



# SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Lund University

## Master Thesis

The Interplay of Consumer, Brand and Situation Characteristics  
within Brand Perception

---

**Authors:** Annika Hein, Louise Marcussen, Janina Schaumann

**Master program:** International Marketing and Brand Management ('09 – '10)

**Supervising professor:** Veronika Tarnovskaya

**Date:** 27th of May 2010

## Abstract

Title	The Interplay of Consumer, Brand and Situation Characteristics within Brand Perception
Date of Seminar	2 <sup>nd</sup> of June 2010
Master Programme	International Marketing and Brand Management ('09/'10)
Authors	Annika Hein, Louise Marcussen, Janina Schaumann
Advisor	Veronika Tarnovskaya
Keywords	<i>Brand Perception, Social Perception, Brand Personality, Brand Relationship, Apple, Coca-Cola</i>
Thesis purpose	The purpose of this thesis is to test and further develop the conceptual model of brand perception by analysing the role of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics in the consumer's perception of the brand. Furthermore, it shall be determined how the interplay of the three characteristics affects the consumer's perception.
Methodology	To fulfil the purpose of this thesis a qualitative approach was chosen. For the analysis of the empirical data the method of grounded theory was used.
Theoretical perspective	This study is based on theories of brand perception, brand personality and brand relationship. The aim is to test and further develop the conceptual model of brand perception through the use of empirical research.
Empirical data	The empirical study is based on 6 in-depth interviews conducted with users of either Coca-Cola or Apple and their opinions and experiences with the brand.
Conclusion	The analysis of the interviews revealed that the three characteristics of brand, consumer and situation play a significant role for the consumer's perception of the brand. Moreover, it was shown that the interplay which takes place is ever changing and only stable until one of the three characteristics changes.

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank the participants of our empirical study who volunteered to share their experiences and opinions about Coca-Cola and Apple with us; our gratitude goes to Holger, Magnus, Ivan, Markus, Karlijn and Lucas. Their input was highly interesting and invaluable to our study.

Furthermore, we would like to give our special thanks to Veronika Tarnovskaya who as our supervisor has given us support and guidance throughout the thesis writing process. Her comments and feedback were always highly appreciated.

Thank you!

## Table of Content

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.1 Theoretical Background</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1.2 Problem Discussion</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.3 Identification of Research Gap and Purpose</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>1.4 Thesis Purpose and Research Questions</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>1.5 Theoretical and Practical Contribution</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>1.6 Limitations</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>2. Theory</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Definition of a Brand</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>2.2 Theory on Brand Identity</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>2.3 Theory on Brand Personality</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>2.4 Theory on Brand Relationship</b> .....	<b>20</b>
2.4.1 Definition of Relationship .....	20
2.4.2 The Brand-Consumer Relationship .....	20
<b>2.5 The Role of Situation and Context</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>2.6 The Brand as a Human Character</b> .....	<b>23</b>
2.6.1 Theory on Social Perception .....	24
2.6.2 Conceptual Model of Brand Perception .....	27
<b>3. The Empirical Study</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>3.1 Research Approach and Philosophy</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>3.2 Grounded Theory – A Qualitative Approach</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>3.3 Choice of Case Brands: Apple and Coca-Cola</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>3.4 Method of Data Collection</b> .....	<b>36</b>
3.4.1 Blog and Forum Research .....	36
3.4.2 In-depth Interviews – An Empirical Setting .....	37
3.4.3 Practical Guidelines.....	38
3.4.4 The Influence of the Researchers .....	39
3.4.5 Conversation Topics.....	40
<b>3.5 Evaluation - Content Analysis</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>3.6 Critical Reflection on Choice of Research Approach</b> .....	<b>45</b>

3.6.1 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research.....45

3.6.2 Reflection on the Method of Data Collection and Limitations .....47

**3.7 Interview Results .....48**

3.7.1 Apple .....48

3.7.2 Coca-Cola.....59

**4. Analysis .....70**

4.1 Analysis of the Interplays .....71

4.2 Analysis and Further Development of the Model and its Sub-Dimensions .....75

**5. Conclusion.....81**

5.1 Answering the Research Questions .....81

5.2 Theoretical Contribution.....82

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research .....83

**Bibliography .....84**

**Appendix .....88**

## **1. Introduction**

In times where people in virtually all societies have increasing difficulties to establish relationships with one another there is an increasing need to humanise immaterial objects around them (Fioroni and Titterton, 2009). In this respect, the notion of brands having a personality that people can relate to becomes more important for managers and researchers. A brand and its definition has nowadays expanded to spheres that imply a direct comparison of this immaterial object to a human being, having its own, individual personality and engaging in relationships with its consumers.

When this comparison is made and a term such as “personality”, which originates from human psychology and sociological, is used in a branding context one has to consider the implications this brings along. When brands are seen as human characters, they should be researched like human characters; with the help of knowledge gained from social science and psychology. This also means that the construct of “brand personality” suddenly becomes far more complex and it seems important for researchers and managers to ask one very important question: how is brand personality constructed?

This also means that claiming to have given a brand a “personality”, humanising this inanimate object and stating to be able to use this to build brand equity seems to miss out one very important aspect: how do consumers interpret information about a brand? Which factors play a role in the consumer’s perception? Can the consumer’s perception be controlled and how important is each perceiver’s individual character? This thesis strives to understand a consumer’s brand perception; because without understanding there is no reasonable basis for decision making of management. Moreover, without a comprehensive picture further research might miss out on essential interrelations within brand perception through which a consumer constructs a brand’s personality in his/her mind.

### **1.1 Theoretical Background**

Literature is filled with definitions of what a brand is, how a brand is characterised, how it relates to the consumer and how it is judged by consumers. Most scholars agree that a brand is more than just a mere product (e.g. Kapferer, 2008 and 2004; Keller, 1998, de Chernatony, 2009, Kay,

2006)). There are also psychological, personal and sociological factors which all help describe what a brand is and what role it plays in people's everyday life. It is more than just a name, term, sign or symbol used by marketers for identification and differentiation of products (de Chernatony, 2009). In fact, the consumer himself/herself plays a central role in defining a brand's 'being'. He/she decides when a product has turned into a brand and it is his/her perception and mental associations that make the brand into what it is. (e.g. Keller, 1998; Kapferer, 2008). Furthermore, it is the consumer who can let a brand evolve into a strong brand when it is imbedded in the consumer's mind as having a personality and providing added value (de Chernatony, 2009). More scholars stress the role of the consumer as co-creator or co-producer of a brand (e.g. David Aaker 1996 cited in Kay, 2006) by building stories around it additional to those created by marketers, giving the brand a personality.

As with any human behaviour, of great importance for the judgement of brands is the context (e.g. Mitchell, 2002; Lynch et al., 1991; Chakrayarti and Lynch, 1983). This includes different usage situations, the goals of the consumer (e.g. refreshment) or the comparison with other brands, on bases of which a brand is judged and perceived.

The term "personality", which originates from human psychology, is commonly used in branding literature (e.g. Arora and Stoner, 2009; Rajagobpal, 2006; Aaker, 1997; Fournier 1998; Brown, 1991; Fioroni and Titterton, 2009). One of the most influential and cited scholars mentioning a brand's personality is Kapferer (2004) and his "Brand Identity Prism", which is often used by managers as a base for decision making. "Personality" is one facet on the sender side of his identity prism. In this way "personality" for Kapferer (2004) is only defined by marketers and does not include how the consumer actually perceives the brand. The model is based on the idea that the brand has a speech flowing from the sender to the receiver in a one-way communication, leaving brand personality separated from the influence of the consumer. Rajagobpal (2006) sees it similar, saying that a brand's personality depends on the company and its marketing strategy. However, other scholars such as Kay (2006) stress that it is still the consumer and his/her perception through which a brand is interpreted, perceived and judged.

Other scholars go as far as describing a brand as a living organism (Fioroni and Titterton, 2009) or directly compare it to a human character (Aaker, 1997). According to Aaker (1997) consumers

assign human personality traits to brands in order to enhance the brand's self-expressive function and the relation to one's own self. In her view these human characteristics depend on the typical user that the consumer associates with the brand, as it is this person's character that is transferred to the brand. Aaker (1997) was one of the first to develop a framework for brand personality. It is the first to give a systematic scale fulfilling the evaluation criteria of quantitative research in terms of validity, reliability and generalisability. By exposing the study participants to human personality traits that are normally associated with brands and she identified the most commonly perceived traits. Previous studies on brand personality stem from the field of personality psychology and according to Aaker (1997) are said not to be as valid in the context of brands.

Brand personality is closely linked to the relationship that a consumer can establish with a brand, an extensively discussed topic among researchers (e.g. Fournier, 1998; Fioroni and Titterton, 2009; de Chernatony, 2009). Fioroni and Titterton (2009) emphasise the important role of brand personality, through which a brand just like another person becomes part of everyday life, in the process of brand-consumer relationship building. With that they closely compare it to the process of human relationship building.

Fournier (1998) was one of the first to compare the relationship that people have with each other with the relationship consumers have with their preferred brands, showing that brands and consumers are in fact capable of entering a relationship with one another. To speak of a relationship Fournier (1998) outlines that a mutual and over time exchange between active and independent parties in response to interactions and changes in the environment/situation has to take place. In this course the relationship develops and changes. In meaningful relationships and through interactions people mutually influence each other, their self-concepts and personalities. According to her argument it is essential to see the brand as an active relationship partner, expressing its personality traits through everything that can be observed about the brand and supporting the establishment of a two-way communication. This way the brand can prove to be a preferable relationship partner, just like in human relationships.

## **1.2 Problem Discussion**

The impact and consequences of the direct comparison of a brand with a living organism or human character is not fully explored in existing research. According to this comparison and the usage of phrases such as “personality” and “relationship” in a branding context, it is necessary to see the brand and the construct of ‘brand personality’ from a sociological and psychological point of view.

When looking at existing literature one can see three main factors that play a role when it comes to building brands and their personality. On the one hand, there is the marketer who decides on the values and the communication through which these values are brought to the consumer, hoping to send the right messages in order to present the brand, its identity and personality in the desired way. On the other hand, there is the consumer or co-creator, who independently and subjectively perceives the brand and defines its “being” through the associations, experiences and stories in his/her mind. Moreover, the context influences the consumer’s judgement and like this also takes part in the creation of a brand and its personality. Therefore, a brand’s personality is depending on all three aspects. However, the step that information about a brand firstly needs to be perceived and interpreted by a consumer in order to construct the brand personality is not paid any attention to in existing literature. Furthermore, there was no literature found showing how these three aspects of brand (as designed by the marketer), consumer (as a co-creator of the brand) and the situation/context work together to form this personality through a consumer’s perception of the brand.

Aaker (1997) treats personality as a quantifiable matter approaching it from natural science rather than from social science. Aaker’s (1997) approach seems to neglect the psychology and self of the individual in her attempt to make her research reliable, valid and generalisable. With that she seems to ignore the dynamics in the individual’s mind during brand perception and does not examine how the characteristics of the individual relate to the character traits and stimuli of the brand that in fact, together with the context, influence the perception and construction of brand personality. Furthermore, she provides the participants of her study with a set of predetermined character traits, which implies that the perceiver is externally influenced and not fully independent and subjective. In general, Aaker (1997) can be criticised as she seems to neglect the

mutual interaction between consumers and brands and only pays little attention to the individual consumer, which is also a criticism of Fournier (1998).

Kapferer (2004) sees brand personality as a predefined facet established by the sender. Just as Aaker (1997) he does not consider the individual, independent self and the mutual interrelation between the individual characteristics/personality of the consumer and the brand's characteristics. The interaction which takes place in Kapferer's (2004) identity prism is not an interplay between the consumer and the brand but merely a one-way communication flowing from the brand to the consumer, or the other way, but not back and forth in a dynamic interaction. According to Kapferer (2004) the focus is on the brand, which already has a personality that has been established by the company. Hence, it is not a personality which is created in the consumer's mind. In his model sender and receiver form an entity that builds up the brand's identity. Kapferer (2004) seems not to consider that firstly sender and receiver are independent from each other and especially that the consumer has an independent, individual identity on his/her own. The independency of both parties in brand perception and the construction of brand personality is however an essential aspect. Additionally, although literature shows the importance of the situation and context in which consumers perceive brands, this aspect has not been paid any attention to by Kapferer (2004) or any of the reviewed existing literature on brand personality.

### **1.3 Identification of Research Gap and Purpose**

We claim that the phenomenon of brand personality requires digging deep into the perception and interplay of human and brand characteristics as well as the situation and context from a psychological point of view. After having reviewed the existing literature in this field, we believe that there is a considerable gap and it is worth conducting further research on the consumer's perception which forms a brand's personality. Therefore, this thesis aims at exploring and investigating both parties' (brand and consumer/perceiver) individual characteristics and the role of situational cues to identify their importance for influencing the consumer during the perception of the brand.

The objective of this thesis is to test and further develop a conceptual model that can be used to identify the influencing factors such as the consumer's characteristics, brand characteristics,

situational characteristics and the role they play in the perception of a brand. We believe that brand perception is dynamic and subjective and in many ways can be compared to social perception through which humans interpret and construct opinions about others. This is because brands are perceived by individuals due to similar influences. We expect the characteristics of the consumer, brand and situational cues to represent a mutual interplay and to influence the interpretation of information about a brand. The conceptual model, which is the basis for our empirical study, will be illustrated and explained in the theory chapter.

#### **1.4 Thesis Purpose and Research Questions**

The thesis purpose is to test and further develop the conceptual model of brand perception through an empirical study and to analyse the interplay of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics in the consumer's perception of the brand. In order to reach this purpose the following research questions are raised.

1. What are the roles of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics within the consumer's perception of the brand?
2. How does the interplay of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics affect the consumer's perception of the brand?

#### **1.5 Theoretical and Practical Contribution**

As criticised and discussed in the scope of the thesis, the impact and consequences of the direct comparison of a brand with a living organism or human characters is not fully implemented in former research. Researcher such as Aaker (1997) or Kapferer (2004) emphasise the role and importance of the consumer's personality, the brand and the situation within the construction of brand personality. However, literature fails to show how these three aspects work together within the consumer's perception of the brand to form the brand's personality. By testing the conceptual model in an empirical setting, the dynamics and interrelations between consumer, brand and situation are expected to become apparent. Research findings will supply the academic world with further knowledge and understanding of brand perception as a dynamic concept and subjective interplay of brand, consumer and situational characteristics. Furthermore, this thesis will provide a starting point and a conceptual model on which future research can lean on to

investigate the dynamics of brand perception, taking into account the correlation between the three characteristics.

However, this research could also be beneficial to the business world. Due to the current market environment where quality differences between products are minimal and the brand turns out to be the main determinant for differentiation, the brand personality is acknowledged as an invaluable factor to build brand equity (van Rekom, Jacobs and Verlegh, 2006). Clarifying the meaning of brand perception and making this intangible phenomenon more tangible for managers would help them to plan their marketing activities to increase the likelihood of a favourable consumer perception which enhances the possibility for brand choice and loyalty. Although a consumer's perception is still a subjective process and can never be completely controlled by the marketer, it seems that understanding how this perception works and knowledge about the correlation between consumer, brand and situational characteristics can help managers to plan messages and their likely effects.

## **1.6 Limitations**

This study aims to analyse the consumer's perception of a brand and not the actual process that over time leads to the construction of a brand personality. That the consumer's impression of a brand's personality is developed over time and not merely constructed through one perception in one moment of time is a given. Here we will only look at a consumer's brand perception and investigate the interplay between brand, consumer and situation without making any timely references to perceptions. Moreover, although there is a very close link between the brand's personality and the relationship that consumers might establish with a brand, this is not the focus of this thesis and no specific conclusions will be drawn from this aspect in the analysis of the study.

## **2. Theory**

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the objective of this thesis, this chapter outlines the ground of the study and theory required to develop the conceptual model on basis of which the empirical study will be conducted.

## 2.1 Definition of a Brand

According to the American Brand Association (cited in de Chernatony, 2009:102), a brand is a *“name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those competitors”*.

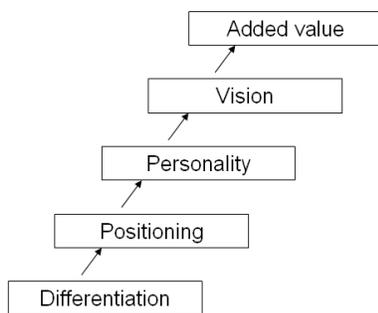
The marketing of a brand can generate beliefs and bonds in the consumer’s mind and due to the perceived values and benefits, opinion leaders, distributors or consumers are likely to become brand loyal. So-called “assets” in the consumer’s mind include brand awareness, beliefs of exclusivity and superiority of valued benefits, and emotional bonding. Keller (1998 cited in Kapferer, 2008:10) summarises this by saying that *“a brand is a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service”*. In modern brand management, the brand should be seen as a set of added consumer perceptions, starting with the perceived value of the product and service. By means of marketing communication, tangible perceptions can be brought into order and intangible ones can be added. This definition clearly links the “actual being” of a brand with the mindset and the perception of the consumer, the topic of this thesis. The brand must be seen and perceived through the values and beliefs of the consumer before it can be considered a brand.

Kapferer (2008) on the other hand regards a brand as a name influencing the purchase decision of a potential buyer but emphasises that only if the name arouses benefits such as saliency, differentiability, intensity and trust it becomes a brand. According to Kapferer (2008), representations and relationship building form the power of the brand to influence buyers whereas representations are referred to as a system of mental associations. This system can be understood as a network of interconnected associations influencing each other, in marketing terms called “brand image”. Associations concern questions such as what is the level of quality of the brand, what are its qualities, what is the most distinguishing quality and benefit (perceived positioning) or what is the brand personality and imagery (Kapferer, 2008). These mental associations are also present in the definition used in this thesis as it is the mental association in the mind of the consumer which constructs the perceived brand personality.

### The brand as an evolutionary construct

De Chernatony (2009) brings in the concept of time and regards the brand as evolutionary in nature and refers to Goodyear (1996 cited in de Chernatony, 2009) and Kunde (2000 cited in de Chernatony, 2009) who belong to the first researchers explaining that brands evolve over time. Furthermore, he bases his assumptions on brand marketers in the product and service sectors. According to his framework, the brand evolves throughout five stages, namely differentiation, positioning, personality, vision and added value as can be seen in the model below.

#### Managerial evolving interpretations of a brand



(de Chernatony, 2009)

Significant attributes such as logos, colours and design have the power to express unique benefits of a brand, which attracts attention and shows *differentiation* from competitors, one of the primary roles of a brand. *Positioning* follows the stage of differentiation and focuses on providing and communicating functional advantage to the customer, implying that customers should perceive the functional benefits of a brand which best meet their expectations. (de Chernatony, 2009)

Consumers are sensitive towards the *personality* that a brand conveys as they are not only influenced by what they perceive but also how. In this respect, brand communications and organisational cultures generate emotions around the brand that are in fact more sustainable than the perception of functional benefits. The behaviour of employees take a significant part in the perceived brand personality, thus if the staff's values agree with the brand values communicated to the market, the customer is likely to trust the brand more. When customers feel confident about a brand they are encouraged to choose this brand as it serves to reflect their self-identity or to identify them as a member of a social group. (de Chernatony, 2009)

Moreover, a clear *vision* is of importance in order to enhance employee commitment and give something back which customers appreciate. Mainly through the internet, brand communities are nowadays getting directly in touch with managers and investigate the social contribution of the brand, which represents a good platform to communicate a visionary promise and encourage customer commitment (de Chernatony, 2009). Here, the brand personality is communicated through the brand itself, e.g. employee behaviour help shape the idea of a brand personality rather than seeing the personality emerging from the interaction of brand and consumer, making the brand personality a consumer perception as it is argued in this thesis.

Given that the brand is easily identified and there is no risk perceived by the customer, the brand has a *value-adding* function for the customers' lifestyle. Brand value can be increased by engaging the customer in an interaction with the brand; mutual respect is enhanced and the customer becomes a co-creator of value. In this respect, the Internet is a useful tool to interact with the customer (de Chernatony, 2009). Here the consumer as a co-creator of value is emphasised. However, this also indicates that the consumer can be a co-creator of brand personality. Adding a personality and value to the brand makes the brand stronger in the consumer's mind compared to other, similar brands, which confirms the contribution of this study.

### Strong brands and their meaning

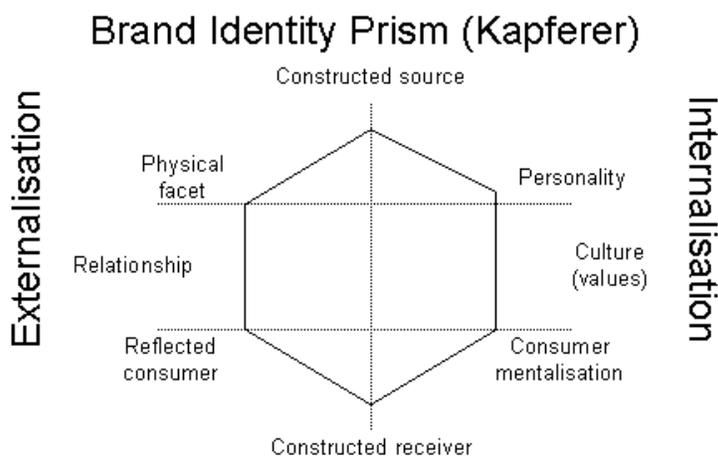
David Aaker (1996 cited in Kay, 2006) outlines that a strong brand is not defined by theory but through a story around it, thus what "happens" to the brand and how it is formed. Kay (2006) furthermore explains that as associative representations, brands are there to communicate the meaning of a product or service to the consumer and consumer perception decides about the strength of a brand. If the consumer attaches a deep meaning to the brand in his/her mind, he/she perceives it as a strong brand and if that happens to a great extend, one can talk about a success story of a brand. Positioning and differentiation are important roles of branding and means to build a strong brand. In order to create awareness and interest, the products and services should differentiate within their category but still convey a clear meaning, which implies the importance of positioning. In the market environment of today, brands can even be seen as social or cultural property because "brand meaning" partly plays a role in consumers' everyday live and creates a social value. Managers should regard consumers as co-creators or co-producers of the brand and

incorporate the consumers' response into a continuous process in which core values are specified by management but interpreted and redefined by customers. This undermines the significance of intangible resources within the branding process, namely the co-creation and relationships to consumers. (Kay, 2006)

## 2.2 Theory on Brand Identity

The concept of brand identity was introduced by Kapferer (1986) and describes a brand's tangible and intangible characteristics forming its unique "being". Kapferer sees the brand identity to be more important than the brand personality alone. According to him, the brand identity includes the facet of *personality* among others (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). In order for a brand to become or stay strong, it needs to stick to its identity and essence. The concept of brand identity is crucial in order for the brand to be perceived coherently, to be believable and to differentiate (Kapferer, 2004).

According to Kapferer (2004) the brand has 6 facets which together make up the brand identity prism.



(The FMCG & Retail Marketing Blog, 2007)

A brand has physical characteristics also known as the *physique* of the brand. The *physique* of the brand is basically its core, its objective and tangible assets with which it could not live without. The *physique* can also be seen as the flagship product which represents brand quality, e.g. in the case of Coca-Cola this would be the typical Coca-Cola bottle which is recognised all over the

world. The second facet is the *personality* of the brand which according to Kapferer (2004) should not be confused with the customer's own perception of the brand, a notion which contradicts the essence of this thesis. The easiest and most common way today to give the brand a personality is by giving the brand a spokesperson, i.e. a celebrity endorser whose personality is adopted by the brand in the mind of the consumer. This however does not rule out the idea that a personality is bestowed upon the brand through the consumer's perception and interaction with the brand, which is argued in this thesis.

The third facet of the prism describes the *culture* of the brand, which communicates what the brand is, where it comes from and what it represents. The *culture* is what links the brand to the company and it plays a vital role in setting the brand apart from other similar brands. The *relationship* facet defines the conduct of the brand, how it acts and what it offers and how it interacts with its customers. The *reflection* facet describes how the customer is reflected in the brand. Unlike the *target* facet which describes the brand's potential users, the *reflection* describes how the brand can make people feel, e.g. the middle aged man driving the Porsche feels young again. The difference between the *target* and the *reflection* is not to let the brand portray the customer as they are but as whom they wish to be. The sixth and last facet in the brand identity prism is that of *self-image* which describes the consumers' perception of themselves. It does not, like the *reflection* facet describe who they want to be but instead describes who they actual feel they are. (Kapferer, 2004)

According to Kapferer (2004) the *personality* and the *physique* are means to describe the sender of the brand by customers. The facets of *reflection* and *self-image* portray the receiver. Both dimensions of *culture* and *relationship* build a bridge between the sender and the receiver. Moreover, his model is based on the notion that a brand has a speech flowing from the sender to the receiver side. Seen from a vertical dimension the facets *physique*, *relationship* and *reflection* represent the social aspects of the brand while *personality*, *culture* and *self-image* are the facets which are incorporated in the brand itself. This as opposed to the basis of this thesis can be seen more as a one-way communication flow dominated by the brand rather than a dynamic interplay between all facets, which mutually stimulate and affect each other. Other researchers have acknowledged the importance of brand personality and focused their research on this construct.

## 2.3 Theory on Brand Personality

*"Evidence suggest that brands do indeed possess personalities"* (Arora and Stoner, 2009:273). They are developed through strategic branding and *"involve active communication on the part of the firm: the personality must be disseminated to be made to come alive"* (Rajagobpal, 2006:66). Everything a consumer experiences about a brand builds up brand personality. In this respect and according to Rajagobal (2006) brand personality depends on the marketing strategy of the company owning the brand and the resulting branding, marketing and communication activities rather than a perception made by the consumer.

