

The sample of respondents wasn't very large but I managed to interview almost 1 person per each age group from 14 till 22 years old. My aim with the younger teenagers was to see if the content was understandable for them but also adapted to their age. Finally I asked each one of them If they would accept to take a selfie in front of the visuals to show it in my report (Figure 28).

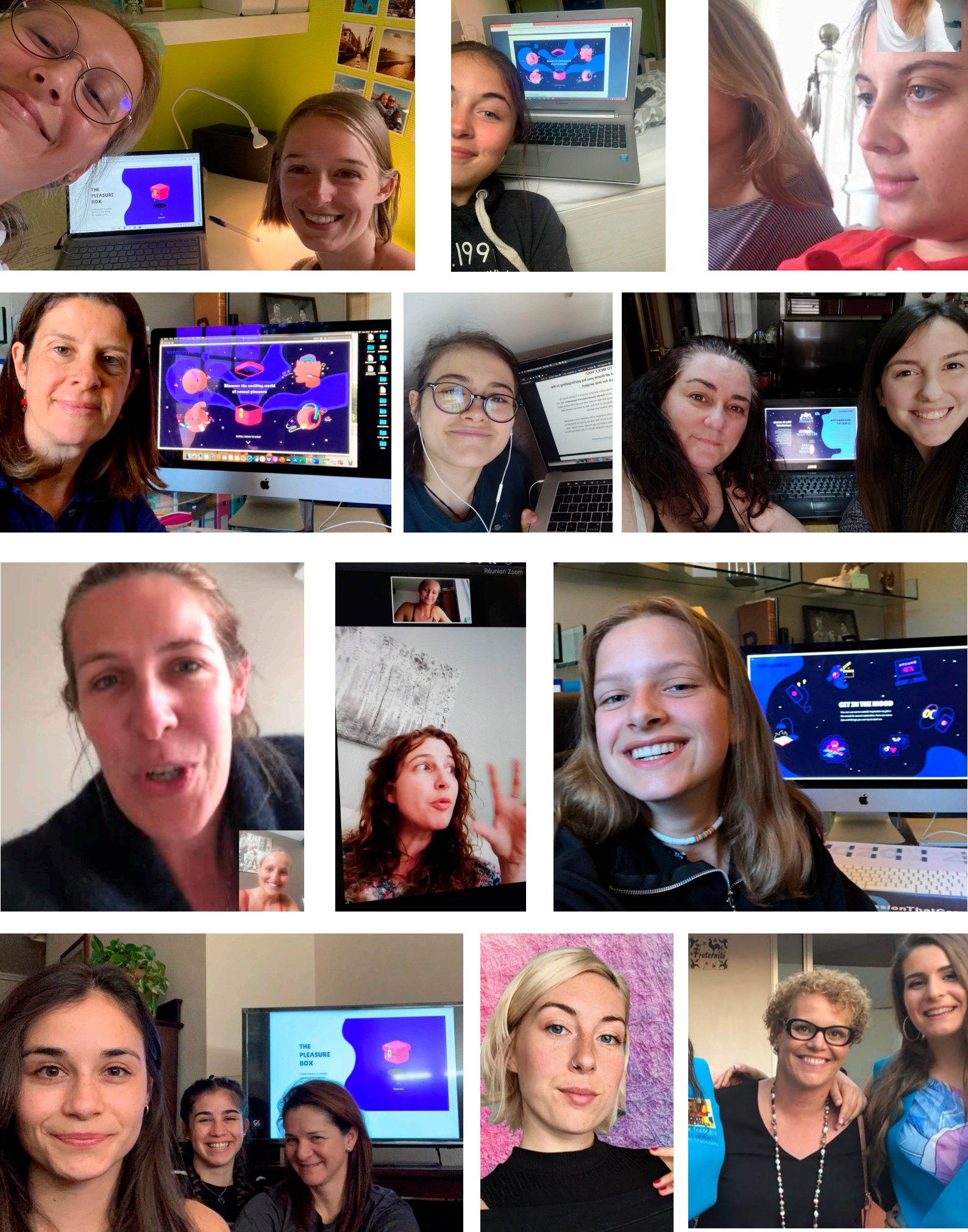
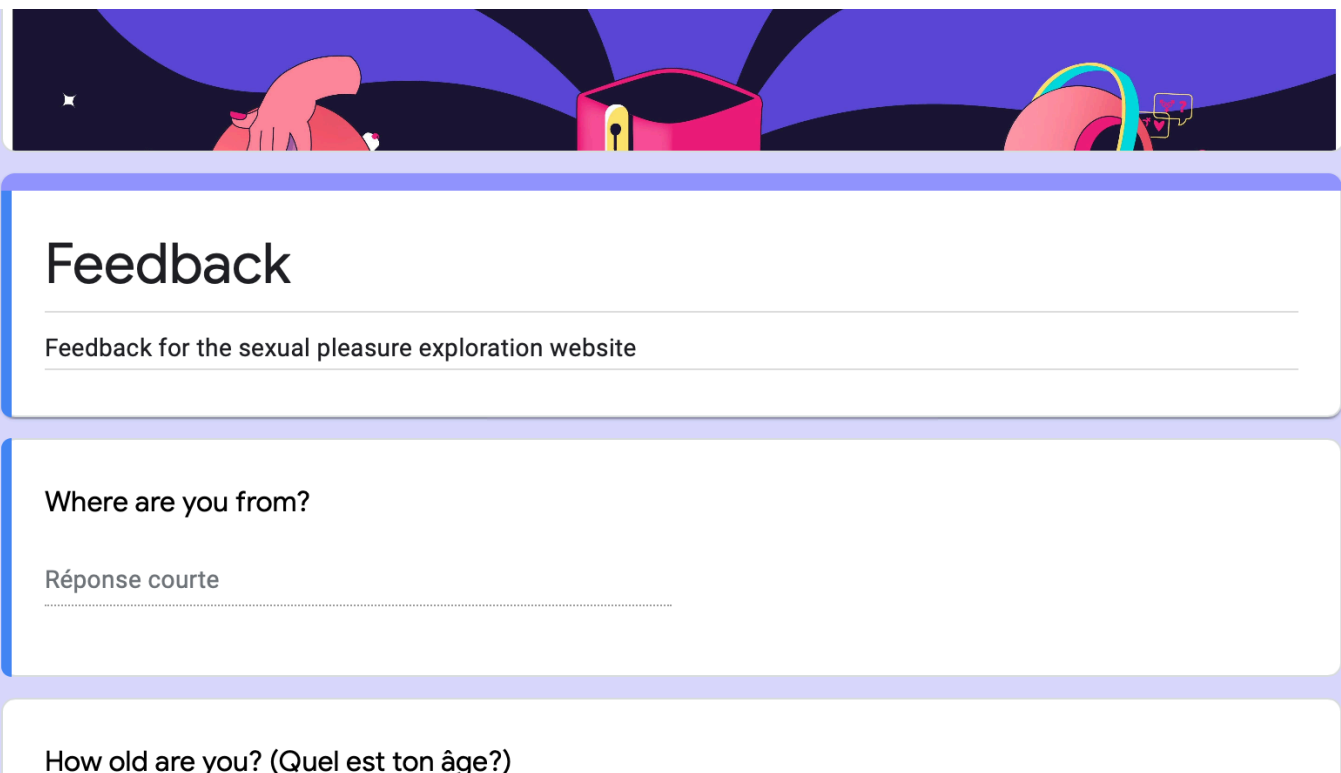


Figure 28 (interview selfies)

I was afraid of not receiving a lot of answers so I also created a PDF with a link to an online survey (Figure 29) for extra feedback. I shared it on my social media and relied again on the support from my mother and friends to share it around. The questions were similar to the ones I asked for the interviews:

- Where are you from?
- How old are you?
- How do you feel about the project after reading it?
- What did you expect when reading the introduction text on the first page?
- Was anything confusing or anything that you didn't understand ?
- How would you make the project better?
- Do you think the content is adequate for adolescent girls?
- Would you start exploring your personal sexual pleasure after going through this website?
- How would you feel if it was your mother giving you the link to the website?
- Have you ever talked about sexual pleasure with your mother?
- What is the probability of you sharing the website with your friends?
- If you went through the project with someone else, did you discuss anything in particular regarding the theme?
- How do you find information about sexual pleasure?
- How did you feel about the illustrations?



