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Brands

– Putting perspectives into perspective

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~ Abstract ~

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Five keywords: Brand Management, Consumer Culture Theory, brands, research perspective, active consumers.

Purpose: Our purpose is to emphasise what kind of knowledge that can be produced by the Consumer Culture Theory perspective and the Brand Management perspective when studying consumers' understandings of a brand, in order to evaluate which perspective that is the most suitable one in the new consumer landscape.

Methodology: Focus Group interviews complemented with one managerial interview with our case company Björn Borg.

Theoretical perspectives: Brand Management and Consumer Culture Theory.

Empirical foundation: Primary data gathered from the focus groups.

Conclusion: A shift in the consumer landscape has led to that new factors have gained importance for understanding how consumers understand brands. These factors were foremost connected to cultural and social aspects which the Brand Management perspective cannot capture to the same extent as the CCT perspective. Due to this fact, the CCT perspective is concluded to be the most suitable research perspective in our case.

~ Elucidation of Terms ~

Brand Management: The application of marketing techniques to a specific product, product line, or brand.

Consumer Culture Theory: Considers consumption and its involved behavioural choices and practices as social and cultural phenomena.

Brand Understanding: How a consumer, or a group of consumers, makes sense of a brand. From a Brand Management perspective this is often studied as “brand image” and from a CCT perspective “brand culture” is the closest concept.

Passive Consumer: Receiver of messages, not actively involved in the formation of brands.

Active Consumer: Active in the process of forming and re-working messages and images attached to a brand.

Postmodern Consumer: Obtains personal sovereignty through brands by combining them in order to cultivate a desired self.

Spurious correlation: A false presumption that two variables are correlated when in reality they are not. Spurious correlation is often a result of a third factor that is not apparent at the time of examination. Spurious comes from the Latin word spurious, which means illegitimate or false. (Investopedia.com)

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~ Background ~

During the last ten to fifteen years a vivid discussion concerning the statement that the passive consumer is dead has been frequently debated. (McConnell & Huba, 2007; Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Srivastava & Kamdar, 2009) Authors like McConnell and Huba (2007) and Bengtsson and Östberg (2006) argue that the consumers are getting a more active role in the processes in and around companies and should rather be seen as participants than receivers. Consumers unite and interact with each other and companies are claimed to lose more and more power in decisions surrounding the brands. For example, McConnell & Huba (2007) propose that the new multi-way ecosystem of consumers has led to a democratization of ownership in companies, brands and products. In other words, consumers and companies are argued to be mutual owners and influencers.

As there seems to be a shift in power from marketers to consumers, the traditional view of the relationship between consumers and brands are now being reconsidered. People now decide what and how brands are invited in their lives and the content that is created and shared is rather consumer-generated than company-generated. As a result, the traditional Brand Management perspective has been questioned for its applicability when it comes to understanding how these new active consumers make sense of brands (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006; Holt, 2003, 2005; Thompson, 2004). Thompson (2004) for example, argues that the traditional Brand Management literature is guided by the normative assumption that managers have a fairly high degree of control over brand images. With platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube it is not hard to see why such an assumption is questioned. These technology breakthroughs have affected the foundation of branding since we are moving away from a world where the brands set the agenda to a world where brands are invited to participate in the consumers' discussions (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Strong advocates of the Brand Management perspective like Kotler and Keller (2009), Armstrong and Kotler (2000) and Kapferer (2008) depict the company as the main sender of brand

messages and the individual consumer as the receiver. Consequently, the brand images are constructed within the minds of the consumers and the main focus is the cognitive structures through which the consumer interprets the world.

The critique above originates from the fact that several authors within the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) perspective argue that the formation of brand images is far more complex than that (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Holt, 2003, 2004, 2005; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002). For instance, Holt (2005) claims that brands exist in public culture as conventional signs that give the brands' symbolism its social value. Mentioned as brand culture rather than brand image, the consumers' shared understanding of a brand is something that is negotiated among the consumers. Not just received as proposed by the Brand Management perspective. Besides, brands are used to forge affiliations, to claim status and to socialize. In other words, brands are something that exists between consumers and not just in the consumer's head.

It is obvious that the different research perspectives have different focuses when it comes to how a brand is formed and established. Since the active consumers are claimed to interact and unite with each other it is fairly unexpected that consumer culture has become more important when studying brands. In the conventional Brand Management literature, culture in theoretical terms is primarily looked upon as a part of the brand image, making the brand a junction point for associative networks consisting of cues, benefits and symbolic meanings made by consumers (Thompson, 2004). Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) claim that the Brand Management-view have been obsolete and calls for a more open-minded view on the construction of brands since brands are social entities, created both by marketers and consumers in a complex social construction. This intersection of brands as a defining entity of consumer culture and community is challenging the classic notion of brand creation processes. Muniz & O'Guinn argue that this contribution from the CCT is a good complement to the narrowly defined field of Brand Management. Accordingly, Holt (2003) argues

that the Brand Management literature has to be complemented with insights from the CCT perspective to be able to describe how consumers make sense of images attached to a brand.

Since there is an ongoing debate on which research perspective that is the most suitable when it comes to understanding of the formation of brands, we find it appropriate to address this in our thesis. Besides, since the shift seems to be foremost on the consumers' side we find it wise to address their understanding of brands, often studied as "brand image" within the Brand Management perspective and "brand culture" within the CCT perspective. Therefore, our purpose is to emphasise what knowledge that can be produced by the different research perspectives when studying consumers' understandings of a brand. By evaluating the perspectives and identifying equivalences and unique features between them, we aim to reveal which perspective that is the most suitable one when it comes to studying how consumers understand brands in the new consumer landscape presented above. This has resulted in the following research question:

- What kind of knowledge can be produced by the different research perspectives when studying consumers' understanding of a brand?

Our research question gives rise to several methodological questions on how to generate data that can be analysed from both the perspectives. However, by conducting focus groups, including the new active consumers, we are able to combine self-reporting with observation, which are methods that are frequently used within both the perspectives. Besides, focus groups also allow us to use and switch between techniques that are appropriate due to the different research perspectives. Another advantage is the focus groups can be used to capture the new consumer landscape in terms of interaction and brand discussions.

~ Theoretical framework ~

Our main theoretical frame will be derived from the Brand Management perspective and CCT perspective. We will first present key concepts from the different perspectives that we find appropriate to discuss based on our research question. Then we will compare these constructs to see how they correspond with and differ from each other. We start off with the Brand Management perspective, followed by the CCT perspective and will end with the comparison.

Brand Management

To be able to find out how consumers are participating in the formation of their brand understanding, we find it necessary to initially discuss these key constructs: the brand, brand identity, brand image, positioning and co-creation. These are the constructs that we find appropriate due to our research question and discussion above. Note that brand image is often used to describe how consumers understand a brand within the Brand Management perspective.

Definition of a brand

Echoing Batey (2008), brands can be defined as a cluster of meanings concerning attributes, benefits and values. During every contact and experience a consumer has with a brand, meanings, or associations, are created and enhanced. Batey proposes that the main differences between a product and a brand are that you choose a brand for what it means and not for what it does, it exist in the minds of the consumers rather on the shelves in the store, it is timeless and cannot quickly be out-dated and it is unique and cannot be copied by competitors. Kornberg (2010) argues that the main difference is that products are designed to match needs in contrast to brands that are designed to produce desire.

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, sign or symbol that is used to identify the goods and services of a seller and differences among competitors. Kotler and Keller (2009) further argue that brands are products that add extra dimensions that differentiate them from other products aimed to satisfy the same need. These extra dimensions are argued to be subjectively constructed and therefore there cannot be any objective view on what a specific brand stands for (Fournier, 1998). The brand-definition according to Kapferer (2008) is recognized as a part of the company's capital, which should be exploited and seen as an intangible asset, the brand offers added benefits for the business, which also is the domain of Brand Management. The disagreement between different definitions of a brand varies

endlessly, leaving one with the problem of measurement, also known as brand equity for the Brand Management advocates (Kapferer, 2008). The problem of measurement occurs due to the different focuses of the two major paradigms, namely the consumer-based and the management-based which are fundamentally different.

Keller (2006) suggests that brands represents enormous valuable pieces of legal property but also holds the power to influence the consumers' behaviour and secure future revenues to the owners. However, for a brand to become successful it is vital to meet a number of conditions (Doyle, 2004): The brand should be differentiated, positioned on quality and added value, innovative in order to meet changing consumer tastes and to keep ahead of competition, fully supported by management as well as employees combined with a consistent communication.

The discussion above has introduced us to how brands are studied from a Brand Management perspective. Based on the different definitions above we can conclude that a brand is something that extends the physical function of a product. It is intangible and exists only in people's minds and can be of high economic value. But to understand how consumers are participating in the formation of brand images we find it important to narrow in on concepts that directly deal with the formation of brand images, namely positioning, brand identity and brand image.

Positioning images in the consumer's mind

Positioning is a concept derived from the Brand Management perspective that can help us to explain why similar images can appear in different consumers' heads.

Kotler and Keller (2009) describe positioning as:

“... The act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market.” (Kotler & Keller, 2009, pp. 308)

In other words, positioning is about placing a company's offering and image in the minds of the consumers. The result from positioning is the creation of a customer-focused value proposition, a persuasive reason for why the target market should buy the product (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Kapferer (2008) argues that positioning a brand means emphasising the characteristics that differ from competitors and are appealing to the consumers. However, he also proposes that positioning itself cannot explain a brand's richness of meaning and reflect its full potential since positioning focus more on the product itself. Kapferer therefore highlights the importance of separating product positioning and brand positioning. Instead, product positioning focuses on consumer attributes and benefits and brand positioning on the overall value.

Kapferer (2008) argues that positioning derives from a brand's identity but that it exploits different aspects of the identity based on a given point of time in at a given market.

Brand identity - The source of image

Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as a set of associations that represent promises to consumers as well as an explanation of what the brand stands for. According to Aaker, the process of Brand Management starts by developing a brand identity, working as an aspiration brand image. Aaker further claims that a typical brand identity is composed by different elements that should be differentiated on some dimensions, be similar to others, resonate with consumers, drive brand-building programs, reflect the culture as well as the strategy of the business, and at the same time, the brand identity has to be credible.

Kapferer (2008) takes this discussion even further and alleges that brand identity is an essential prerequisite for efficient brand management. He argues that modern competition calls for managerial tools like brand identity and since it is on the sender's side it is more controllable than brand image. Kapferer claims that the

purpose of brand identity is to specify the brand's meaning, aim and self-image. By knowing what to communicate companies can project a desired image to the public. Using a model called the identity prism, Kapferer (2008) argues that brand identity has six facets: 1) a brand's physical specificity and quality, 2) a brand's personality that builds up its character, 3) a brand's culture, 4) a brand's relationship with its customers, 5) a brand's reflection of the buyer it seems to be addressing and 6) a brand's appeal to our self-image. These six facets define the identity as well as it sets the boundaries within which it is free to change and develop. Kapferer claims that a brand exists only if it communicates and these six facets are emphasised as the substance of a brand's communication.