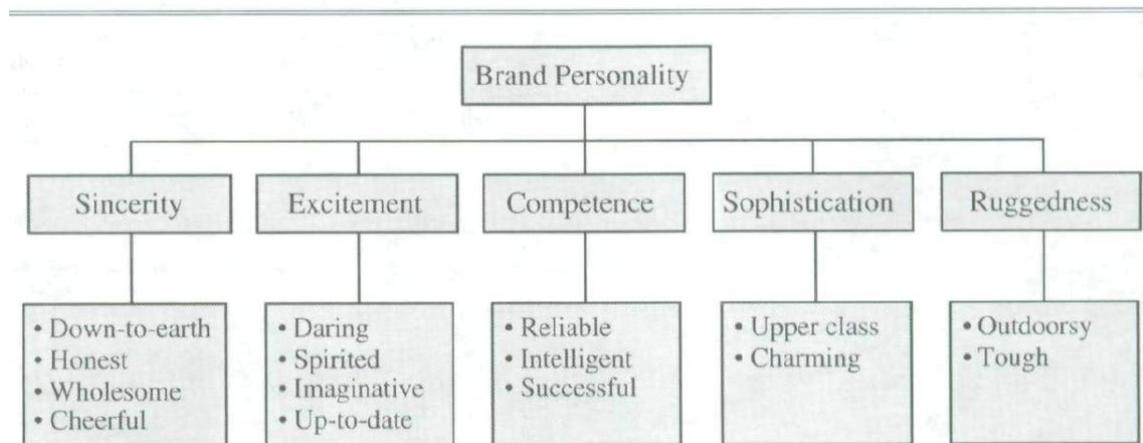
Aaker (1997) outlines that consumers tend to assign human personality traits to inanimate branded objects and by that turning them into a human character. She defines in her "brand personality framework" five core dimensions, which can help describe the profile of brands by using human characteristics and thereby making the brand personality compatible to a human being. She defines brand personality as *"the set of human characteristics associated with a brand"* (Aaker, 1997:347). The brand personality framework is the first contributing with a systematic scale that enables researchers to measure brand personality in a reliable, valid and generalisable way. Previous studies on brand personality stem from the field of personality psychology and are said not to be so valid in the context of brands. (Aaker, 1997)

For instance, previous research in this field claims that the greater the congruity between the characteristics that describe the individual's actual or ideal self and those which describe the brand, the greater the preference for the brand will inevitable be (Malhotra 1988; Sirgy 1982 cited in Aaker, 1997:348). According to Aaker (1997), this however shows a lack of consideration for the personality construct and the psychological mechanism through which it operates as human and brand characteristics differ to a great extend in the way they are formed. She argues that whereas human characteristics are recognised on the basis of the individual's behaviour, attitude, physical characteristics and beliefs as well as demographic characteristics, brand personality is formed through any direct or indirect contact with the brand, a viewpoint which will be illustrated later on. This could be the perception of the typical user of the brand, the CEO of the brand or the endorser of the brand which characterises how the individual perceives the brand's characteristics (Aaker, 1997). It is hence the characteristics of the typical user and the

personality of people who consumers associate with the brand that are transferred directly onto the brand (McCracken, 1989 cited in Aaker, 1997). In an indirect way brands are furthermore characterised by their attributes, product category, brand name, logo and symbols (Batra, Lehmann and Singh, 1993 cited in Aaker, 1997). Finally, demographics play a role in the perception of a brand as some brands are considered to be either male/female, young/old, white/blue collar etc. (Aaker, 1997)

To understand why consumers chose the products they chose and how they see these products having a self-expressive purpose the following framework was developed by Aaker (1997). By exposing 1200 people (631 respondents) to 37 brands and providing them with 114 human personality traits that are usually associated with brands, Aaker (1997) identified the most commonly perceived brand personality traits and assigned them to the five appropriate dimensions. The following brand personality dimensions were determined: Sincerity (through traits like domestic, honest, genuine), excitement (e.g. daring, spirited, and imaginative), competence (e.g. reliable, responsible, efficient), sophistication (e.g. glamorous, charming, romantic) and ruggedness (e.g. tough, strong, outdoorsy).

A BRAND PERSONALITY FRAMEWORK



(Aaker, 1997)

When accepting the idea that brands have their own personality it becomes easier to also accept the idea that consumers form relationships with these brands. The relationship that a consumer can establish with a brand is discussed in the following.

## 2.4 Theory on Brand Relationship

### 2.4.1 Definition of Relationship

Fournier (1998:346) outlines that *"relationships are constituted of a series of repeated exchanges between two parties known to each other; they evolve in response to these interactions and to fluctuations in the contextual environment"*. To speak of a relationship a mutual exchange between two active and independent parties has to take place. Furthermore and very importantly, relationships are processes because they develop and change from one interaction to the other and are affected by the interaction context.

According to Kelley (1986 cited in Fournier, 1998:345), *"the development of a personality depends in large part on relationships forged with others"*. In meaningful relationships and through interactions people mutually influence each other. Personal self-concepts may be changed through the interaction and confrontation with "the unfamiliar" or they may be supported due to agreement between the parties, which reinforces self-esteem. Thus, relationships can play a significant role in people's lives if they are considered to be strong and meaningful. Moreover, contexts in which persons interact affect the significance of the relationship. The nature of relationships can be distinguished through the different benefits they deliver to the relationship partners. In this respect, relationships can enhance socio-emotional provisions such as psychosocial identity functions, security or social support or they lead to instrumental provisions including functional benefits such as attaining objectives or short-term goals. The types of bond, substantively or emotionally rooted are indicators for relationships. Further differentiating aspects concern non-voluntary versus voluntary, formal versus informal, equal versus unequal and friendly versus hostile relationships.

### 2.4.2 The Brand-Consumer Relationship

Fournier's (1998) research indicates that brands and consumers are in fact capable of entering a relationship with one another and that these relationships are valid at the level of lived experiences; a fact that has proven to be valuable both theoretically but also for managerial use. She describes the evidence of the intensity of the human-brand relationship as, *"thinking about the brand not as a passive object of marketing transactions but as an active, contributing member*

*of the relationship*” (Fournier, 1998:344). Furthermore, she claims that the brand personality is expressed through all observed behaviour (e.g. marketing activities) that can be seen as “*a set of behavioural incidents from which trait inferences about the brand are made and through which the brand’s personality is actualized*” (Fournier, 1998:345). The foundation of the relationship depends on the interaction between the partners as they affect, define and redefine the relationship. Hence, it is fundamental that the brand and the consumer interact with one another in a flow of two-way communication. As it is said that consumers today can see a brand as a human being with human characteristics it becomes easier to accept that the brand can in fact become a “partner” and not just another product; a partner who helps reinforce a person’s self-concept through means of self-worth and self-esteem. (Fournier, 1998) Here it is the idea that brand and consumer enter a two-way communication street with one another which is essential for the argument of this thesis. In this communication flow the situation plays an important role; the interplay which takes place between the two parties builds the foundation of the consumer’s perception of the brand and its personality.

Similar to Fournier (1998), Fioroni and Titterton (2009) describe a brand as a living organism with a personality that consumers themselves assign to the brand in order to be able to establish a relationship with this inanimate object. Fioroni and Titterton (2009) emphasise the important role of brand personality in the process of brand-consumer relationship building and compare it closely to the process of human relationship building. Moreover they describe that “*as with any living organism, a brand’s personality is the expression of its style, character and attitudes*” (Fioroni and Titterton, 2009:32).

Consequently, it can be assumed that everything observable by the consumer and connected to the brand influences the brand-consumer relationship as it is translated into traits and therefore serves as a basis for the evaluative concept of a person/brand if we transfer research on human impression formation by Srull and Wyer (1989) to brands. These observed traits after all build the entire picture of a brand’s personality, which will affect its existing relationship with the consumer or increase or decrease the likelihood for the establishment of such. According to Fournier (1998), the brand can be qualified as a personality by appearing as an active member of the relationship and as such proves to be a preferable relationship partner through its personality traits, just as it is in human relationships. Fioroni and Titterton (2009) conclude: “*It is through*

*the perceived personality that individuals are able to gain useful information about the brand, information which would not otherwise be communicated and which becomes the basis for building relationships – and not just those of exchange”* (Fioroni and Titterton, 2009:33). Moving on we will investigate what role the situation and the context, in which the brand is experienced, plays for the consumer’s overall perception of the brand.

## **2.5 The Role of Situation and Context**

Shukla (2008:113) views the role of situation and context in respect to status consumption in the following way: *“Consumers seldom operate in a social vacuum, rather they continuously compare themselves with significant others when consuming status brands and situations such as social occasions provide a perfect venue to elevate an individual’s status.”* Situations in the context of consumption are furthermore identified as factors standing apart from the consumer and the product and causing behavioural or perceptual effects. (Shukla, 2008)

Generally speaking, psychology research shows that human behaviour is very much depended on context and it affects consumer behaviour and the judgement of a brand. These context effects emerge due to different usage situations, differences in the products that the individual has seen before the judgement, or because different information from the memory is activated (Mitchell, 2002).

Often consumers develop judgements of marketing stimulus whilst they are simultaneously exposed to other stimuli, which can be identified as the context of the judgement. Judging the same stimulus differently in various context situations is a common phenomenon and it is assumed that the context influences judgement (Chakravarti and Lynch, 1983). Lynch et al. (1991) also point out that products are not judged according to their own characteristics but also on basis of other products’ characteristics perceived at the same time or before. Hence, context effects influence consumer decisions to a great extend. Probably best recognised are the contrast effects where *“ratings of a stimulus along some dimension are inversely related to values of the context stimuli considered simultaneously”* (Lynch et al., 1991:284). The Mac Book Air for example is judged as “light” when judging it in the context of other laptops such as Acer, HP or even other Apple computers. Thus, the context becomes somewhat a guideline and point of

reference or point of comparison to measure and judge upon, which implies that without a context judgement seems impossible. Amongst others, Lynch et al. (1991) suggest that context affects perception by referring to consumer satisfaction, perceived quality and price perception. This supports the idea that it is the interplay between situation, consumer and brand which leads to the overall perception of the brand and helps the creation of the brand personality in the consumer's mind.

It is furthermore believed that brand choice is affected by the situational context since choice is identified as being dependent on a goal and goals are dependent on context. In this respect, benefits and usage situation have an impact on the consumers' consideration sets (brands that the consumer is aware of). Specific benefits and the usage context determine the consumer's goals. Without this specification, namely the need for a certain product due to a certain situation (e.g. the benefit of a refreshing low-calorie drink after working out), there were no specified consumption goals and obviously no product choices (Whan Park, 1993). The roles that context and goals play in terms of brand choice is of high interest in regard to brand perception as it can be assumed that the perception of brands within the consideration set take place in the consumer's mind prior to arriving at a purchase decision. As the consumer perceives the brand, he/she links certain characteristics to the brand and gradually the brand takes on a human personality with human characteristics in the consumer's mind. How the brand is perceived as an object with human characteristics will be discussed in the following.

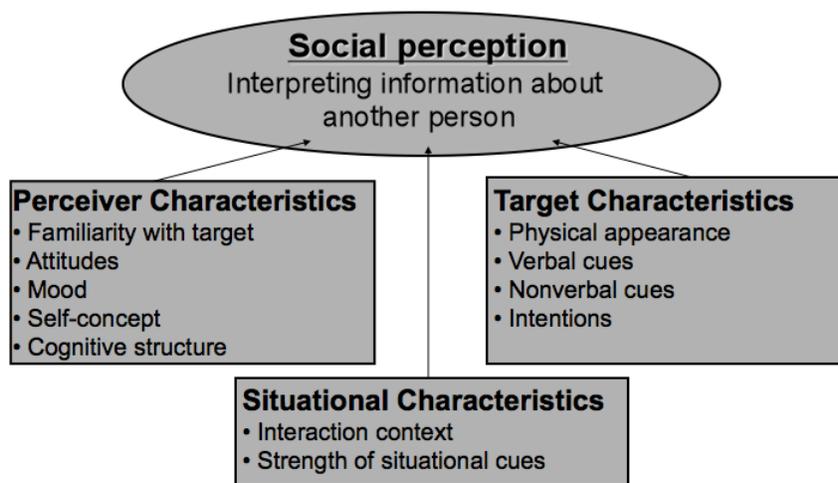
## **2.6 The Brand as a Human Character**

The previous part of the theory chapter describes terms such as personality and relationship in a branding context. It is obvious that with the application of these terms for brands, the brand as an inanimate object has turned into something that is not as inanimate anymore. Due to this it can be concluded that brands and their personalities are perceived by individuals according to similar influences playing a role in human personality perception. In this respect it seems logical to look at the phenomenon of brand personality from a sociological and psychological point of view referring to human personality perception. Knowledge from these fields is likely to be applicable in a brand perception context due to the great similarities that could be found. To draw a connection between social perception and brand perception, theory on social perception will be

outlined and later adapted to form a conceptual model in the context of a consumer's brand perception

### 2.6.1 Theory on Social Perception

Social Perception can be described as the process in which “*individuals perceive, organize, and ultimately integrate information to form unified and coherent situated impressions of others*” (Moore, 2007). It shows how and through which information individuals draw conclusions on who another person is and what he/she is like. This interplay of information is outlined in the following model.



(Nelson and Quick, 2005)

Characteristics of the perceiver, the target and situational characteristics influence the perception of each individual and as such induce the perceptions of others. (Nelson and Quick 2005)

#### Perceiver Characteristics

The perceiver is made up of *familiarity, attitude, mood, self-concept* and *cognitive structure*. The *familiarity* with the target effects the human perception. Analyses show that familiarity is strongly related to similarity, meaning that people who are perceived as being similar to oneself cause a familiar feeling. The more familiar or similar someone is, the more attractive he/she appears. Humans tend to be reminded of themselves and past experiences when they are exposed to similar others. This is commonly called the “halo” effect. As one obviously feels familiar with

the associations concerning oneself, a comparable feeling about the familiar person arises. Numerous researchers such as by Byrne (1979) or Nelson (1965) found that humans feel attracted to others that are perceived as similar to oneself. Byrne and Clore (1970) assume that this is because similar people offer an agreeing verification of the own attitudes, values and beliefs. Furthermore, McLaughlin (1971) concluded that besides causing attraction, similarity also generates better recall. Human beings can best remember someone when they like that specific person and feel similar to him/her. This also highlights the close linkage of similarity, familiarity and attractiveness (Moreland and Zajonc, 1980).

Russel H. Fazio (1986 cited in Sorrentino and Higgins, 1996) examined the influence of *attitude* on behaviour and identified conscious and unconscious influencing factors. An individual may analyse the cost and benefit of certain behaviours through reflecting on the relevant attitudes in a specific situation. He describes this process as endorsing relevant attitudes in order to arrive at a behaviour plan. Alternatively he suggests that events and situations are interpreted unconsciously and that attitudes instinctively guide the individual in a spontaneous manner. (Fazio 1986 cited in Sorrentino and Higgins, 1996)

*Mood* affects the way a person perceives someone else. People think differently when they are cheerful than when they are sad. Furthermore, one remembers perceived information that is in line with one's mood state better than information that is not coherent with the mood. Consequently, positive impressions are formed when the mood is consistent and negative impressions in case of inconsistency with the mood of others. (Nelson and Quick 2005)

According to Epstein (1973) the *self-concept* is a self-theory that the human being has constructed about himself without consciously knowing or developing it. Self-theory can surface due to the simple fact that one is functioning and constantly experiencing and like that developing a theory about oneself based on major influential experiences. Optimising the balance of pleasure and pain is the main function of the self-theory throughout a person's lifetime. It is understood that if any of the functions of the self-theory is interfered with or is endangered, negative emotions arise. Intimidation can harm the functions of the self-system, the self-esteem and aspirated pleasures. If any of these functions are promoted or in case it can be anticipated that they will be facilitated, positive emotions arise. The stronger the positive or negative emotion, the

more significance and importance are given to a certain function of the self-theory. (Epstein, 1973)

*Cognitive structure* can be understood as the individual's pattern of thinking, which also affects the way one perceives the target. For some people, physical traits such as height, weight or appearance are perceived prior to personality traits of the target, while others perceive personality traits first. In this process cognitive complexity allows the individual to perceive more than one character trait at the time.

### Target Characteristics

The target characteristics entail *physical appearance*, *verbal cues*, *nonverbal cues* and *intentions*. *Physical appearance* has considerable impact on the perception of the target, starting with features such as height, weight, estimated age, race and gender. Especially clothing affects the perception and the resulting judgment of another person and his character. Human beings particularly tend to notice features that are severe, in contrast with the norm or unusual (tall people, loud people, fancy dresses etc.). Furthermore, individuals who are strangers raise more attention to the perceiver. The attractiveness of a person's physical appearance to the perceiver has a significant power for the perception as it can create the entire impression about a person. (Nelson and Quick, 2005)

*Verbal communication* also plays a vital role within the process of social interaction and perception. The tone of voice, the topic one speaks about and e.g. the accent influences the perception and interpretation of information that the perceiver receives about the target. (Nelson and Quick, 2005)

Moreover, the perceiver is exposed to *nonverbal cues* of the target such as eye contact, facial expressions, body movements and posture, which influence the interpretation and perception of the other person. It is important to note that the meaning of some nonverbal cues differ between cultures. (Nelson and Quick 2005)

Human beings show a tendency to interpret the *intentions* of someone they interact with, which also affects the way the perceiver perceives the target. People who are believed to have positive

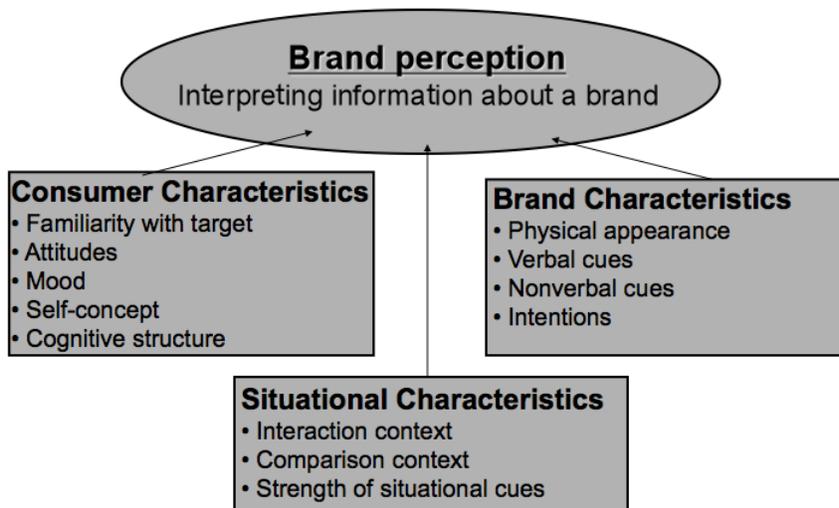
intentions are obviously rather perceived positive than negative. (Nelson and Quick, 2005)

### Situational Characteristics

The situational characteristics are based on the *interaction context* (social context/situation), which is of great importance in the perception process. To give an example, meeting someone in the office generates a different impression of the person as then if the meeting took place in a pub (Nelson and Quick, 2005). The intensity of *situational cues* is also important when analysing social perception. It is common that the way people behave is stirred by the situation and context in which they are located in that specific moment. Hence, the behaviour of human beings can largely be explained by the situation and context of the incident. This is referred to as the “discounting principle” in social perception and can be defined as “*the assumption that an individual’s behaviour is accounted for by the situation*” (Nelson and Quick 2005:81).

#### 2.6.2 Conceptual Model of Brand Perception

As it was previously discussed in the theory and the introduction of social perception by Nelson and Quick (2005), it can be assumed that brands and their characteristics are perceived by individuals according to similar influences that effect the perception of a human personality. Theory of researchers such as Aaker (1997)) and Fournier (1998) emphasise the comparison of a brand to a human character and the relation to the perceiver’s self and thus support the linkage of brand perception and social perception. Due to the outlined parallels between an individual’s perception of a brand or a person, the model of social perception was adjusted for the purpose of this thesis and now illustrates the consumer’s perception of a brand. The conceptual model can be seen as a snapshot of a moment in which a brand is perceived by a consumer and the characteristics that play a role within it. However, the brand’s personality and the impression that an individual builds in his mind are made up of a serious of these moments over time and are only stable until a new perception delivers new cues. These records of perceptions are accumulated and shape the way a customer sees the brand. Thus, the model of brand perception is not only applicable to grasp the moment of perception but also the perception that has been developed over time. The following represents the conceptual model of brand perception.



Characteristics of the perceiver, the target and situational characteristics affect an individual's personality perception of others (Nelson and Quick 2005). Such as between humans, consumers are exposed to sensation stimuli, but in this context stimulus is generated through e.g. advertisements, product packages and radio and TV commercials. Individuals are positively attracted by certain stimulus and thus pay attention to certain brands but others are ignored straight away because the personal interpretation/perception result is negative (Solomon et al., 2006). Brands are perceived by individuals due to similar influences playing a role in social perception. It can be assumed that based on the perception of a brand, the consumer adds meaning to a sensation and constructs a brand's personality in his mind.

### Consumer Characteristics

The characteristics of the consumer are equal to the characteristics of the perceiver in the social perception model explained previously. The positive effect of *familiarity* in the human personality perception is very likely transferable to brand perception, which implies that the consumer evaluates the brand more positive if he/she feels similar to it. In this respect, the country of origin effect should be taken into account, which claims that if the country of origin of the brand is the same as the one of the consumer, the brand feels familiar and generates more attraction.

The consumer's brand perception can be influenced by *attitude* and *mood* in a comparable way. The consumer may consciously analyse the costs and benefits of a brand by reflecting own

attitudes, but yet attitudes can also unconsciously influence the brand perception. The same counts for the aspect of mood in the sense that good mood is likely to create a rather positive perception of the brand and bad mood a negative perception. Furthermore, if the stimulus around a brand is consistent with the mood state of the consumer the evaluation of the brand is likely to be positive.

*Self-concept* plays a comparable role in respect to brand personality and the notion of “you are what you consume” can be applied to make the theory of self-concept more tangible. Consumers have a certain idea and theory about themselves (body image, food habit etc.) and Belk (1988) speaks about the extended self, claiming that possessions serve to contribute to or reflect the identity of an individual. The extended self is defined as “me” (self) and “mine” (the possession). Moreover, the nature of the home and interior and choice of neighbourhood are ways that are used to express a personal identity and the extended self. Gender roles also influence self-concepts and brand perceptions. Men are rather attracted by brands that suit their idea of being a man and women perceive brands more positively when they suit their self-concept as women. (Belk, 1988)

The *cognitive structure* has an impact on brand perception and can be understood as the consumer’s pattern of thinking. Depending on the cognitive structure, each consumer perceives a brand with a different focus and thus processes different cues and assigns different meanings to them. Whilst one individual perceives the package design positively in such a way that it fosters a purchase, the other may evaluate a brand only by functionality factors. As it is the case within social perception, cognitive complexity certainly also allows perceiving multiple character traits at the same time during the brand perception. (Nelson and Quick, 2005)

### Brand characteristics

Brand characteristics are compatible to the target characteristics of the social perception mode. Marketers are convinced by the power of *physical appearance* such as visual elements in advertising, store design and packaging giving meanings to brands through the size of the product, styling, brightness and distinctiveness in order to attract the consumer and differentiate the brand from the competition. Some colours evoke positive feelings such as excitement (red e.g.) or relaxation (blue e.g.) whereas others generate negative feelings. The perception of colours

are also influenced by trends such as green tends to evoke consumers' ecological consciousness. (Solomon et al., 2006)

Moreover, when dealing with *physical appearance* of a brand, the appearance of a company's building, vehicles and sales staff should be included in the effects of perception. Especially for service brands, the appearance of the sales staff has a significant impact on the consumer's perception. "Above-the-line" and "Below-the-line" marketing communication also influence the physical appearance of a brand as "ATL" communication includes traditional promotion such as print media (magazines, brochures, billboards etc.), internet, TV and radio and "BTL" communication includes public relations, sponsoring, fairs, the use of supermodels or brand ambassadors, event marketing, contests or decoration of stores.

*Verbal cues* like sounds and music are important means for marketers to create desired moods and influence the consumer when perceiving the brand. In this context, advertising jingles create awareness and maintain brand recall whereas the speaking rate within commercials influences the attitude formation and message comprehension. Fast talkers may increase persuasion because the consumer has the impression that the speaker is confident and knows what he is talking about, whereas for others fast-talking may also decrease persuasion because it may hinder the consumer to form a judgement. (Solomon et al., 2006)

Humour and generation of fear are examples of *nonverbal cues*, which have an impact on the brand perception. Furthermore, the tone of voice of sales personnel or people in commercials or movements and the body language of sales people, brand ambassadors and people in commercials have an influencing role in the process of brand perception (Solomon et al., 2006). It can also be assumed that shelf space, thus the location of the brand in retail shops represents a nonverbal cue as some brands are strategically placed at eye level or placed on separate "eye catcher" shelves.

In social perception, the perceiver usually interprets the sender's *intentions*. Similarly, the consumer of a brand is aware of the intentions of the company behind the brand and thus (direct or indirect) messages that are related to the company's values and missions may be interpreted. Internal factors such as working atmosphere, level of respect of staff, the importance of customer

service, importance of innovation and the importance of providing quality products may also be part of the company's intentions. The consumer will perceive and judge intentions through messages, own experiences or exchange with others. The interpretation may be processed consciously or unconsciously, depending on how direct or indirect the company communicates or depending on the degree of personal interest of the consumer.

### Situation Characteristics

The role of situational cues can be transferred to brand perception as the *situation* and *interaction context* which the consumer is exposed to has an influencing impact on the perception. Interaction contexts in which an individual is exposed to a commercial of a brand may include the environment at home or the cinema. Another example of interaction context/situation is the placement of commercials on TV, namely the choice of TV channel, the broadcasting time and the program type during which the commercial is placed (series, films, news, reportage etc.). In a similar way, the choice of print media (newspaper, magazines etc.) is important and can be referred to as situational cue for brand personality, due to the context in which the brand is acting (e.g. advert in Playboy Magazine or The Times).

Additionally, the comparison to other brands, which are present during perception, influences the consumer as it serves as a base for evaluation and with that judgement and perception of the brand. The *context* and *situation* that a customer is in are also important because they influence the consumer's goals (e.g. strive for refreshment after sport). In this respect, the economic situation can also influence the brand perception as in times of economical crisis a sensitive instead of wasteful behaviour is probably perceived more positively. Moreover, trends such as behaving "green" and using "green" products and services can influence how certain communicational cues are interpreted.