Feedback

Feedback for the sexual pleasure exploration website

Where are you from?

Réponse courte

How old are you? (Quel est ton âge?)

Figure 29 (survey layout)

Outcomes and feedback

The following two pages summarize the feedback I have received from the 32 respondents gathered from the interviews and the online survey.

The first page contains information gathered from young girls between 14 to over 20 years old and the second one contains information from mothers and professionals. To make it simple I have categorized the feedback in different colors.

- Green is for new things they learned through the website
- Blue is for interesting quotes and reflections
- Red is for things they didn't understand or comments that could benefit the future second version of the prototype.

I was hoping with all this new information to find out what could be done better to design the second version of the website. It was very stimulating and I was welcoming any type of feedback.

Age

20+

(11 ppl)

«I feel more free to think what I want about the subject» + «I know more about my sexual anatomy» + «I realize that deep down we're all the same» + Learned about hormones

«I would encourage to explore visually our own genitals with a mirror» «Where does the info comes from?» Finds info on Internet, by friends, or Insta pages « Add hygiene, benefits or disadvantages of masturbation during menstruation»

Didn't really understand hormone roles (ADH) What is that ? (underwear illustration) Hard to read black text on the blue background «Add a title on the "masturbation : sex toys" page because this was a bit confusing»

20

(4 ppl)

Learned about statistics (reassuring in a way) + Learned about precise words for the vulva

Follows specific facebook groups that talk about sex & fetishes (for fun). Finds info on Insta. Shared prototype with boyfriend to show him where is the clit so that he could understand what is pleasurable to her «I think at 14 I would have been ready to know all of this» «I started masturbating pretty early, but it would have helped me to understand what happens to me»

19

(3 ppl)

Learned about clitoris size + Happy to learn again that women can have multiple orgasms

« I would be more interested if it was about how to get pleasure with a partner » afraid not to know how to pelasure her partner

Embarrassed to talk about it with her mom Never tried masturbating before

18

(4 ppl)

Learned about specific anatomy vocabulary + Diff. orgasm lenght for male & female + Interesting stats.

Gets info from Insta & YouTube videos «Didn't know half of the things that were listed!» Would want info about partner pleasure and ways to explore together

17

(5 ppl)

Learned about specific anatomy vocabulary

Asks boyfriend if she has qtns. Learns through her relationship I like the idea because it's usually «taboo», «secret», «dont speak enough about it» Intro was clear, curious to read the rest «Interesting but doesn't attract me for the moment»

What is ADH? Underwear confusing, what is it for? Majority don't talk about it with their mothers Has tried masturbating 1 time but never tried again

16

(3 ppl)

Learned about benefits of masturbation + Diff. parts of the vulva + Masturbation techniques

«I think it's that I don't want to think about it yet, I don't know» «Maybe if I knew more I would ask more... but I think this is good for my age»

Didn't understand «genital changes» visuals & frequency of contractions Didn't understand «genital changes» visuals (what are the genitals?) Uncomfortable to see masturbation techniques with fingers Never masturbated before & didn't know masturbation was healthy (didn't really understand why)

14

(2 ppl)

«I'm not interested yet »

Uncomfortable to see the part with masturbation techniques Difficulty with specific vocabulary (ex: clitoris text) Never masturbated before

Mothers

2 Spanish families

2 Belgian families

Learned about the size of the clitoris



Vibrating lube



Open to talk about it with their daughters

«You always think...the later the better, no? (daughters having sexual intercourse)»

«There is a special workshop where moms can teach their daughters about sexual ed.»

«The first time I talked about it (reproduction) with the daughter of my sister in law, she was 6 years old...it was in the carrefour because she saw a book about how to make babies... and my husband later in the day asked me « How did you say something like that to her?! » and I replied that it was the most natural thing to talk about.»

Don't know how to start talking about it with their daughters

How is it going to reach our daughters?

«Maybe there are not interested in the exact studies and scientific stuff like that»

Teachers & professionals

1 Biology teacher

1 Mother graduated in sexuality

1 Professional (26), graduated in sexuality and sexual queerness and sex technology for final thesis. Worked 1 year for Mystery Vibe, now freelancing. Works with multiple sex positive and sex tech companies.

1 Professional, psychologist, sexologist and family therapist in a family planning center in Namur, Belgium. She is also mother of a 12 year old girl.

«See more possibilities like teaching about couples pleasure, male pleasure...you should definitely leave the subject open»

Channels to share the project : «Planning familial», «éducateurs de rue» and «PMS» «gynecologists»...

«I'll send you what I find in my school manuals about the clitoris for the 17 year olds»

« I think it's more complicated to give a specific age for the website, it really depends on their personal journeys and curiosity »

«A sentence that explains that this resource will refer to "female pleasure" but is for anyone with a vulva, including trans and non-binary people»

«You could add a page with more information if they are more curious»

Talking about the website flow «Can they stop whenever they want?» (If they don't want to see the masturbation part for example)

«But the good thing is that even if they are young and don't understand everything, at least they are more open about the subject and curious about it.»

«It's easier for moms, if they struggle talking about it with their kids, to make it in this type of media»

«You can find 3d models online of the clitoris & the female reproductive apparel on sketchfab or stimshc»

Talk about pleasure in workshops « It's like a little bonus at the end if we have time to talk about it but it's true we talk more about protection, contraceptions... Sometimes we realize we are giving an anxiety-provoking speech, so it's nice also to talk about it like a positive thing »

«include the varieties of different genital shapes and colors»

«Incorporate the term "cis woman" when referring to women assigned female at birth.»

«I would also talk about clitoral and vaginal orgasms, because it's actually the same»

The majority of respondents from 17 year old above, expressed their curiosity and interest in the topic and were very happy to give me their opinion on my work.

From 17 to 19 year old, I noticed an increasing interest on the topic of partnered pleasure. Many that were in a relationship have mentioned they would have liked the same information but about men and how to share pleasure together. Most of them also learned some new vocabulary for the vulva and the clitoris.

The older the participants were, the more they knew already on the subject. They have found this information through Instagram pages, YouTube, other websites, articles... Furthermore, the older they were the more they realized the importance of the project on a more general scale (changes in society) and the importance of pleasuring oneself. Many said that they would have loved to have access to this information earlier in their teenage years to understand what was happening to them.

On the other hand, the two 14 year old girls never thought or talked about the topic of masturbation and sexual exploration with anyone before and didn't really understand the purpose. They lacked vocabulary and it impacted their understanding of the content. They were quite shocked and ashamed to see the masturbation techniques illustrations, specifically the ones with the hands.

I had tested the prototype with 14 till 22 years old women because I wanted to see which age would be most in need of this information today. I had the feeling that 14 year old seemed too young from the feedback I received previously, they were generally not interested yet in the topic. 16 years old seemed like the best target for now.

Since parents are supposed to be their children's main educators in sexuality I was interested to have feedback from different mothers. I was expecting to have much more resistance from their side but surprisingly they have been very positive about wanting to be more open to talk about the topic with their daughters. They just didn't seem to know how to do it. Some mothers even learned new things like the size of the clitoris. Their views on sexual exploration of pleasure and masturbation are still a little conservative but they show a will to challenge their own perceptions. I thought this quote proved a good point:

« It's easier for moms if we struggle talking about it with our kids to make it in this type of media »

There is a nice short story that happened within this testing period related to mothers that I wanted to share with you. My mom's best friend has an 18 year old daughter and they live in Australia. I had previously asked her daughter during the testing week if she could answer the survey online regarding my work, but I never got a reply back from her. One morning while I was working on the thesis, my mom called her best friend, as they usually do, to talk about their lives in confinement. I could hear them talk from where I was in the office (mainly because my mother is very loud) and one of the comments sparked my interest. My mother's best friend told her: «Well, I think you can thank Alexia for me because she has succeeded to loosen up my daughter at least 5%, she came to me and said she didn't know that when you have an orgasm your buttohole also contracts» and they both laughed.

The lesson I learned until now was that by providing this prototype it had opened the space of discussion between mothers and daughters but not only, there were also friends talking about it with other friends, mothers with other mothers and it was beautiful to see that it started the conversation for a new change of perspective.

On the professionals side they were more concerned about the practicality of the idea. They wanted to know how I was going to reach these teengagers and they gave me ideas to diversify a little bit more the content. But overall they were very open and positive about the prototype.