Contradictory to Aaker's (1996) and Kapferer's (2008) ideas, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) contend that identity is dependent on image. Identity is the company members' perceived character of the organization and image is what the members believe outsiders think the character is. One person's image is another person's identity (Kornberger, 2010).

Based on the definitions above we can establish the thought that there is interplay between brand image and brand identity. Which one that precedes the other is debated but the interplay itself is important to acknowledge. Kornberger (2010) argues that in an information society people have real-time access to information about everything and that this will create ambiguity both concerning brand image and identity. This opens up for interpretations, which Kornberger proposes is an explanation for why organizations invest heavily in image campaigns; the interplay namely injects instability into a brand and image campaigns are thought to create congruency between identity and image by closing the gap between them.

How a brand image is established among consumers

As mentioned above, researchers within the Brand Management perspective argue that there is a relationship between identity and image. Kapferer (2008), who claim that identity is on the sender's side and image on the receiver's side, has depicted the relationship like this:

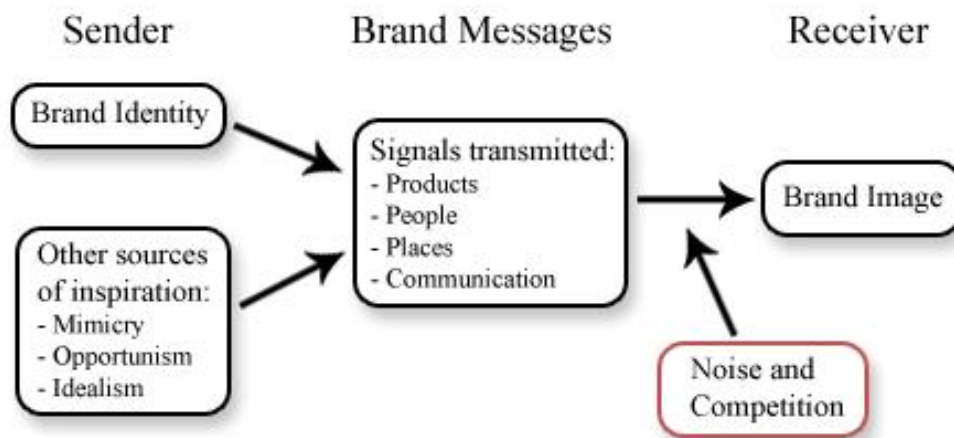


Figure 1 Own illustration of Kapferer's theory. (Inspired by Kapferer (2008), pp. 174)

Kapferer argues that image-research focuses foremost on how brands and products are perceived by certain groups. The way these groups decode all the signals emanating from the communication, products and services covered by the brand are referred to as image. In other words, Kapferer claims that brand image is a synthesis made by the public of all the various brand messages. But where do all these messages originate from?

As seen in the picture, brand identity is one obvious source. Encoded within products, people, places and communication it is transferred from the company to its consumers. However, Kapferer (2008) also emphasise the importance of taking "noise" into account. "Noise" is explained as extraneous factors that speak in the brand's name producing meanings and associations that are incongruent with the brand identity. The three major factors described in Kapferer are 1) companies that

imitate a competitors' identity instead of creating an own, 2) companies that are obsessed with the willingness of creating an appealing image that are liked by everyone and 3) fantasised identities. The latter is present when a brand is depicted in a way that does not match what it actually is. This will result in perplexity and rejection since people are too remote and disconnected to the message.

Srivastava and Kamdar (2009) refer to brand image as the consumer's perception of brands. This perception can be seen as a coherent image derived from all the impressions the consumers have from different sources (Herzog, 1963). In other words, brand image can be seen as a consumer-constructed notion of a brand that are based the subjective perceptions of associations of a brand. This is something that Srivastava and Kamdar (2009) also have illuminated. They argue that consumers are responsible for making differences between brands, interrelating knowledge into cognitive structures that help them to interpret and create meanings out of brands.

Kotler and Keller (2009) argue that it is possible to establish the right brand image. This is the image that is congruent with the tailored brand identity. By conveying the brand identity through every brand contact and communication vehicle a public notion can be established. The better and more integrated the marketing efforts are the greater chance to succeed. Srivastava and Kamdar (2009) have also found that consistency is the key to create a common brand image. Besides, they argue that the higher degree of brand involvement, the more consistent is the brand image among the consumers. In other words, the brand involvement increases the chance for the brand messages to reach through.

The different authors above all describe brand image as *one* image that are coherent for one person or a group. This image is based on how a consumer or a group perceive all impressions from the brand. In other words, brand image is described as one single notion of a brand that can be held either by an individual or a group. That is why we have chosen to equate brand image with how consumers understand brands

from a Brand Management perspective. Besides, even if several sources are argued to be responsible for this understanding, companies are described to be the major sender and the consumer the receiver.

Co-creation of value and meaning

To be able answer our research question we find it necessary to discuss concepts that address consumer participation. We have not found any concepts within the Brand Management perspective that directly address consumer participation with concern to brand understanding. Still, the concept of co-creation can help us to understand how consumer participation is studied from a management perspective.

It is not obvious to discuss co-creation from a strict Brand Management perspective since several aspects originates from CCT. However, the focus of the co-creation concept is the subjectively constructed value and meaning from a management perspective and therefore we find it appropriate to discuss in this part. Besides, it might help us to better capture the new active consumers.

Ramaswamy and Prahalad (2004) argue that consumers have shifted from isolated to connected, from unaware to informed and from passive to active. The major reasons for this are that information is more available than ever, less geographical limits, larger networks, easy-handled tools for public experimentation (e.g. Linux) and increased activism due to easier discrimination among products. The conventional value creation process where producer and consumer had clear roles is outplayed by a process where the consumer is involved in both the definition of value and the creation of it.

Ramaswamy and Prahalad (2004) further claim that this new consumer no longer are satisfied by the marginal customization of products, nor the outsourcing of activities or the participation around company activities. A new era of more active and

productive consumers has instead created a new phenomenon called co-creation of value. Consumers and producers now interact on the same levels, resulting in experiences and expectations being mutually shaped. The points of interaction are crucial elements of the value creation and the interface for the interaction is the brand. Similar to Ramaswamy and Prahalad (2004), Lanier and Jensen Schau (2007) have studied the concept of co-creation but instead of focusing on value creation they have developed the concept of co-creation in terms of cultural dimensions. They argue that moving away from the strict definition of value (that often focuses on economic and utilitarian goals) can help us to understand how consumers rework brand meanings. Instead, they have conceptualized an approach called “co-creation of meanings” which focuses on the processes where the consumers “actively appropriate, extend, and/or modify products in ways that differ from the predefined or prescribed form and/or use in order to create new symbolic structures and meanings that have both personal and communal significance.” (Lanier & Jensen Schau, 2007).

In order to understand why consumers engage in co-creation of meanings, Lanier and Jensen Schau (2007) argue that the process is driven by three things: the symbolic richness of the product, the opportunity to develop this richness and the degree to which the product can be appropriated and reconstructed. Merz and Vargo (2009) claim that the co-creation concept also is applicable to brands. They argue that brands are dynamic and social processes between the firm, the brand and the stakeholders. Brand value is something that is co-created with and among all the stakeholders and determined by all the stakeholders’ collectively perceived value.

Berthon, Pitt and Campbell (2009) claim that consumers are more likely to derive brand meanings from stimuli that are compatible with the one that they already have. The more stimuli a person encounters and the more complex the context gets, the more likely the person is to rely on old meanings to make sense of ambiguities. Berthon et al. therefore suggests that organisations need to actively co-create brand

meanings and reject the naive assumption that they can control the consumers' perceptions and interpretations.

Based on the different aspects presented above we can conclude that co-creation is something between the firm and the consumer. Authors like Larnier and Jensen Schau (2007) and Merz and Vargo (2009) have also emphasized the importance of other stakeholders and therefore included more conventional aspects of meanings and value attached to a brand. In other words, the co-creation is acknowledged as a process that is not strictly isolated between the firm and the consumer.

Above we have presented how brands are studied from a Brand Management perspective. We concluded that brands are subjective interpretations that exist only in the consumers' heads. However, managers are argued to be able to affect how their brands are interpreted. By well-planned Brand Management they can make sure that the desired brand image matches the public's image of the brand. Consumer participation is foremost studied as an isolated relationship between the single consumer and the company and value is argued to be co-created between them.

Consumer Culture Theory

Within CCT brands are often treated as symbols with cultural and symbolic values that are constructed between consumers rather than in the consumer's head. To understand how consumers are participating in the formation of their understanding of a brand we find it appropriate to address these concepts: brands, brand culture, brands as cultural and symbolic resources and brands as social glue.

The social construction of brands

Holt (2005) argues that brands are storied products that have distinctive markers like trademarks and design through which consumers experience and perceive identity myths. Accordingly he proposes that the brand can be seen as the culture of the product. As products circulate in the society they acquire meanings (or connotations) that over time become conventional and widely accepted as truths. The brand culture will work as a perceptual frame through which consumers understand, value and experience the product and that is why we find this concept similar to brand understanding.

Holt (2004) further suggests that the efforts conducted by the marketers are meaningless without the influence of consumers. Marketers create names, logos and designs but these are all empty material until they reach the market and can be used by consumers. In the marketplace brands are evaluated and discussed, causing accumulating ideas from the history to take form. Holt argues that these ideas fill the empty markers with meaning and form the brand. In other words, the consumers are said to have a major influence on the brand culture and therefore on how brands are understood.



Figure 2 Own illustration of Holt's theory. (Inspired by Holt (2003), p. 2)

As seen in the picture above, Holt (2003) argues that there are four major influencers, or authors, of a brand's culture: the firm, popular culture, influencers and customers. These authors simultaneously write stories that interact in complex ways that are difficult to isolate. However, Holt further suggests that the cultural materials these authors provide are in forms of stories, images and associations, where associations can be seen as a residual of stories and images. For instance, a consumer might not recall a full story but is able to attribute some characteristics to a brand.

When stories, images and associations collide in the everyday social life conventional meanings take form (Holt, 2003). As mentioned above, a brand culture takes form and Holt (2004) claims that it is the collective nature of the consumers' perceptions that makes a brand powerful. However, when a brand culture is established, it is hard to change. Holt (2003) argues that brand cultures have a "sticky" nature. He mentions two reasons. 1) Consumers are cognitive misers that try to minimise the amount of thinking and searching when making a decision and brand culture work as a heuristic in this case. 2) Brand culture is shared by many and expressed in several contexts. Just as a brand culture must be formed collectively, it must be changed collectively. In other words, it is hard for the individual consumer to "opt out" from the conventional meanings.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argue that brands are social entities, created both by marketers and consumers in a complex social construction. This intersection of brands as a defining entity of consumer culture and community is challenging the classic notion of brand creation processes. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argue that this contribution from the consumer culture theory is a good complement to the narrowly defined field of brand management.

A new stream of research suggests far more encompassing and significant interrelationship between cultural processes/structures and brand meanings. Brands are encoded with different aspects and the consumers are argued to actively rework and transform them to manifest their lifestyles and fit in social circumstances (Slater, 2002; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Within the CCT perspective this heterogeneous images are often studied as brand meanings (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Fournier (1998) further suggests that the brand categories created by consumers do not always match the categories imposed by the marketers.