### Reflection of the conceptual model

This chapter is rounded-up with the introduction of the conceptual model of brand perception, which derives from background theory referring to the definition of a brand and the importance of brand identity, brand personality and brand relationship. The conceptual model should prove that a brand is perceived in a similar way as a human being and should be seen as a tool to determine the roles of brand, consumer and situation in an interrelated context. The developed

model of brand perception takes a central role in the scope of this thesis and the following empirical study as it will be tested on its ability to be used to analyse the interplay of characteristics within brand perception. The results of this investigation are expected to serve as a basis to develop and optimise the conceptual model of brand perception. Consequently, the findings ought to contribute to the literature in the field of brand perception, brand personality and brand relationship by incorporating the role of and the interplay between consumer, brand and situation within brand perception which so far was neglected as such.

### **3. The Empirical Study**

#### **3.1 Research Approach and Philosophy**

The aim of this research is to test and further develop the conceptual model of brand perception as mentioned in part 2.6.2 by answering the previously defined research questions through empirical data collection. The conceptual model was already developed based on the discovery of "white spots" in and criticism on existing literature. It will be used as a guiding framework for the research method in order to give a clearer argumentation on what aspects and factors will be central to this study. In this respect the developed model and its set of concepts can be seen as providing *"a general sense of references and guidance in approaching empirical instances"* (Bulmer, 1954:7 cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007).

As *"theory cannot be understood without empirical observation and visa versa"* (Dubois and Gadde, 2002:555) the conceptual model will be tested on its applicability and further developed through this empirical study, and the analysis and interpretation of gathered data. It is essential to this study that the researchers will not see the framework guiding this research as fixed but rather as evolving throughout the study. The researchers will let the meanings of concepts emerge and allow its refinement by swinging back and forth between empirical data and theory. The theory and the conceptual model, the starting point of this study, will be successively modified through empirical data collection. In this respect the introduced study can be described as abductive, e.g. mentioned by Dubois and Gadde (2002). This approach is assumed to achieve a better and enriched understanding of both the theory and empirical phenomenon, deriving from the confrontation of the theoretical model with reality (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

In order to provide the reader with an insight into the researchers' view of the nature of reality, the ontology underlying this thesis will be outlined. As mentioned in the problem formulation, this research adopts the notion that brand perception is a subjective, dynamic phenomenon that depends on the interplay between the consumer, brand and situational characteristics. As such, brand personality is not a stable entity defined by the company owning the brand, but individually and socially constructed through the phenomenon of brand perception. Each person has a unique character and distinctive experiences with a brand. During each perception the mentioned characteristics and their interplay construct the brand's personality in a highly personal manner. Additionally, brand personality is in a constant state of revision as each perception delivers new cues. According to this argumentation the ontological position of this thesis can be defined as constructionism as it implies that meanings and social phenomenon are continually generated and constantly revised by social interactions. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

The researcher's view on the nature of reality and the domain of this thesis lead to the conclusion that the best way to understand the assumptions made about reality and a consumer's brand perception is through the epistemological approach of interpretivism. This epistemology attempts to understand human behaviour rather than just to explain; *"the intent is not to gather corroborating "facts" but rather to increase a researcher's understanding of the complexities and nuances of the phenomenon under study"* (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010:103). It therefore digs deeper into the meanings that people assign and aims at answering the questions *why and how* rather than only giving a description of *what*. This is especially important as this study views a consumer's brand perception and the construction of a brand's personality in the consumer's mind from a psychological angle and therefore an empathic approach was chosen for this research.

Interpretivism supports the notion that the researcher should attempt *"to see things from the person's point of view"* (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975:13 cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007) in order to gain an understanding of how this person sees and assigns meanings to the world around him/her. For this thesis it means that looking through people's eyes can deliver knowledge of how brand personality is constructed for each individual, due to the mentioned interplay of consumer, brand and situational characteristics within brand perception. It is this empathic understanding that will deliver information on how the consumer's character in an individual and dynamic interplay

relates to the brand's characteristics and the situational context, and like that delivers insight into how a brand's personality is constructed through perceptions. Understanding will be based on each individual's personality in connection to his/her experiences with the brand and record of perceptions. In this way the individual himself/herself becomes the constructor of brand personality and understanding can only be achieved by seeing the world through his/her eyes.

### Text as Empirical Material

Due to the highly subjective nature of the information that will be gathered through the empirical study the researchers will be looking for “text”, which embodies the meanings that can deliver insights into the phenomenon of the study (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010). In opposite to “data”, which can be characterised as objective facts representing an external reality, “text” however, *“acknowledges the fundamentally subjective nature of information”* (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010:103). This is rooted in the assumption of interpretivism that humans convey the meanings that they assigned to the world around them through written and unwritten texts delivering *“rich data with thick description”* (Charmaz, 2000:514 cited in Grubs and Piantanida, 2010). Moreover, written text gives the researchers the possibility to code the “text” and extract meanings from it. To simplify, it will however be continued to refer to “data” in the course of this thesis.

### **3.2 Grounded Theory – A Qualitative Approach**

Due to the underlying epistemology and ontology of this thesis it was decided to follow a qualitative research design and the broad-based method of grounded theory as described by Easterby-Smith et al. (2008). As the aim of this thesis is to test and further develop the conceptual model, grounded theory is viewed as a method with precisely articulated presuppositions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). As such the view of Anselm Strauss (1987 cited in Easterby-Smith et al., 2008:101) is adapted who recommends *“familiarizing oneself with prior research and using structures, and somewhat mechanistic, processes to make sense of data”*. The conducted literature review and the derivation of the conceptual model draw a direct connection to prior research. Moreover, the model will provide useful structure and a guideline to the research method.

Due to the interpretive epistemology underlying this thesis and in order to understand and deliver comprehensible research results the researchers will have to engage in the interpretation of the gathered data and become part of the data production. As such this thesis and the interpretation of data on which the further development of theory is founded is not primarily based on what the research participants literally say, but what the researchers interpret and the meanings which the spoken and written word conveys in the context of this study. It is recognised that the researcher's "*interpretations are constructions of these meanings and therefore a construction of the construction made by the actors studied*" (Thomas and Linstead, 2002 cited in Thomas and Davies, 2005:688).

As an interpretative approach acknowledges that being positional is inevitable, interpretation depends on the theoretical sensitivity of the researchers, which according to Strauss and Corbin (1990:42 cited in Grubs and Piantanida, 2010) refers to as "*the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't*". In this process the conceptual model is used as it delivers a pre-understanding of the phenomenon and helps the researchers to understand and interpret the gathered data in the context of the phenomenon studied. In the same way it provides the reader with the context in which this study has to be viewed.

### **3.3 Choice of Case Brands: Apple and Coca-Cola**

Two case brands were chosen for this study as it is assumed that the perception of brands from different categories (e.g. low/high involvement) might differ. Moreover, a criteria for the chosen brands was their high popularity and strong market presence. This is seen as beneficial for the study as participants are very likely to have a strong and rich record of perceptions regarding these brands, which will deliver more data in the empirical study.

The first brand chosen is Apple which has a strong position within the IT industry and has sustained high growth within the last 5 years with products such as the Mac Book, iPod, iPhone and the latest product the iPad. Apple is known for its revolutionarily design and creative thinking and for the same reason Apple was in the beginning seen as an IT tool for people in creative environments. Since then more people have fallen for the simplistic and high functional

design and Apple products have to some extent become a product for the masses. In her research Aaker (1997) comes to the conclusion that the brand is seen as young and hip compared to its competitors.

Apple products are like most IT products high involvement products because of both, the higher price that is connected to the purchase but also because of the information search that usually happens prior to the purchase of an IT product, whether it is a phone or a laptop. Though, being an everyday product that is used at all hours of the day by most people only few people will go into a store and purchase a laptop, a mp3 player or a new phone without having researched the different options first; especially in the case of Apple whose products still tends to be slightly more expensive than the competition.

The second brand that will be examined is Coca-Cola, a fast moving consumer good. Coca-Cola is one of the most recognised brands in the world and was the most valuable brand worldwide in 2009 (Interbrand, 2009). Like Apple, Coca-Cola is very much an everyday product but here the involvement is lower. When choosing Coca-Cola instead of e.g. Pepsi Coke it is unlikely that the consumer will have invested as much time in the decision making process as it will be the case with a high involvement product such as an Apple computer. Coca-Cola stands for the all-American trusted family product as oppose to Pepsi Coke, which is considered to be young, hip and exiting (Aaker, 1997).

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection**

The empirical study of this thesis consists of the investigation of relevant Internet blogs and forums and the conducting of exploratory in-depth interviews. The internet-based research will be outlined first followed by the methodology and reasoning for the in-depth interviews. Furthermore, a critical reflection on the choice of research design is provided.

#### **3.4.1 Blog and Forum Research**

The collection of information retrieved from blogs and forums precedes the conduction of in-depth interviews and should be understood as “pre-empirical study”. Such sources concern online brand communities, blogs and forums containing consumers' opinions about Apple and Coca-

Cola. It will help the researchers to gain a first and overall picture of what people share on the Internet in respect to the brands, their opinions and current topics of interest. In this way the researchers gain insight knowledge and expertise on topic areas that seem interesting to address in the in-depth interviews to trigger conversation. It also serves the researchers to get a first and rough idea of the characteristics introduced in the conceptual model, which are assumed to play a role within the consumer's perception of Coca-Cola and Apple (e.g. new product introduction, strong CSR activity, common context of usage etc.).

### 3.4.2 In-depth Interviews – An Empirical Setting

According to Lofland and Lofland (1995, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007:416), *“face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being, and you must participate in the mind of another human being (in sociological terms, “take the role of the other”) to acquire social knowledge.”*

The objective of this thesis and the epistemology and ontology underlying this research approach require a truly qualitative insight into the consumer's mind. The view of Lofland and Lofland (1995) on the necessity of face-to-face interaction in order to achieve social knowledge supports the decision to conduct in-depth interviews for this study. The interviews and statements deriving from them should be seen in their social context and as such as *“an empirical situation in itself”* (Alvesson, 2003 cited in Thomas and Davies, 2005:688). By expecting social knowledge to be constructed within this interaction, through the researchers co-producing role but also because they are incorporated in the social setting as “one of them (interviewees)”, it is expected that the participants will intervene with the interviewers in the same way they would interact with other people in a social setting, sharing their knowledge, opinions and perceptions about the brand. Moreover, interactions and the meanings and knowledge deriving from it, even though they might be based on recall, are constructed in the context of the interview. This is because the interviewers foster this recall and ask the interviewee to share perceptions and bring them into the context of the social interaction of the interview. Through this interaction in the interview, a social context per se, the researchers *“emphasize the situated, partial, localized and self-referential nature of knowledge”* (Foucault, 1980 cited in Thomas and Davies, 2005:688).

Due to the need for rich and detailed data the interviews should not be based on a strict list of predefined questions but leave the interviewee the room to communicate freely. Furthermore, conducting qualitative interviews without structured questions allow to depart from certain viewpoints and to deviate to anything that emerges from the conversation. In this respect, the researchers can identify what the interviewee regards as relevant concerning the interview topic without influencing him with fixed questions. In addition to this, the researchers are able to react on emerged information that seem relevant to the research and then lead the conversation further into this direction in order to access further data.

For the purpose of retrieving rich and detailed data in the way as previously explained, the interviews are semi-structured in order to establish the desired flexibility but also follow a list of predetermined topics to collect thorough insights into aspects concerning the characteristics included in the conceptual model. From this model topic areas can be predetermined that work as a guideline but leave the freedom for deviation.

### 3.4.3 Practical Guidelines

Six participants were chosen for this study, known to be users of either Coca-Cola or Apple (3 for each brand). The fact that a certain segment of the population has been selected for the interviews according to the criteria that they are consumers of one of the two brands makes it a non-probability or non-random sampling method. “Being a consumer” was not specified in more detail for the selection of participants. For this reason, participants with different frequented usage rates and different opinions (positive/negative) are part of this study. However, due to the strong presence and popularity of the brands every participant will have a record of perceptions that lead to different kinds of opinions about the brand. The empirical method is now used to tackle these accumulated brand perceptions that have been built over time to identify and analyse the interplay of characteristics involved. Since the participants are indirect or direct acquaintances of the researchers and thus relatively easy accessible, one can speak of a convenience sample (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

As this interview aims at rich data, the duration of 1-2 hours is considered in order to establish a relaxed atmosphere with room to get to know each other and talk informally. Furthermore, the

interview will take place in a private and quiet setting, which also contributes to the creation of an atmosphere in which researcher and participant can get acquainted and not distracted by noise or external influences. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

The interviews are recorded which allows the interviewer to naturally interact with the participants and give them their full attention. As the interviews are semi-structured topics are predetermined rather than formulated into specific questions. The spoken information recorded during the conversation will be transcribed into written material, which will simplify the analysis.

#### 3.4.4 The Influence of the Researchers

As the nature of data to be collected concerns the psychology of the human mind, it is most appropriate to aim at a natural discussion, which is only in an indirect way controlled by the researchers in terms of structure and questions. This way, the interviewee is most likely to speak more open-minded about himself/herself, intrinsic motivations and feelings and thoughts concerning the brand. All three researchers of this study take part in the interviews in order to establish a dynamic conversation allowing more deviations and a greater variety of questions triggering an informative conversation. However, one researcher is identified as the leading interviewer in order to navigate the conversation in a somewhat structured way emerging from the course of the interview. If there was an equal say the risk for confusion amongst the researchers and for the interviewee would be high. In this respect, the leading interviewer has the main say but the co-interviewers note down questions and ask them additionally in an appropriate moment according to the course and context of the discussion. Especially in the beginning it is important to give the leading interviewer and interviewee room to get acquainted with the situation and establish a flowing conversation before the other interviewers gradually take part in the discussion in a natural way.

To strategically trigger the participant to talk about intrinsic motivations for certain perceptions the researchers take on a naive role even though they acquired expert knowledge on the two brands studied, giving the participant the feeling to be the expert on the topic. According to Jacob Östberg (2010), *“most people feel good when they get to explain things to others”*. Priority of the strategic approach for the interviews is to give the interviewee the freedom and the floor to

tell his/her “story” without much external input that could influence him/her.

In order to trigger and assert how interviewees perceive the brands, the interviewers foster recall. The interviewee is asked questions related to where and when he/she was first exposed to the brand, what he/she thought and what he/she associates with the brand, why and when he/she purchased it, what he/she likes most about it, in which context he/she uses the brand etc. This way, the researchers activate the interviewee’s memory and dig into numerous perceptions. Moreover, the researchers trigger perception by using visual elements, thus exposing the interviewees to products of Coca-Cola and Apple. This also includes competitor’s brands to recall and trigger comparison context. The items are placed in front of the interviewees on the table where the interview takes place, but not in a predominant way. After discussing the brand based on memory and recall, the interviewers guide the attention to the items and ask questions about which item he/she likes most or even possesses, which one he/she prefers and why or what he/she thinks about the outer appearance and functionality etc. Obviously, the interviewee can touch the products, using it in the case of Apple or taste it in the case of Coca-Cola. In the case of Coca-Cola a voluntary blind-test to see if participants can distinguish Coca-Cola from other Coke brands is also a possibility. It can be assumed that by triggering the human senses such as seeing, touching, hearing and tasting, the interviewee generates current perception or activates memory and past perceptions. Besides using the products as such, the interviewee is asked whether he/she can show certain internet pages he/she uses in regard to the brand or certain commercials he/she likes or associates with the brand. Here, questions relate to why he/she uses that page, what he/she thinks about the page etc. The interviewees have the freedom to activate and use the previously outlined elements in such a way that it suits the context and nature of every individual interview.

#### 3.4.5 Conversation Topics

The initial intention of the interview is to determine the character of the interviewee. Due to the theory and the fact that brand and consumer have to be seen as neutral and independent entities, the in-depth interviews begin with the acquaintance of the participant’s character. The character traits, which are determined for the consumer in the introduced model, function as an indication for what to find out about the human being. Getting to know the participant at the beginning of

the interview will help the researchers interpret the information provided by the participant through the eyes of this person (Bryman and Bell, 2007). This way, the researchers will be able to identify the characteristics that play a role in the person's perception and analyse the interplay of these characteristics.

Based on the previously mentioned research on Internet blogs and forums the researchers gained expert knowledge, which can be used to trigger thoughts and inputs from the conversation with the interviewees. The list of relevant topics is shown below:

- Personality of the individual
- Demographics
- Usage and shopping habits
- Associations and opinions about the brand
- Loyalty to the brand
- Competing brands

### **3.5 Evaluation - Content Analysis**

For the content analysis the method of grounded theory has been used as it is one of the most recognised and frameworks for analysing qualitative data. Grounded theory is defined as a theory that derives through the systematically gathering of data, which then is analysed throughout the research process. Here the data collection analysis and theory are closely connected with one another. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

The process of grounded theory, which has been used for this study follows the following path:

- Theoretical sampling
- Coding
- Constant comparison, i.e. clustering
- Memoing

#### Theoretical Sampling

The initial step is the conduction of interviews with relevant participants for the topic in question

in this case, users of the two chosen products. As outlined previously, the interviews are seen as a quest for “text” as oppose to “data” to signal the social constructed nature of the information illustrated. This acknowledges the subjective nature of any information given during the interview, as will it be later on in the analysis of text. (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010)

### Coding

The coding of the text is the key process using grounded theory for the content analysis. In this case the transcribed interview was first read without making any notes or comments to the text. This first step was made to get an overall feel for the interviewee and his/her perception of the product in question. After the first step the transcript was re-read and this time observations were noted as key words or key phrases. By giving these observations, which may seem basic when they stand alone a name or a title, this is seen as the act of coding within grounded theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007). To some extend the codes in this analysis appear as full sentences for the sake of not loosing any data or context for which the code was made. Here, the researchers are following the examples given by Grubs and Piantanida (2010). Coding should be seen as the naming of important facts within the text, which in turn will help the research in the next phase (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010). It is the process of filtering key information out of the text, which can later be used for comparison and content analysis. Obviously statements and formulations that are likely to contribute to the process of answering the research questions are of interest. An example of how transcript text is coded is given below:

#### Interview

Magnus: Yes, for sure, I drank a lot of Coca-Cola when I was a kid.

Annika: So, you were on fire due to the caffeine?

Magnus: Yes, maybe. I drank so much and ate so much chips during the weekends.....

Janina: Is that why you associate chips with Coca-Cola because you eat that with it?

Magnus: Yeah well, I associate Coca-Cola with Fridays also because every Friday I drank Coca-Cola and I ate this small kind of Pizza. Instead of having Saturday candy I had this. I didn't really like candy that much, so Coca-Cola and Pizza.

Annika: And it had to be Coca-Cola?

Magnus: No, not necessarily. I tried Sprite for a while but I didn't really enjoy as much as Coca-Cola. And I tried Trocarero....but I got tired of that. so I went back to Coca-Cola.

#### Code (key information)

Drank Coca-Cola a lot when he was a child

Drank it a lot in the weekends with chips

Coca-Cola with chips was his "Saturday-candy", something special

Replace Coca-Cola with other soft-drinks as well but went back to drinking Coca-Cola

As the researchers read through the interviews the second time key information (right side) from the interview (left side) was sieved out. For instant here we learn that the interviewee drank Coca-Cola when he was a child. This information might prove relevant in the analysis as it says something about the situational context of the use of the brand. The quote is coded and put into a table. The whole example of above table can be found in appendix I. Once the interview has been coded the researcher can move on to the next step.

Constant Comparison / Clustering

During the process of coding the interviewer then begins to view the codes from a comparative point of view. This means that the codes are analysed in terms of how they relate to each other. Some codes will relate to each other in the sense that they are considering the same topic, describe a certain state of mind or similar. These codes are then clustered and the cluster is given a name that describes the overall theme or topic. A cluster of code is also known as a category. The above illustrated code has later been clustered into a category name “consumption occasion” along with other similar codes describing the same subject. Now a category has emerged that describes the overall situational context of the interviewee’s use of the brand in questions.

<p><b>Consumption occasion</b></p>	<p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drank Coca-Cola a lot when he was a child</li> <li>○ Drank it a lot in the weekends with chips</li> <li>○ Coca-Cola with chips was his “Saturday-candy”, something special</li> <li>○ Drinking Coca-Cola was a ritual during his childhood</li> <li>○ Today it is not a ritual anymore</li> <li>○ He drinks Coca-Cola when he has the cravings</li> <li>○ Has the cravings at certain occasions such as during the weekends and watching football</li> <li>○ Coca-Cola is not a special treat or reward</li> <li>○ Liked Coca-Cola after sports when he was younger but not now because it is not healthy</li> <li>○ Prefers Coca-Cola in a glass with ice</li> <li>○ Likes a lemon with it if by chance available</li> </ul>
------------------------------------	--

The important thing to remember is that the comparison of codes is made by the researcher and it is his/her interpretation of similarities between the codes that forms the cluster i.e. the category and not necessarily shared characteristics between the codes (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010). The ultimate goal of this constant comparison is to generate a theoretical elaboration of the different codes, which in turn will simplify the final analysis of the interview text. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

## Memoing

The final step before the actual analysis can commence is the creation of memos based on the formed categories. *“Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding. . .”* (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010:105). The memos serve to assist the researcher in summarising his/her own thoughts about the coded categories. They are building blocks for reflections and can be used as the first step of analysis and interpretation (Bryman and Bell, 2007). To the above exemplified codes and categories the following memo was written:

*>> Again, Magnus would drink Coca-Cola when he has the craving for it but does not make it a daily habit. It seems it is something “special”, though not exactly a treat to him. Moreover, as he says, something “special” like a beer once in a while. He likes drinking Coca-Cola especially during weekends and when watching soccer. He remembers the ritual of drinking Coca-Cola with pizza on Fridays. He compares it to the Saturday candy and I have the feeling that it was very important to him (so he says too). I also have the feeling that nice memories come up when he is talking about it. <<*

The memo is the last step of sorting and evaluating categories. Through this process the researchers' might find that the significance of certain codes or categories to be less relevant in comparison to the overall outcome. The investigation and categorisation of the interviews differ as each case (interview) has to be considered individually in order to look into the individual brand perception as a dynamic interplay of influencing characteristics of consumer, brand and situation. In this respect, data can be coded and assigned to categories and analysed for each individual. As the coding, clustering and categorisation and the memos of the interviews are quite substantial in terms of page numbers, only the interview of Magnus and the working documents of the grounded theory can be found in appendix I and II.

### 3.6 Critical Reflection on Choice of Research Approach

#### 3.6.1 Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

Due to the nature of qualitative research this choice of method always underlies certain criticism. Because of this it was found important to discuss the reliability and validity of the proposed research method in this chapter. In terms of external reliability the proposed study employs some limitations as it is *“impossible to ‘freeze’ a social setting”* (Bryman and Bell, 2007:410) and neither the perception of a brand nor the resulting constructed personality for each individual participant. The reliability of the data gained from each interview cannot be proved through a repeated research as the record of perceptions, which the interviewees have when they are questioned, cannot be restored. This is because brand perception is a constantly revised phenomenon where each perception delivers new information and with that revises the brand’s personality as constructed by the consumer. However, that the exact interview situation and emerging data cannot be replicated stresses the proposition that brand perception and the constructed brand personality is highly individual, socially constructed and constantly revised.

Internal reliability will be reached for this thesis through extensive and in-depth discussions among the researchers about each interpretation drawn from the previously gathered data. This also serves the intention to try and keep personal biases out of the analysis and interpretation as far as possible. This is possible through detecting and becoming aware of personal preferences, values, preconceptions and assumptions, which are likely to guide interpretation of qualitative data. In case that no agreement about the coding and interpretation can be reached, this will be mentioned in the analysis chapter. However, as mentioned earlier, subjectivity is inevitable in an interpretive approach and as such objectivity can never be reached. Nevertheless, *“care must be taken to avoid overly superficial, simplistic, or naïve interpretations based on one’s taken-for-granted assumptions”* (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010:102).

Internal validity or credibility is likely to be reached through the chosen research design and qualitative approach, which will give the researchers a deep insight into experiences, views and perceptions of the study participants. Moreover, due to the theory driven approach of this thesis observations and their interpretations will be based on theory. This makes it possible for the researchers to identify variables and as such interpretations are expected to deliver credible

account, which can be utilised to draw conclusions and theoretical ideas. (Bryman and Bell, 2007)

External validity also named transferability deals with the question if the findings of the study in question are generalisable into other social settings (Bryman and Bell, 2007). As this thesis deals with the phenomenon of brand perception and the dynamic interplay of characteristics that are highly individual the results of this study are generalisable in the way that the dynamic interplay is assumed to be found in each individual's perception. However, as findings are expected not to be uniform for each study participant, this study is unlikely to generate any general patterns, which could be accounted for in a larger population, simply due to the subjectivity of any perception.

It has to be noted that the verification of a study's validity and reliability derives from a quantitative research approach, which for most parts is highly scientific in the way that it longs for numeric data. Seeing this, it seems logical to expect a study to be valid and reliable. Yet, as this study does not aim at scientifically and numerically proving what is "really" going on in the world but rather to gain deep understanding of the phenomenon under study, it is the social world and its meanings that are important (Grubs and Piantanida, 2010). Drawing on the work of Crotty (1998:28) and criticism of seeing the world through a scientific lens: *"Science imposes a very tight grid on the world it observes. The world perceived through the scientific grid is highly systematic, well-organised world. It is a world of regularities, constancies, uniformities, iron-clad laws, absolute principles. As such, it stands in stark contrast with the uncertain ambiguous, idiosyncratic, changeful world we know at first hand."*

In the context of this thesis, its ontology and epistemology, this view of the world through a scientific lens and aiming for numeric data is not suitable. This also means that this study cannot easily be verified under such terms as validity and reliability. However, this is not what this study is looking for in the first place, absolute principles or uniformities. It is on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity and the documentation and method of this study, which can eventually substantiate the further development of the conceptual model through the outlined empirical study and the gathered information.

### 3.6.2 Reflection on the Method of Data Collection and Limitations

The method of data collection holds advantages and disadvantages. The choice for semi-structured in-depth interviews is highly advantageous in respect to the research objective as it seems the only way to access rich data about the consumer's perception of brands. Only through personal interaction, the researcher is able to ask questions that directly or indirectly lead to information about influencing characteristics within the brand perception. Besides that, the semi-structured and open atmosphere in terms of time and way of questioning seems essential in order to "look" into the consumer's mind and determine his/her personality, which is essential to relate characteristics to situational characteristics and brand characteristics.