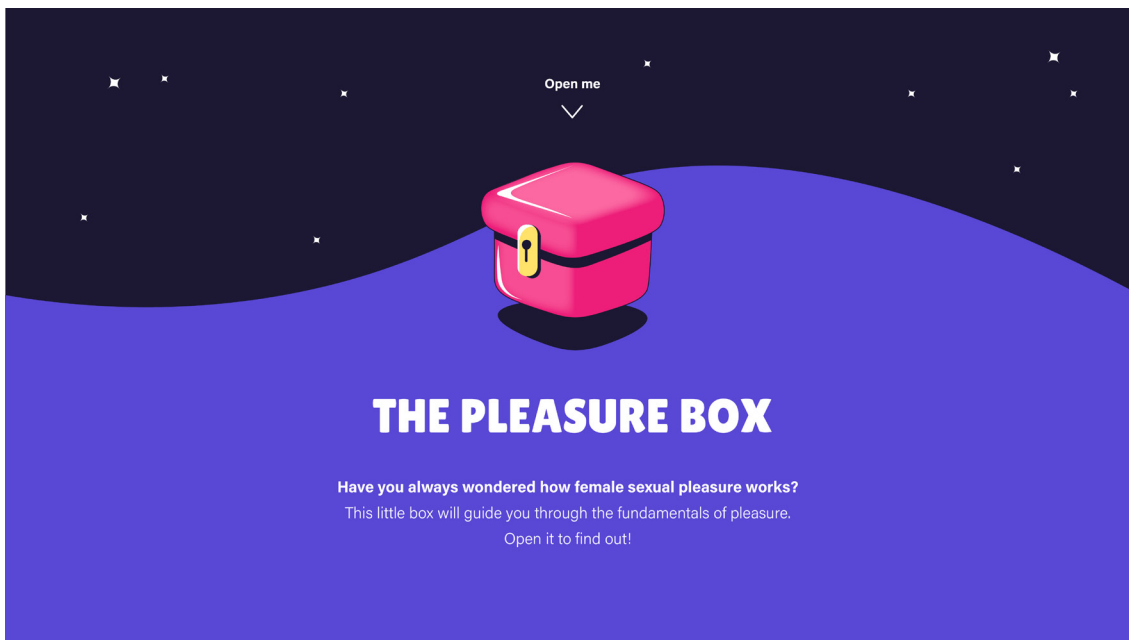
Sarah Hubert a psychologist, sexologist and family therapist working in a family planning center in Belgium told me they recently updated their sexual education content to a new version updated by the Belgian government called EVRAS (education to sexual, relational and affective life) and she thought it was already a good improvement. She explained to me that family planning centers in Belgium work alongside schools to provide workshops about sexuality. She was more specifically giving workshops to teenagers from 15 to 16 years old. Unfortunately she said not to mention sexual pleasure and rarely talk about the clitoris in her workshop. She thought it would be too uncomfortable for them to be confronted in a class with this new information.

Nevertheless she told me each planning center in Belgium can still choose the content they want to teach and that it was even possible for them to share the website for young teenage girls that would be curious about the topic.

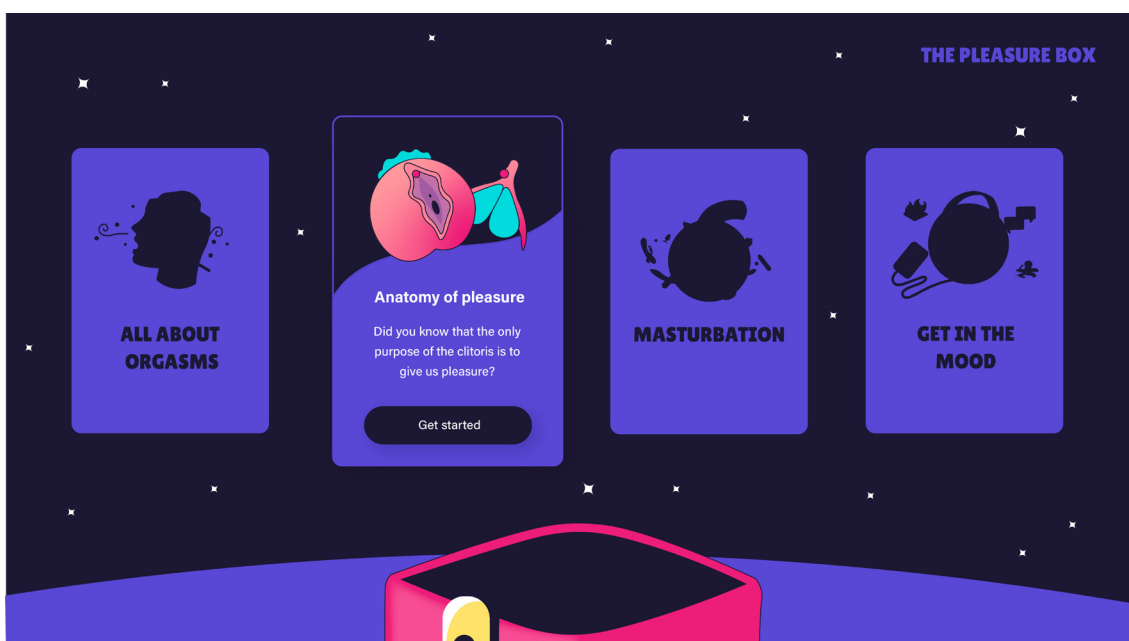
I hadn't really thought about the way I would need to reach these young girls, I was too preoccupied about how to design the idea first. Luckily, talking to these professionals has guided me back on the right track. How could my idea be useful if teenage girls couldn't find the website? How was I going to reach them? I kept these questions on the back of my mind, in the meantime, it was time to design the second version of the prototype thanks to the feedback.

Prototyping: 2nd version

Incorporating the feedback



Changed the introduction sentence to **make it more inclusif** of other people that might not identify themselves as women but that have a female body.



Added the idea of 4 cards that would guide the user through the content.

THE VULVA'S ANATOMY

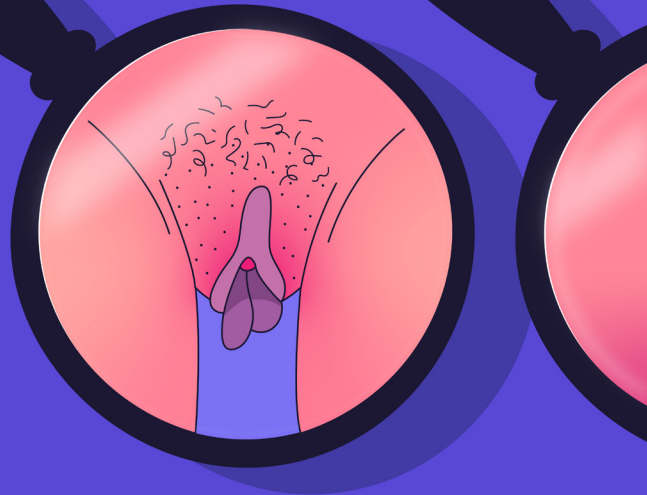
THE PLEASURE BOX

ALL VULVAS LOOK DIFFERENT

Vulvas and all their components come in many different shapes, sizes, and colors. Many people worry that their genitalia don't look "normal," but the only "normal" out there is what's normal for you. Discover the large diversity of beautiful vulvas that exist. It's important that you know how yours look so take a mirror and check yourself out!

DESCRIPTION

Long, dangling and beautiful uneven labia minora



NEXT >

New page.
All vulvas are different and beautiful.

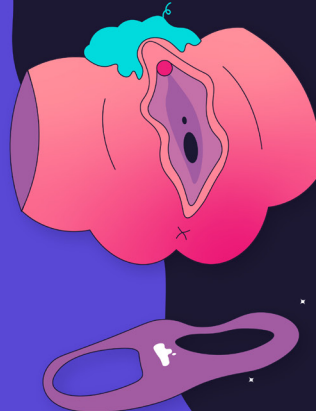
THE VULVA'S ANATOMY

THE PLEASURE BOX

Hover over it to find out more about each part

V LIKE VULVA

Yes you read it right, not Vagina, but Vulva. This is the anatomically correct way to name it. Here you can explore each part of the vulva and their role in sexuality. The vulva is one of the strongest part of a female body, it can overcome births, period blood, penetration and even feces!