Based on the theory examined above, a major part of the differences among brands are argued to be constructed by and among the consumers. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) have acknowledged the social nature of brands and stress that brands are social objects that are socially constructed, involving the consumers actively in the construction. Therefore they propose that brand creation should be studied as a consumer-brand-consumer triad rather than a brand-consumer dyad. Besides, Edson Escalas and Bettman (2005) argue that consumers are more likely to accept the social meanings of brands conveyed by their reference group than other groups. Kornberger claims that brands become social signifiers that refuse to accept the status quo that consumed and produced the very brands in the first place. Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling (2006) further propose that only one agent cannot determine brand meanings. Rather it is constrained by cultural codes that enable the production of meaning.

Eckhardt and Houston (2002) have found that meanings attached to a brand name at any given moment are highly dependent on the cultural values that are evoked in different situations. Ligas and Cotte (1999) argue that meanings in this social environment is not just transferred and developed but also negotiated and altered. In line with Holt (2003; 2004; 2005), they claim that the conventional brand meaning is a negotiated result from the members of the society.

Cultural and symbolic resources

McCracken (1988) proposes that consumers use products as bridges to reach idealistic worlds. He calls his theory-displaced meanings since the things symbolize a meaning displaced from the product itself. By consuming these displaced meanings consumers reach their idealistic lifestyles without necessarily fulfilling all criteria.

Recent research emphasized the active role of consumers, making the theory of passive consumers, a straightforward management view on the situation (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006). In fact, the consumers reinterpret the meaning of brands and personalise them, turning brands into cultural symbols (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006). According to Holt (2004) consumers value products as much for what they symbolize as for what they do. Every brand is imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in their construction of identities. Brands that embody the ideals the consumers admire become helpful tools to express who they want to be. In other words, brands buttress consumers' identity work and brand-consumption is highly symbolic, which has a fundamental meaning for the view on people and brands (Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006).

Levy (1959) studied the symbolic aspects of brands by analysing how consumers talk about their belongings, things that they buy, what it means to them and how they use them. The study showed the vital role that brands have in the symbolic aspects of an individual's self-perception. For a brand to succeed, Holt (2004) emphasises the role

of having a high identity value. This means that they embody ideals that are particularly admired and help consumers to express who or what they desire to be.

Holt (2004) argues that it is the identity value that decides which brands become iconic and institutionalized in the society. Iconic brands, or persons, are valued since people get to experience powerful myths through them. (Holt, 2003) Often since they address contradictions in the society or take a rebellious standpoint. Holt (2002) further claims that it is important to study brands as cultural resources and not as cultural blueprints of lifestyles. The contemporary consumer, by Holt called the postmodern consumer, is more likely to use different brands to produce the self as one chooses. In their search for authenticity the consumers seek out the most authentic brands that could work as useful ingredients in the construction of identities. Using different brands to construct personal sovereignty is something that is highly valued by the postmodern consumer.

Interpolating into the future, Holt (2002) suggests that there is a new post-postmodern consumer on the rise that value authenticity beyond brands. The post-postmodern consumer does directly interlink brands with companies and cultivate themselves through them. Holt suggests that there is five contradictions to the postmodern consumer culture that together have give rise to this new post-postmodern consumer. He argues that 1) the ironic distance of commerce is compressed since it has become overused and a cliché, 2) the sponsored society is revealed since the consumers see through companies' stealth branding efforts, 3) the authenticity is becoming an endangered species since expressive culture has been commercial, 4) the consumers scrutinize the performance beyond image to see if backstage is consistent with performed on stage, and 5) the ever-expanding supply of fashion, cultural texts, mass cultural icons and alike has led to a sovereignty inflation when it comes to brands and consumers are increasingly looking for sources that can help them.

Social glue

Bengtsson and Östberg (2006) argue that it is important to analyse consumers' identity works in social settings. The line between the individual and the social is hard to decide. However, it is necessary to have some knowledge about the social setting to understand the individual and vice versa.

When analysing fashion for example, the role of cultural aspects has in many cases been stressed, sometimes neglecting the impact it has on social relationships. Firstly, the meaning of brand relationships is necessary to clarify. According to Fournier (1998) brand relationships have different meanings for different people. Secondly, the different types of relationships towards brands also differ in the amount of maintenance requirements.

Shared interests in brands or lifestyles are often seen as markers of individuality (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). At same time fashion and brands can be seen as social glue, bringing together people with similar preferences (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Bengtsson & Östberg, 2006). Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) argue that their study of brand communities reveal important aspects of brands social nature. Brands are socially constructed through rituals, traditions, stories and history, which are reinforced by the community. Social structures between consumers and producers are created and while they provide meaning for the producer they provide a social cohesion and identity for the community. Besides, among all the things that are shared within a community one thing is common: the creation and negotiation of meaning (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Kornberger (2010) further suggests that brand communities also can be referred to as tribes. These tribes are likely to reject marketing efforts and are often critical towards corporations and advertising. Kornberger claims that the tribe members develop a clear idea of the brand and if the advertisements do not reinforce this image, communities can become critical for companies. In other words, the consumers

become active co-authors of the brand and the jointly constructed images unite the community.

A similar idea is presented by Arvidsson (2005) who takes a critical standpoint and argues that contemporary consumers tend to engage in activities that are comparable with immaterial, unpaid labour. He claims that consumers develop consumer goods and “generally available media culture” to produce an ethical surplus - a social relation, a shared meaning and/or emotional involvement - around the brand and that can be understood as the direct basis of its economic value. Arvidsson names this “consumer agency” since the consumers themselves are responsible for the values that are assigned to a brand, not companies. He further argues that brand managers only can *manage* the production process that goes on beyond their direct control. They organize and provide material through which the consumers themselves create the value. Even though Arvidsson’s main focus is on the value, his theories reveal important aspects of how consumers are argued to be participating in the formation of brand understandings from a CCT perspective.

Above we have been introduced to how brands are studied from a CCT perspective. Described as something that is negotiated and shared among the consumers, brands are created by and among consumers. Companies and consumers are equal members of the society causing the relationship to be more open and less controlled by single actors. Besides, through concepts like identity and social glue we have been introduced to brands’ cultural and social aspects.

Concept comparison

Above we have presented concepts derived from both the CCT perspective and the Brand Management perspective. As we mentioned before these concepts deal with how brand images are constructed, altered and shaped. In this part we will identify similarities and unique features between the perspectives.

Within the Brand Management perspective brands are often studied as an extension of a product or service that exists in the minds of the consumers (Batey, 2008; Kotler & Keller, 2009; Kapferer, 2008; Keller 2006). They are argued to be constructed of different meanings, or associations, that individual consumers have derived from encounters with the brand. In other words, brands are depicted to be highly subjectively constructed and dependent on the encounters one has with a brand.

From a CCT perspective, the formation of brands is also argued to be derived from different encounters. However, the focus does not lie in the cognitive aspects of the individual consumer. Rather CCT studies brands as social entities that are collectively constructed between consumers (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2011; Holt, 2003, 2004, 2005; Edson Escalas and Bettman, 2005). In contrast to the Brand Management perspective, a brand is something that is constructed between consumers and heterogeneously are foremost studied as brand meanings (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) and/or images, stories and associations (Holt, 2003). However, as these heterogeneous brand meanings, images and stories collide in everyday social life, a conventional notion, or brand culture, takes form.

Based on the discussion above we can conclude that brands are not defined alike within the different research perspectives. Brands from the Brand Management perspective are studied as subjective constructions within the individual consumer's head. In contrast to CCT, the focus is the cognitive structures rather than the social aspects between the consumers. However, heterogeneous notions of brands within

CCT stem from cultural restraints and within the brand management perspective past experience is the main reason.

From a CCT perspective, the concept of “brand culture” is comparable with the concept of “brand image”. Brand image is described as a single notion of a brand that can be held either by an individual or group and brand culture as a perceptual frame through which the consumers understand value and experience the product. The similarity lies in the idea of a shared understanding of a brand, in other words, that a brand evokes the same or similar images/stories among different consumers or groups. However, from a Brand Management perspective this shared understanding originates from brand messages (Kapferer, 2008) and from a CCT perspective stories, images and associations are the main source (Holt, 2003; 2005). Note that “images” within the CCT perspective are not the same thing as “brand image”, since it is rather studied as one of many pieces that construct the shared understanding.

Within the Brand Management literature, companies are depicted to be the major sender of brand messages. By communicating a brand identity packed with associations and characteristics the desired image can be established. The more congruent the communication is, the more similar are the images in the consumers' minds. In other words, the consumer is studied as a receiver and company as a sender.

In contrast Holt (2003; 2005) argues that a brand culture is formed when images, stories and associations collide in everyday social settings. Consumer participation from a CCT perspective is something that transcends the brand-consumer relationship. Consumers along with the company, popular culture and other influencers are actively participating as authors of brand stories in the everyday social setting. Brands are socially constructed and so are the images attached to them. In contrast to the Brand Management perspective, the CCT perspective suggests that a brand is a negotiated result from the members of the society. In other words, brands are empty markers when they reach the market. Not loaded with associations as depicted in the Brand Management literature. The arena of the brand understanding

formation differs remarkably between the concepts and so are the sources of “construction material”.

The perspectives also differ in their explanation of the heterogeneous images that are evoked by a single brand among consumers. For instance, Kapferer (2009) explains variations and differences between the communicated brand identity and the brand image by extraneous factors called “noise”. This concept do not exist within the CCT perspective since it rather focuses on a brand’s cultural aspects than its managerial. Instead, non-shared brand stories, images and associations explain variations and differences. This is an important difference to acknowledge since different explanations of how a shared brand understanding is formed can be derived. Within the CCT perspective stories are studied as a vital part of the shared understanding between consumers and therefore the individual consumer's own meanings attached to a story are omitted. For instance, Holt (2003) assumes that the shared stories, images and associations means the same for all consumers since they are a negotiated result. In other words, the fact that stories might mean different things for different consumers is not considered at all. In contrast, the Brand Management perspective studies the cognitive structures through which the consumer interprets all brand impressions. As a result, the subjective aspects of a brand are revealed and the past brand experience is the main influencer.

Another interesting insight drawn is that the research perspectives treat the creation of associations differently. Within the CTT perspective consumers are argued to derive associations from those stories and images that circulate in the society (Holt, 2003; 2004). In other words, associations can be seen as residuals constructed by authors in the society. In contrast, associations within the Brand Management perspective are communicated to establish an desired image of a brand. Associations are often studied as generic concepts that are created as a part of the overall branding strategy and not as a result from a cultural context (Holt, 2005). Therefore managerial tools

like “brand identity” and “positioning” has no equivalences within the CCT perspectives.

Through the concept of “co-creation” the Brand Management perspective approaches the CCT perspective since the consumers are claimed to have a more active role in the formation of value and meaning. However, the focus is still the individual consumer and consumer-company relationship but the consumers are not depicted as a passive receiver to the same extent. From a CCT perspective the consumers are participating to the same extent as the other “authors” (Holt, 2003). Brands are argued to be socially constructed and through rituals, traditions, stories and history, the community reinforces them. Arvidson (2005) takes it even further and argues that consumers alone are responsible for the value and meaning attached to a brand. In contrast to the brand management perspective, this “co-creation” seems to be under consumer agency. Arvidsson argue that the actual formation process is among the consumers rather than between the consumer and the company.