A disadvantage of the method of data collection is that only two brands with a strong market presence will be used in this research. Although these are active in different industries and markets it is a clear disadvantage of this very time consuming method, in the context of the limited time that is available for this study. Furthermore, getting to know another person in the time available for this thesis and each interview is of course not likely. The researchers might be able to get a superficial picture of the participant's character but will not be able to grasp all facets of his/her personality. Although the participant's character is a central aspect of this study, it is believed that this primary and somewhat sketchy personality picture will be sufficient for the purpose of this thesis. Future research might however chose a research design that is more suitable to really dig deep into a person's character, e.g. ethnography. This is also advisable in order to be able to investigate the consumer's perceptions in the moment when they actually happen and look at the way that brand personality is constructed in this process. In this study the researchers are only able to trigger a recall of perceptions to investigate the interplay of characteristics, but it is unlikely that new clues will be delivered during the interviews that could initialise a new perception, unless the interviewee is confronted with a cue that was not part of his/her record of perception before. The fact that the researchers can only recall perceptions leaves some room for errors as it might not always be completely clear which interplay of characteristics really did play a role in a specific perception due to the time that has passed.

### 3.7 Interview Results

This part contains the results of the interviews and the categories that emerged from the content analysis. Wherever the researchers could see a correlation between the derived categories from the interviews with the characteristics of the consumer, brand or situation as mentioned in the conceptual model they were connected and related to each other in order to form the participants' interplays of brand perception. To enhance understanding, the interplays are visualised through the conceptual model.

#### 3.7.1 Apple

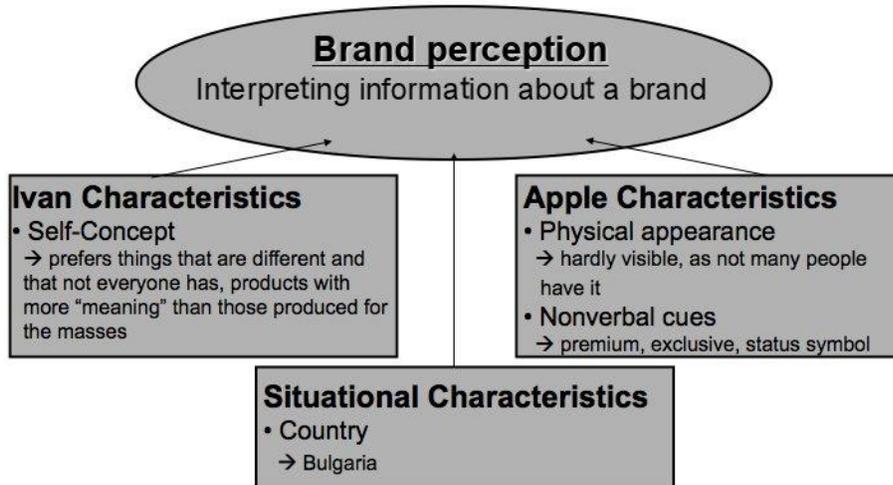
##### Interview Ivan

Ivan is 24 years old and comes from Bulgaria. He did his bachelor in international economic relations at the University of Varna, Bulgaria and is currently doing his master in international marketing and brand management in Lund, Sweden where he has been living for the past year. Through moving to Sweden his environment has changed completely, first of all because Bulgaria and Sweden are very different countries, not only culturally but also economically. The difference in Ivan's perception when moving to Sweden is one of the most interesting interplays.

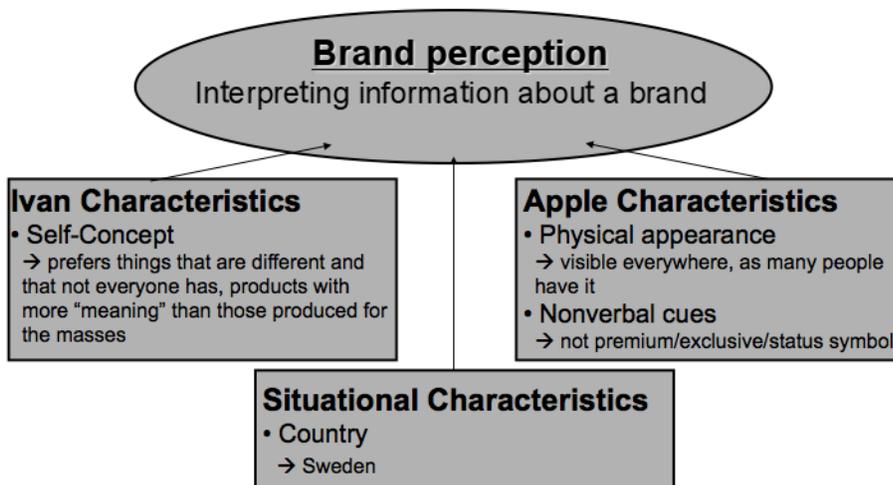
In the *situation/context* of *Bulgaria* one can see an interplay between Apple's *nonverbal cue* to be a premium, exclusive product and a status symbol, which also shows through the *physical cue* that Apple products are just not visible all around. He gives an example of what he considers to be a status symbol as he explains how he sees Apple in this category when being in Bulgaria, "*it is a status symbol when not everybody has it... " – "...in Bulgaria not everybody has an Apple".* It positively interrelates with Ivan's *self-concept* to prefer things that not everyone has, "*I like things that are different and not everybody has. Like Ferrari, everybody has a Ferrari, I go for Ford, it is different*", things that have more "meaning" than products for the masses, which in his view are just disposables, "*mass products, there is no love for the products, no involvement. They are disposables*". In the *situation* of *Sweden* however, due to the fact that far more people have Apple products in this country, the *nonverbal cue* of Apple changes into rather being a product for the masses than exclusive or a status symbol (according to his definition). Along with this comes the *physical cue* that Apple products can literally be seen everywhere. "*It was kind of a status symbol because in Bulgaria not everybody has an Apple, not like here (Sweden). Here*

everyone seems to have an Apple. You can see it all over the place”. In this situation the brand’s characteristics negatively interrelate to Ivan’s previously mentioned *self-concept*.

Apple as a status symbol



Apple as “everyone’s symbol”

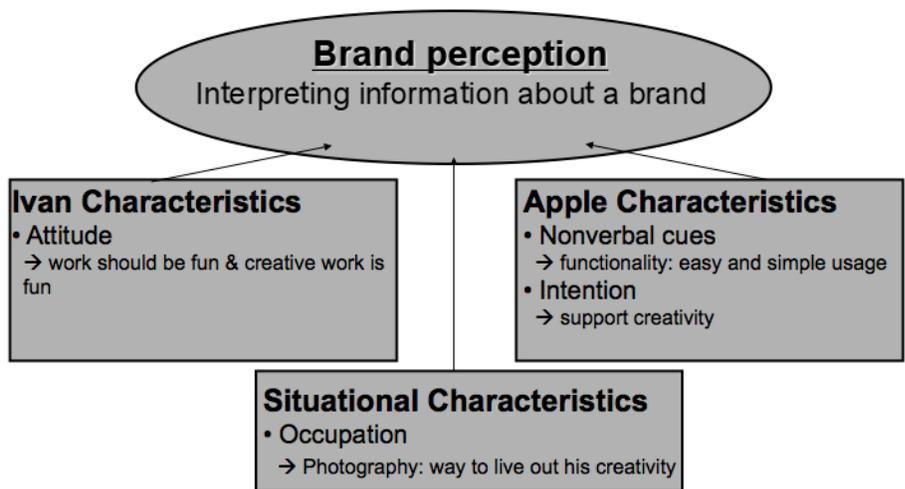



---

The brand’s *nonverbal cue* of great functionality, to make the use of Apple devices easy and simple “it (Apple) makes it easy with all those fancy applications” and its *intention* to support

creativity, “*it (Apple) facilitates creativity, that’s for sure*” interrelate with Ivan’s positive *attitude* towards creative work “*if you can be creative (at work) it is still fun*”. Ivan’s occupation as a *photographer* can be seen as a *situation characteristic* as this is when he lives out his creativity and personality “*you create stuff, express yourself*” and in that context it can be interpreted from his statements that he prefers things that are easy and simple and do not hinder but support his creative way of thinking and self-expression.

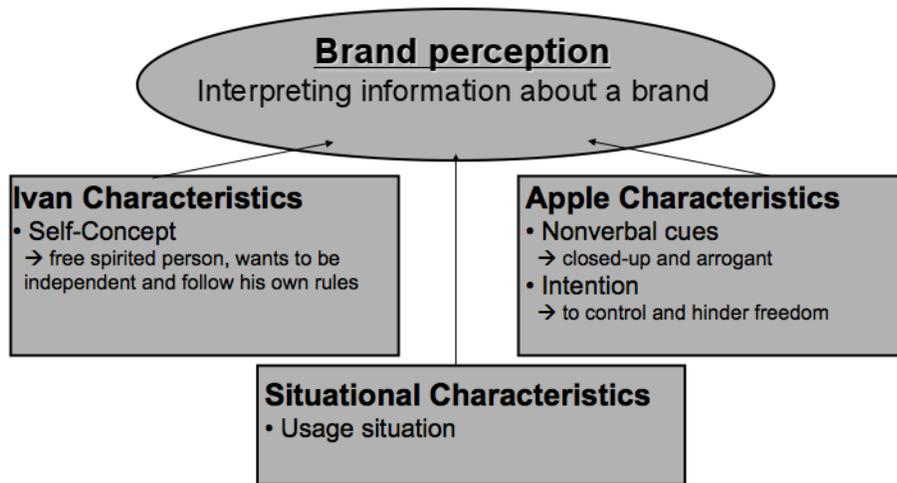
Turning work into fun



During the interview Ivan said that Apple has a very closed-up system in the sense that the user is only able to install and use the kind of software that the brand approved for to be used on Apple products and not just any that the user might prefer, “*Apple is closed, they want to bind everything to their own applications.*” With that they control all the functions of their devices and also the user himself/herself, “*I think Apple is arrogant and controls the people. They think they can do what they want since they only include the software they want. They control all functionalities and tell companies like Flash, if you don’t do like we want, you cannot use our applications.*” This interplay shows the *nonverbal cue* of Apple as being closed-up and arrogant in the way that they think they can do whatever they want and not listen to the needs of the user. Moreover it is Apple’s *intention* to control and hinder the freedom of its users and Ivan himself. These characteristics interrelate with Ivan’s *self-concept* as a free spirited person, who wants to

be independent and rather follow his own rules than those of others. This is illustrated in his reasoning for his ambition to be self-employed one day, “because of freedom, you are your own boss, you decide things, you are free, you can do whatever you want” – “you don’t have to follow any rules, except of your own laws”. This interplay can be seen in every usage situation, as this is the context in which Apple shows its constrains.

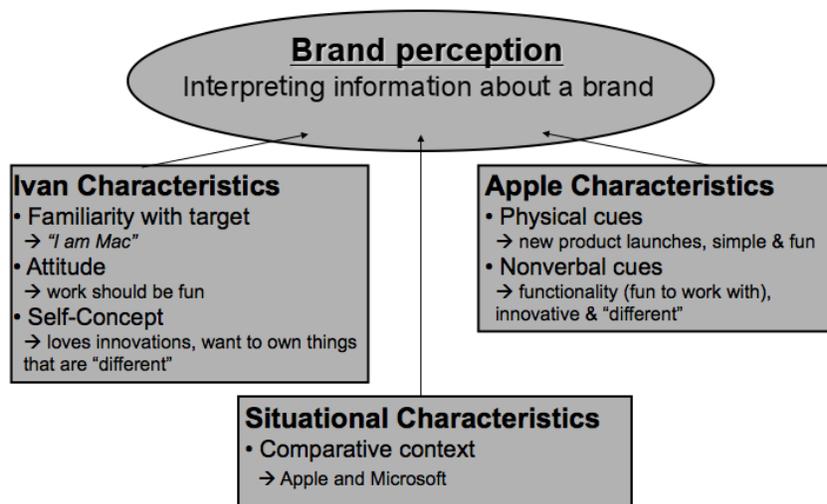
The arrogant dictator



The *physical cue* of the brand to regularly launch new products (e.g. iPad) plays a role within this interplay. Additional important characteristics are the brand’s *nonverbal cues* of fun functionality “Apple applications are just fun to work with” and to be very innovative and “different” in their innovations, “it is a wonderful innovation because it is again different. Apple always has the most ground breaking and innovative innovations”. These interrelate with Ivan and his familiarity with the brand. He says about himself “I am Mac” so he sees himself as a person very similar to Apple as a brand, in sharing attitudes, beliefs and values. What is shared between the brand and Ivan could be his already mentioned *attitude* that work should be fun. Additionally his *self-concept* of being a person who loves innovations can be seen as similar to the brand, which can be interpreted through his choice of strong and emotional words when he talks about the new iPad, as he says, “it is a wonderful innovation”. Moreover, he easily gets tired of “worn out” things and because of that wants to own things that are different and innovative, “I like

*things that are different and innovative” - “I wanted something different, I always want something different. I hate getting used to something. And the PC was boring for me”. This interplay can be seen in the situation of a comparative context, as Ivan sees all these shared characteristics with Apple, but does clearly not see them with Microsoft, e.g. when he talks about the launch of the Apple iPad, “Microsoft would have never done this because they are not innovative and stand still”.*

“I am Mac” – a continuous reinvention

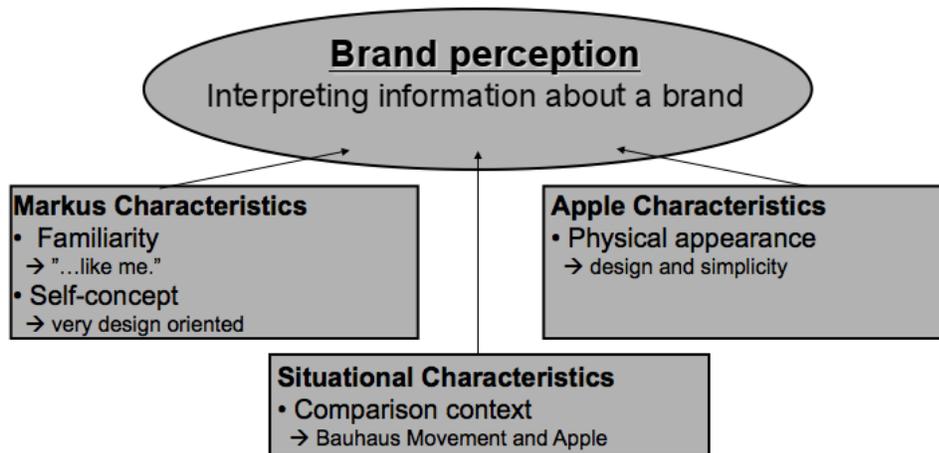


Interview Markus

Markus is 28 years old and from Germany. In Germany he studied business administration and he came to Sweden to finish his master degree in marketing. Markus is very cultural aware and has taken a great liking to the Scandinavian way as oppose to the German which he considers hierarchical, conservative, and boring. He is very fascinated with the Bauhaus Movement, an architectural movement from the early 20th century which is characterised in its simplicity. He says: *“I like it because it doesn’t distract you from yourself. It is just a necessity that you have a house for example but I would like to put more emphasis on things that are different from the main thing. I like to have a house or a specific product that has a specific style and this Bauhaus style is of course the background of all these contemporary trends of Zen, Feng Shui.....It’s all related somehow.”* And goes on as he compares it to Scandinavia: *“the Bauhaus style is*

*influenced also a bit by the Scandinavian style. You have very, very basic forms. I think the main slogan of this style is “form follows function”. In a comparison context between Bauhaus and Apple he compares the physical appearance of the great design and the simplicity. His own self-concept is that he too is very design oriented and there is a familiarity with the brand which he describes as someone “...like me.” When asked what he meant by that he described it as: “...that is unique....(laugh) No, the categorise as I already mentioned before is being fashionable and design oriented.”*

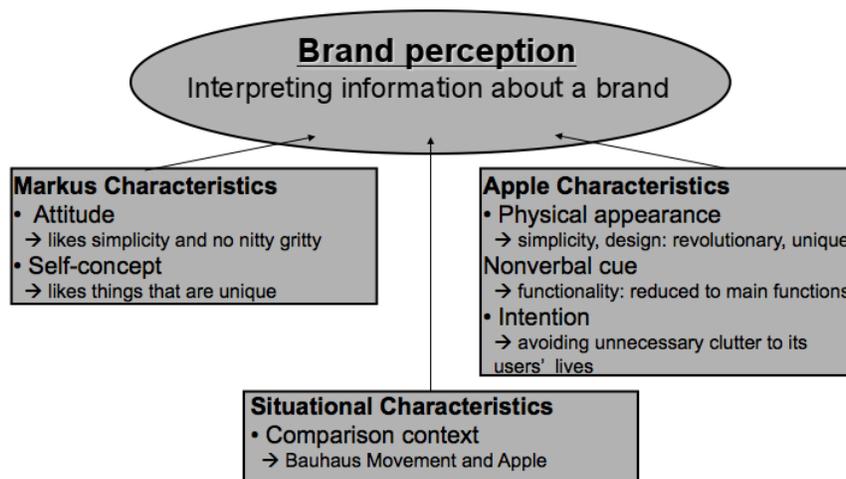
Apple is like Bauhaus, Apple is “...like me.”



Markus’ love of the Bauhaus design displays his *attitude* towards everything simplistic; “*With no nitty gritty details, it is very reduced...It doesn’t conflict or contradict with other things that I am interested in such as books or art....*” In this *comparison context* of Bauhaus with Apple he chose the Mac Book Air because it had been “*reduced to the main functions*”. As such the brand’s *nonverbal cue* of functionality is important in this interplay. In this sense one could also interpret the brand’s *intention* not adding any unnecessary clutter to its users’ lives. Furthermore in his *self-concept* Markus prefers things that are a little unique and far from mainstream: “*It’s just that I want to have a unique style in general from different perspectives. I like to buy specific things that are for instant from Asia and this can still fit into the Bauhaus house*”. The Mac Book Air was in Markus’ view: “*quiet new and revolutionary, this thin model. There has never been such a thin and light way laptop produced. And I wanted to have a Mac because, well I had the iPod*

before and I was kind of fascinated by the design... and the specific benefits of the Mac Book Air is that it is so thin and you can carry it everywhere and it's eye catchy". Here the Apple's physical appearance facilitates the unique style which Markus is looking for. It is revolutionary because of its thinness and weight. It is something that has never been done before and the fascinating design is eye catchy and people notice it.

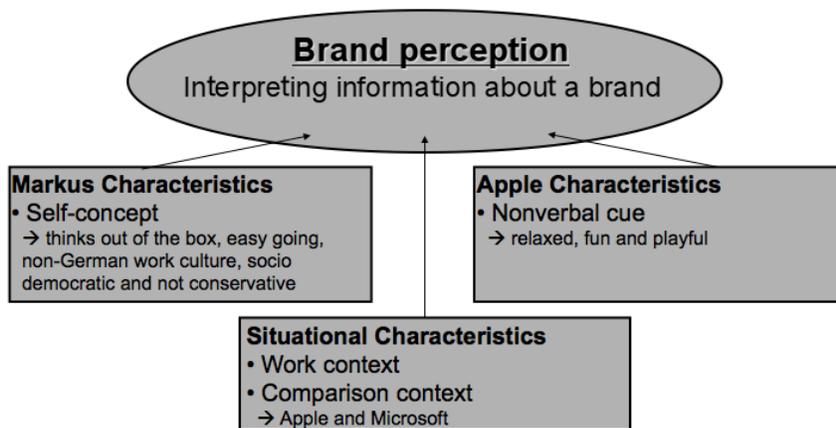
Not nitty-gritty, but unique and simple



Markus also compares the Scandinavian work culture with the German as he says; *They (Scandinavian companies) have more flat hierarchies, less conservative approaches and more team work. What I dislike in my experience before is that there are really tough companies in these old fashion traditional German companies like Henkel and Beiersdorf.* In a work context Markus' self-concept does not correlate with his concept of the typical German work culture, "I think that it is quiet important when it is a job that is more open, like marketing for instant where you have to step out of the box sometimes". He does not see himself to be quite as "rigid" as he sees the big German companies. Instead he is fascinated with Scandinavia, Bauhaus, and social democratic movements; "I knew about Scandinavian design before and new about Scandinavian fashion and specific social-political background and I thought that was very interesting" Markus own self-concept is that he is not so much a "...hard core strict career guy... I take opportunity as they come along". One could say that he is more dynamic in his self-concept compare to how he

sees German companies. “...thinking about that, I thought it was too monotone. I wanted to get another or different experience....I wanted to try something else before I started something new. Now I’m studying here in Sweden and I am still open about what it is I want to do.” With this *self-concept* in mind one can see how Markus compares himself to Apple products as he also compares them to Windows products in a *work and comparison context*; “... the whole Windows world is more related to actually working and Mac has more the relaxed, fun characteristics.” - “Normally at work you have this PC and Windows based items and well because it’s common. The majority of companies are using this”. Here he compares the *nonverbal cues* of Windows and Apple. When asked to describe the Apple systems he says: “It has a more playful, more relaxed attitude.” - “Yeah, it’s just more fun”. When however asked how he would characterise Windows he says: “It looks more boring and more conservative.” Here he sees Apple’s *nonverbal cues* as being fun and creative where Windows’ are boring and conservative. Here one can see that Markus compares himself to Apples creative and easy going spirit as oppose to Windows which connotes work, conservatism and rigid functionality.

Laid back and easy going

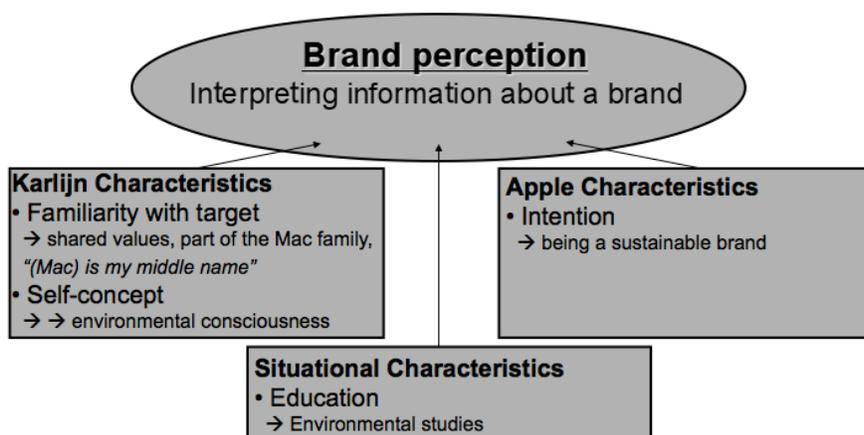


Interview Karlijn

Karlijn is 24 years old and original from the Netherlands where she studied business administration and finished with a master in finance. She came to Sweden one year ago to earn a master in environmental studies. She sees herself as being quite environmental and admits that: “I have a higher sustainability conscious than other people”. This is expressed in a very high sustainable awareness in her daily life and consumption which becomes evident during the course

of the interview: *“I try to buy organic meat instead. I think it is better to buy meat once or twice a week and then buy something good, some organic meat”*. Also when choosing technological products her sustainable conscious is alert: *“The last one I had (talking about a PC) was a Lenovo which is a brand that scores high on sustainability so I also look a lot into those things.”* - *“For my sustainable conscious it would also just be ridiculous to change a working iPod with a new one. So I won’t do it”*. In the *situational context* of her education being environmental studies she says: *“Because I am doing this study I want to do something positive for the environment”*. Karlijn’s *self-concept* is to be someone who actively things about her carbon footprint and how she can do right by the environment. When asked about which companies she considers to have a high sustainable consciousness she mentions Apple and that her Mac Book was bought for the same reason: *“they make a lot of sustainable reporting and trying to upgrade the system by doing this “end-of-lifecycle”, it’s called. Here you take the computer and provide the service of actually treating the waste or using parts of the electronics and putting into new products”*. Here Apple’s good *intentions* as a sustainable brand which recycles its used products helps Karlijn emphasise her *self-concept* as someone who cares about the environment. This also strengthens her *familiarity* with the brand as she sees Apple having the same values as her. Her *familiarity* also shown in her decision upon buying her Mac Book Pro she says: *“I thought maybe it is time to get into the Mac family and try it out.”* and also claims that: *“(Mac) is my middle name”*.