MONS PUBIS

Upper part of your vulva covered by pubic hair. This hair offers a protection against friction, injury, and bacteria or other unwanted pathogens. It also keeps your skin healthy by keeping it warm and moist.

THE CLITORIS ANATOMY

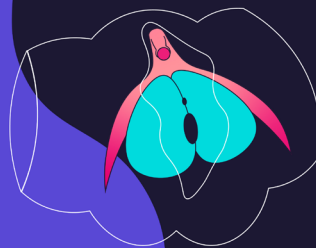
THE PLEASURE BOX

Hover over it to find out more about each part

THE CLITORIS: CENTER OF PLEASURE

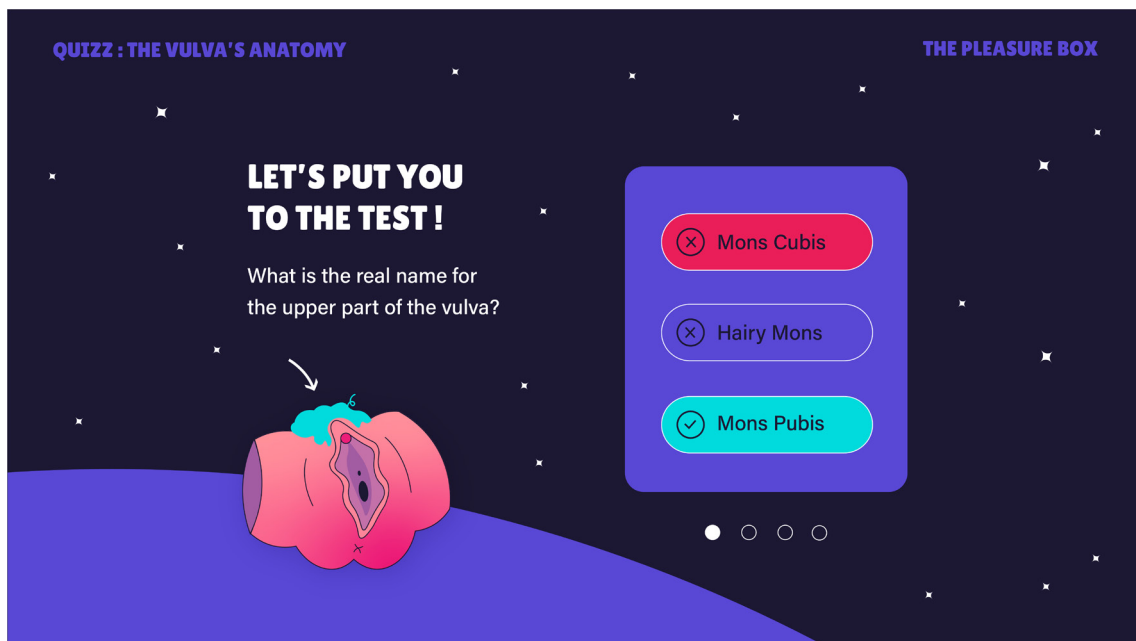
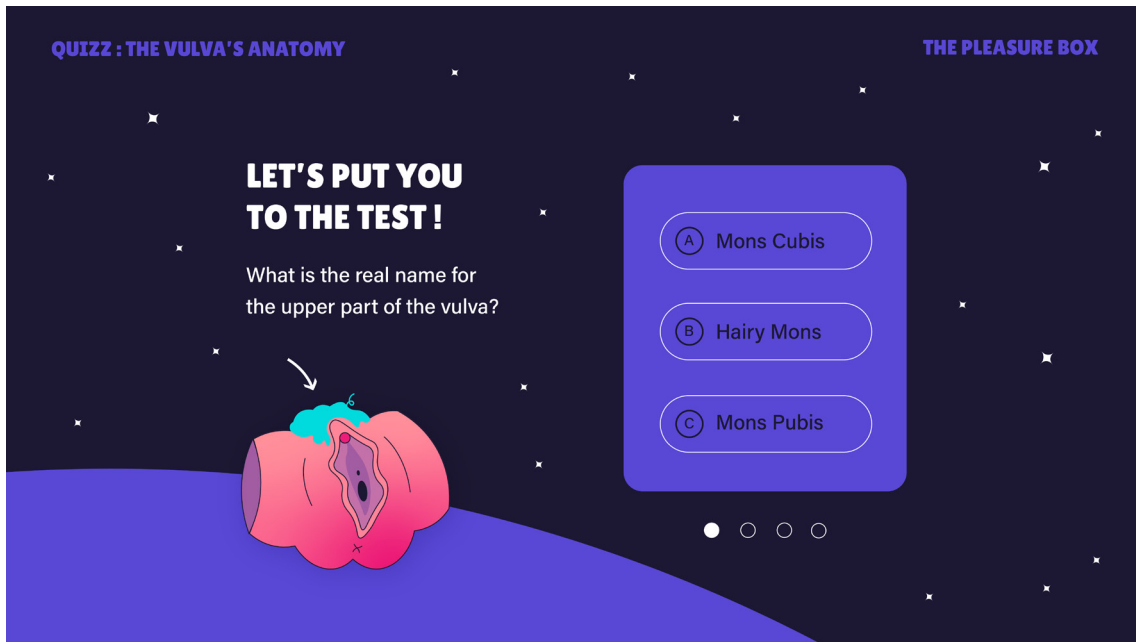
It's one of the most erogenous part of your body and has around 8.000 nerve endings, which is double the amount of what the penis has. In fact the two genitalia are very similar: they are the same size and they also swell thanks to their erectile tissue when aroused. The differences are that the clitoris structure is mostly internal and that it has no other purpose than giving pleasure!

This amazing part of our vulvas has only been fully discovered in 1998 by the Australian urologist Helen O'Connell. So let's understand how it works!

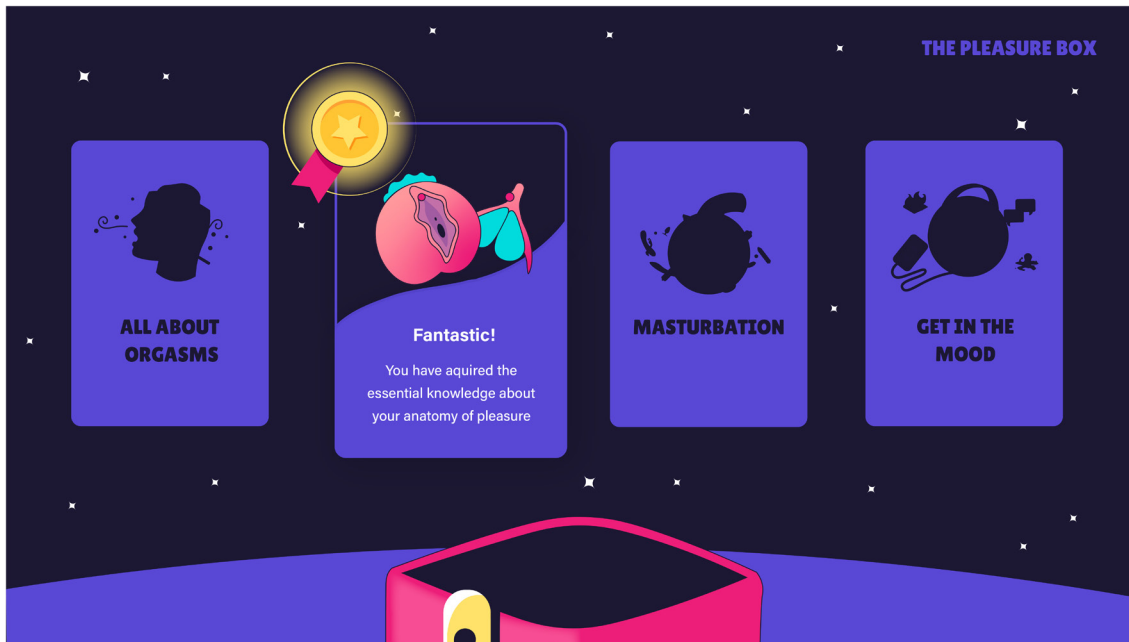


GLANS CLITORIS

Main visible part of the clitoris hidden under the clitoral hood. It is usually the size of a pea and has the highest concentration of nerve endings. When the clitoral glans is stimulated it produces a feeling of pleasure that might lead to experiencing an orgasm.