Based on the discussion above it becomes clear that both the perspectives address brand symbolism. However, there are some fundamental differences on how it is understood and studied. From a CCT perspective, a brand’s symbolic aspects are foremost derived from the stories, images and associations in the consumers’ social lives. Brands are used as cultural and symbolic resources through which the consumers buttress their identity works and negotiate their social lives. Consumers themselves position the brand in their social context, based on cultural aspects and not purely from a brand’s “positioning strategy”. This is a unique feature within the CCT perspective that can help us to reveal how consumers are participating in the formation of their understanding due to social aspects.

Within the Brand Management perspective, brand symbolism enters through the concept of associations and is often studied as a part of a brand’s intangible aspects. As mentioned above, these associations are often depicted as generic concepts and in

contrast to the CCT perspective; stories are beyond the scope of research. Stories are rather comparable with “past experience” which the Brand Management perspective uses to describe the cognitive structures through which the consumer interprets the stimuli. Since the Brand Management perspective is based on a psychological model brand symbolism corresponds foremost to intrinsic values. However, this will help us to understand how consumers are participating due to psychological aspects.

Due to a brand’s social and psychological aspects its culture, or image, is hard to change (Holt, 2003). From a Brand Management perspective, a brand’s sticky “culture” are explained by that humans are cognitive misers that rather rely on old meanings than looking for new ones that contradict the olds. From a CCT perspective, this sticky nature is rather explained by the culture that is negotiated and established in the society. Even if they differ in their explanations, both the research perspectives see brand culture, or image, as something inert and solid.

Concept overview

	Brand Management	Consumer Culture Theory
<i>Associations</i>	Generic concepts, created as a part of the overall branding strategies	Residuals from stories and images that circulate in society
<i>Brand Identity</i>	A set of associations that explain what the brand stands for and promises to its customers	-
<i>Brand Images</i>	A single notion of a brand, could be hold by a group or an individual	One of many pieces that construct a brand's culture
<i>Brand Stories</i>	Comparable with "past experience", used to explain cognitive structures in the consumer's head.	Potent sources of brand culture shared among consumers
<i>Brand Symbolism</i>	Derived from associations connected to the brand, intangible aspects	Derived from stories, images and associations in the consumers' social lives. Buttress identity work.
<i>Brands</i>	Highly subjectively constructed and dependent of the brand encounters	Social entities that are collectively constructed between consumers
<i>Brand's Stickyness</i>	Explained through cognitive factors, humans are cognitive misers	Explained by the culture that is negotiated and established in the society
<i>Consumer Participation</i>	Co-creator with company restraints	Active author with cultural restraints
<i>Creator of Meaning</i>	Company, through brand messages (+ consumer)	Consumers, through negotiation (+ company, influencers and popular culture)
<i>Heterogeneous Understanding</i>	Past experience, different brand encounters, noise	Non-shared stories and images
<i>Homogeneous Understanding</i>	Brand image (derived from all brand impressions)	Brand culture (derived from shared stories, images and associations)
<i>Positioning</i>	A cognitive image of a brand in relation to similar brands in the same industry	-

Table 1 Summary of the constructs discussed in the concept comparison.

~ **Method** ~

In this following chapter we will present the methodology chosen, elaborate on our epistemological and ontological considerations, discussing research philosophy, research method, sample, and the quality of the study. Lastly, we motivate and reflect over our choices, taking into account a critical approach to the methods used.

Research philosophy

When conducting a study, epistemological and ontological considerations must not be separated from the research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). We will therefore present our reflections concerning these factors for the study in the following section.

Since we will take standpoint in the subjective positions that only exist in the mind of the individual and paying attention to the social context in which the consumers interact, an interpretation-process from our side will be required as we seek to study how consumers participate in the formation of their understanding of brands. Our research has adopted an abductive approach since we, as Holme and Solvang (1997) states, has moved back and forth between theory and empirics, causing these two parts to being created and formed simultaneously. The abductive approach therefore allows the theory to develop parallel with the collection of empirics. Through the abductive approach, the empirical material is allowed to develop and at the same time the theoretical framework can be adjusted (Holme & Solvang, 1997). When taking an interpretive stand, the focus is towards the behaviours and underlying causes in the phenomena (Bryman & Bell 2003), which is in agreement with this study where the involvement relationship between consumers and company is the focal point. By using this approach, we hope to raise new insights and knowledge, lacking from current literature.

Research method

We intend to use two focus groups in order to answer our research question and one managerial interview in order to support our Brand Management analysis. Together they will form a case in which we are able to study how consumers are participating in the formation of how they understand brands, from both the research perspectives. The discussions within the focus groups are foremost concentrated on our case company Björn Borg. This due to the fact that focusing on specific events and

contexts are argued to enable the respondents to provide a more detailed description of an experience as it was lived (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989).

Björn Borg is an interesting company to emanate from since it is both an iconic brand on the Swedish market and is named after the iconic Swedish tennis player Björn Borg. Registered in the late eighties and established in the early nineties, the brand has gone from a situation where it was foremost associated with the player to a situation where most of their customers associate it with its products. However, Björn Borg themselves argue that the successful sports career of the tennis players still opens doors both within the Swedish and international market (bjornborg.se). Björn Borg has gone through an interesting development, concerning both cultural historical and managerial aspects, and therefore Björn Borg is a suitable case company in our thesis.

However, we also find it necessary to discuss brand understanding on a more general level to be able to generate data that can be analysed from both the research perspectives. For instance, since the contemporary postmodern consumer is likely to use several brands to construct a desired identity (Holt, 2002), it would not be wise to explicitly focus on only one brand when studying this phenomenon.

By combining questions that are directly addressing Björn Borg with question that are addressing brands in general we hope to derive an extensive foundation for our analysis. Therefore, the use of focus groups will correspond well with both perspectives since it will allow us to combine self-reporting, that is frequently used within the Brand Management perspective, with observations, that are frequently used within the CCT perspective. Through the focus groups we combine techniques that are common within both perspectives, taking in to account the different research methodologies to best profit from the material. However, since the focus within the Brand Management perspective lies on the company-consumer relationship we find it necessary to complement and support the focus group data with an interview with a

brand manager from Björn Borg. This will provide an appropriate foundation to build our Brand Management analysis on since we are able to investigate how the communicated image is received among the consumers.

Being evident from the text above, the primary data, that is, data originated for the specific research problem, will be drawn from the focus groups and the interview. In order to find the relevant questions and issues to address, secondary data will be used, mainly consisting of previous theories.

Focus groups

Focus groups consisting of consumers will be beneficial for our type of research question since it will allow us to study how the individuals discuss in the role of group members on a specific topic (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Our aim is to conduct two 90 minutes focus group sessions with five respondents in each. Max Schori, a senior research consultant at Gfk, confirmed that this amount is more than enough in our case. His consultation on our project also helped us to find an appropriate sample. He also introduced us to and taught us techniques and methods that are frequently used within focus groups, giving us insights on how to best moderate a group. Schori's consultation will work as a good complement to the literature we have studied.

The benefits of using focus groups are for example stimulation of new ideas that might not have come up during individual interviews, these reactions can also be seen as a group process, which itself can be interesting to analyse (Goldman, 1962).

Besides being suitable for individual and group discussion analysis, focus groups will also enable us to bridge the social gap, allowing us to “experience the experiencing” of consumers (Potter & Puchta, 2004). The logic of the phenomenological approach lies in the finding that in order to be effective in advising on the marketing of products or services, the researcher must be a part of the conversation, and share the experience of the consumers (Potter & Puchta, 2004). Here lies the fundamental

difference between commonly used research-methods within the field of marketing such as surveys or questionnaires, which does not allow us to neatly organise and summarise the findings (Potter & Puchta, 2004).

Compared to individual interviews where respondents from a CCT perspective often are asked to describe different social contexts and how they would act in a group setting, the focus groups will enable us to observe them, discovering their explicit behaviour (Goldman, 1962). During the focus group interviews we assume to explore and define the different ways of consumer participation in the brand understanding formation and by including the social effects of group-interaction we aspire to gain insights beyond what the consumers verbally express to reveal their underlying intentions concerning the involvement in brands. Advantages using focus groups can also be the contributions on dynamics of attitudes and opinions in the group. As the discussions develop, some members will change their standpoints based on the opinions of others, some will defend their beliefs even more and so a picture of the dynamics of opinion will form (ibid.). Since brands are assumed to be created amongst consumers given a CCT perspective, the focus groups will enable us to capture myths and stories during the discussions. Based on our purpose, the Goffman analysis is most appropriate at the moment. The two basic principles for this analysis, namely that people try to sustain their self-narratives and that conversations are social rituals of how to do it, will help us to explore both the social and individual aspects of brands.

Another aspect contributing to us choosing to use focus groups is the amount of spontaneity and openness that these types of interviews may encourage in people, making the group members act as one, engaging in an emotionally proactive setting, ignoring the presence of the moderator (Goldman, 1962; Malhotra, 2010). The usage of focus groups will therefore provide us with more and qualitatively different insights compared to individual interviews (Goldman, 1962). Besides, our aim is to combine the common market research focus groups, which typically focus on

opinions and attitudes, with the social science focus groups that typically are used in relation to knowledge and theory (Kitzinger, 1994), which also is the standpoint for our research.

Research techniques

We will use Projective Techniques, usually used within the Brand Management perspective (Cian, 2011), and Narrative Techniques, used within both the perspectives (ibid), to reveal the consumers' brand understanding in the focus groups. By using collages, that is one form of construction technique, we enable the consumers to depict their understanding themselves. Besides, we believe the collages also can reveal important aspects of how consumers are participating in the formation of brand understanding from both the research perspectives. For example, by discussing the similarities and differences in the collages we might reveal shared brand cultures and images among the consumers. We suspect that the discussions revolving the collages, which is a form of narrative technique, can help us to produce data that can be analysed from both the research perspectives. For instance, a respondent's comment on his/her collage can be studied both as past experience (as mentioned within the Brand Management perspective) and as stories (as mentioned within the CCT perspective).

We will also aspire to use probing techniques where the respondents are told to extend, justify, exemplify and describe more clearly. This will help us to go beyond the explicit answers and gain a deeper understanding. Since consumers are getting more active and informed in brands, we find it appropriate to discuss the issue with them rather than just observing. Focus groups enable a combination of observation and interviewing and by integrating content and group dynamics we will dissolve the traditional firm distinction between interview-data and observational-data (Halkier, 2010). Besides, focus groups allow us to both addresses the social, or conventional, view of a brand as well as the more individually shaped.

Even though we consider focus groups to be very beneficial for our research question and purpose, there are some critical aspects one must consider. Firstly, elicitation and the sense of intrusion is a common critique towards focus groups. To avoid this, the participants have been ensured that there are no wrong or right answers, encouraging them to speak freely and be open-minded for other's opinions, consolidated by the making of collages (Potter & Puchta, 2004). The relationship between participants is important for the tone in the focus groups, which could be both beneficial and obstructing. This aspect can be hard to predict since one never knows how the contestants chosen will act.