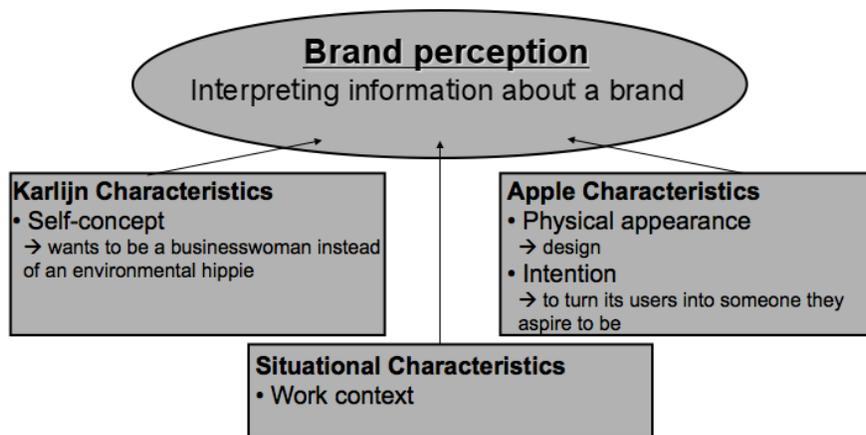
Apple and me - an environmental conscious family



Though she seems very convinced by the environmental movement there are some contradictions in Karlijn’s *self-concept*. She says that: *“I don’t think of myself as an environmental activist”* and

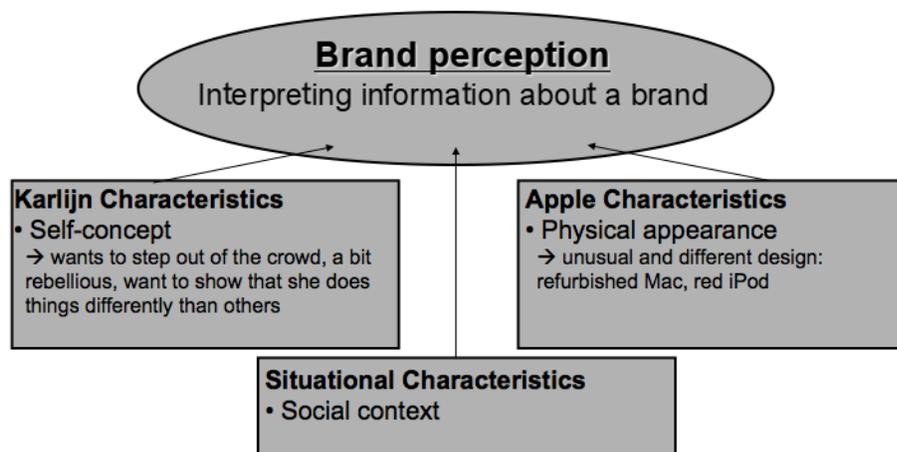
though she respects the work that the people do she could never see herself working for NGOs: *I'm not really interested in that. I think that it is good that people want to work for them but I don't think I am the right person for that. I don't have these extreme thoughts and I am not an activist*". Instead in a professional *context* she sees herself as a business woman combining her two masters of finance and environmental studies: *"So I would like to combine it or the finance of sustainable products because I think it is a strong combination. Often people with an environmental background they don't really have the business insight or feeling"*. She also goes on saying: *"I don't think that we can just do everything for the environment when it becomes super costly and then it is not realistic either."* - *"I still don't see myself as being a hippie or something but I think that I have listened more to people that are different than me I can see that it makes sense what they say as well. And I have learned to respect it more"*. Through this statement it can be interpreted that the environmental consciousness does not overpower the businesswoman in her. Also in terms of appearance she is leaning more towards the business side as she says: *"...when I think business woman I think about someone who sued up to go to work. I like the more formal clothes. And being a bit tough and efficient, being clear in what you want and what you say"*. Here Karlijn uses the *physical appearance* of Apple, as especially the product design helps her communicate who she is and who she wants to be as she believes that people choose Apple to *"move into a higher class or become a certain type of person"*. In this respect it can also be interpreted that it is Apple's *intention* to turn its users into a person they aspire to be. The interplay is a less conscious one yet it can still be identified within a *work context*.

Apple turns you into who you want to be



In a *social context* she likes to “step out of the crowd” and “express myself for me but not show off” instead of being mainstream. About her own *self-concept* she says about herself: “a bit funky and a little bit evil, maybe rebellious. I guess I don’t always have to be perceived as a sweet soft girl. I think I am stronger, that’s how I perceive myself”. At the same time however she also likes to dress formal and stylish but says: “There is a difference between formal and informal but formal does not have to be boring”. When interacting with other people she likes people to see that she does things differently. To express this she has for instant changed the *physical appearance* of her Mac Book Pro as she has added a sticker on the front of the computer. As a way of making it her own and something no one else has: “When you have a Mac, it is still owned by Mac but when you refurbish it you can make it your Mac”. Also when she bought her new iPod she decided to get a red iPod because: “I only bought this because you couldn’t buy this in the stores in the Netherlands. And people now tell me “oh, you have a red one” “is it from the AIDS edition”, so people know”.

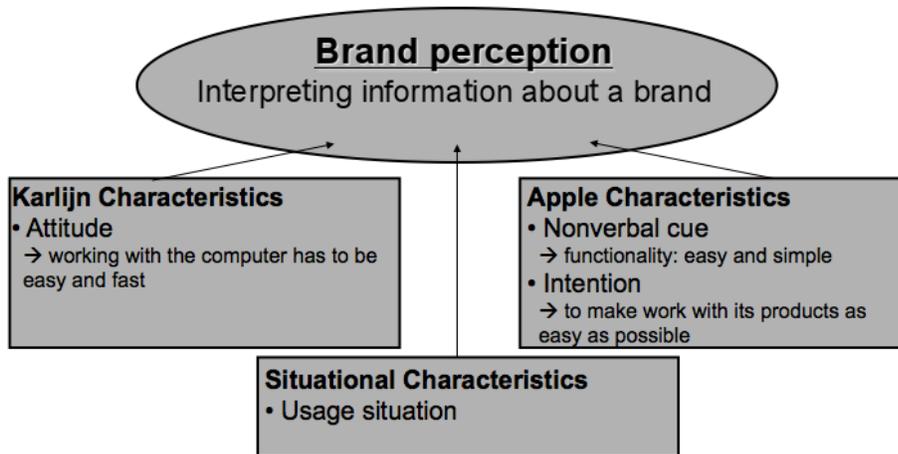
A tool to step out of the crowd



In a *usage situation* she particular enjoys the *nonverbal cue* of Apple’s functionalities and the brand’s *intention* to make working with its products as easy as possible. This interrelates with her *attitude* towards working with the computer: it has to be easy and fast. Here she says: “You can use your hands to scroll and change to different screens. And often when I am working and I am not typing but just looking for things I am just working with one hand on the mouse pad. It goes way quicker.....I am just working with 4 fingers.... It is really addictive because it looks really

nice, I think, the Mac Book and with all its functions.”

### Apple makes work easy



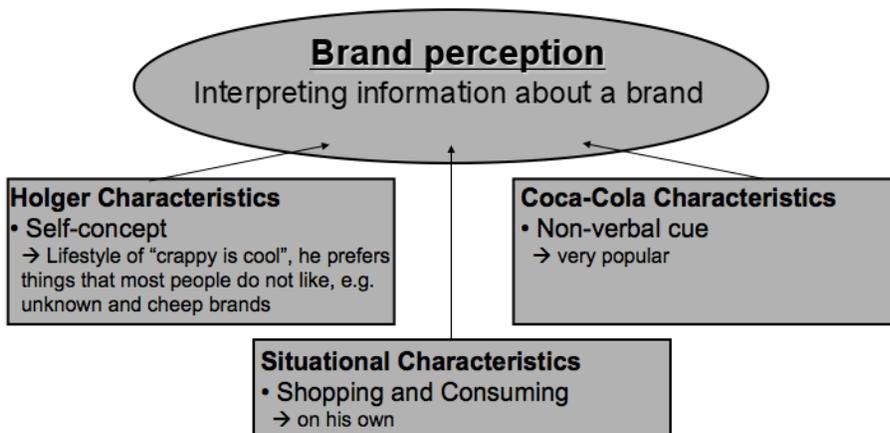
### 3.7.2 Coca-Cola

#### Interview Holger

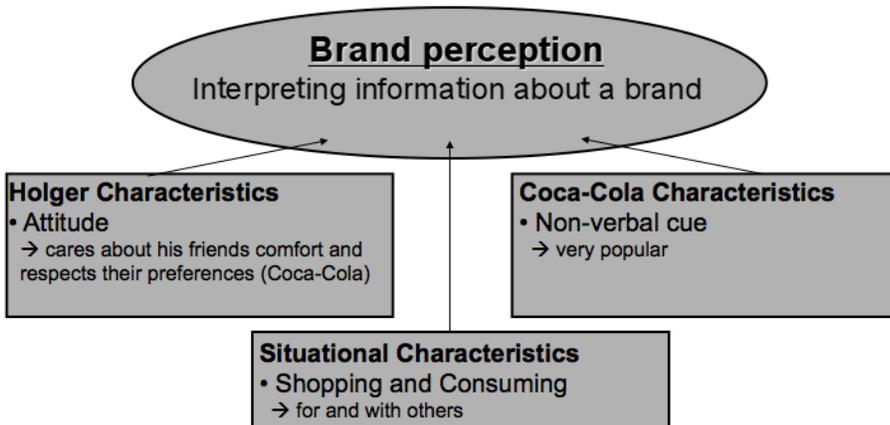
Holger is 32 years old, German and a PhD student at Lund University in the department of engineering. Due to the fact that Holger is certain that taste does not differ among Coke brands, he tends to buy no-name brands and cares little about the Coca-Cola brand. Furthermore it is very distinct that he likes things that not everybody likes or prefers, due to the fact that they are not luxurious or fancy but rather cheap. This shows when he talks about the very cheap beer he normally buys: *“I think at first (I bought it) because of the price but now I think it is cool to drink this crappy beer”*. For him doing unusual things is a kind of lifestyle as he says for instance *“crappy is cool”* and refers to his small student room and no-name Coke brands that nobody would drink: *“Yes true (it is like a lifestyle for me). It is a bit like I am cool enough to drink it.”* In this respect, one can speak of a *nonverbal cue* of the brand, the popularity of Coca-Cola, which Holger is not attracted to. It seems appropriate to relate this to the consumer’s *self-concept* which includes that “crappy and cheap” and buying absolutely unknown brands is sort of a lifestyle. The *context* in which this interplay takes place is a usual *shopping and consuming situation* in which he shops for and consumes by himself.

In another *context*, when it comes to buying Coke for guests and friends for a party Holger will only buy the Coca-Cola brand as he outlines “... if I have a birthday party for example I would not buy the cheap stuff because it looks ugly...I want to give my friends good quality. And their comfort is important for me and I don’t want them to think that I might have saved money on their “well-being”...” In this case he respects that most people like the Coca-Cola brand and rather dislike no-name brands. Therefore, one can identify an interplay of Holger’s caring and respectful *attitude* towards friends, the brand’s *nonverbal cue* of being a favoured Coke brand and the *situation* of *consuming with others and buying for others*. Although Holger’s *self-concept* is still the same, his *attitude* towards his friends is dominant and plays a bigger role in this context.

“Crappy is cool” – Coca-Cola is not...

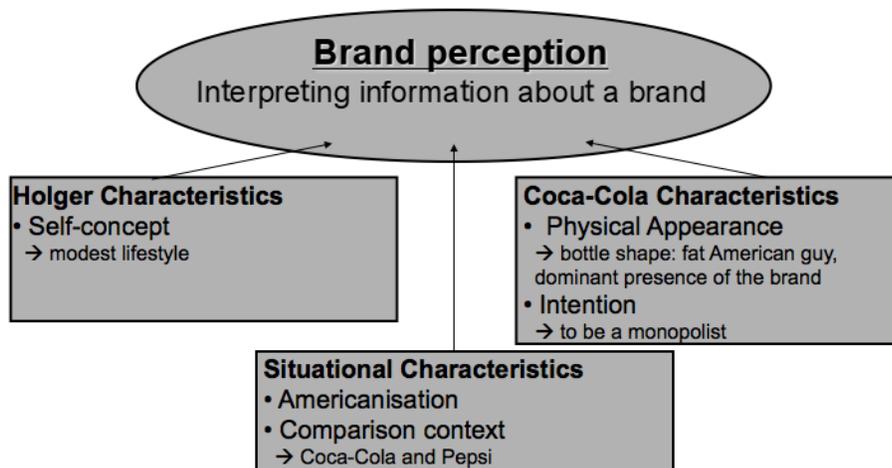


...but it serves his friends’ comfort.



When seeing the Coca-Cola bottle, its shape and also thinking of the brand Holger associates it with a fat American guy, “when I look at the bottle I straight away think about a fat American guy going into McDonalds and ordering 1 Litre of that stuff with his menu. It is just gross”. In this respect he also explains: “To me they are Monopolist like Microsoft. So I don’t really like them, although I don’t know really why. I just don’t. I guess it’s because they are so big.” Moreover he describes: “I think the most stylish bottle is definitely Pepsi. So much cooler shape than Coca-Cola. And it’s just not so omnipresent. Coca-Cola is like everywhere!!!! And I feel like Pepsi is not”. It seems that these perceptions put him off from buying the Coca-Cola brand. His statements seem to agree and relate to his personal character of being a guy not caring about conveying a certain image to the outer world e.g. through consumption and living in a fairly modest way, even rather basic “I think I am modest, because I live in this small shitty room, I have no car, only a terrible bike. But I am really happy like that. I prefer it that way” and being down to earth, “I think that Pepsi is in a way more modest and not such a huge monopolistic company. I think I generally rather prefer the ‘small’ things and not so much the huge all-controlling monopolistic things. I am rather down to earth I would say, and I think those companies are not.” Consequently one can determine an interplay of the consumer’s *self-concept* of having a modest lifestyle, the *physical appearance* of the brand in shape of the bottle and its dominant presence, and the brands *intention* of being a monopolist. Furthermore, one can assume that *Americanisation* plays a role influencing Holger’s thoughts and as such represents the *context* in the interplay of perception, additional to a *comparison context* with Pepsi.

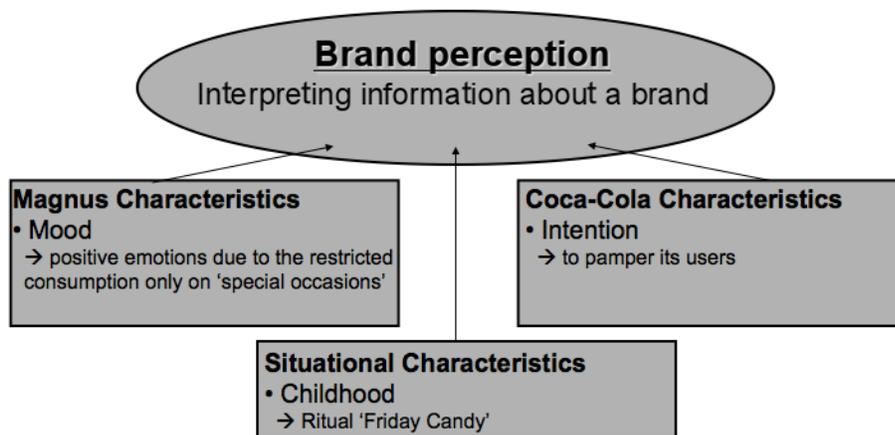
The fat, American bully



### Interview Magnus

Magnus is 24 years old, Swedish and currently studies geology in Lund, Sweden. During the interview it became clear that his childhood plays an important role in his perception of Coca-Cola. Magnus remembers and explains his childhood ritual of drinking Coca-Cola with pizza on Fridays: *“I associate Coca-Cola with Fridays also because every Friday I drank Coca-Cola and I ate this small kind of Pizza. Instead of having Saturday candy I had this. I didn’t really like candy that much, so Coca-Cola and Pizza... I loved that ritual and I think it would be good for a kid to have a ritual. It’s the same as with the Saturday candy...”* It seems that positive feelings arise when he talks about this situation. In this case, the *childhood and the mentioned ritual* can be assigned to the *context* of the interplay. These memories generate a positive *mood*, as in his childhood the consumption of Coca-Cola was restricted to one special occasion per week Coca-Cola became something special, influencing the general perception. In this interplay the brand’s *intention* to pamper Magnus plays a role, visualised in the model below.

### “Friday Candy” – a treat once a week

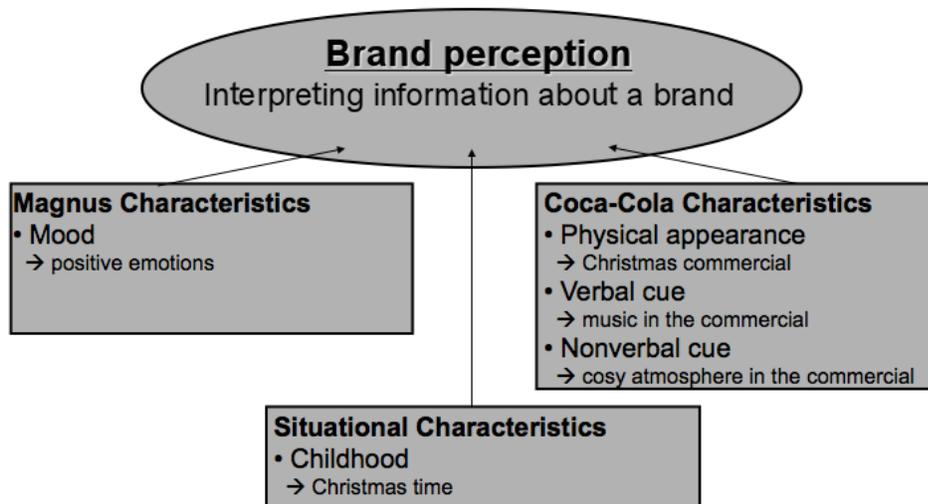


---

When asking Magnus about associations with the Coca-Cola brand, he talks quite emotionally about the Christmas commercials he remembers from his childhood. He says *“It’s so cosy with all the nice lights and houses. I just want to be inside there.”* One can distinctly identify a strong positive *mood* of Magnus that is affected by remembering the *physical appearance* in terms of the Christmas commercial and the *nonverbal cue* of the cosy atmosphere within the commercial

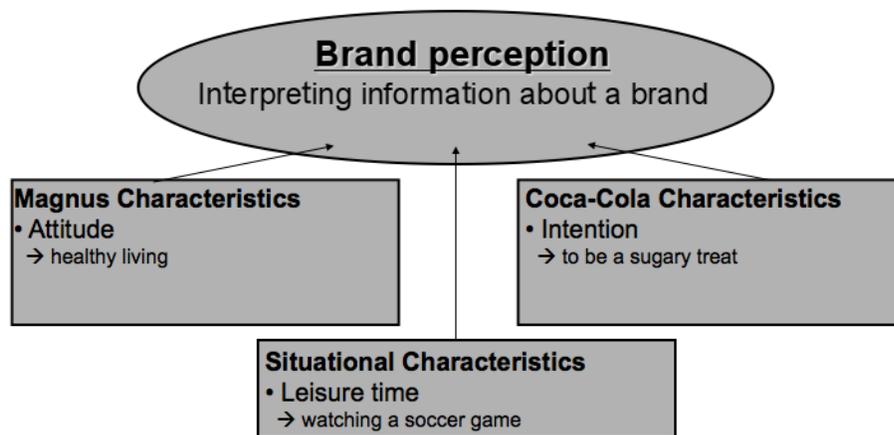
(e.g. nice lights and houses). In this setting he also mentions the music in the commercial and describes it as “*the sound of Christmas*”, which can be seen as a *verbal cue* of the brand. Again, the *context* is very likely *the childhood and Christmas time*, which can be expected to have a positive impact on Magnus’ *mood* as well.

Cosy Christmas memories



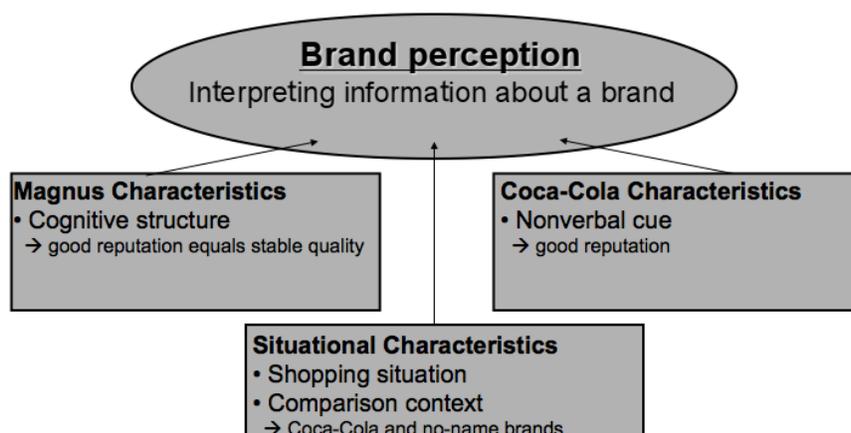
Magnus is a very active and sportive person as he plays a lot of football and goes to the gym regularly. He is aware of the fact that Coca-Cola is not very healthy. Nevertheless he treats himself once a week to Coca-Cola and seems to consider it as somewhat special: “*I could get that craving especially during the weekends. But also when there is some kind of a big event, Champions League for example. I could get the cravings for Coca-Cola and just sit down and relax instead of drinking alcohol. So, I think it is really good to drink Coca-Cola and watch football.*” He says that it is a better alternative to treating oneself to alcohol during the week. Magnus might unconsciously be attracted by the brand’s *intention* of being a sugary treat and values it as such. It can be interpreted that his *attitude* of living a healthy life makes him perceive Coca-Cola as a treat. This interplay can be seen in the *context* of *leisure time* and the *situation* of *watching a soccer game*, during which he treats himself to a Coca-Cola.

A special retreat while watching soccer



Magnus holds a strong opinion about the quality and good reputation of the Coca-Cola brand. He explains that the trust he has in Coca-Cola derives from the good reputation, which makes him loyal to the brand by saying *“Also, maybe I buy Coca-Cola because I know what I get, I know that I get quality. If I buy the Willy’s one, I am not really sure if the quality is at the same level all the time. It could be once really good or another time really, really bad... I hear about Coca-Cola – there is a lot people liking it, so I rather take Coca-Cola just because I know the people like it and it’s good taste.”* Even though he liked the no-name brand after a blind taste even more he would stick to Coca-Cola because he is certain that the quality level stays the same whereas the quality of the no-name brand could be unstable. Considering this judgement it can be said that the *nonverbal cue* of the brand in terms of good reputation is very strong and relate to the *cognitive structure* of Magnus who thinks a good reputation equals stable quality. This interplay can be seen in the *context* of a *shopping situation* and a *direct comparison to no-name brands*.

You know what you get



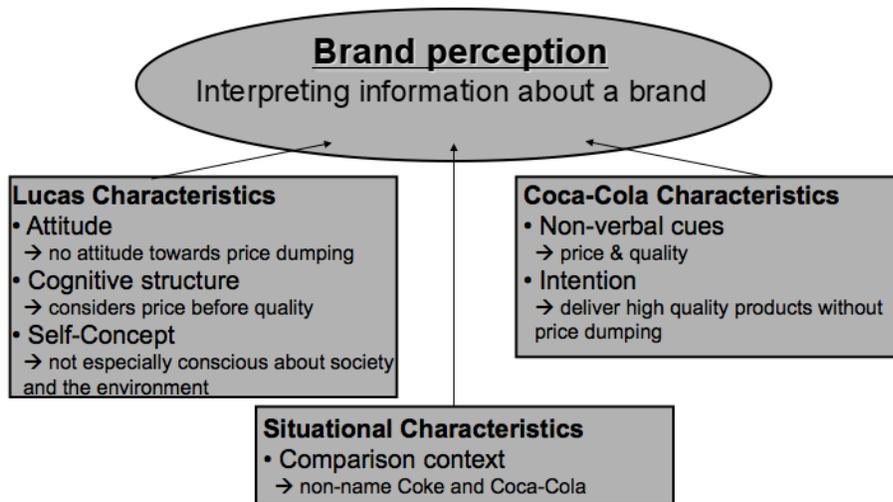
### Interview Lucas

Lucas is 23 years old, French and did his bachelor in business management studies in Edinburgh, Scotland. Moreover he spent a semester abroad in Nepal. Currently he is doing his master in environmental studies in Lund, Sweden. This interview was very interesting due to the way Lucas has changed his views and way of living during his life. Especially when he changed the focus of his education. He became more conscious about environmental topics and the problems of our society that every consumer fosters due to the way he/she lives, and his responsibility as a human being on this planet. *“I realise that if I want to make myself useful and if I want to go to the roots to how I could make my life useful with the time that I got, then having an understanding of how the environment works and how society influences this environment is crucial.”* The clear change at one point in his life and his very distinct *attitude* and *self-concept* can be seen in many of the interplays.

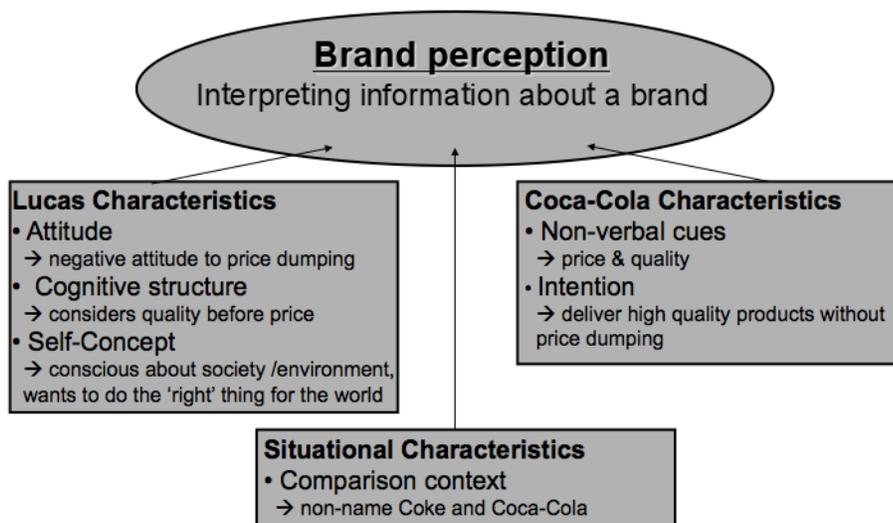
The *nonverbal cues* of price and quality of Coca-Cola and the brand's *intention* to deliver quality products directly without price dumping relate to Lucas' *self-concept*. He wants to be a good person who tries to do the 'right' thing for the world and society in every decision. This can show in the following citations: *“Mhm, well doing as much as I can to be a good person first, because it's a question of personal moral”* and *“I think...what defines you is not what you are right now or what you are born into but the choices you make and the movement and process you make. So what you can be held responsible for is the directions towards which I am going and the results of these decisions.”* This is why he would chose Coca-Cola over a cheap no-name brand as he has the *attitude* that it is not good for society if prices are pressured down. He does not want to be a person who engages forcing companies into price dumping, so in this case Coca-Cola interrelates with his *self-concept* in a positive way in the *comparison context* to cheap no-name brands, which can be seen as a *situation characteristic*. Another part of this interplay is Lucas' *cognitive structure* and pattern of thinking, as he does not firstly consider the price but the quality. Interestingly, before his change of views, according to his *cognitive structure* he would have primarily considered the characteristic of price before the quality in a *comparison context* and according to this chosen the no-name Coke over Coca-Cola. *“I bought that (no-name brands) for a long time until I realised that it had consequences on the overall industry because you drive prices down so you force the producers to produce crap because only price matters and not quality. So now my consumption has changed from the cheapest to depending on what product*

and the quality I want...I start with the quality and than try to find the cheapest with that quality.” The following models show the differences in the interplays within Lucas brand perception from the “Lucas of the past” who was not very conscious about topics regarding problems of the society or the environment and the “Lucas today” who is very conscious and accordingly very informed about these kinds of topics.