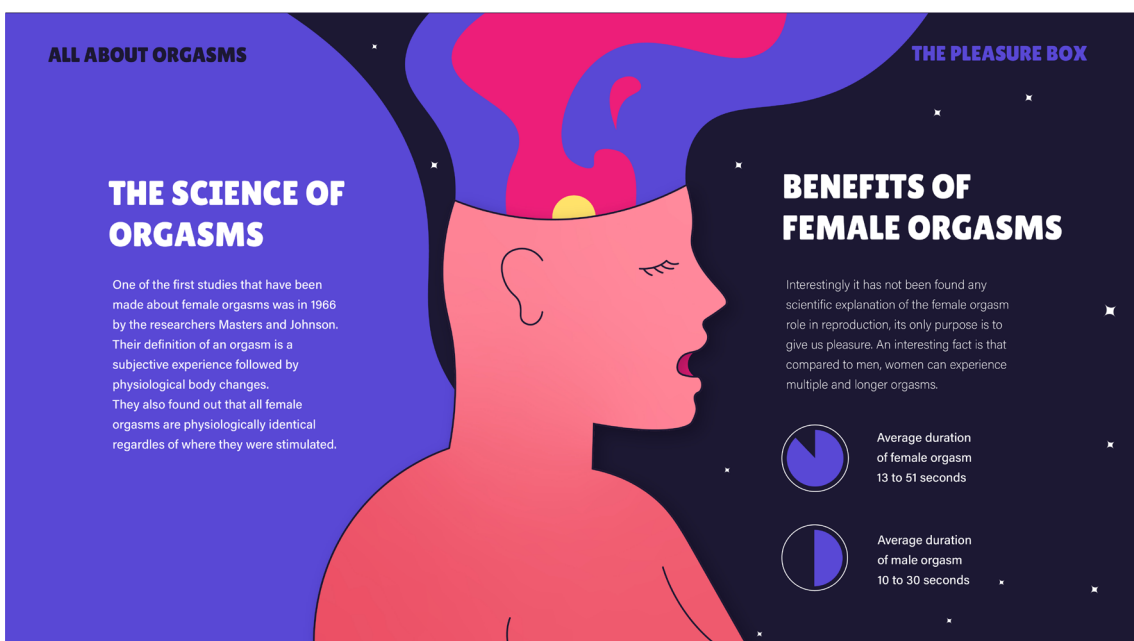
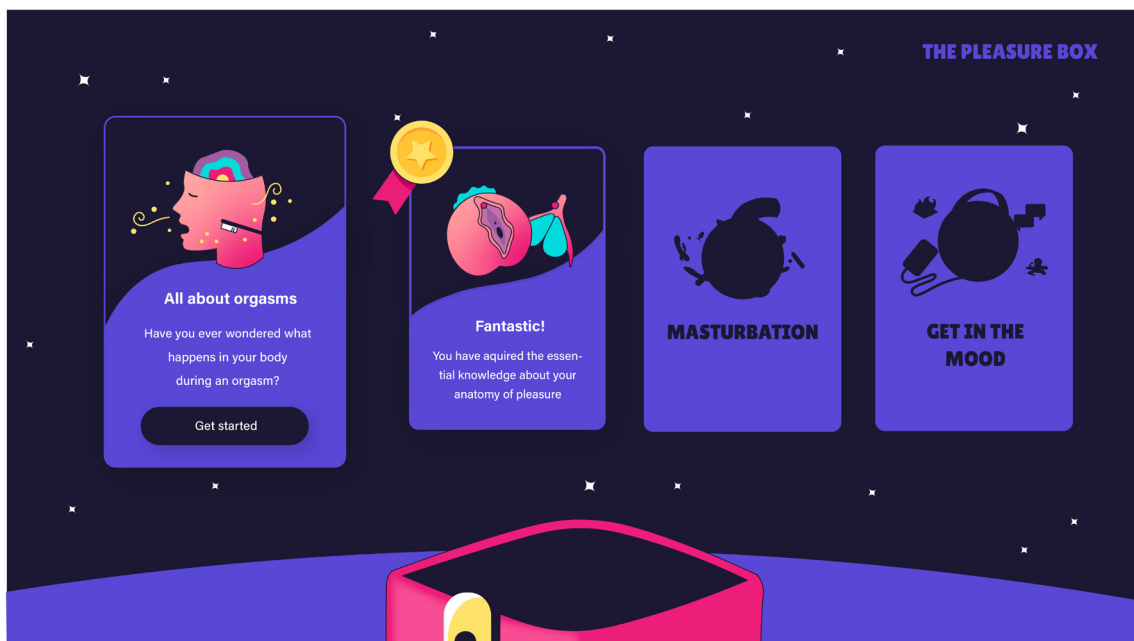


New pages. Make an easy quizz to test what they just learned and give them points at the end. If they pass the quizz they can access to the next card. I haven't done an example of the quizz for each new card, but in the future development of this project there would be a test after finishing each card.



When they pass the test they receive a medal and can access the new card with the nex content.

Also changed the illustration of the vulva because another respondant said it looked like it had flies flying around.



ALL ABOUT ORGASMS

HORMONAL CHANGE

Stimulating the erogenous zones of the body sends a message through the nerves directly to the pituitary gland located in the brain. This message tells the brain to release some specific hormones. This release of chemical substances will help to coordinate everything that happens in the body during and after the orgasm.



Keep pressing until you reach the orgasm



THE PLEASURE BOX



Dopamine
Regulates addiction, attention and pleasure.



Oxytocin
It's associated with empathy, trust, sexual activity, and relationship-building.



Prolactin
Regulates the production of milk and sexual satisfaction.

New version of the hormones illustrations and took away the ADH hormone because it didn't make so much sense in the role of sexual response.

ALL ABOUT ORGASMS

EXTRA GENITALS CHANGES

When the body experiences an orgasm it goes through 3 different body changes that occur approximately at the same time. First there is a noticeable increase in heart beat, in breathing and sweating. Involuntary spasms might happen as well in the area of the neck, legs, feet and face...but this last part varies from one woman to another.



Keep pressing until you reach the orgasm



THE PLEASURE BOX

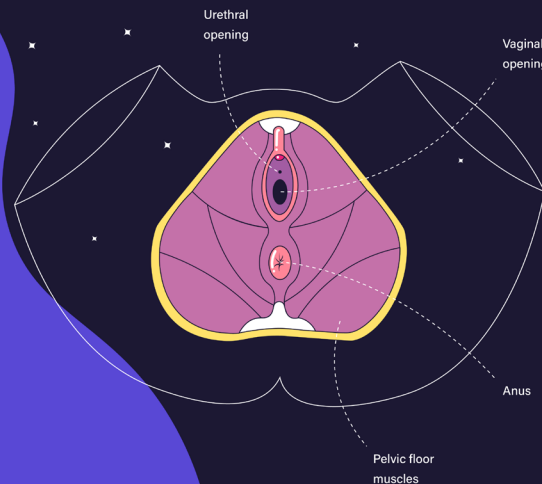
ALL ABOUT ORGASMS

GENITAL CHANGES

At the peak of sexual pleasure the vagina, rectal sphincter (part of the anus) and uterus move in synchronicity in a series of rhythmic contractions (at a general frequency of 0.8 per second for 5 to 8 contractions). The contractions occur thanks to the pelvic floor muscles that surround all these organs.