To avoid an obstructing environment we have chosen participants that are relatively homogeneous and almost everyone have some kind of relation to one or another. The negative aspect of participants that know each other is argued to be preconception of the others, resulting in them leaving out certain facts that they take for granted in the discussions (Bryman, 2006). Despite this, it is still recommended that the established groups constitute an advantage compared to the ones where the participants have no previous relations to each other, since the conversation flows more freely due to this fact (Bryman, 2006). The presence of us as focus group leaders might have a negative effect on the participants, as they might feel obligated to say what they think we expect from them.

Sample

The sampling technique that we have chosen is judgemental sampling which is a form of convenience sampling in which the selection is based on the researcher's judgement (Malhotra, 2010). In line with our purpose it is important that the new active consumer is represented in the focus groups and therefore we have chosen to identify participants in accordance with the criterion presented by Baker (2003). Participants that fulfil the criterion of being active, cynical, knowledgeable, time-constrained, tribal, individual, demanding and experience seeking are therefore

suitable. Besides, since our research object is Björn Borg our sample has to include people that are familiar or have some connection with this brand. Therefore, participants from Sweden in the age between twenty to thirty, that fulfil the characteristics of an active consumer, will enable us to generate data that are in line with our purpose.

In accordance with Malhotra (2010) argues the importance of a homogeneous sample, taking into consideration demographic and socioeconomic aspects. This will decrease the risk of conflict as well as it will allow us to better address our findings (Malhotra, 2010).

The work of the focus group interviews must be in line with five important requirements such as objective, valid, reliable, intensive analysis and marketing applicable (Goldman, 1962) in order to serve its research objective. Firstly, through extensive reading on interview techniques and consulting from Gfk, we have gained objectivity to decrease the interviewer's impact on the focus group participants. Secondly, the validity of the study has been accomplished through a strong connection to the research question, purpose, theory and the theoretical framework. We have used methods that are well documented and suitable for our research, which will enable us to conduct a valid research. Thirdly, the data's reliability has been fulfilled through a careful selection of participants, with homogeneous features in order to be able to generalize the findings. A fourth requirement is that the data is to be analysed intensively, accomplished by the material being analysed in conjunction with the focus groups. Lastly, the interviews have market applicability, since they are relevant to solve a marketing problem and help to answer our research question. By achieving these criteria, we are convinced that we have taken actions to prevent common pitfalls that one could encounter when working with this material.

Knowledge process

The subject of this thesis is something that we started to discuss long before the writing process took off. We knew that we wanted to address brands with concern to the new consumer landscape presented above, but since the field of research is wide, we needed to find a narrower scoop. After studying literature and articles it became clear that there was an ongoing debate on our selected research field that we found interesting to investigate further. Researchers that were embracing the CCT perspective questioned the applicability of the traditional Brand Management perspective when it came to understanding brands in the contemporary society. Since we as authors have been separately trained in these schools, we found this debate interesting to explore.

As we gained deeper insights in this debate we understood that the research perspectives had different advantages and disadvantages due to what was going to be studied. However, we had identified an area, namely how consumers understand brands, where the perspectives were fundamentally different but still investigated the same phenomenon. We therefore found it appropriate to address this in our thesis in order to evaluate what perspective that was the most suitable one when studying brand understandings.

This purpose arose several problems that we had to deal with in order to be able to succeed. For instance, if we were to be able to study a specific phenomenon from two different research perspectives, we needed to choose a method that allowed us to collect data that could be analysed from both the CCT perspective and the Brand Management perspective. After having evaluated several options, we decided to use focus groups, a method that allowed us to combine and shift between techniques from both perspectives. Deriving data that were suitable for both the perspectives were one of the hardest parts in our thesis. However, as we developed deeper understanding for the phenomena we also understood what we needed to do.

At the beginning of the process, the theoretical foundation for the thesis was relatively broad, resulting in us needing to rework and subtilise, pending between theory and empirics through the abductive approach as the paper took form. As this process went on, we gained more and more valuable insights that we could use in our work. As Backman (2008) argued, research is a dynamic process that in many senses is self-correcting.

This process demanded that we as researchers interpreted the material strictly from the two perspectives in order to keep the findings separated, which from time to time became quite hard since they are so closely connected on some areas. The empirical material therefore was evaluated through a model that we set up in order to systematically cultivate the material. In the analysis we have aimed for clear connections, patterns and differences between both empirics and theories in order to in order to present our findings in the best possible way. The conclusions are then presented with the most important tendencies and findings that we have encountered through our data collection and analysis with consideration to our research question.

Gummesson (2005) argues the importance of the researcher's own interpretations and identity plays a great role in qualitative studies. He also claims that our values and experiences will off course imprint the research process and that this is unavoidable. We are fully aware of that our common background as business students might have affected the outcome of our thesis. But the fact that our target readers are to be found within business research and that we are trained within different schools (Brand Management and CCT) legitimize our work. Besides, Patel & Davidsson, (2003) argues that the researchers' interpretations can be seen as an enriching factor to the depth of the paper, which makes the subjective marks a positive thing

~ **Analysis** ~

In this part we will present and analyse our material from the focus groups in order to understand how consumers are participating in the brand understanding formation process. This part includes a short description of the structure of the analysis, two separately conducted analyses from both the research perspective and a summary where equivalences and unique features between the analyses are discussed.

Structure

We plan to conduct two separate analyses, one strictly from a Brand Management perspective and one strictly from a CCT perspective. Then we will compare the findings to see how they differ from and correspond to each other. We find this appropriate due to our structure in the theoretical part where the constructs are presented separately based on perspective and then compared. Applying the same structure in the analysis will make the line of argument more evident and facilitate a comparison of the results.

Since Björn Borg is our case company we find it appropriate to discuss findings concerning it first. Then we will present and discuss the findings that are more general and spontaneously generated by the focus groups. This approach will consider and make room for the social aspects and the dynamics of the groups, necessary when conducting the CCT analysis at the same time as it allow us to analyse the data from a Brand Management perspective.

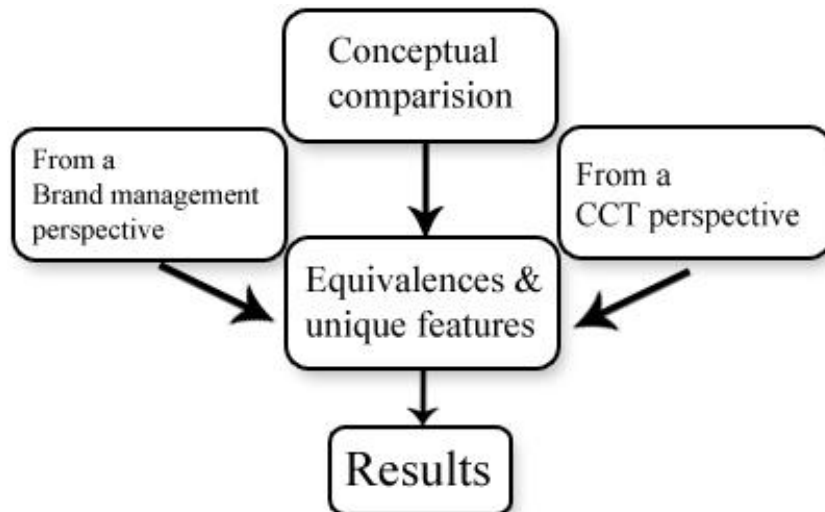


Figure 3 Our work-process visualised in a model

From a Brand Management Perspective

When studying Björn Borg from a brand management perspective we find it appropriate to discuss the image(s) based on the associations that were revealed in the focus groups. By doing so we hope to find similarities and differences among the consumers that we will use to describe how the consumers have participated in Björn Borg's brand image formation.

Analysing the findings from a Brand Management perspective, associations that are frequently co-occurring such as "sport", "young", "strong colours" and "underwear" displays some of the intended messages that Björn Borg have aspired to communicate. The coherence between the associations from the focus group participants and the communication shows a strong influence from the company's side whereas the intended communication is also the one registered. Laura Lawaetz, marketing, PR and online communication manager at Björn Borg, confirms this and says that they intentionally use lots of colours (both literally and metaphorically) and their sporty legacy in the marketing. Since they communicate the same messages through every media channel she is not surprised that these associations occur in the focus groups. Besides, Laura also mentions that Björn Borg is trying to emphasise its Scandinavian roots, which is evident during the discussions and in the collages.

"My focus is the Nordic person; everybody is blond and bright in the commercials."

- Peter, describing his collages



Picture 1 An illustration of Björn Borg’s brand image from one of the focus group participants.

The similar images that imprint the collages can be explained due to a congruent positioning strategy. Even though associations like “MQ-guy” was negative according to the focus groups, Laura Lawaetz claims this connection is a positive one

on their behalf since they enjoy being associated with brands that MQ-stores distributes. The collages does though express younger people than the one Björn Borg is communicating to, which is explained by Laura Lawaetz as a result of the heritage of the brand. With Björn Borg being established as a young and fun brand, their customers are young and this seems to have imprinted the brand. Even though the commercial target group lies in the range of 13- 60 years, in other words, the group that is supposed to buy the items, and the communicative target group, which lies in the range of 18-30 years, the one Björn Borg is communication to, the actual consumers are younger. The fact that the consumers, despite the commercials being aimed towards older consumers stay so young could be explained due to the fact that the Björn Borg brand has been associated with a specific type of youngsters for a long time. When potential consumers then are exposed to new campaigns, re-branding efforts and commercials from Björn Borg, they are not likely to take notice of it and register new associations or desired images. This due to the fact that one is more likely to hold on to previous notions and images just as Berthon, Pitt and Campbell (2009) claims. We will discuss this more in detail later.

In Björn Borg's case it is evident that several aspects of their desired image are encoded in their communication. However, past experience and encounters with Björn Borg's products seems to be a huge influence of Björn Borg's image, especially with concern to its underwear's. Several of the respondents mention that the first time they encountered the brand was thought its underwear's. Since the underwear is characterized with strong patterns and colours it is not hard to see why most of the respondents' images include this association. Björn Borg's underwear's seem to be encoded with the colourful associations of their desired brand image. In other words, colourful is an association among the consumers that are derived from brand encounters with Björn Borg's products. Just as Kapferer (2008) proposed, the brand messages sent from the company seem to have reached the consumers through its products and communication. However, even though there are several similarities among the consumers there are also lots of differences.

“It was like the first thing you saw of them, I mean their [Björn Borg’s] underwear. After some time other pictures have been added”

- Madeleine

Since a brand image is argued to be a subjectively constructed image derived from different brand encounters (Srivastiva and Kamdar, 2009) it is no surprise that differences occur among the members in the focus groups. The fact that the main part of the first focus group was more critical than the second one, could imply that they have had different brand encounters, leaving them with varying images of the brand. One reason for these differences, even though the participants are homogeneous to some extent, could be various in backgrounds and past experiences. Within the Brand Management literature, these factors are important to study to understand how consumers interpret and make sense of brand image.