An over-priced brand



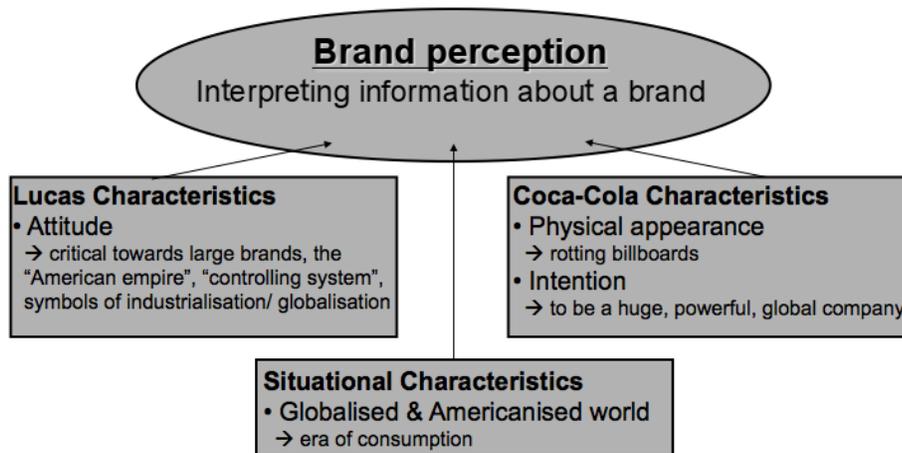
Reasonable price for good quality



A very interesting *physical cue* was Lucas description of the rotting Coca-Cola billboards and advertising he saw in Nepal and the brand's *intention* to be a huge, powerful, global company. *"To me Coca-Cola is a symbol of the industrial world. I made a whole collection of pictures of Coca-Cola when I was in Nepal. Cause you can see their advertisement absolutely everywhere. There is even a Temple Coca-Cola. And you know that was in the 80s and now it got old and all of it is falling apart and rotting. And it is just beautiful to take pictures of it because it is like an era that's finished and it is like an empire at its end."* It interrelates with his critical *attitude* towards large brands such as Coca-Cola, the powerful American empire, *"I can not separate Coca-Cola of the idea of...lets say the American empire"* and symbol of industrialisation and globalisation, *"It (Coca-Cola) was one of the first brands like McDonald to really represent globalisation."* He sees these big, mostly American corporations as part of the "controlling system" from which he tries to escape.

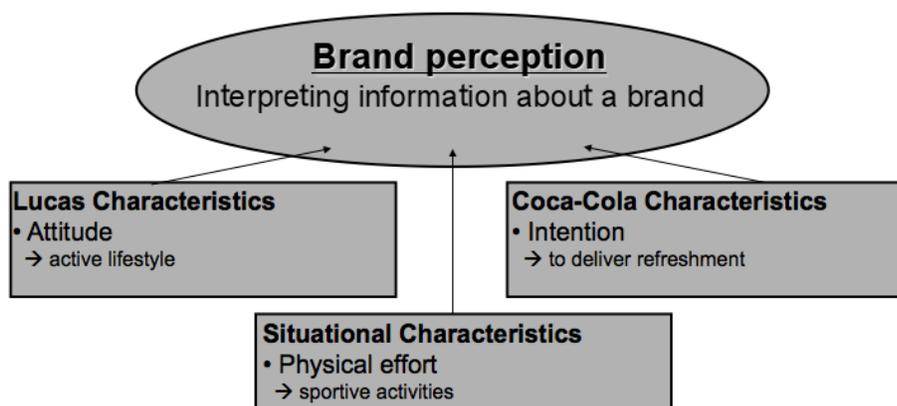
This showed when he talked about the moment in which he first realised that he needed to change something about the way he was living. He was watching the movie "The Corporation" by Joel Bakan, a critical documentary about the modern-day corporation and its influence and behaviour on society and the world, *"I didn't cry but I ... it just turned my belly upside down and I realised that there was something wrong in the way that I was slowly incorporated into the system and I thought that I needed to do something about it" – " ...that if I wasn't careful I would loose control over the way I evolved and the choices I was taking."* But he also feels that the era of Coca-Cola is coming to its end. Lucas perceives in the *context* of a *globalised world* maybe also *Americanised world* within an era of consumption. In this interplay, the rotting Coca-Cola billboards to Lucas become a symbol of the end of the era of limitless consumption, *"Simply the decline of an era for Coca-Cola but more generally, with my background, like an end of an overall era with consumption that had no limits. But that is my own personal idea behind it."*

## A symbol of the end of an era of consumption



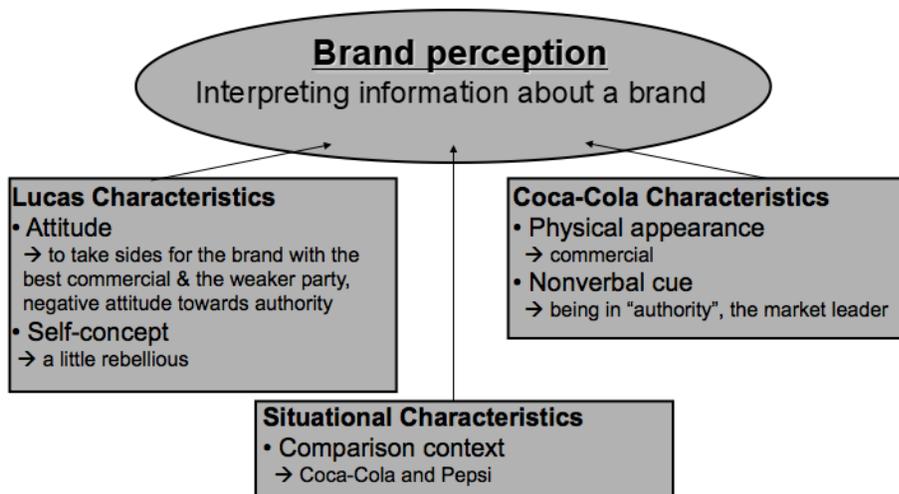
The *intention* of Coca-Cola, meaning that the product delivers "refreshment" interrelates with Lucas *attitude* for an active lifestyle. This is especially visible in the *context* of *sportive activity*. When he seeks refreshment after working out and feels extremely thirsty, he thinks that water is not refreshing enough. He needs something that refreshes him more and in this situation only Coca-Cola can deliver satisfaction. This is a typically situation for Lucas to drink Coca-Cola. "Definitely after physical effort when you know you have that thirst that is nearly fake like super thirsty and you want something super fresh and for me Coca-Cola is definitely one of the freshest drinks around."

## Super fresh for super thirst



During the interview Lucas showed us one of his favourite commercials of Pepsi, in which Coca-Cola is directly compared to this competing brand in a negative way. This *physical cue* of Coca-Cola in the commercial interrelates with Lucas *attitude* to take side for the brand with the best commercial, which in this case means Pepsi and not Coca-Cola, and to support the weaker party or the challenger, which in his view also is Pepsi, “*I take sides for the best commercial. And this one was Pepsi yeah, but in general they are more creative or used to be because they were the challenger.*” Moreover it interrelates with his critical *attitude* towards authority. It also connects with his *self-concept* as seeing himself as someone who is a little rebellious and as being a Frenchman due to his following explanation: “*I mean French people always stick with the weakest right!? Just to take piss at authority*”. In this context one could also interpret Coca-Cola’s *nonverbal cue* of being in “authority” on the market as the market leader against which Pepsi is fighting as the challenger or rebel. This interplay is a *direct comparison* between Pepsi and Coca-Cola.

Rebel cry against authority



#### **4. Analysis**

This thesis refers to an identified gap in the literature of brand personality as it does not deal with the dynamics within the brand perception and the mutual interplay between consumer, brand and situational characteristics. Therefore, the purpose was to conduct further research on the consumer's perception, which forms a brand's personality, taking into account the role of consumer and brand characteristics and situational cues during the perception of a brand. In this respect, a conceptual model has been developed in order to analyse the dynamic interplay of these outlined factors. Through the empirical study in terms of conducting in-depths interviews, the conceptual model was tested, further developed and the research questions regarding the role of the three characteristics and how their interplay influences the consumer's brand perception were explored by digging deep into the consumer's mind and interpreting the information that derived from the empirical study.

During the interviews with six participants, great attention was paid to the personality of the consumer, their judgement and perception of the brand Apple or Coca-Cola and the context influencing the perceptions. It can be concluded that the consumer's brand perception represents an interplay of influential characteristics and its sub-dimensions as outlined in the conceptual model introduced under 2.6.2. By interviewing the participants about their associations and judgements of brand characteristics as well as raising questions leading to the context of brand perception, several interplays could be identified. Within one interview a number of interplays of different influencing characteristics of consumer, brand or situation could be found. Besides the variation of influential cues within one interview, the nature of the interplays differs between the interviewees as well which signifies that the brand perception is a subjective phenomenon.

The findings illustrate that information about a brand is perceived and interpreted by a consumer in a similar way as it would be the case with another human being. Consumer and brand play an equally important role in this perception. Hence, a mutual relationship between brand and consumer comparable to a human relationship takes place in a dynamic way, which confirms that a brand can be understood as a living organism (Fioroni and Titterton, 2009) and an entity with human character traits (Aaker, 1997). The empirical results go beyond this and distinctly show that brand personality is not a one-sided phenomenon determined by marketers but one that is

constructed and developed through the perception of the consumer, characterised as a mutual interplay of influencing consumer, brand and situational characteristics. This also adds another point of view to the theory of Kapferer (2004) who considers the brand as the “sender” of a predefined personality, to some extent disregarding the consumer as an independent entity who influences the perception and in fact develops a personal construct of a brand’s personality. Furthermore, the identified important role of the situation/context within brand perception and thus the three-sided interplay supplements the existing literature as the context has not gained attention by scholars in regard to brand perception and personality.

The following analysis firstly deals with the analysis of the interplays as found through the empirical study and what the roles of the three characteristics are. This is followed by the further development of the conceptual mode based on the analysis of the sub-dimensions found in the three characteristics and how their interplay effects the study participant’s perception of the brand.

#### **4.1 Analysis of the Interplays**

The study shows that the conceptual model is applicable when analysing the interplay of the three characteristics within the consumer’s perception. In all interviews, the interplay and mutual relation between consumer characteristics and brand characteristics were easy to identify and required relatively little interpretation by the researchers. Realisation here though, was the need to clarify the meanings of certain brand and consumer characteristics and what these actually include. This issue was addressed in the continued development of the conceptual model under 4.2. However, the situational characteristics were not easily identified in many cases and to a great extent turned out to be an interpretative task. The interplay “Apple is like Bauhaus, Apple is “...like me”“ resulting from the interview with Markus represents an example where it appeared difficult to determine the context. The passion for the Bauhaus movement could on one hand be identified as a comparison context but on the other hand, also belongs to the interviewee’s self-concept.

The difficulty to determine the context mainly derives from the fact that the interplay of the three characteristics was not investigated in the moment in which the consumer’s perception of the

brand actually took place. This study concerned popular brand names that have been on the market for many years and for this reason a record of perceptions has already been developed and opinions about the brand have been formed in the consumer's mind. Hence, the participant's perceptions of the brand were primarily recalls generated during the interviews. Consequently, identifying the context of the perception often seemed difficult as the interviewee either recalled the context or the researchers interpreted the context based on the information provided by the participants. This information however was often very limited as it in most cases is a cue that the interviewee is not consciously aware of. In both cases, the accuracy of the identified situation can be questioned.

### Role of the Consumer Characteristics

The consumer's characteristics relate to the stimuli of the brand. The empirical study proved a difference in the consumer characteristics' role interrelating with high involvement products such as Apple and low involvement products such as Coca-Cola. It was realised that Apple users referred far more often to their own personality when speaking about their interactions with the brand. Many times the interviewees showed that they compare themselves to the brand by identifying with certain brand characteristics for instance in the case of Markus who claims that he himself is simplistic and design oriented and in this way he refers to Apple as being someone "*like me*" (visible in the interplay "Apple is like Bauhaus, Apple is "*...like me*""). Another example of how the consumer characteristics relate to the brand characteristics as a way to express themselves through the product as in the case of Ivan ("*I am Mac*" – a continuous reinvention"). He sees himself as a creative mind and Apple becomes the tool, which he uses to express his creativity. As such, Apple as a high involvement product becomes more than just a tool to satisfy basic needs. In the case of Ivan it can even be a status symbol connecting to the consumer characteristic in such a way as it supports who the consumer wants to be.

These findings agree with Aaker (1997), claiming that consumers assign human personality traits to brands in order to enhance the brand's self-expressive function and the relation to one's own self. Here, the interplays named "Apple is like Bauhaus, Apple is "*...like me*" and "*I am Mac*" – a continuous reinvention" which stem from the interviews with Markus and Ivan, illustrate examples where the consumer expresses himself/herself through the brand. On the other hand, in the case of Coca-Cola it seems that personality as in the case of Apple plays a minor role since

motivations for the brand are not used for self-expressive purposes but for the fulfilment of short term and basic needs. This type of motivation for the brand can be found in the interplay “Super fresh for super thirst”, deriving from the interview with Lucas who perceives Coca-Cola as a great refreshment after physical effort. Nevertheless, consumers can still have relatively strong emotions to the brand, which in the case of Coca-Cola often derives from many years of use, childhood memory and perceiving it as a treat. Here, the interplay “Friday Candy” – a treat once a week” illustrates how Magnus relates very positive feelings to Coca-Cola as a special treat from his childhood.

It is the consumer’s perception and mental associations that make the brand into what it is (Keller, 1998) and having analysed the consumer to such extent, contributes to the understanding of his/her role in a branding context. The interviews showed the consumer’s role as a co-creator who builds stories around the giving the brand a personality as also suggested by David Aaker (1996). This can for example be seen in the case of Coca-Cola and the differences in perception of Magnus and Lucas. Lucas personal story is based on rotten billboards, which he associates with the end of a consumption era, generating thoughts of Coca-Cola as a symbol of industrialisation and globalisation. This can be found in the interplay “A symbol of the end of an era of consumption”. Magnus story around Coca-Cola on the other hand concerns childhood memories and associations of the Coca-Cola Christmas commercials, represented by the interplay “Cosy Christmas memories”.

### Role of Brand Characteristics

In all interviews the brand characteristics seem to represent a point of reference for the interviewee that can be seen as a starting point and stimuli for perception and formation of an opinion about the brand. In this respect, several interviews regarding Apple showed that the interviewees refer distinctively to the nonverbal cues of simplicity, creativity and functionality, which as such can be seen as their point of reference during brand perception. In the case of Coca-Cola the interviewees refer to the Christmas commercials (physical appearance), the monopoly position of the Coca-Cola Company (intention), the good reputation and popularity (nonverbal cue) or the shape of the bottle (physical appearance).

The role which brand characteristics such as physical appearance, intention or nonverbal cues play here show again that there is a two-way communication between brand and consumer in which both parties influence each other mutually as outlined by Fournier (1998), believing in a relationship established with the consumer. However, Fournier and also Aaker (1997) were criticised in the scope of this thesis for not exploring the mutual interaction between consumer and brand in a more qualitative way. The findings on the role of the brand show how brand characteristics affect the consumer within brand perception and thus add to former research on brand personality and brand perception. The interplay “Not nitty-gritty, but unique and simple” from the interview with Markus shows how the consumer takes the brand characteristics as a point of reference stimulating Markus’ perception. In this example Markus relates to the brand’s simplistic and function design. Another example can be found in the case of Holger for whom the Coca-Cola bottle serves as a point of reference, which is illustrated in the interplay called “The fat, American bully”.

#### Role of the Situational Characteristics

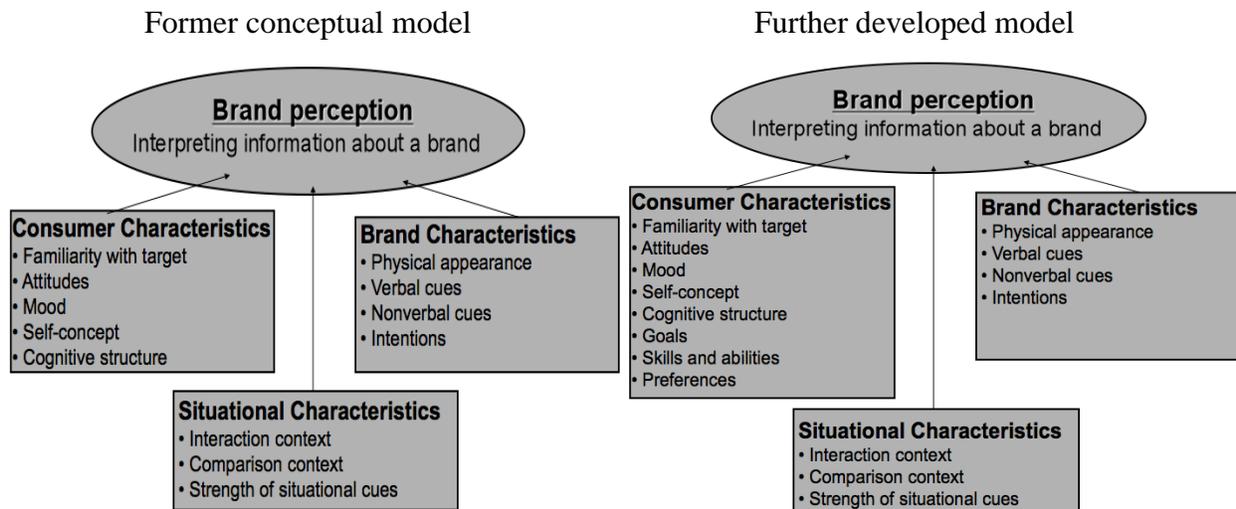
The situational characteristics can be seen as the stage on which the consumer’s brand perception takes place. Although in some cases it was difficult to identify the situation, its importance for the consumer’s perception of the brand can be determined. This was seen in the case of Ivan whose perception of the Apple brand differed as soon as the situational characteristic changed from Bulgaria to Sweden. The interviews revealed that the nature of the situational cues differs; examples, which were found, include life stages, occupation, education, location etc. It became evident that strong situational cues were those, which lasted over a longer period of time and were closely connected to the consumer’s self-concept or signified a dramatic change in the life situation of the consumer. Moreover, a situational cue represents a point of comparison, which can be found in several interplays. Markus for instance explains his perception of Apple to be laid back and easy going into a comparison context with Microsoft, which he perceives as boring and conservative (visible in the interplay “Laid back and easy going”). Other examples are Ivan’s interplay “*I am Mac*” – a continuous reinvention”, Holger and “The fat, American bully”, Magnus’ interplay “You know what you get” and Lucas’ interplay “An over-priced brand”.

As was criticised, research by Aaker (1997) does not include and does not deal with the dynamics in the individual’s mind during brand perception, namely how the consumer characteristics

interrelate with the brand but also what role the context plays and how it influences the perception and construction of brand personality is left out. Identified interplays such as “Apple as a status symbol” and “Apple as “everyone’s symbol”” deriving from the interview with Ivan demonstrates the distinct impact of the situational context on brand perception. Here, the location decides about how the consumer perceives the brand as in Bulgaria Apple represents a status symbol and in Sweden Apple products are something everybody has. Other research on brand personality or brand identity (Kapferer, 2004) used in the scope of this study neglect the importance of the situation and context as well. In this respect the previous outlined findings supplement Aaker’s (1997) research on brand perception and add better understanding to the role of context in brand judgements compared to what exists in literature by scholars such as Mitchell (2002) or Lynch et al. (1991). Lynch et al. (1991) point out that products are not only judged according to their own characteristics but also on basis of other products’ characteristics perceived at the same time or before. Findings of the empirical study confirm the identification of other products as a point of comparison in terms of contextual cues (e.g. visible in Markus’ interplay “Laid back and easy going”).

#### **4.2 Analysis and Further Development of the Model and its Sub-Dimensions**

As it is the objective of this thesis to test and further develop the conceptual model the following part attempts to show if the different sub-dimensions of the consumer, brand and situation characteristics could be identified in the study participant’s brand perceptions. Moreover, it will be shown how their interplay affects the participant’s perception of the brand. It was realised during the categorisation and application of the conceptual model that more detailed descriptions of the characteristics could make the model more conclusive. It was found that the model of brand perception, as it is still very similar to the original model of social perception, could require more adaptation in order to be more applicable in the context of brands and the consumer’s perception. Due to these reasons and reflections on the possibilities for adaptation, the model of brand perception was tested and developed further accordingly. The following shows the former and the further developed model, where 4 sub-dimensions were added to the consumer characteristics. These will be described below along with more detailed descriptions of the existing characteristics.



### Consumer Characteristics

It was found that *familiarity* and the consumer's feelings of similarity to the brand have a great importance for brand perception. This characteristic seems to play a special role within brand perception when the main and most dominant aspects of the consumer's characteristics either are like the brand's characteristics or not. A good example for this is Karlijn's interplay "Apple and me, an environmental conscious family", which refers to Karlijn's environmental consciousness that is an important aspect of her personality. Familiarity with Apple is built up on this very central characteristic. This is also the case with Markus who compares himself to Apple due to its comparison to the design of the Bauhaus movement, which is also central to Markus' personality and his perception on many aspects of life (visible in the interplay "Apple is like Bauhaus, Apple is "...like me."").

*Attitudes* could be identified as influential in the participant's perception. They can be more specifically explained as views and opinions that are very important for the way a person lives his/her life and that have been shaped through the experiences of this person (e.g. Lucas' negative attitude towards price dumping, which plays a role in the interplay "Reasonable price for good quality"). Moreover, attitudes can also arise due to the belonging to a certain group (e.g. as a woman one might have a more positive attitude to other women than men).

The *mood* of a consumer was possible to identify in the consumer's perception of the brand. It

was possible to show how a positive mood of the consumer also positively influences the brand perception. This can be seen in the example of Magnus and his interplay “Cosy Christmas memories”, in which his positive mood and emotions while watching the Coca-Cola Christmas commercials during Christmas time as a child affects his perception of Coca-Cola.

The consumer’s *self-concept* could be identified in all perception interplays. The self-concept can be described as the way the consumer sees and understands himself/herself, who he/she really is and who he/she wants to be. The latter can be seen in Karlijn’s interplay “Apple turns you into who you want to be”, namely a businesswoman. It needs to be stressed that it is very difficult to say whether the interviewee really is that way or just aspires to be so, especially with the short time available for this thesis and the fact that the researchers only superficially got to know the study participants. However, it does not make a difference for the perception of the brand if the consumer brings in his/her true self-concept or a “self invented” one. As it was already mentioned in the previous model, Epstein (1973) refers to the self-concept as a theory that the consumer has set up about himself/herself. In this sense a self-concept might always be made up of true and self-invented aspects.

The *self-concept* also includes morals and ethics should also be seen as part of the self-concept. It is obvious that a consumer who considers child labour as unethical, will perceive a brand who engages in such differently than a consumer who has no ethical constraints against this. Morals can also be seen as a central aspect in e.g. Lucas’ self-concept and his aspiration to do the “right” thing for society, which he refers to as “*a question of personal moral*”. Logically morals and ethics are very dependent on the consumer’s background, country of origin, age, gender etc., which leads to another characteristic that is part of a consumer’s self-concept, namely demographics. A good example of this is Lucas and his French roots which influence his perception of Coca-Cola. He refers to the French, and like that also to himself, as always supporting the challenger and rebel, which in the interplay “Rebel cry against authority” is not Coca-Cola but Pepsi.

The *cognitive structure* as a consumer’s pattern of thinking could be identified in a couple of interplays. In the case of Lucas’ perception of Coca-Cola and in the connected interplays of “An over-priced brand” and “Reasonable price for good quality” it could be seen how a change in the

cognitive structure affected his perception of the brand. In the first interplay Lucas primarily considered the price, whereas in the latter his perception is built up on firstly the quality of a product.

*Goals* need to be added to the consumer's characteristics, as they have a strong influence on the consumer's perception of a brand. In the end the consumer will always ask himself/herself: how can this brand help me reach my goal or support me on the way? Both aspects are closely connected to the situation, for example after physical effort the consumer might have the goal to satisfy his/her thirst (e.g. Lucas's interplay "Super fresh for super thirst"). However, goals can also be independent from the situation in case the goal is not purely the usage of the product but somehow serves a higher goal and purpose like personal fulfilment or self-definition (e.g. Karlijn's interplay "Apple turns you into who you want to be"). These kinds of goals are more likely to be connected to high involvement than low involvement products.

*Skills and abilities* also form an important part of the consumer characteristics. For example a person like Ivan describes the Apple applications as fun and easy to use, but someone without any abilities or skills regarding computer literacy might rather perceive them as complicated and irritating. This characteristic will of course mostly apply for the consumer's perception of products/brands that require the allocation of knowledge in order for a consumer to be able to use them, like for example a computer or a car.

*Preferences* should be added to the consumer characteristics, as they have not been dealt with in the previous model but can be assumed to have been part of the consumer's *attitude*. However, attitudes are suggested to go somewhat deeper than preferences and a distinction should be made between the two. As it was mentioned before attitudes can be described as values and opinions that are very important for the way a person lives his/her life and that have been shaped through the experiences of this person; preferences however are a totally different matter. People might prefer certain things to others only due to a matter of taste, without any specific reason. These mostly might be little things but can be just as important for the consumer's perception (e.g. having a preference for the colour blue).

### Brand Characteristics

The brand's *physical appearance* was often found to be a strong and very symbolic point of reference to stimulate the consumer's perception. This characteristic seems to serve as a basis for the mental associations that a consumer forms in his mind about the brand as e.g. referred to by Kapferer (2008). In the case of Holger, his mental association about Coca-Cola that is stimulated through the physical appearance of the bottle is titled in the analysis as "the fat, American bully". Without a doubt this is a very symbolic and figurative association and shows how strongly a physical cue of the brand can influence the consumer's perception. Another example that supports this is Lucas' interplay "A symbol for the end of an era of consumption", which is stimulated through the physical cue of rotting Coca-Cola billboards.