Keep pressing until you reach the orgasm



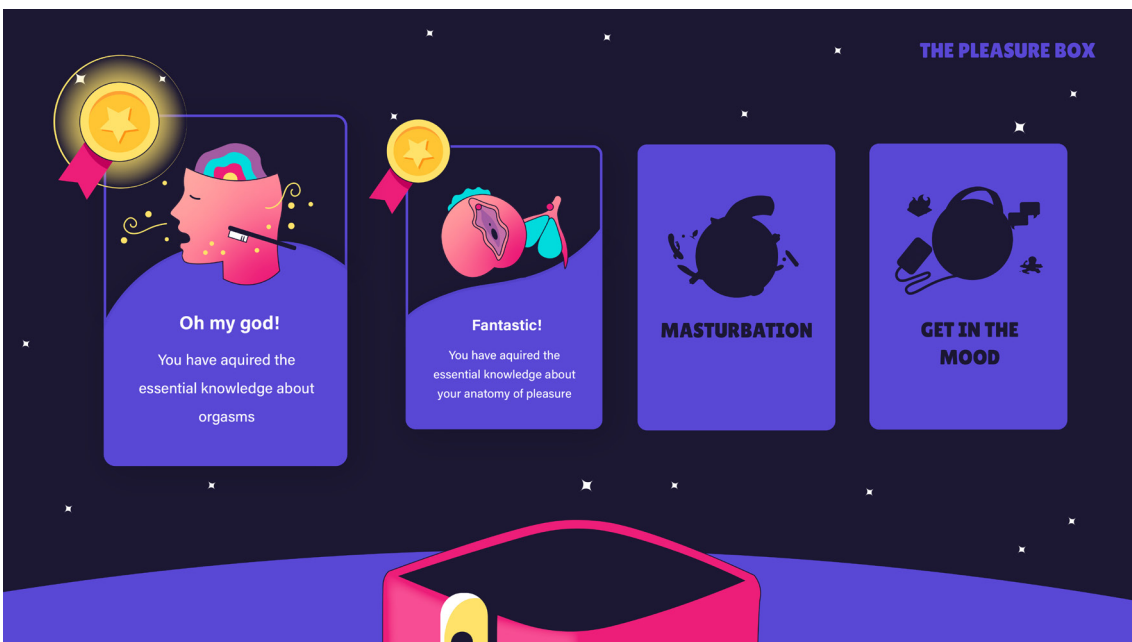
THE PLEASURE BOX

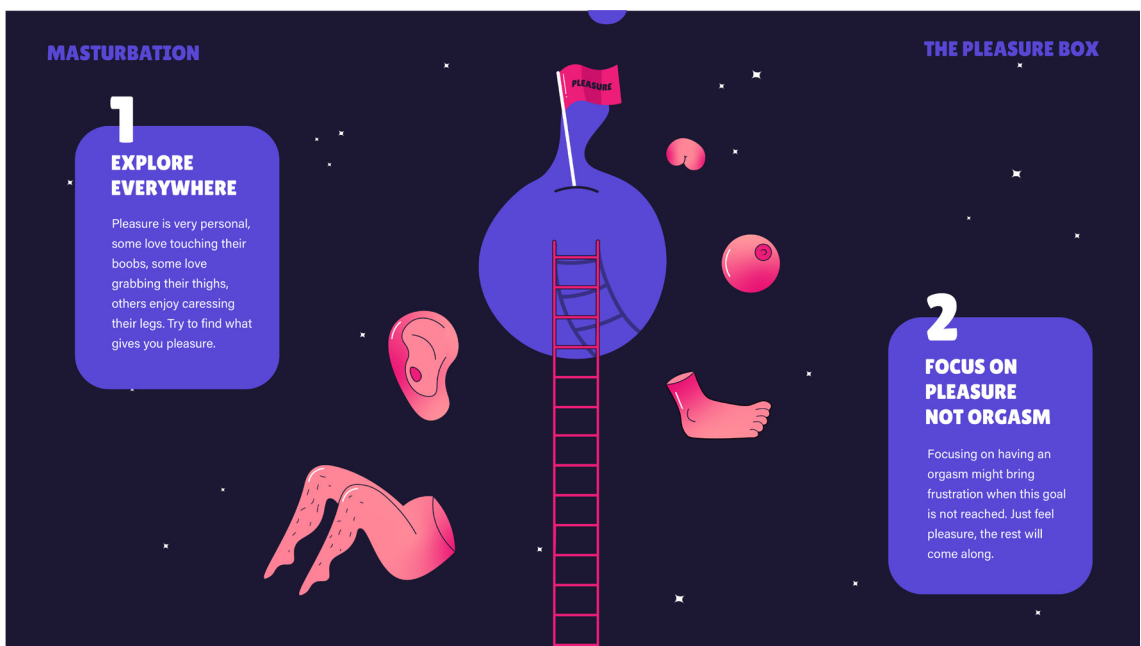
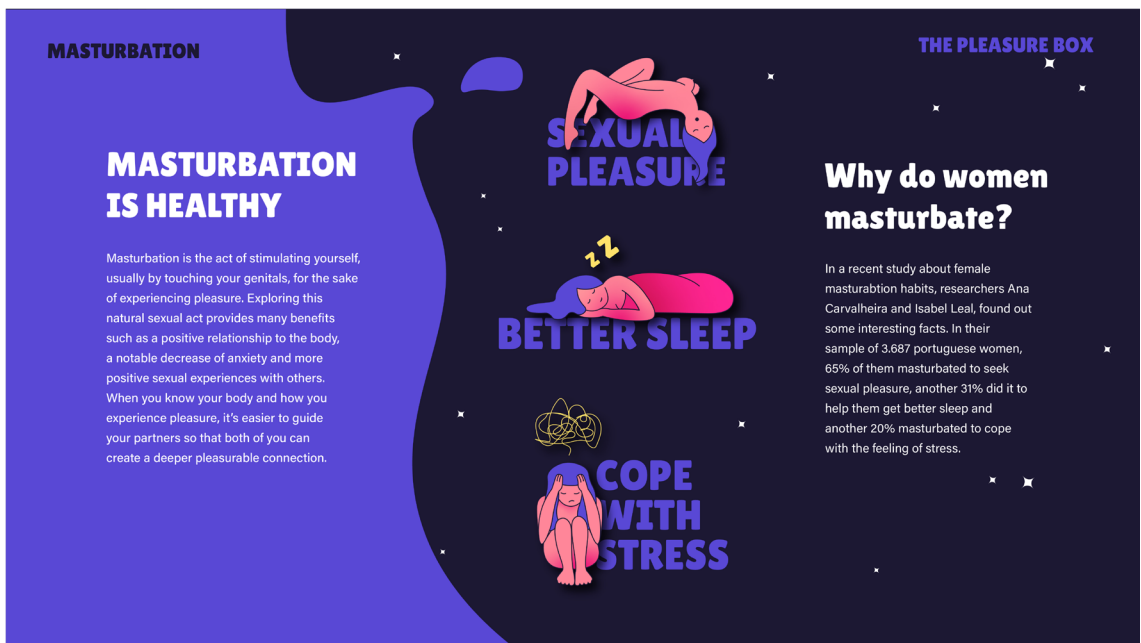
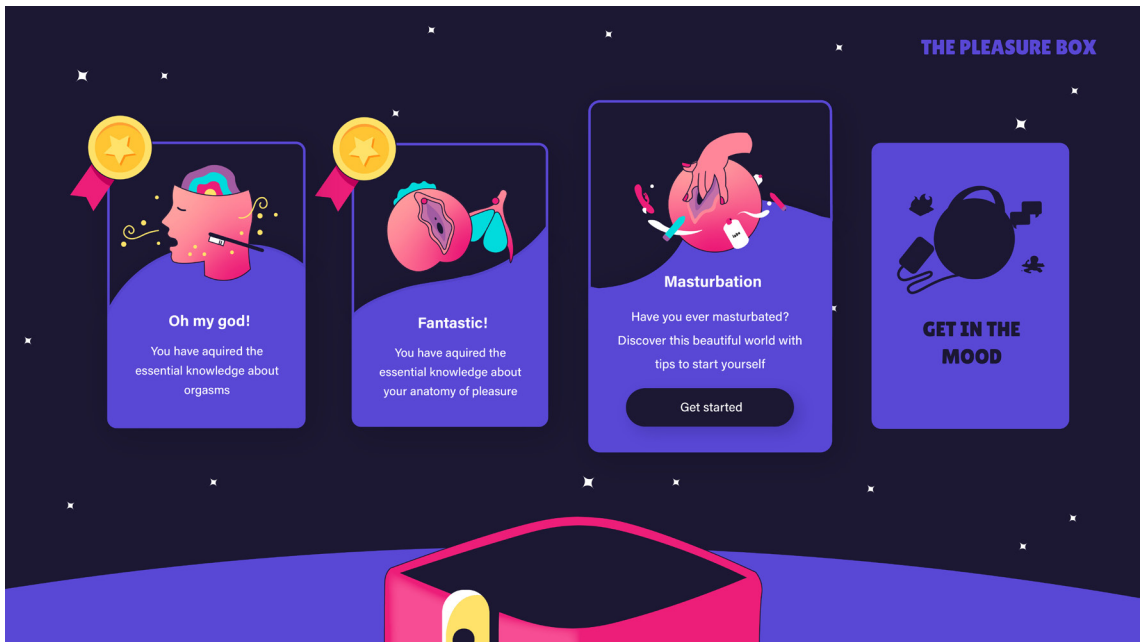
Added the position of the genitals, because many respondents didn't understand what the illustration was showing.