“... I first recognised the brand for real when I was visiting Turkey. Many of my friends bought cheap Björn Borg underwear there. Then it was like I wanted the brand because my friends had it.”

- Linus

Linus statement and collage shows that his experience with the brand, through his friends in Turkey, has influenced his image of Björn Borg. Obviously, Turkey is not an association that Björn Borg has “sent out” but still it is a part of Linus’s image of them. Most of the respondents’ images include associations that are not a part of Björn Borg’s desired image and therefore no totally objective image seems to exist.

“I strongly associate Björn Borg with situations where I’ve seen their underwear. For me, they are clearly associated with that. Yes, and then Båstad is included [refer to his collage]. I don’t know if it is for the tennis or for the brand. It’s hard to say”

- Christian

The fact that the individual consumer’s image partly differs from Björn Borg’s desired image is no surprise. From a Brand Management perspective it is rather expected. However, there are several associations that are shared among the group

members that have not been communicated by Björn Borg. For instance, associations that were negatively outed in the group, such as “Fjortis” have not been intendedly communicated on Björn Borg’s behalf, still it is a part of the collective image presented in the focus groups. We find it appropriate to analyse this deviation in terms of “noise”, in accordance with Kapferer’s “sender-message-receiver-model”.

Noise that occurs when consumers takes on the brand, re-arranging frames and images attached to the brand and this can create an ambiguous picture of what the brand stands for, causing consumers to be hesitant to it. In Björn Borg’s case this is evident since the majority of the respondents seem to have past experiences that include a young boy with a specific style that some like to call “Fjortis”.

“I also believe that it has to do with past experience with the brand. Personally I have always been against Björn Borg. I have thought it is lame since everybody had it, like “fjortisar”. Since everybody wanted it, I didn’t”

-Anders

Kamilla describes a seventeen-year-old boy with a polo shirt and several other respondents depict and/or describe a young boy on the beach showing off his underwear. It is obvious that the respondents’ brand encounters through this type of persons have influenced their image. The “fjortis” can be understood as an extraneous factor that speaks in Björn Borg’s name, producing meanings and associations that are not congruent with its brand identity. According to Kornberger (2010), this discrepancy between identity and image opens up for interpretations and in accordance to what is said above about Björn Borg’s target group, this might explain why the respondents depict younger persons than the ones that Björn Borg uses in its commercials.

“My image of Björn Borg is blurry but I do associate them with brash patterns and strong colours. I think their marketing efforts correspond with that image. Still, I get no clear image of them. Feels like their commercials don’t match their users or something.”

- Jesper

Jesper's statement further justifies the fact that there are room for interpretations in Björn Borg's case. Even though the commercials have reached through, Jesper's image is still "blurry" since some associations are different from how he has experienced the brand. Another appropriate way to interpret this statement is in terms of "fantasised identities". Kapferer (2008) argues that "fantasised identities" can result in increased noise when the reality does not match how it actually is. Even if the respondents do not say it out loud, it is obvious that they have accepted some associations and acted with perplexity and rejection against others. One such association might be the age of the people in the ads. This is also evident when it comes to other cases where other brands are discussed. For example, Anders claims that Ben Sherman is trying to be in the category of British 80s fashion, with features from hooliganism, and therefore they are stealing identities from other similar brands. However, he rejects the brand and the associations they are trying to communicate since they are trying to be something that they are not.

Another interesting finding that is not directly connected to the Björn Borg case is that the more involved people are with a brand, the more their image seems to differ from the others. For instance, Olle knows far more about Seiko than the other group members do and his image of Seiko therefore differs from the groups. He claims that, "those who know" know that Seiko manufactures quality watches. His involvement with the brand has elaborated a more narrow understanding for it. The same is true in the cases where Anders talks about his fascination for Stone Island's products. He knows their reputation, how the products are made and from what materials. He is clearly involved with the brand and therefore his image differs from the groups. Srivastava and Kamdar (2009) argued that the higher degree of brand involvement, the more consistent the brand image is among consumers. Olle's and Anders's images of their favourite brands differ from the rest of the groups' and we therefore suspect that the more involved people are, the more their images differ from the publics'.

“Stone Island, because they have a good design and use new thinking materials. Because of that I have become more interested in them. For instance, they use Japanese parachute material, that’s cool.”

- Anders discusses his favourite brand.

The theory suggests that when the respondents are not involved, they are more likely to hold on to old brand encounters and meanings. In other words, they reject the new brand messages. One explanation seems to be that the respondents do not have time to be involved in everything. Madeleine for example, feels like everybody is so knowledgeable today that it is hard to follow. It is easier to not care. Just as Ramaswamy and Prahalad (2004) argue, the consumers seem to be very informed. However, they only seem to be active when it comes to brands they really care about. When it comes to other brands they are more passively relying on old meanings, just as Berthon, Pitt and Campbell (2009) proposed. To ease the pressure from all the different communication that consumers encounter every day, we have found evidence in the focus groups of them rather strengthening their images of a brand than changing their mind after a new brand encounter, especially when it comes to brands that already have a negative image.

“I believe it is easier to strengthen one’s associations to a brand. If someone cool wears for example ACNE it certifies my image. But when a cool person wears Crocs, it is too hard to change. I have too negative associations to it.”

- Peter

Due to the differences and similarities concerning Björn Borg’s image among the focus group participants, it is obvious that they have contributed both as receivers and as co-creators of meanings. The similarities revealed that several parts of Björn Borg’s desired image had reached the consumers through its communication and products. The congruent brand messages have shaped common associations among the group members. Past experience also seems to have shaped common associations that are not communicated by Björn Borg. For instance, “fjortis” is an association that is shared by several members and through their statements we could conclude that

they all had past experience that included this type of a person. Besides, in accordance to Kapferer (2009), who argues that a brand's identity set the boundaries in which the brand is free to develop, Björn Borg's double nature might have open up for interpretations as well.

Differences among the group members could be explained by several factors. However, the interesting thing is that the consumers actually can be said to participate in the formation of brand images, at least the ones in their own minds. Several associations seem to be dependent on the past experience the members have had with the brand and new brand messages are interpreted through the existing cognitive structures. In conformity with the concept of co-creation of meanings, the members seem to be choosing which brand messages to absorb and adjust them in order to fit their life circumstances. Even though this process seems to be mainly subconscious among the members, there is also evidence of that the consumers are aware of it. Consumers actively choose which brands to embrace and by doing so, they control the degree in which the brands are allowed to be developed in their minds.

From a CCT Perspective

When analysing the material from a CCT perspective we have noticed that the social aspects of brands are evident in two different ways. First, the stories, images and associations that is derived from experiences outside the focus group setting and second, the stories, images and associations that are formed and created within the focus groups. Since they most likely are connected to each other we find it important to address them both.

The first thing we notice when analysing Björn Borg's brand is the variety of stories, images and associations within the focus groups but also in the individual consumers' statements.

“Happy colours! And I want paparazzi shots since you always see Björn Borg in papers or posters. It is obvious that the underpants are from Björn Borg. My focus is the Nordic person; everybody is blond and bright in the commercials. Generally, one notices the Björn Borg logo on boys in the city.”

- Peter

When Peter is trying to explain his collages it becomes clear that he is influenced by several stories, images and associations that circulate in the society. According to Holt (2005) this is exactly what happens when a product has reached the market. Even though there seems to be many differences between the consumers’ understanding of Björn Borg, there also seem many similarities. In other words, we have found several brand stories, images and associations that are more or less established.

Take “happy colours” for example. When studying the collages this reoccurring theme and during the discussion “happy colours” are revealed as an association, or residual, from the brand stories and images produced by the respondents collages and discussions. A common thing behind these “stories and images” is that they seem to be derived from Björn Borg’s commercials and products.

“My image of Björn Borg is blurry but I do associate them with brash patterns and strong colours. I think their marketing efforts correspond with that image, still, i get no clear image of them.”

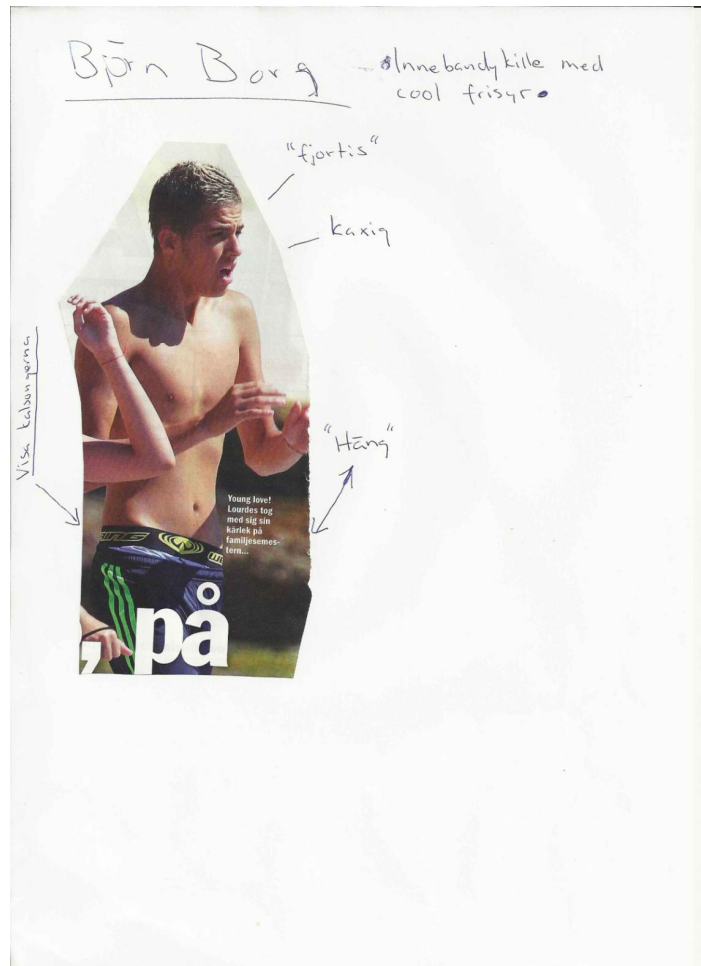
- Jesper

“One always sees the Björn Borg logo, everywhere in the summer. I believe that the public have influenced my view on Björn Borg as a brand the most. I have not thought about it in that way. Like product placement in reality. But yes, Björn Borg is lot of colours. As you said [refers to Peter], “happy”.”

- Kamilla

Peter mentioned above that it is obvious when underpants come from Björn Borg and several respondents mentioned that the encounters with its products are the main influencer of their understanding. The product has shaped several of the respondent’s

images and since they are characterised with strong colours and patterns it is not hard to see why the respondents share images and association on this point. In other words, Björn Borg can be seen as influential author of their brand's culture.



Picture 2 An illustration of Björn Borg's brand image from one of the focus group participants.

Another interesting thing is that the respondents mention different situations where they have encountered Björn Borg's products. Several respondents believe that it is people in general and not just Björn Borg that have influenced their view on the brand, which is also confirmed throughout the discussions by statements and opinions. For instance, the term "fjortis" seems to be an established part of Björn Borg's brand culture.