*Verbal cues* were only specifically identified in the brand perception of Magnus, namely the interplay called "Cosy Christmas memories" referring to the musical cues of the Christmas commercial. The way in which Magnus describes the Coca-Cola jingle in this commercial as "*the sound of Christmas*" stresses the important influence of this cue for his brand perception. For Magnus the brand Coca-Cola has a very deep meaning in his mind, stimulated through this verbal cue. In this respect and in regards to Kay (2006) one could say that Magnus perceives Coca-Cola as a strong brand, which shows the influence of just this one characteristic. The fact that a verbal cue could only be identified in one interplay might be because these cues are rather subtle and mostly unconsciously perceived. Moreover, no participant described a situation in which he/she had a direct contact with a representative of the brand (e.g. customer service staff, salesperson etc.). It is however these situations in which verbal cues are also expected to have a strong influence on perception due to the direct, verbal interaction with a person representing the brand.

It was found that apart from humour or generation of fear, as mentioned in the previous conceptual model, *nonverbal cues* in the context of brand perception could also be the brand's reputation, innovativeness, quality, price, features and functionality. These can also be closely linked to the brand's intention. For example in the case of Coca-Cola "being a refreshing drink" can be interpreted as the brand's nonverbal cue of functionality, whereas it might also be perceived by the consumer as an intention of the brand to deliver "refreshment". In the case of functionality and Apple, easy to use applications can be interpreted as nonverbal cues in which case the brand's intention could be perceived by the consumer as "to simplify computer related

work” or as it was the case in Ivan’s perception “to enhance creativity” visible in the interplay “Turning work into fun”. Moreover, a nonverbal cue can be what a brand stands for, what the consumer associates with it and what it symbolises. For example in the case of Ivan living in Bulgaria Apple was a status symbol (visible in the interplay “Apple as a status symbol”).

As was already mentioned in the previous paragraph, apart from the *intentions* of the company, which the consumer connects, to the brand (e.g. company values, mission etc, as mentioned in the previous conceptual model) the product benefits should also be included in the brand’s intentions. However, the consumer’s judgement of these intentions just like a company’s mission or values can still be based on brand/company messages (e.g. fair trade labels), own experiences (e.g. Lucas’ interplay “Super fresh for super thirst”) or exchange or interaction with others (e.g. Magnus’ interplay “You know what you get” in which brand reputation plays an important role). How important the degree of the personal interest of the consumer is for the interpretation of intentions can be seen in the two connected interplays of Lucas’ “An over-priced brand” and “Reasonable price for good quality”. The difference between the interpretations of the brand’s intentions in the two interplays is based on Lucas different levels of interest for the influence of price dumping on society.

### Situational Characteristics

Apart from timely very limited *situational cues* such as a TV commercial, shopping or usage situations, which have been stressed in the previous description of the model, it was found that often the most important situations are those, which are stable over a longer period of time (e.g. the movement towards environmental consciousness or a person’s occupation or job) or which drastically influence a persons life. An example of this would be Ivan moving to Sweden and how it changed his perception of Apple, shown in the interplays “Apple as a status symbol” and “Apple as “everyone’s symbol””. These situational cues are very strong in their influence on the consumer’s perception. In general, the description in the previous model can be rendered more precisely by saying that situational cues should be seen as external to the consumer or the brand, only differing in their strengths and with that their roles for brand perception. However, there are certain exceptions; in case a situation is stable with a strong influence over a longer period of time it can also influence the consumer characteristics, for example the trend for environmental consciousness can also become part of the consumer’s self-concept (e.g. Lucas and Karlijn being

environmental conscious). Moreover, the job or occupation can be a situation, but at the same time it can also be very closely related to the consumer characteristics in the case where a person feels very passionate or can identify very well with his/her occupation.

The *comparison context* was found to be very important for the participant's perception of the brand. In many cases the interviewees explained the way they see and judge the brand on the basis of a comparison to a direct competitor (e.g. Markus interplay "Laid back and easy going"). Every characteristic of a brand is always consciously or unconsciously perceived in relation to other brands and their characteristics and, as was also mentioned by Lynch et al. (1991), judgement of a brand is based on this comparison or contrast. In this respect, the comparison context is essential for a consumer's perception of the brand and can be valued as a very strong situational cue.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Answering the Research Questions**

The purpose of this thesis was to test and further develop the conceptual model of brand perception through an empirical study and to analyse the interplay of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics in the consumer's perception of the brand. In order to reach this purpose the following research questions are raised.

1. What are the roles of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics within the consumer's perception of the brand?
2. How does the interplay of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics affect the consumer's perception of the brand?

In regard to the first research question, we can draw the conclusion that all three characteristics play an equal and important role for the consumer's perception of the brand. It became evident that the brand characteristics serve as a stimulus and point of reference, initiating the consumer's brand perception. The consumer characteristics in turn relate to this stimulus, generating the brand perception in his/her mind. An indispensable and fundamental role for the consumer's

perception of the brand are the situational characteristics, which become the stage on which the interplay takes place.

For the second research question it can be said that the dynamic and mutual interrelation of the brand, consumer and situation characteristics are the elements of the consumer's perception of the brand. It is this mechanism and continuous flow of information between the three characteristics that is the foundation of the consumer's brand perception. This perception is only stable until a change within one of the characteristics occurs, resulting in a change of the interplay and with that generating a new perception.

## **5.2 Theoretical Contribution**

As the theoretical focus of the research question implies, this thesis is primarily directed towards an academic audience. As outlined throughout the problem discussion, we could identify certain gaps in the existing literature towards a comprehensive understanding of brand personality and the way it is perceived and constructed. The literature oversees the vital role of consumer, brand and situational characteristics mutually influencing each other within brand perception. Aaker (1997) and Fournier (1998) emphasise the mutual relationship between brand and consumer and the influence of consumer characteristics when talking about brand personality but seems to dismiss a thorough investigation of such. Kapferer (2004) also acknowledges the mutual relationship in this context but in fact regards brand personality as predefined. The literature generally neglects the role of situation/context in respect to brand personality construction.

The introduction of the conceptual model, the applying empirical study and development of the model contribute to the existing literature as they consider the consumer, brand and situation and clarifies their roles and importance for the consumer's brand perception. The findings will supply the academic world with further knowledge and understanding of brand perception as a dynamic and subjective interplay of brand, consumer and situational characteristics. The study clearly illustrates the influences that the characteristics of the consumer, the brand and the situation have on the brand perception and in fact the brand personality. Thereby the findings raise the awareness for the mutual relationship and connectivity/correlation between all three factors in respect to brand perception and brand personality construction.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

During the empirical research it became evident that the perceptions established and evoked were not so much “in the moment”-perceptions but an already established record of perceptions or a summary, which during the course of the interview were recalled by the interviewee. The brands investigated here are brands, which not only are already known to the participant but also brands with which the participants have previous experiences and with that pre-established opinions formed through this record of perceptions.

To be able to identify the consumer’s real time perceptions of a brand it is essential that the consumer has no pre-established knowledge or opinions about the brand. Here it is not enough that the consumer has no experience with the brand prior to the study but he/she must also not know the brand in any given way including information sources such as word-of mouth or advertising of any kind.

In a case were a newly established brand that has not yet or only just been introduced on the market it would be possible to use the perception model in an ethnographic research, following the consumer as he/she interacts with the brand from the first time on. Here it would be possible to observe the actual moments in which the consumer perceives the brand and the interplay of characteristics involved in the way they are in this very moment. Moreover the researcher is likely to be able to see “live” how brand personality is constructed and built up through these moments of perception, also in connection to the way the consumer’s characteristics change over time. Additionally these observations will deliver a more precise analysis of the interplay within the consumer’s perception of a brand, as the researcher does not rely on information given by the consumer, especially when talking about situational characteristics, but is actually present in the moment of perception.

That being said, the interplays, which have in fact been established during this research are neither imagined nor wrong. They are however a perceptions which have been coloured by the consumer who may not remember the exact first interaction with the brand or remember it to be different from the actual fact. Hence, the consumer’s perception of the brand interpreted by the researchers in this study are in fact true perceptions as they are based on events and facts given to the researcher by the consumer in a way which he/she perceives to be the truth.

## **Bibliography**

### Journal articles

Aaker, J.L., 1997. Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, pp. 347-356

Aaker, J.L., Fournier, S., Brasel, S.A., 2004. When Good Brands Do Bad, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(1), pp. 1-16

Arora, R. and Stoner C., 2009. A mixed method approach to understanding brand personality, *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 18(4), pp. 272-238

Azoulay, A. & Kapferer, J.-N., 2003. Do brand personality scales really measure brand personality? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(2), pp. 143-156

Belk, Russell W., 1988. Possessions and the Extended Self, *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, pp. 139-168

Chakravarti, D., Lynch, J.G. Jr., 1983. A Framework for Exploring Context Effects on Consumer Judgement and Choice, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 10(1), pp. 289-298

de Chernatony, L., 2009. Towards the holy grail of defining 'brand', *Marketing Theory*, 9(1), pp. 101-105

Dubois, A. & Gadde L.-E., 2002. Systematic combining: an abductive approach in case research, *Journal of Business Research*, 55(7), pp. 553-560

Epstein, S., 1973. The Self-Concept Revisited: Or a Theory of a Theory. *American Psychologist*, 28, pp. 404-414

Fournier, S., 1998. Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research, *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(4), pp. 343-373

Grubs, Robin E. & Piantanida M., 2010. Grounded Theory in Genetic Counselling Research: An Interpretative Perspective, *Journal of Genetic Counselling*, 19(2), pp. 99-111

Kay, M.J., 2006. Strong brands and corporate brands, *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8), pp. 742-760

Lynch G. J., Chakravarti D., Mitra A., 1991. Contrast Effects in Consumer Judgments: Changes in Mental Representations or in the Anchoring of Rating Scales?, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(3), pp. 284-297

Mitchell, A.A., 2002. Context Effects in Consumer Judgements, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29(1), pp. 455-458

Moreland, R.L. & Zajonc, R.B., 1982. Exposure Effects in Person Perception: Familiarity, Similarity and Attraction. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 18, pp. 395-415

Rajagobal, 2006. Impact of Advertising Variability on Building Customer-Based Brand Personality in a Competitive Environment: Empirical Analysis with Reference to Mexico, *Latin American Business Review*, 6(3), pp. 63-84

Sirohi, N., McLaughlin, E.W., Wittink, D.R., 1998. A Model of Consumer Perceptions and Store Loyalty Intentions for a Supermarket Retailer. *Journal of Retailing*, 74(2), pp. 223-245

Srull, K. and Rober S. Wyre, Jr., 1989. Personal memory and judgement, *Psychological Review*, 96, pp. 58-83

Thomas, R. and Davies, A., 2005. Theorizing the Micro-politics of Resistance: New Public Management and Managerial Identities in the UK Public Services, *Organization Studies*, 26(5), pp. 683-706

Van Rekom, Jacobs & Verlegh, 2006. Measuring and managing the essence of a brand personality. *Marketing Letters*, 17, pp. 181-192

Whan Park, C., 1993. Context Effects on Consumer Choice, Brand Awareness and Decision Making, *Advances in Consumer Research*, 20(1), pp. 395-397

### Books

Brown, Donald E., 1991. *Human Universals*. McGraw-Hill, New York

Bryman A., Bell, E., *Business Research Methods*, 2nd edition, 2007, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Crotty, M., 1998. *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage, Thousand Oaks

Easterby-Smith, M, Thorpe R., Jackson, P.R. *Management Research*, 2008, 3rd edition, SAGE Publications, London

Fioroni, M. & Titterton, G., 2009. *Brand Storming: Managing Brands in the Era of Complexity*. Macmillan Publishers Limited, Hampshire

Kapferer, J.-N., 2004. *The new strategic brand management*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Kogen Page Limited, London

Keller, K. L. (1998). *Strategic Brand Management: building, measuring and managing brand equity*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey

Nelson, D.L. & Quick, J.C., 2005. *Understanding Organizational Behavior*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Thomson South-Western, Mason (USA)

R.M. Sorrentino & E.T. Higgins, 1986. *How do Attitudes guide behavior?*, *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior*, Guilford Press, New York

Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S., Hogg, M., 2006. *Consumer Behaviour: A European Perspective*. Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh

#### Electronic Sources

Interbrand, 2009 ranking. Best global Brands

Available at: [http://www.interbrand.com/best\\_global\\_brands.aspx](http://www.interbrand.com/best_global_brands.aspx)

[Accessed 28 March 2010]

Moore, Christopher D. (2007), Available at:

[http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com/public/tocnode?query=impression+formation&widen=1&result\\_number=1&from=search&fuzzy=0&type=std&id=g9781405124331\\_chunk\\_g978140512433115\\_ss1-26&slop=1](http://www.sociologyencyclopedia.com/public/tocnode?query=impression+formation&widen=1&result_number=1&from=search&fuzzy=0&type=std&id=g9781405124331_chunk_g978140512433115_ss1-26&slop=1)

(Accessed 05 Mai 2010)

The FMCG & Retail Marketing Blog (2007)

Available at: <http://fmcg-marketing.blogspot.com/2007/10/brand-identity-prism-kapferer.html>

[Accessed 09 April 2010]

#### Other sources

School of Economics and Management, Lund University, 2010. Östberg. Jacob, Lecture 10, BUSM05. *"The long interview"*, Lund, February 19, 2010

## Appendix

### I. Interview and Codes: Magnus, Coca-Cola

Text	Code
<p>Louise: Can you tell us a little about yourself, where are you from, what you study etc.?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, I am from Lund, from the beginning, and I am 24 years old. I study geology and I play a lot of football, I go to the gym and I party.</p> <p>Louise: Why did you choose geology?</p> <p>Magnus: Well, I always liked stones, ever since I was a little child. I grew up on a farm and this farm had a lot of different kind of stones around, so I started to pick them up because I thought there were nice and I wanted to know where they came from, how they were formed and everything. So I started off having my own collection back home when I was about 10 years old or something like that. So, I got a pretty cool collection and also my father who is geologist actually and collected all stones, so he gave me a lot of cool stones from all over the world and stuff. I though this was really, really cool. And then I grew up and was thinking that this is an interest and I couldn't really work with it. So after my military service I started studying oceanographic because I was in the Navy when I did my military service. So I thought, maybe I should work with the ocean. So I started studying that in Gothenburg but I did not feel that this was really my thing, it was too much mathematics and physics. So, I went down to Lund and started studying geology and kept on for 3 years.</p> <p>Louise: What do you want to work with when you grow up?</p> <p>Magnus: Well I am not really sure about that but I want to combine working on the ocean and working with geology somehow. It could be oil or construction, I don't know, I am not so sure. That is what I am</p>	<p>Active Sportive</p> <p>Very fascinated by nature and the details of it Combining fascination for nature with job Open and talkative Not hesitating to try out things and see if they suit him</p> <p>Takes his time to figure out what fits Does not act according a fixed plan</p>



<p>Magnus: I don't have any practical experience yet. That is what I will try to get next year, applying for some jobs and seeing if I get a job instead of doing my Masters, or work before I get my Masters.</p>	<p>No practical experience seems to take it easy and takes his time to figure out what he wants and what's best for him</p>
<p>Annika: What exactly fascinates you most about geology?</p>	
<p>Magnus: One thing that fascinates me most is that we were all dependent on the geology and if there weren't any geology, we wouldn't exist. Because of the geology we exist. So, there is a lot of coincidences because of the geology that makes us live actually. And the geology is quite a big area; it is also about what is going on in space as well, it is not just the earth. And because of that it makes us have a good climate for life and it is really really interesting how it can work.</p>	<p>Fascinated by geology due to its close relation to the humanity</p>
<p>Louise: Is it the history behind it that fascinates you?</p>	
<p>Magnus: Yes, exactly.</p>	
<p>Annika: Do you like the question why things are as they are.</p>	
<p>Magnus: Yes, basically, and I think stones fascinate me, how they are formed and created. They create like at deep depths of the mountain or under the earth and why they do that.</p>	<p>Wants to know how nature developed, emerged, has been formed</p>
<p>.....</p>	
<p>Janina: Are you interested in the creation and power of things that interests you?</p>	
<p>Magnus: Yes, everything about geology, for example this volcanic eruption in Island, that's amazing. I'll go there in June for an excursion; I really hope it's still active when I come there. That would be the best thing I have ever had.</p>	<p>Fascinated by dynamics of the nature Seems a very important part of his life</p>
<p>Annika: Do you see yourself rather outside and doing things with your hands or sitting inside in the office analysing and doing measurements?</p>	
<p>Magnus: I would rather combine to work in the field for like 2 weeks and</p>	<p>Can see himself working outside and inside</p>



<p>Magnus: 3</p> <p>Louise: Quite a big project, don't you think it's a little scary, yes you can go wherever you want but you are also the middle of nowhere, there is nothing there. Don't you find that a little intimidating as well?</p> <p>Magnus: Yeah, it was, but I wasn't really trying to think about that that much, it was just like we have to go now and make sure that everything is prepared and just make the best out of it and just enjoy it - as much you could. But it was hard to enjoy it all the time, you know when there was a storm, hard weather or we got some misfortunes with the pole and the sails maybe broke and stuff like that, and the engine broke sometimes. It wasn't really like a pleasure ride or joy ride; you had to do a lot of work. Basically, you don't think about all the dangers all the time because you are so focused. But all in all it was really really nice.</p> <p>Louise: Would you do it again?</p> <p>Magnus: I would.</p> <p>Louise: Where would you go?</p> <p>Magnus: All around the world this time I think.</p> <p>Annika: Did you think about the dangers or scenarios before you started or where you really optimistic, just prepared everything and went off.</p> <p>Magnus: I don't really thought about it that much since we were so busy with the boat, we were working on the boat and planning the trip. I didn't really think of the dangers – I know my family did because they asked me all the time about things. So, I wasn't really thinking about it then but as soon as we took off from the harbour I was a bit scared because a big storm was coming in to Sweden.....</p> <p>Annika: Where you scared in the middle of the storm?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not so much because we were close to the shore. If it was in the middle of the Atlantic I would have been.</p>	<p>Courageous  Wants to enjoy the moment  Optimistic  Does not thinking much about risks and things that could go wrong  Faces problems rational  Takes action</p> <p>Enjoys activities that are not only easy and convenient  Likes challenges  Seeks for more, not restless  Rational, not worrying</p> <p>Can admit anxiety</p>
--	--

<p>Janina: How did you actually get the idea of undertaking this big trip?</p>	
<p>Magnus: It was actually Kalles idea, the skipper. He was planning this for a long time. Kalle knew Oskar a good friend of mine who was supposed to go with him. One night he was telling me about it in the pub and I just asked if there is a seat left. And he said that is very possible. And then I got in touch with Kalle and we decided together to take off two months later.</p>	<p>Extremely spontaneous Uncritical</p>
<p>Louise: It is surprising that you did not know each other before because on the boat you live really close together.</p>	
<p>Magnus: Yes, it is important to respect everyone and their needs.</p>	
<p>Louise: Which route did you take?</p>	<p>Empathetic Tolerant</p>
<p>Magnus: .....we took the channels first because we were not really finished with the boat and thought we could do minor things at stops.....</p>	<p>Relaxed</p>
<p>Annika: You said you didn't know Kalle before the trip and you dared do go for 6 months with him on a trip even though you have to live in such a small area. Do you think you are relaxed, social and easily bonding with people?</p>	
<p>Magnus: I think yes. I am very easy for people I think. I am very tolerant; I am a very patient person, so I think I could get along with everyone, basically, if they don't have some big issues. And Kalle is a really nice person, so it just made it easier and I knew Oskar from the beginning and had no doubt that he is good with that whole thing of living so close to each other as he went to the army. I for myself had also confidence in myself that I could live with people like that because I had experience from the submarine.</p>	<p>Social Tolerant Believes in others</p>
<p>Annika: When you say you are patient, what would I have to do to annoy you?</p>	
<p>Magnus: You had to nag all the time. I don't really like controlling people, not on a boat like this, because you all have to be in it when</p>	<p>Patient</p>

<p>decisions have to be made. That was good with Kalle, when major decisions had to be made we had kind of a council (laughter) - a boat council, and then we decided about what we wanted to do, everyone of us after discussing.</p> <p>Louise: Have you decided in advance that someone would have the last say?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, that was Kalle; he had full responsibility because it was his boat, so he was officially the skipper. He always had to take the final decisions but he would always take the decisions according to us. Our opinions were very important to him; he would always do things with our agreement.</p> <p>Janina: That sounds very Swedish to me – consensus.</p> <p>Magnus: Yes? Yeah, maybe it is.</p> <p>Annika: Did you have conflicts?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, we had but only when we were drunk.</p> <p>(laughter)</p> <p>Louise: So did you ever consider throwing someone over board?</p> <p>Magnus: No – no, no, not at all.</p> <p>Annika: What were you fighting about when you got drunk and fight?</p> <p>Magnus: I don't know really. We just drank too much and then it happened. I don't know what it was.</p> <p>Annika: Could it have been because during the day emotions were suppressed sometimes?</p> <p>Magnus: Yeah, maybe, also when it happened our engine broke. It was really, really, really a bad time - a really bad time because we didn't know when the engine was going to be repaired, we didn't know how</p>	<p>Not dominant Able to subordinate Has a standpoint and can communicate it</p> <p>Able to subordinate A team player</p> <p>Honest</p> <p>Stress-resistant Not reflecting much</p>
---	---



<p>Magnus: Yes, I think so. Also considering what I am going to do next year, I don't know and I think I will decide one day before. And it could be something totally different.</p>	
<p>Annika: Being spontaneous, does it also imply that you don't have big expectations?</p>	
<p>Magnus: With this trip I didn't really have any expectations. I didn't build up the same expectations that Kalle did...I just thought "yeah, cool".....After a while I grew more confident with the boat, Kalle and Oskar as well, so I was confident that we are going to manage that, so then I started thinking more about how it is going to be, nice sunsets and so on.....</p>	<p>Not creating many expectations before certain events</p>
<p>Annika: And concerning other issues, do have expectation in life or do you handle it the same?</p>	
<p>Magnus: Yes, I think same thing in life, yes, just take it as it comes.</p>	
<p>Louise: So, you don't have sort of a long-term plan? Let's say in 10 years, do you know what you should have achieved?</p>	<p>Not having much expectations in life Takes life as it comes</p>
<p>Magnus: No, not really. I want to do some stuff but I know maybe I can't do it but one dream is to buy a boat and then go all around the world. But there is no definite plan. But for the future, it's about getting a good job, really like the job and see what happens after that. See if I like to work with geology since studying is a different matter.....</p>	<p>No long-term plan for the future</p>
<p>Louise: Where do you see yourself in ten years from now?</p>	
<p>(Long pause), well, I see myself on a boat.</p>	
<p>(Laughter)</p>	
<p>Louise: Are you alone on that boat?</p>	
<p>Magnus: No.</p>	
<p>Louise: Are you there with mates or with family?</p>	<p>Sees himself on a boat in ten years Advantageous</p>



<p>.....</p> <p>Louise: Apart from groceries, what would you say do you spend most?</p> <p>Magnus: Trips.</p> <p>Louise: Travelling?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, travelling, I think so because I save a lot of money for just travelling.</p> <p>Louise: And where have you travelled so far apart from the sailing trip?</p> <p>Magnus: This fall I went to South East Asia for two months to just travel around, see things, meet people and I took my divers license.</p> <p>Louise: So, you prefer to spend your money on things that where there is an experience as opposed to things?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, instead of like buying clothes and stuff. I think it is more fun to buy clothes in a place where I have been to remember the place in one way instead of buying the same clothes at home.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Louise: When you say you want to see something are we talking about nature or culture?</p> <p>Magnus: Both, I love churches for example.....and since I am a geologist mountains.....</p> <p>Louise: Why churches?</p> <p>Magnus: I don't know, I love wandering around and phantasise how they were build and what happened during that time...I think it is a fascinating work of art.....</p> <p>Louise: Would you consider yourself as someone who is brand conscious?</p>	<p>Spends most on travelling and groceries</p>
--	--

<p>Magnus: I don't care about brands; I buy whatever I think is best. If I feel it is comfortable and it looks good, sure I buy it, if it is not too expensive, and often the big brands are too expensive, so I am not buying them.</p> <p>Annika: Is there any brand, it doesn't need to be necessarily expensive that you like and buy more frequently, concerning food or clothes or whatever?</p> <p>Magnus: Mmmmh, I don't know, I buy a lot of food from ICA.</p> <p>Janina: Their own brand?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, I think they are trustworthy, I just find them good. Well, concerning clothes, I don't have specifically one brand that I buy.</p> <p>Louise: So, let's say if you wan to have a Coke, what Coke would you buy?</p> <p>Magnus: I would buy Coca-Cola because I know it is tasty.</p> <p>Louise: That one or that one (pointing out to Coca-Cola and Coca-Cola Zero)</p> <p>No, the real Coca-Cola (pointing out to the original).</p> <p>Louise: So, it's because it has the better taste?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, what I think.</p> <p>Louise: Would you ever buy one of the others?</p> <p>Magnus: Ähshm, no, not really, I don't think so. I tried Pepsi when I was younger and I think my mother used to buy those cheap ones as well, but I never really liked them in the same way as Coca-Cola. I thought it had a better taste.</p> <p>Louise: Better taste, how?</p>	<p>Not brand-conscious</p> <p>Buys the ICA brand a lot.</p> <p>Purchases and consumes Coca-Cola because it is tasty.</p> <p>Drinks the original Coca-Cola only Neglects no name brands due to a better taste of Coca-Cola</p>
--	--

Magnus: More fizzy and more taste basically, so I thought it was better, and not really as sweet as many of the other Cokes.

Louise: Imagine, if you would go to ICA for buying a Coca-Cola and there is no Coca-Cola anymore, would you buy any of these (pointing out to the less known brands and Pepsi) or would you not buy any?

Magnus: I wouldn't buy any then. When I buy Coca-Cola it is because I have the cravings for Coca-Cola, then it is just Coca-Cola, nothing else.

Louise: When do you have the craving?

Magnus: I can't really say any specific time, it doesn't have to do with hangover or that sort of thing, it is just like sometimes I have the cravings for, so once a week I just have to have Coca-Cola, and then I go buy a Coca-Cola.