Changed the title «Change Mindset» because one respondent read it «Change Set» previously in an interview.

After this page would come another quizz about orgasms.





Changed the illustrations, made them more with a 3D look on another respondant comment about this page not being so good looking as the others.

MASTURBATION

THE PLEASURE BOX

SOME TECHNIQUES TO START

This is just a beginners repertoire of different simple techniques that most women practiced, they might be useful if you are just starting on this amazing journey.

Encircling
Squeeze your skin around the clitoris glans between your fingers while moving up and down gently

Added the specific names of the techniques.

MASTURBATION : SEX TOYS

THE PLEASURE BOX

SEX TOYS

You can also spice up your solo sex with the help of sex toys. Here is a recommendation of 3 choices, but there are many more possibilities!

LUBE
For silicone sex toys it's best to use water based lubricant. And don't forget it's always better to put too much than not enough.

LIQUID VIBATOR
Apply only on clitoris glans. The liquid will vibrate 5 to 10 min.

Anal plug
The anus is a very pleasurable area to explore. Better to apply too much lube than not enough.

Bullet
Small and easy to take with you everywhere. It's the perfect sex toy to start your exploration journey.

Rabbit
One of the most famous sex toys. It vibrates, moves and does the combo internal and external clitoral stimulation.

Added an introductory text for this page on another respondant comment about this page not being so clear in the masturbation section.

MASTURBATION

THE PLEASURE BOX

EDGING, ALL ABOUT RYTHM

Edging is a specific technique to improve the intensity and lenght of your orgasms. It's very easy to do, you just have to stop stimulating yourself right before you feel an orgasm is coming, and start stimulating again when you feel is right. You can edge as many times as you wish, there are really no rules when it comes to pleasure. Play it yourself to see how it works.

PLAY ME

Press the love button until you reach the top of the curve then let go to relax. Start again e at the bottom and continue until you reach the final orgasm.

New page. The technique of edging to have stronger orgasms. Users can play the game and learn about the technique themselves.

Would be followed again by a quizz about masturbation.

THE PLEASURE BOX

Oh my god!
You have aquired the essential knowledge about orgasms

Fantastic!
You have aquired the essential knowledge about your anatomy of pleasure

Perfect!
You know now that masturbation is healthy and you can even practice it

GET IN THE MOOD

THE PLEASURE BOX

Oh my god!
You have aquired the essential knowledge about orgasms

Fantastic!
You have aquired the essential knowledge about your anatomy of pleasure

Let's begin!
You have all the info now to start practicing and discover what works for you

Get in the mood
It's perfectly normal to find inspiration outside to get in the mood for masturbation

[Get started](#)

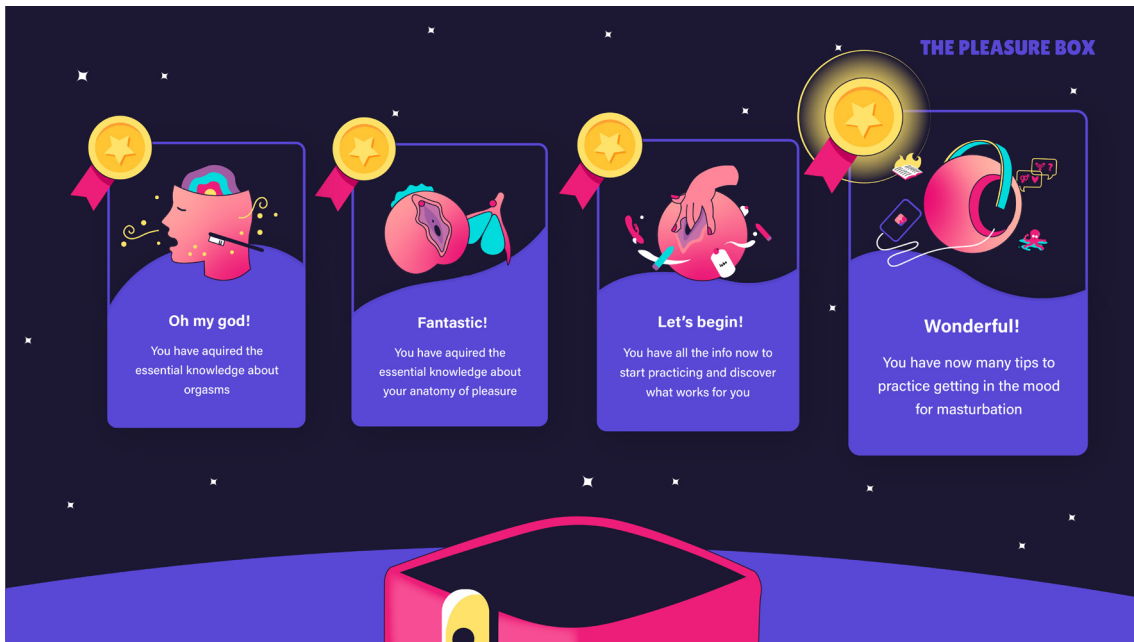
GET IN THE MOOD

GET IN THE MOOD

Sexual desire can arise from many different situations. If you like reading hot stories, listening to podcasts or watching hot series here are some recommendations for some outside inspiration to help you get in the mood for sex exploration. Find out what content the illustration hide.

Dipsea
An amazing app that offers a diversity of hot stoires in the form of podcasts. You can try the free trial version to find out if it's your thing.

THE PLEASURE BOX



THE PLEASURE BOX

I'M PROUD OF YOU!

You are officially ready to start your own sexual exploration journey. Always remember to respect your timing, to learn to love yourself first and to be proud of yourself.

Let's change the perspective on female sexual pleasure by sharing it with your friends!

SHARE

If you want to know more about the topic [here](#) are some extra sources for you

On this final page I added an option to access a link that would provide them with more information about any topic mentioned in the website.

Reflection

Vision and future work

I feel that my contribution to the field of design is bringing on the table a different research approach by experimenting a new methodology such as dating. Of course I bring the conversation of this method with its limitations and ethical constraints. Dating implies that the person with whom we are going on a date shows a level of attraction to us, they might tell us things, in a way, to please us but at the same time they might share more subjective and personal experiences. My interest relied on the conversations but it could be interesting to analyze the choice of “safe space” that I mentioned previously in my work, the influence of spaces on conversations. There is definitely the constraint of numbers, since I went on dates on an individual level, but maybe we could also explore the possibility of group dates. This approach can serve as an inspiration for other researchers in their own work.

On the other hand I feel I have uncovered such a huge topic that has many design possibilities. I think about everything I learned in just 6 months and I am excited to continue on my personal journey. This project has personally contributed to see the world with a different set of eyes, one that understands the many other possibilities that can be uncovered. I now understand the importance of receiving a better sex education with fundamental information on how our bodies work in order to understand how we feel about ourselves in the world, in order to create our own expectations of what sexual pleasure brings to us. I believe that a better sexual education about pleasure can provide a stronger impact on how people actually explore their sexuality without outside expectations or norms, but it's still just the beginning of an ongoing journey. My journey started with anger towards men but soon developed into the idea that since I couldn't control outside affects on myself, then motivating changes from within seemed more beneficial. I wanted to provide in a way a set of knowledge and tools that could become the influence of that change in the affect we place on things such as sex.

I also acknowledge that my work came with its own constraints. The first one being that I was only one person working on this project which limited my capacity to handle such a big complex topic. I also had to restrict myself to European, English, French and Spanish speaking respondents. Finally the short amount of time we had to do our project didn't allow me to test the iterated version of my work.

That being said, working on this project made me think about the amount of future possibilities that could be tackled as well around the topic of sexual exploration of pleasure.

In the short term I want to actually build the website, make it emotional and build it as an educational game with interactions and animations. I would also like to test the second prototype again and analyze how users behave with it and what they have actually learned.