“I do also believe that it has to do with past experience with the brand. Personally, I have always been against Björn Borg. I have thought it’s lame since everybody had it, like “fjortisar”, so since everybody wanted it, I didn’t”

- Anders

Similar aspects are also captured in the collages (see for instance 4, 5 and 10 in Appendix 2). The fact that Björn Borg is associated with “fjortis” reveals several important aspects of how consumers have participated in the formation of Björn Borg’s brand culture.

First, the term seems to be derived from stories and images that are created among consumers concerning a young boy with a specific style wearing Björn Borg underpants. Since “fjortis” is evident in the collages and at early stages in the discussion we dare to conclude that it is a shared association among several members of the groups. Since Björn Borg is that closely associated with “fjortis” it is likely that that these persons are actively co-authoring brand stories just by using Björn Borg’s products. In other words, Björn Borg’s brand culture includes cultural and symbolic aspects that are transferred from stories about its very consumers. This is also confirmed in the interview with Laura Lawaetz when she concludes that the Swedish users in general are young, much younger than Björn Borg’s intended target group. The shared stories include young people and therefore the brand culture is characterised by this. Laura compares our findings with Denmark where the general user is in the fifties and where the brand culture is much “older” even though the target group and communication are the same between the two countries.

Secondly, the term “fjortis” can also be understood as a negotiated result from the stories and images that are presented in the focus groups. Before “fjortis” was mentioned, terms like “Björn Borg boy”, “floor ball-guy with a cool haircut” and “seventeen year old boy with a standing collar” were used to describe the typical Björn Borg user. “Fjortis” captures several of these stories and once it was introduced to the group, it became the collectively used word to describe a typical Björn Borg

person. However, since “fjortis” was evident in the in the collages before it was introduced in the focus groups it cannot be claimed to strictly originate from the discussions. It is rather a matter of interplay.

Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) argue that brands can be studied as social objects which become highly evident in the case above. In addition to “fjortis”, terms like “happy colours”, “underwear” and “boys” become accepted as group truths as the discussions go on. A common feature between these terms is that they all represent a set of similar stories. In other cases, when stories are not being equally shared and agreed on, no such negotiations takes form. This might be a good example of Björn Borg’s “sticky” brand culture and just as Holt (2003) argued; it is hard for the individual consumer to opt out from the conventional meanings.

In addition to the fact that brand stories are negotiated and then reinforced by the members of the groups, the social character of the groups evoked different stories. For instance, in focus group one the discussions included more negative stories than in focus group two. Members like Anders and Olle shared negative stories that influenced the discussions and reinforced the negative aspects rather than the positive one.

“It feels like there are only boys, all the collages include beautiful boys but mine. He’s not hip. He’s not beautiful at all, kind of ugly actually. Yes, I associate Björn Borg with ugly guys; like, ugly guys on the beach.”

- Olle, commenting on his collages

Focus group two did not include the same amount of negative stories. Instead positive or neutral stories were reinforced. In addition to the terms mentioned above, “Sport” seems to be a part of several stories and images. “Sport”, and above all, “tennis”, is an obvious theme throughout the collages. Based on Björn Borg’s history as both a brand and a famous tennis player this is no surprise. Eckhardt and Houston (2002) argues that brand meanings attached to a brand name is highly dependent on the

cultural values that are evoked in different situations and since we conducted our focus groups in Sweden, with Swedish respondents, Björn Borg the tennis player is a possible co-author of the brand culture. This is also confirmed in the interview with Laura Lawaetz who claims that even though Björn Borg uses its sporty legacy in their overall marketing, the same associations cannot be found in Denmark as in Sweden.

Seen from a cultural historical perspective it becomes rather expected that the respondents share stories involving tennis and sport. Even though many of them were not born when Björn Borg retired, he is still a living icon in Sweden. His career was followed by a whole nation during the late seventies and early eighties and the people that grew up during these years are often referring back to his games as something that united the country (Sylvén, 2011). However, since the respondents in the focus groups grew up in the nineties, their understandings of Björn Borg the tennis player are foremost constructed of stories, written before their birth.

Putting this in relation to the brand, the respondents have grown up in a time where Björn Borg has been iconic tennis player, an entrepreneur and a brand circulating in the society. Distant to Björn Borg's active career and guided by other and more present ideals (in a vast media supply), Björn Borg as a brand does not seem to provide the same powerful identity myths for respondents as for earlier generations. Instead, other stories, closer to present culture have been established, and just as Madeleine mention in focus groups two - how Björn Borg is understood is a question of generation.

The focus group discussions helped us to reveal what we see as the established brand culture of Björn Borg, captured from the public. However, the focus groups also capture several non-established stories, images and associations, which we believe are just as important to mention. For instance, "Ugly guys", "MQ-guy", "Turkey" and "lesbian girls with baggy jeans" are presented to the group as parts of new stories. However, since they are not collectively shared they cannot be seen as a part of Björn

Borg's established brand culture. As mentioned above, when stories are not shared, the negotiation of meaning becomes tougher.

"... I first recognised the brand for real when I was visiting Turkey. Many of my friends bought cheap Björn Borg underwear there. Then it was like I wanted the brand because my friends had it."

- Linus

Another thing that becomes obvious in our focus groups is the symbolic value of brands. Bengtsson and Östberg (2006) argued that brand consumption is highly symbolically loaded and this is evident through several statements in the focus groups. For instance, Anders claimed above that he did not want buy a pair of Björn Borg underwear since "fjortisar" had it. Björn Borg is imbued with stories that might contradict Anders desired identity since most of his other statements refer to a desired British hooligan-identity. However, the fact that "the fjortis" as a consumer has influenced the respondents' shared stories are important to acknowledge since they reveal consumers as important influencers of a Björn Borg's brand culture.

If we take a look at other brands that are discussed in the focus groups we find that the respondents might not always be actively participating in the formation of a brand understanding. Instead, the discussions reveal that consumers often just accept the symbolic and cultural aspects mentioned above. In other words, the consumers consume the conventional meanings that the brands are imbued with, just as Holt (2002) and Bengtsson and Östberg (2006) suggest. For example, Anders said that the reason why he bought his first Stone Island shirt was that he knew what it "communicated" and Madeleine emphasise how you become a better person if you own an Apple-computer. However, the symbolic aspects are not aimed to be understood by everyone, just by those "who should know".

"But one has to admit that it is not fun when the brand is totally unknown. One does not want to buy brands that nobody is familiar with, you know, one out of ten should know."

-Linus

“Yes, you want everybody that should know, to know. A good example is when I bought my Seiko watch, which is an understated brand in Sweden. Those who know a lot about Japanese watch culture know it is a good brand. We know equally much.”

-Olle

Olle talks a lot about his Seiko watch in the focus groups. He shares stories about how he explores forums and other sites to find the best and expressed particular interest in Japanese watch communities. Olle’s Seiko-stories differ from the groups’ but they most likely correspond with the stories that circulate in the communities he refers to. He refuses stories that he argues are shared by Swedish users and accept the stories of “those who know”. In this case, “those who know” might be understood as Olle’s reference group and just as Edson Escalas and Bettman (2005) argue, he is more likely to derive social meanings from them. The Seiko brand represents the Japanese watch culture and brings Olle and his reference group together like, as titled by Fournier and Avery (2011), “a social glue”, which also becomes evident when the respondents discuss Apple:

“With some products it is like you’re a part of a community if you buy the same product. If your friends have it you want to join and if they also say it’s a good product they influence you and you can join the clique. If anyone says “Apple-computer” I do not think of Apple’s commercials, I think of the “rumour” in my community.”

- Johan

According to Holt (2003) it is hard to strictly isolate all the stories, images and associations that circulate in the society. Just as emphasised by the Björn Borg case, all the brand stories, images and associations collide and interact in complex ways and new stories are created as the discussions goes on. Everything flows together and a brand culture is taking form. In a few cases we were able to deduce the main author but still, others have most likely influenced the stories as well. Even though the respondents share some stories, there are non-shared stories that most likely correspond to the individual respondents’ own understandings. A reasonable reason for these non-shared stories could be the different references groups of the members,

where these stories are shared amongst the members. Kornberger (2010) refers to these phenomena as tribes, where the tribe-members together develop an idea of a particular brand and reinforces it. As a result it might differ from the public idea of the brand, as illustrated by our case.

Seen from a cultural context becomes obvious that the respondents are guided and restrained by contemporary culture. Due to increased education levels and opportunities to connect with others, the respondents seem to be very knowledgeable about specific brands and brands in general. Signs of the active consumers are evident throughout the groups but it is mostly evident when the respondents discuss commercials. Taking a cynical approach, the respondents depicted commercials as something that they have seen through. As argued by Holt (2002), consumers today are getting familiar with contemporary branding techniques due to years of usage.

“I am influenced by the surroundings. In reality it does not matter what companies are trying to be or not. Take Ben Sherman for example, they want to be in category of English 80s, kicker-style towards hooliganism, so they are trying to look like other similar brand, but I think this is an epic fail. It is obvious that they have copied other brands and I do not like it.”

- Anders

Another distinct feature is the need to stand out, to be special and unique. In line with Baker (2003), this is an expected characteristic of the active consumer. What is interesting though is that Sweden, from a cultural historical perspective, often has been described as a collectivistic society where standing out is something ugly. Due to more individually oriented consumers these bonds might be diminished, causing less restrained consumers, or as stated in Swedish media, “...the individualism is the reason why Jantelagen is resolving” (dt.se).

Connecting back to Björn Borg, their underwear was somewhat unique when they were introduced to the market, defying existing rules about not standing out. This rebellious standpoint might explain why they are so widespread. In line with Holt

(2003), they might provide identity myths that are/were right at the time. A wave of more individually oriented consumers is contradicting the established norms of the Swedish society. However, due to the individualism, the underwear's incidence might also explain why several respondents have negative attitudes.

Our material clearly shows signs of consumer participation in the formation of brand understandings through different means even though the way of participation can be hard to identify. Arvidsson (2005) claims that consumers exert some kind of consumer agency and this was apparent in the focus groups, which for example could be displayed through the negotiation of "fjortis" being a part of Björn Borg's culture.

Equivalences and unique features between the analyses

By analysing the collages and the focus groups it becomes evident that choice of research perspective contributes to different types of knowledge with concern to some fundamental aspects of the Björn Borg brand. Just as we concluded in the concept comparison, the CCT perspective revealed several social and cultural aspects that we could use in order to explain the participants' understanding of Björn Borg. The shared understanding was concluded to originate from social and cultural contexts both within and outside the focus groups. Since Brand Management focuses on the cognitive aspects of the individual consumer, we could not reveal the same social aspects as if we had used the CCT perspective. Instead, the Brand Management perspective helped us to reveal how the participants individually had formed their images by similar brand encounters and past experiences, forming the shared understanding. For instance, since Björn Borg's products were claimed to be distinctly encoded with associations through colours, "colourful" was concluded to originate from its products.

In contrast, looking at the phenomena from a CCT perspective, stories and images including encounters with Björn Borg's products could be argued to have shaped the

shared understanding. Notice though that it is the stories and images that are in focus and not the specific encounters or the past experiences. Therefore “Colourful” or “happy colours” is rather studied as an association negotiated among the participants in the groups than an association encoded in the products.