Annika: If you had the cravings for Rum with Coca-Cola and there is no Coca-Cola in the shelf, would you then consider buying a substitute?

Magnus: Then I should buy something else because there is no Coca-Cola. Maybe, the Pepsi or Coca-Cola Zero.

Janina: So, you are not into the light stuff?

Magnus: No because somehow it tastes sweeter even though they say there is no sugar in it...and also there is a difference with the bubbles and the foam, I think there is more foam with the light.

Janina: So, it is a refreshment drink for you?

Magnus: Yes.

Louise: What do you associate with Coca-Cola?

Magnus: Chips.

(Laughter)

Likes that Coca-Cola is more fizzy and less sweet than other brands

Would not replace Coca-Cola with another brand even though it was not available

Would replace the Coca-Cola if it is for a mixed drink

Does not like Coca-Cola light or Zero

Coca-Cola is a refreshment drink to him

Associates Coca-Cola with chips

Louise: So, do you always eat Chips with Coca-Cola?

Magnus: No...maybe, I should say I associate it also with ice because ice in Coca-Cola, "wow"!

Janina: Ice cream?

Magnus: No no, ice cubes. But actually you can also pour some Coca-Cola over a fruit salad and then eat ice-cream with it, that's delicious!

Louise: Coca-Cola is also good to use in a marinade as well, it makes the meat tenderer.

Magnus: Oh, I have never tried that, but that's a good idea.

Janina: I thoughts it's rumours.

There is some kind of asset in Coca-Cola, so I think it's possible.

Annika: Can you remember when you were a kid; were you aware of Coca-Cola and in which way?

Magnus: Yes, for sure, I drank a lot of Coca-Cola when I was a kid.

Annika: So, you were on fire due to the caffeine?

Magnus: Yes, maybe. I drank so much and ate so many chips during the weekends.....

Janina: Is that why you associate chips with Coca-Cola because you eat that with it?

Magnus: Yeah well, I associate Coca-Cola with Fridays also because every Friday I drank Coca-Cola and I ate this small kind of Pizza. Instead of having Saturday candy I had this. I didn't really like candy that much, so Coca-Cola and Pizza.

Annika: And it had to be Coca-Cola?

Associates it also with ice cubes

Likes to add Coca-Cola to a fruit salad with ice-cream

Drank Coca-Cola a lot when he was a child

Drank it a lot in the weekends with chips

Coca-Cola with chips was his "Saturday-candy", something special

<p>Magnus: No, not necessarily. I tried Sprite for a while but I didn't really enjoy as much as Coca-Cola. And I tried Trocarero....but I got tired of that, so I went back to Coca-Cola.</p> <p>Janina: And you don't get tired of Coca-Cola?</p> <p>Magnus: No.</p> <p>Annika: So, it is also like a ritual right? At least when you were a kid?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, exactly.</p> <p>Annika: Is it still something like a ritual or you just do it when you feel like it?</p> <p>Magnus: I rather drink when I feel like it; it's not a ritual, no.</p> <p>Louise: But do you still get that weekend feeling?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, sometimes and sometimes I could get that craving especially during the weekends. But also when there is some kind of a big event, Champions League for example. I could get the cravings for Coca-Cola and just sit down and relax instead of drinking alcohol. So, I think it is really good to drink Coca-Cola and watch football.</p> <p>Louise: Do you consider Coca-Cola as some sort of treat?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not really. I have the cravings and then I just want. It is not that I feel that I earned Coca-Cola or anything it is just that I want to drink it because it is good. I just like it.</p> <p>Louise: When you think about Coca-Cola as a brand, what do you associate with that?</p> <p>(Long pause)</p> <p>Louise: Is there any commercial for instance that pops up in your mind?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, one commercial, the Christmas commercial with this big</p>	<p>Replace Coca-Cola with other soft-drinks as well but went back to drinking Coca-Cola</p> <p>Doesn't get tired of Coca-Cola</p> <p>Drinking Coca-Cola was a ritual during his childhood</p> <p>Today it is not a ritual anymore He drinks Coca-Cola when he has the cravings</p> <p>Has the cravings at certain occasions such as during the weekends and watching football</p> <p>Coca-Cola is not a special treat or reward</p> <p>Is hard for him to associate something with the Coca-Cola brand</p>
---	--

<p>truck and all the light and it's just cosy.</p> <p>Annika: What do you think about it?</p> <p>Magnus: It's so cosy. I just want to be inside there. And the music; it's the sound of Christmas. It's not really Christmas before you have heard the Coca-Cola Christmas song.</p> <p>(Laughter)</p> <p>Janina: You want to be inside the truck?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not really inside the truck but inside the commercial with all this nice, cosy houses.</p> <p>Annika: Have you ever seen the truck?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, I have....</p> <p>Louise: But do you also Coca-Cola as a Christmas drink?</p> <p>Magnus: No, because we have Julmust.....and with that drink, it is very nice, but you can get tired of it very easily.</p> <p>Janina: Do you have an explanation of why you don't get tired of Coca-Cola?</p> <p>Magnus: Well, I don't know (pause). No. Well, maybe I drink it like once a week and if I drank it more often, I could be tired of it. But not when I am drinking it once a week, or sometimes twice a week.</p> <p>Janina: So, as long it is no overkill, it keeps it fresh.</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, I think so. And also, I had one period of my life, like two years ago, where I said I am not going to drink any soft drinks. I managed until October or so and then I just saw a Coca-Cola can standing on the table and I touched it and it was cold, shit, I can't stay away from it and I drank it (laughter). So, I started drinking again, but only Coca-Cola.</p>	<p>Remembers the Christmas commercial</p> <p>Describes the Christmas commercial as very cosy The sound of Christmas Seems to evoke feelings since he wants to be in the commercial</p> <p>Julmust was not a replacement drink on the long run because you can get tired of it</p> <p>Assumes he does not get tired of Coca-Cola because he drinks it approximately once a week</p> <p>Could not even resist his plan to avoid soft drinks due to health reasons Drank it again after seeing and touching a cold can of Coca-Cola That seems to evoke somewhat emotions</p>
--	--

<p>Janina: So, is it also something about the coldness that you like?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, you have to drink Coca-Cola when it's cold, especially with ice.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Annika: How would you deal with Coca-Cola if you had kids, would they get it for lunch and dinner?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not at all. I would give them Coca-Cola at one specific time. Not so often.</p> <p>Annika: Also make it to a ritual and treat?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, because I loved that ritual and I think it would be good for a kid to have a ritual. It's the same as with the Saturday candy.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Annika: What do you associate with Coca-Cola as a company; do you know anything about them?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not really, not that much.</p> <p>Annika: And when you think of where they're from, what they do....</p> <p>Magnus: I think they have been on big events; they have been sponsoring indoor football cups. When I was younger we drank Coca-Cola after the games.</p> <p>Janina: Did you like it after doing sport?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, when I was younger, but not now.</p> <p>Louise: Why?</p> <p>Magnus: Because I hear that if you drink soft drinks after workout, the</p>	<p>Romanticises about Coca-Cola with ice.</p> <p>Would give his children Coca-Cola at a specific time</p> <p>He loved Coca-Cola as a ritual when he was a child and thinks that a ritual as this is good for children</p> <p>Difficult to come up with associations about the Coca-Cola Company</p> <p>Can think of sponsorship</p> <p>Liked Coca-Cola after sports when he was younger but not now because it is not healthy</p>
--	---

<p>immune system will go down like 50% or something like that.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Janina: I actually feel like a Coke now, does anybody else want one?</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, sure.</p> <p>Janina: Which one do you want?</p> <p>Magnus: Can I try different tastes?</p> <p>Janina: Of course, you can also do a blind test and see if you find out which one Coca-Cola is.</p> <p>Magnus: Oh yes, cool.</p> <p>Louise: How do you usually prefer Coca-Cola, in a can, in a bottle or in a glass?</p> <p>Magnus: In a glass with ice.</p> <p>Louise: Any lemon or lime with it?</p> <p>Magnus: Sometimes lemon is quite good but I usually have it only in restaurants.</p> <p>(Annika bringing in tablet with three glasses, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and a cheaper brand from Willy's)</p> <p>Annika: So, let's see if you will taste which one is Coca-Cola.</p> <p>(The interviewee takes his time and seems to enjoy the blind test.)</p> <p>Annika: Wow, you take it very seriously.</p> <p>Magnus: I want to win.</p> <p>Annika: You always want to win?</p>	<p>Would like to taste the different flavours and brands that are exposed to him Is somewhat excited about doing a blind test</p> <p>Prefers Coca-Cola in a glass with ice</p> <p>Likes a lemon with it if by chance available</p> <p>He takes his time tasting the different Cokes and seems to enjoy the blind test. Drinks back and forth different ones. Drinks water in between</p> <p>Says he takes it seriously because he wants to win</p>
---	--

<p>Magnus: Of course.</p> <p>(The interviewee tastes one sort and drinks a zip of water in between. The first one is Coca-Cola but he says straight away that it this is not Coca-Cola. He thinks that the unknown brand is Coca-Cola and the Pepsi is the unknown brand and Coca-Cola is Pepsi. The interviewee is very surprised about the result.)</p> <p>Annika: So, we could sell you the cheap one in a Coca-Cola bottle.</p> <p>Magnus: Sure, I was surprised that it tasted like Coca-cola to me.</p> <p>Annika: Now, if you know you like the cheaper brand from Willy's, would you mind buying it or would it feel weird to you?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not at all.</p> <p>Annika: So you didn't mind to buy the cheap brand you don't care about the branding itself?</p> <p>Magnus: No, as I said before I am not into branding.</p> <p>Louise: Next time you go to Willy's and you want to have a coke, will you buy Willy's coke or do you buy Coca-Cola?</p> <p>Magnus: I think I would buy a Coca-Cola.</p> <p>Janina: Could you picture yourself with a Willy's bottle on the couch watching football?</p> <p>Magnus: I don't know, not really.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Louise: Well, don't feel bad about the blind test result, that happens all the time when Coca-Cola does these tests actually.</p> <p>Magnus: Oh really, but I didn't like the Pepsi right because I think it is</p>	<p>Admits that he always wants to win</p> <p>He thinks that the unknown brand is Coca-Cola and the Pepsi is the unknown brand and Coca-Cola is Pepsi. The interviewee is very surprised about the result</p> <p>When realising that he likes the Willy's brand he would also buy it</p> <p>Say he does not care about the brand Coca-Cola itself</p> <p>Would nevertheless buy Coca-Cola when being next time at Willy's</p> <p>Cannot imagine himself with the Willy's bottle on the touch watching football</p>
--	---

<p>far too sweet. Also, the big burger chains, don't they all sell Pepsi?</p> <p>Louise: Pizza Hut does and Burger King does as well in the US.</p> <p>Magnus: Ah ok, but not here.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Magnus: Also, maybe I buy Coca-Cola because I know what I get; I know that I get quality. If I buy the Willy's one, I am not really sure if the quality is at the same level all the time. It could be once really good or another time really, really bad.</p> <p>Annika: You think that the quality could differ with the same brand.</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, maybe, that's on my thoughts.</p> <p>Annika: So, you trust Coca-Cola more than the other ones.</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, because they have a better reputation.</p> <p>Louise: Coca-Cola has actually people that do nothing else than travel around the world and go incognito into the bars or Coca-Cola to see if they mix it right.</p> <p>Magnus: Oh, interesting.</p> <p>Janina: But in what way does Coca-Cola have a better reputation?</p> <p>Magnus: Well, it is a bigger brand and has been a brand since, let me see (grabbing the bottle and pointing to the label), 1886. The same recipe all along.</p> <p>Janina: So, that means better reputation?</p> <p>Magnus: Could be if it's better taste. I think it is harder to get another brand with the same taste as Coca-Cola if it's a low budget.</p> <p>Janina: And you think keeping the same taste over years brings them a</p>	<p>Thinks that he buys Coca-Cola because he knows what he gets in terms of quality He fears that the quality of the Willy's brand does not stay the same Can imagine it to be very good or bad as well</p> <p>Associates Coca-Cola with quality due to its better reputation</p> <p>Thinks of a better reputation because it is a bigger brand which has been around for a long time</p> <p>Believes it is hard to get another, especially a low-budget brand with the same taste as Coca-Cola</p>
---	--

<p>better reputation?</p> <p>Magnus: Well, that's just one of my thoughts when I am choosing between these two. I haven't really heard good things about this Willy's brand but I hear about Coca-Cola – there is a lot people liking it, so I rather take Coca-Cola just because I know that people like it and its good taste. But I am not sure about this one because I haven't heard of it.</p> <p>Janina: But now you know that it is good you would not go because you don't know if it stays as good.</p> <p>Magnus: No, but I could drink it.</p> <p>Annika: Is there anything you want to tell us about Coca-Cola what you haven't mentioned yet.</p> <p>Magnus: Yes, there is something. I could drink Coca-Cola when I am really tired or when I have a headache. Then, Coca-Cola helps because of the caffeine.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Louise: So, thank you very much then for your time and great contribution.</p> <p>Magnus: Thank you too, it was fun.</p> <p>Annika: Giving us a feedback, did you feel comfortable and so on?</p> <p>Magnus: I think it was interesting and nice since you first asked me personal questions like who are you. That was good and made me feel comfortable in myself as well.</p> <p>Janina: It wasn't intimidating?</p> <p>Magnus: No, not at all. Then you were very casual, you didn't really go after a schedule. Well, I don't know if you did but at least you didn't show me.</p>	<p>He thinks that the consistent good taste has brought Coca-Cola its good reputation</p> <p>Trusts in the Coca-Cola brand because it is known, other people like it and it has a good taste</p> <p>He would not buy the Willy's brand because he doesn't believe that the taste stays as good Though, he would drink it if it is just there</p>
--	--

## II. Clusters and Categories: Magnus, Coca-Cola

Categories	Memos and codes
<b>Activities in life</b>	<p>Memo: when telling us about playing football, partying, and going to the gym, he seems very active and sportive. Later on, it turned out that he is also sails and as a kid he was always running everywhere ('I couldn't stop running').</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Active</li> <li>○ Sportive</li> </ul>
<b>Passions and interests</b>	<p>Memo: Is very fascinated with his hobby, geology and nature, which he turned into his field of study and desired future occupation. I could see that he is fascinated by it by the way he talked about it and explained everything in details. Furthermore, loves the ocean due to the endless freedom.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Very fascinated by nature and details of it</li> <li>○ Combining fascination for nature with job</li> <li>○ Fascinated by the details of his field of study</li> <li>○ Fascinated by field of study (geology)</li> <li>○ Fascinated by geology due to its close relation to the humanity</li> <li>○ Wants to know how nature developed, emerged and has been formed</li> <li>○ Fascinated by dynamics of the nature (Seems a very important part of his life)</li> <li>○ Loves the ocean</li> <li>○ Associates it with endless freedom</li> </ul>
<b>Decision-making</b>	<p>Memo: From what he says and also what he says about himself, he is not really able to plan ahead. He is rather trying out things to see whether he likes it than thinking a lot about it. He takes life as it comes (his words). In general, he makes very much the impression to me too – being relaxed etc.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Takes his time to figure out what fits</li> <li>○ Does not act according to a fixed plan</li> <li>○ Has an idea about what a job could look like</li> <li>○ Extremely spontaneous</li> <li>○ Not able to plan ahead</li> <li>○ Also spontaneous when it comes to life decisions</li> <li>○ Not creating many expectations before certain events</li> <li>○ Not having much expectations in life</li> <li>○ Takes life as it comes</li> </ul>
<b>Character traits</b>	<p>Memo: From what he says and how he appears, Magnus is an open-minded and social person. All questions we were asking, he answered in great extend and in a spontaneous way. Though, I had the feeling that</p>

for questions about his personality or about the Coca-Cola Company for example he had to take some time to think. I had the feeling that he had never reflected on certain things and had to think about it in the moment of the interview. Due to events such as joining a 6 months sailing trip just before the take off I conclude that he is very spontaneous and adventurous. He says that about himself as well. Furthermore, he describes himself as calm and patient which agrees with my impression. It turns out that he always wants to win during the Coca-Cola testing.

Codes:

- Open and talkative
- Not hesitating to try out things and see if they suit him
- very detailed-oriented
- likes to explain things
- seems to take it easy and takes his time to figure out what he wants and what's best for him
- Loves the ocean
- Associates it with endless freedom
- Courageous
- Wants to enjoy the moment
- Optimistic
- Not thinking much about risks and things that could not work out
- Faces problems rational
- Takes action
- Enjoys activities that are not only easy and convenient
- Likes challenges
- Seeks for more, not restless
- Rational, not worrying
- Can admit anxiety
- Extremely spontaneous
- Uncritical
- Empathetic
- Tolerant
- Relaxed
- Social
- Tolerant
- Believes in others
- Patient
- Not dominant
- Able to subordinate
- Has a standpoint and can communicate it
- Able to subordinate
- A team player
- Honest
- Stress-resistant
- Not reflecting much
- Able to reflect if motivated to do so
- Can admit anxiety
- Can reflect
- Can take over responsibility
- Can take over responsibility
- Also enjoy if others are in charge
- Extremely spontaneous
- Not able to plan ahead
- Also spontaneous when it comes to life decisions
- Not creating many expectations before certain events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not having much expectations in life</li> <li>○ Takes life as it comes</li> <li>○ No long-term plan for the future</li> <li>○ Adventurous, sporty, calm</li> <li>○ Says he takes it seriously because he wants to win</li> <li>○ Admits that he always wants to win</li> </ul>
<b>Future</b>	<p>Memo: Appears to me to be extremely relaxed and unplanned about the near and far future. Did also take his time expressing what he wants in ten years time and even what he says seems slightly vague (he sees himself on a boat).</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has an idea about what a job could look like</li> <li>○ No practical experience</li> <li>○ Can see himself working outside and inside</li> <li>○ Seems to prefer outside</li> <li>○ Not having much expectations in life</li> <li>○ Takes life as it comes</li> <li>○ No long-term plan for the future</li> <li>○ Sees himself on a boat in ten years</li> <li>○ Wants to have family</li> <li>○ Can imagine to live an unconventional family life</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption type</b>	<p>Memo: Since all of his savings go into travelling, Magnus is not a big spender. I really had the feeling that he does not care at all about brands and conveying a certain image with a brand.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Saves money</li> <li>○ Not a big spender</li> <li>○ Concerning consumption he buys mainly food</li> <li>○ Eating good food and cooking is a hobby</li> <li>○ Spends most on travelling and groceries</li> <li>○ Not brand-conscious</li> <li>○ Buys the ICA brand a lot</li> </ul>
<b>Association with Coca-Cola</b>	<p>Memo: Buys and consumes Coca-Cola because he finds it tasty and associates chips as well as ice cubes with it. We asked him whether he always eats it with chips .....</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purchases and consumes Coca-Cola because it is tasty.</li> <li>○ Associates Coca-Cola with chips</li> <li>○ Associates it also with ice cubes</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption of Coca-Cola</b>	<p>Memo: Likes the taste and refreshment effect of Coca-Cola. Does not get tired of it as he drinks it once a week. I had the feeling that Coca-Cola is really part of his weekly routine, so that it is true that once a week he has the cravings for it and drinks it to relax.</p> <p>Codes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purchases and consumes Coca-Cola because it is tasty</li> <li>○ Drinks the original Coca-Cola only</li> <li>○ Coca-Cola is a refreshment drink for him</li> <li>○ Likes to add Coca-Cola to a fruit salad with ice-cream</li> <li>○ Assumes he does not get tired of Coca-Cola because he drinks it approximately once a week</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consumption occasion</b></p>	<p>Memo: Again, Magnus would drink Coca-Cola when he has the cravings for it but does not make it a daily habit. It seems it is something “special”, though not exactly a treat to him. More, as he says, something “special” like a beer once in a while. He likes drinking Coca-Cola especially during weekends and when watching soccer. Remembers the ritual of drinking Coca-Cola with pizza on Fridays. He compares it to Saturday candy and I have the feeling that it was very important to him (so he says too). I also have the feeling that nice memories come up when he is talking about it.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drank Coca-Cola a lot when he was a child</li> <li>○ Drank it a lot in the weekends with chips</li> <li>○ Coca-Cola with chips was his “Saturday-candy”, something special</li> <li>○ Drinking Coca-Cola was a ritual during his childhood</li> <li>○ Today it is not a ritual anymore</li> <li>○ He drinks Coca-Cola when he has the cravings</li> <li>○ Has the cravings at certain occasions such as during the weekends and watching football</li> <li>○ Coca-Cola is not a special treat or reward</li> <li>○ Liked Coca-Cola after sports when he was younger but not now because it is not healthy</li> <li>○ Prefers Coca-Cola in a glass with ice</li> <li>○ Likes a lemon with it if by chance available</li> </ul>
<p><b>Association with the brand</b></p>	<p>Memo: When asking about associations with the brand he needs a while to come up with some. We helped him by asking for commercials he might know. He says that he would of course remember the Christmas commercials and it seems to me he like(s)(d) them a lot as he is smiling. He expresses that he would find it very cosy to be in there. Moreover he likes the jingle of the commercial and directly associates it with Christmas time. Has a very strong opinion about the quality of Coca-Cola which seems to be his reason to buy it even though he claimed before he would also buy a no-name brand. Here, I was actually surprised because after the blind test it turned out that he liked the Willy’s brand and he said he wouldn’t mind to buy it. But when we asked him what he would do if he is at Willy’s next time, he says he would buy Coca-Cola again. He even fears that the quality of the Willy’s brand would change which he would never expect from Coca-Cola.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is hard for him to associate something with the Coca-Cola brand</li> <li>○ Remembers the Christmas commercial</li> <li>○ Describes the Christmas commercial as very cosy</li> <li>○ The sound of Christmas</li> <li>○ Seems to evoke feelings since he wants to be in the commercial</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Says he does not care about the brand Coca-Cola itself</li> <li>○ Would nevertheless buy Coca-Cola next time at Willy's</li> <li>○ Thinks that he buys Coca-Cola because he knows what he gets in terms of quality</li> <li>○ Thinks of a better reputation because it is a bigger brand which has been around for a long time</li> <li>○ Believes it is hard to get another, especially a low-budget brand with the same taste as Coca-Cola</li> <li>○ He thinks that the consistent good taste has brought Coca-Cola its good reputation</li> <li>○ Trusts in the Coca-Cola brand because it is known, other people like it and it has a good taste</li> </ul>
<p><b>Associations with the company</b></p>	<p>Memo: When asking about associations with Coca-Cola Company, he cannot come up with anything. Only when we asked where he sees something from them, he comes up with sponsorship of soccer tournaments in his childhood. I was surprised that he had no other associations at all.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficult to come up with associations about the Coca-Cola Company</li> <li>○ Can think of sponsorship</li> </ul>
<p><b>Replacements for Coca-Cola</b></p>	<p>Memo: First said that he would not buy no-name brands. After the blind test, he said, now that he knows it tastes good he would buy it but then changes his mind again. So, he seems very brand loyal to me. Only likes the original Coca-Cola even though he tried other soft drinks or other brands from Coca-Cola. Is surprised that he loses the blind taste very badly. Explains that the reason why he sticks to Coca-Cola is trust, good reputation, other people drink it too and quality.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Neglects no-name brands due to a better taste of Coca-Cola</li> <li>○ Likes that Coca-Cola is more fizzy and less sweet than other brands</li> <li>○ Would not replace Coca-Cola with another brand even though it was not available</li> <li>○ Would replace the Coca-Cola if it is for a mixed drink</li> <li>○ Does not like Coca-Cola light or Zero</li> <li>○ Replaced Coca-Cola with other soft-drinks as well but went back to drinking Coca-Cola</li> <li>○ Doesn't get tired of Coca-Cola but with other soft drinks</li> <li>○ Julmust was not a replacement drink on the long run because you can get tired of it</li> <li>○ He thinks that the unknown brand is Coca-Cola and the Pepsi is the unknown brand and Coca-Cola is Pepsi. The interviewee is very surprised about the result</li> <li>○ When realising that he likes the Willy's brand he would also buy it</li> <li>○ Say he does not care about the brand Coca-Cola itself</li> <li>○ Would nevertheless buy Coca-Cola next time at Willy's</li> <li>○ Cannot imagine himself with the Willy's bottle on the couch watching football</li> <li>○ Thinks that he buys Coca-Cola because he knows what he gets in terms of quality</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ He fears that the quality of the Willy's brand does not stay the same</li> <li>○ Can imagine it to be very good or bad as well</li> <li>○ Associates Coca-Cola with quality due to its better reputation</li> <li>○ Thinks of a better reputation because it is a bigger brand being around for a long time</li> <li>○ Believes it is hard to get another, especially a low-budget brand with the same taste as Coca-Cola</li> <li>○ He thinks that the consistent good taste has brought Coca-Cola its good reputation</li> <li>○ Trusts in the Coca-Cola brand because it is known, other people like it and it has a good taste</li> <li>○ He would not buy the Willy's brand because he doesn't believe that the taste stays as good</li> <li>○ Though, he would drink it if it is just there</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feelings towards Coca-Cola</b></p>	<p>Memo: When speaking about Coca-Cola, he romanticises it occasionally as he explains why he likes it, when he drinks it or how he drinks it (e.g. with ice). Is distinctly excited about doing a blind test (asks if he can do it). Likes to remember the childhood ritual of Coca-Cola and pizza on Fridays.</p> <p>Codes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Could not even resist his plan to avoid soft drinks due to health reasons</li> <li>○ Drank it again after seeing and touching a cold can of Coca-Cola</li> <li>○ That seems to evoke some emotions</li> <li>○ Romanticises about Coca-Cola with ice.</li> <li>○ Would give his children Coca-Cola for a specific time</li> <li>○ He loved Coca-Cola as a ritual when he was a child and thinks that a ritual as this is good for children</li> <li>○ Would like to taste the different flavours and brands that are exposed to him</li> <li>○ Is somewhat excited about doing a blind test</li> <li>○ He takes his time tasting the different Cokes and seems to enjoy the blind test. Drinks back and forth different ones. Drinks water in between</li> <li>○ Cannot imagine himself with the Willy's bottle on the couch watching football</li> <li>○ He fears that the quality of the Willy's brand does not stay the same</li> <li>○ Can imagine it to be very good or bad as well</li> </ul>