In the long term when the project is finalised I still have to think about the many different ways to reach these young teenagers. The intermediary messengers of this website would be the main actors in a teenagers sexual education that exist today; family, teachers at school, family planning centers, gynecologist centers, friends... but maybe it could develop into the idea of a creation of new actors outside of school and the family. I also thought about the possibility to create a tool that could help parents gain some knowledge about teaching their children a better sexual education in general, opening in a way the communication in the family. At the same time I had received many requests to make the same type of content for partnered pleasure or male pleasure. But my final thought about the future development of my work would be to see the actual impact of the website on these young girls' sexuality; will they actually start masturbating? Will they be curious to inform themselves better about their bodies? Will they change the way they have sex with future partners? Is it making any difference? The change is happening because we are bringing this topic into the conversation, but one tool isn't enough to fill the huge gap there is about sexual education of pleasure.

In conclusion sexuality is not something closed and defined and we should help people to define what it means for themselves, providing new tools, new knowledge and new ideas to explore sexual pleasure in a meaningful way through design. There is no fixed way to go about our sexuality and explorations, we are all different in our individuality and everyone changes through their own experiences in time. One's sexuality evolves, it's always an ongoing process and future ideas to explore it should acknowledge that fact.

A special thanks to...



...my friend Tatiana Rubiano Goubert that has supported me on my personal journey and helped me through the completion of the project providing amazing advice.



...my mother for supporting my personal journey, for helping me to find users to test my prototype with and for being so supportive of the overall project.

Bibliography

Gunter, Jennifer. *The Vagina Bible: The Vulva and the Vagina: Separating the Myth from the Medicine*. Citadel Press, 2019.

Forsell, Lena M., and Jan A. Åström. Meanings of hugging: From greeting behavior to touching implications. *Comprehensive Psychology* 1, 2012.

Lewis, Jane, and Trudie, Knijn. A comparison of English and Dutch sex education in the classroom. *Education and Health* 19, no. 4, 2001.

Pop, Meda V., and Alina S. Rusu. The Role of Parents in shaping and improving the sexual health of children - lines of developing parental sexuality education programmes. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 209, 2015.

Orenstein, Peggy. What young women believe about their own sexual pleasure», YouTube video, 17:00, 5th of April 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWA2uL8zXPI&fbclid=IwAR2V7gGGVUiDfbfBB-bld7eVv-tukXwn2wewBr7vA5rLBBkg5OdWpflINWxyk>

Masters, William H., and Virginia E. Johnson. *Human sexual response*. Oxford, England, 1966.

Komisaruk, Barry R., and Beverly Whipple. Functional MRI of the brain during orgasm in women. *Annual Review of Sex Research* 16, no. 1, 2005.

Chuang, Yao-Chung, Tsu-Kung Lin, Chun-Chung Lui, Shang-Der Chen, and Chen-Sheng Chang. Tooth-brushing epilepsy with ictal orgasms. *Seizure* 13, no. 3, 2004.

Meston, Cindy M., Roy J. Levin, Marca L. Sipski, Elaine M. Hull, and Julia R. Heiman. Women's orgasm. *Annual review of sex research* 15, no. 1, 2004.

Kinsey, Alfred, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard. *Sexual behavior in the human female*. Indiana University Press, 1998.

Mitrokostas, Sophia. ScienceAlert. Here's What Happens to Your Body And Brain When You Orgasm. 26 January 2019. <https://www.sciencealert.com/>

here-s-what-happens-to-your-brain-when-you-orgasm

Leeners, Brigitte, Tillmann HC Kruger, Stuart Brody, Sandra Schmidlin, Eva Naegeli, and Marcel James McIntosh. Medical News Today. Orgasms: Facts, types, causes, and misconceptions. 23 November 2018. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/232318#the-male-orgasm>

Hunter, Aina. CBS News. "Thinking Off»? Scientists Study Woman Who Claims to Orgasm by Thought Alone. 23 July 2010. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/thinking-off-scientists-study-woman-who-claims-to-orgasm-by-thought-alone/>

Williams, Lisa and Sommerville, Annik of the Hotbed Collective. More orgasms please: why female pleasure matters. Vintage, 4 July 2019.

Carvalho, Ana, and Leal, Isabel. Masturbation among women: Associated factors and sexual response in a Portuguese community sample. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 39, no. 4, 2013.

Nichols, Hannah. Medical News Today. Masturbation side effects: Myths and facts. 23 January 2020 <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/320265#health-benefits-of-masturbation>

Rogers, Pamela. Healthline. The Health Benefits of Sex. 29th July 2016. <https://www.healthline.com/health/healthy-sex-health-benefits>

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. National Guidelines Task Force. Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Kindergarten-12th Grade. 2004

Odile Fillod, Sketchfab. Clitoris 3d - Download Free 3D model by svtlille. 4 December 2017. <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/clitoris-3d-62d5f2f8943f444a9a1c6cd29d369ec4>

Fine, Michelle and Weis, Lois. Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. *Silenced voices and extraordinary conversations: Re-imagining schools*. Teachers College, Columbia University, 2003.

G. Phipps, Maureen. Consequences of Inadequate Sex Education in the United States. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. Wolters Kluwer Health. February 2008

M. Young, Iris. On female body experience: “Throwing like a girl” and other essays. Oxford University Press, 2005.

World Health Organization & Meeting on Education and Treatment in Human Sexuality, report. Education and treatment in human sexuality : the training of health professionals. Geneva from 6th to 12th of February, 1974.

Strauss, Anselm, and Corbin. Juliet. Grounded theory methodology.» Handbook of qualitative research. 1994.

Ahmed, Sara. The promise of happiness. Duke University Press, 2010.

Ahmed, Sara. Orientations: Toward a queer phenomenology. GLQ: A journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 2006.

Beauvoir, Simone de and H. M. Parshley. The Second Sex. New York: Knopf, 1952

Image references

Dipsea. <https://1aike31wshtt3k0e9u2nxtwz-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/dipsea-the-new-audio-sexy-app.png>

Happy playtime. <https://lasprincesastambienetocan.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/o-happyplaytime-570.jpg?w=381&h=238&zoom=2>

OMGYes. <https://img.culturacolectiva.com/content/2016/07/OMGYes-platform-2-medium.png>

Ferly. <https://cdn0.tnwcdn.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2019/07/MeToo-3-796x417.png>
https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5b5075e9ee1759db8176d251/1573555841143-NQY1LDF7P7SIBIFEJP9T/ke17ZwdG-BToddI8pDm48kKJl328qDJnOf7eiLHhCxzF7gQa3H78H3Y0txjaiv_0fDoOvx-cdMmMKkDsyUqMSsMWxHk725yiiHCCLfrh8O1z5QPOohDIaleljMHg-DF5CVIOqpeNLcJ80NK65_fV7S1UQlcAnqYPPPIQyM1qaTLJ66zYzbVAaL8Vry-VKP1f5lC-m7cTOR_dexc_UL_zbpz6JQ/Woman-final2.png?format=1500w

Juicebox. <https://m0.joe.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/07113907/BBiFRI.jpeg>

Sexplain. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57dbe276f7e0abec416bc9b-b/t/5cf699e6d2c12a0001eba43b/1589117708572/?format=1500w>

Climax. https://climax.how/ico/climax_anim.gif?t=1589376301

Le Petit Manuel. <https://www.paulette-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Capture-d'ecran-2020-01-27-a-08.19.26.png>

Juissance Club - Une cartographie du plaisir. https://monsieurmadamex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/IMG_6243-500x500.jpg

Copyright Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. the present Master's thesis is the result of my personal contribution and it has not been submitted (for defence) earlier by anyone else;
2. all works and important viewpoints by other authors as well as any other data from other sources used in the compilation of the Master's thesis are duly acknowledged in the references;
3. I give consent to the Estonian Academy of Arts to publish my Master's thesis in the repository thus making it available for the general public by means of the Internet.

Pursuant to the above, I state that:

- I as the author of the thesis am the sole owner of the individual copyright of the present Master's thesis and the works included and/or described within the thesis and the disposal of the proprietary rights related with the Master's thesis is subject to the procedures in force at the Estonian Academy of Arts;
- as the Master's thesis published in the repository may be accessed by an unlimited number of persons, I presume that the readers of the thesis comply with laws and other legal acts and good practices in good faith, in a fair manner and with respect to and consideration of the rights of other people.
The copying, plagiarising or any use of the present Master's thesis and the works included and/or described within the thesis that infringes the copyright is prohibited.

09/05/2020
(date)

Alecia kraft de la Saulx
(the name and signature of the author of the Master's thesis)



The thesis complies with the Master's thesis requirements:

13 / 05 / 2020
(date)



(the signature of the Master's thesis supervisor, academic or research degree)