A distinct example of the difference between the concepts could be illustrated by the shared understanding including “sport”. From a Brand Management perspective we concluded that the shared understanding depended on the participants’ encounters with Björn Borg’s marketing efforts, however this was not the fact when analysing it from a CCT perspective. Instead, “sport” was revealed as a negotiated association restrained by the Swedish culture. Even if it is hard to strictly isolate stories, the difference between the Danish and the Swedish market revealed that Björn Borg’s communication was not the main reason for this difference. Just as concluded in the concept comparison, the shared understanding among the consumers was similar regardless of choice of perspective. In other words, the identified brand culture and brand image are alike. Still, the form in which the understanding was “captured” differed substantially and so did the origin.

Evidence of this was also found when we analysed the heterogeneous images presented by the participants. From a CCT perspective the heterogeneous understandings could be understood as non-shared stories among the members that were “authored” both within and outside the groups. Since the CCT perspective focuses on the social aspects of a brand, we could just reveal how the stories, images and associations were formed in the groups. However, the fact that consumers are culturally restrained and that reference groups seemed to have influenced the participants, helped us to deduce the origin of several other stories, images and associations as well. Seen from a Brand Management perspective, these heterogeneous understandings could be explained through different past experiences. Because of the focus that lies on the individual consumer, this was an expected finding.

Within the Brand Management analysis we concluded that the individual brand understanding differed from the groups' the more involved the respondent was with a brand. We suspected that this had to do with more narrow experiences that have increased the likelihood for the brand messages to reach through. However, we could not explain why the respondents had chosen to embrace a specific brand. Through the CCT perspective we gained insight on this fact and concluded that the respondents probably embraced the brand to buttress their identity work. Even though both the perspectives revealed that the more involved the consumer is, the more extensive is the understanding. Only the CCT perspective could explain why a consumer chooses to be involved, or stated differently, participating in making their brand understanding more extensive.

One clear difference between the perspectives is the degree of participation assigned to the consumers versus the company. Doing the analysis from a Brand Management perspective resulted in discussion that emanated from Björn Borg's marketing. Since the consumers are studied as receivers, several of the images among the participants were concluded to be dependent on Björn Borg's desired brand image and positioning. From a CCT perspective, the company is treated as an equal "author" of the shared understanding and therefore it is studied on the same basis as the consumers. This was evident in our analysis since the consumer was argued to be involved in the brand understanding formation at different levels. Within the CCT analysis the consumer were concluded to exert consumer agency through its negotiations. Along with the other authors outside the groups, they were argued to have formed the shared understanding. In contrast, the Brand Management analysis did not acknowledge the consumers as participants in the formation of a shared understanding, however, they were subjectively constructing their own.

Both the analyses revealed the consumers as both passive and active participants in forming their brand understanding. The CCT analysis embraced the consumers as active in that sense that they actively negotiate meaning among other consumers and

passive in that sense that they accept socially and culturally shared meanings in order to buttress their identity work. In contrast, the Brand Management analysis showed that the consumers have passively received some parts of the brand image, and at the same time they have actively interpreted other parts. In other words, the process of participation seems to be both conscious and unconscious.

This was not equally evident in the in concept comparison, even though the fundamental reasons for this are discussed. What is clearly evident though, both in the concept comparison and the analyses, is that consumer participation is restrained by different sources. From CCT perspectives the participants' understandings are restrained by culture and social context and from a Brand Management perspective their understanding is restrained by past experience and Björn Borg as a company, no matter if they are active or passive. Björn Borg's positioning and desired brand image were claimed to have set the frames and therefore several of the shared images were claimed to originate from these managerial tools.

The CCT analysis revealed several social aspects of brands that could not have been derived from the Brand Management perspective. For instance, the social character of the groups was concluded to have an impact on how the consumers understood Björn Borg as a brand. Since the Brand Management perspective focuses on the individual consumer, such knowledge cannot be derived. The same is true when it comes to how consumers use brands as cultural resources to buttress their identity work and the social aspects that ties together the consumers, just like social glue. As mentioned above, the social significance of brands could be revealed. However, as mentioned in the concept comparison, the stories and images could not reveal personal significance, something that might explain the willingness to share new stories.

The Brand Management perspective points out several unique features due to a brand's personal significance. Consumers were concluded to participate in the formation of brand understandings through subjective interpretations. When the

reality mismatches the desired brand image, the consumer is more likely to construct subjective understandings since it opens up for interpretations. Besides, the participants were more likely to strengthen their incumbent understandings than changing them.

Since the Brand Management perspective captures the personal significance it is suitable when studying subjective brand understandings. However, studying brand understanding without taking cultural and social aspects into account would not be wise since those aspects are important to understand the new active consumers. We therefore suggest, in line with the debate above, that the Brand Management perspective needs to be complemented with ideas from the CCT perspective to fit the new circumstances.

Both the analyses captured shared understandings that were not communicated by Björn Borg. However, the implication of this is treated differently between the research perspectives. For instance, the term “fjortis” would from a CCT perspective be explained as a cultural phenomenon that has been transferred from Björn Borg’s consumers to its brand culture. Since culture is in focus and consumers are co-authors of culture, this is not a problem. In contrast, from a Brand Management perspective, where a shared brand understanding is claimed to be dependent on a congruent marketing communication, “fjortis” becomes hard to explain on these terms. Instead, it is studied as noise, which is beyond the control of the company, causing it to often be studied as negative phenomena.

~ Discussion ~

In this part we will answer our purpose due to the results that we have derived above.

The discussion will connect back to the debate presented in the background and reinforced by our results we will evaluate and decide which research perspective that is the most suitable one for studying brand understandings.

Purpose

In the background we emphasised that the new active consumer has caused a shift in power with concern to brands. Consumers were claimed to interact and unite with each other and since they were gaining more power in the processes within and around the companies, they were claimed to be active participants rather than passive receivers. Questioning the applicability of the traditional Brand Management perspective, researchers from the CCT perspective insisted that a new approach, taking culture into account, was necessary to be able to understand how consumers act in relation to brands. They emphasised the normative assumption within the Brand Management literature that managers exert a fairly high degree of control of brand images and claimed that in this contemporary society, with Facebook, Twitter etc., this was an obsolete view.

Since the shift seemed to be on the consumers' side, we found it wise to address their understanding of brands, often studied as "brand image" within the Brand Management perspective and "brand culture" within the CCT perspective. Our purpose was to emphasise what kind of knowledge that could be produced by the different perspectives when studying consumers' understandings of a brand. By evaluating the perspectives and identifying equivalences and unique features between them, we aimed to reveal which perspective that is the most suitable one when it comes to studying how consumers understand brands in the new consumer landscape.

Answering our purpose

As mentioned above, the different perspectives revealed similar understandings among the consumers and if the purpose is to only reveal these understandings, it does not matter what perspective one chooses. However, as concluded in Equivalences and Unique Features, the form in which these understandings are

captured and the origin of them differed substantially causing us to conclude that different types knowledge are derived from the same phenomenon due to choice of research perspective.

Throughout our analysis it becomes clear that both the perspectives contributed in different ways, with both unique and similar features to our results. Since the perspectives originate from two fundamentally different schools, this finding was rather expected. However, as illustrated by the results we have found several interesting inputs, enabling us to produce different kinds of knowledge in explaining the consumer's participation in the formation of brand understandings. Due to this fact, we are now able to conclude which perspective that is the most suitable one when studying these phenomena.

We argue that it is less suitable to study the shared brand understanding formation from a strict Brand Management perspective since it cannot capture several important aspects that have shown to be important in this process. For instance, the Brand Management perspective did not acknowledge consumers as active participants to the same extent as the CCT perspective did, due to shared understanding, and therefore it became hard to draw any distinct conclusions.

Consumer participation from a CCT perspective contributed to knowledge embracing how consumers were participating with concern to each other. Focusing on the social aspects of a brand, consumers were claimed to be active co-authors of the shared brand understanding. They negotiated the brand understanding between other members of the society and the company was understood as an equal part. Referring back to the critique presented in the background, it is evident that consumers are more than passive receivers when it comes to this formation process. As argued above and as we will discuss later, consumers are actively participating in the formation process just by interacting with each other. By framing these interactions with cultural

historical knowledge we gained further insights that help us to explain phenomenon anchored outside the focus groups.

Studying the same phenomena from a Brand Management perspective could not derive the same insights. As argued in the background, the new consumer landscape includes connected and informed consumers that interact in a multi-way system and a cognitive view on this might be problematic. This due to the fact that it cannot capture what is going on between the consumers since the formation process is based on subjective interpretations taking place in the consumer's head. Besides, even though the consumers were active in their choices and interpretations, they were still mainly understood as receivers and the shared brand understanding was, in line with the traditional Brand Management literature, concluded to originate from the marketing efforts of the company. Even though similarities were found when we compared the shared brand image with the brand culture, the degree of participation allowed and assigned to the consumers differed substantially between the perspectives.

We suspect that a standpoint in the assumption that the company is responsible for the shared understanding among the consumers could lead to distorted results. In our case, to ascribe generic associations to a specific company appeared to be unwise since there were several other aspects that influenced the process. As illustrated in Equivalences and Unique features, a strict Brand Management perspective led us to conclude that several of the shared associations were a result of brand communication. The CCT analysis later revealed that in some of these cases this might not be the main explanation. Instead, social factors and, above all, culture was the main influencer. Comparable with the concept of spurious correlations, the Brand Management analysis led us to conclude that two variables were correlated when they might not have been. A third factor, in this case a social or cultural factor, might have been the underlying reason but since the Brand Management analysis could not capture these, they were not revealed in the analysis. We suspect that the likelihood

for these spurious correlations to occur is high since the new active consumers are acting and interacting in a consumer landscape where the companies are not always present. Besides, when the brand name originates from something that already is established in the culture, the likelihood for spurious correlations to happen is even bigger.

The explanation for these spurious correlations is based on the fact that the Brand Management perspective emanates from the marketing and branding efforts that the company has conducted. The fact that we knew what had been communicated and encoded in the products made the analysis somewhat similar to a hypothesis test. Once we found evidence of the communicated image, we were satisfied and we concluded that it originated from the company. Due to this, it was not necessary to analyse how the consumers had participated in the formation of the shared understanding since the company was directly responsible for this. We could just conclude that they were participating in the formation of their own understandings. The same complex problems cannot arise when using the CCT perspective since it takes standpoint in the fact that all members of the society are equal authors of a brand's understanding, or culture.

This conclusion is relevant, not just in our case, but also in a larger sense as well. As proven by the results, choice of perspective has a huge impact on what kind of knowledge that can and cannot be derived from the analysis. In our case, the Brand Management perspective was restricted by its cognitive foundation and the CCT analysis by its contextual or social. Transferable to other research areas, similar limitations might have a big impact on the results and as concluded in this thesis, causing spurious correlations that mislead might future decisions and research. Besides, taking a managerial focus when studying how consumers understand brands might enhance this since the relation between the company and the consumer is not as isolated as depicted by the Brand Management perspective.

The traditional Brand Management-view presented above caused troubles when analysing shared understandings that were not communicated by the case company. Even though one could claim to explain a shared understanding through past experiences, the traditional Brand Management perspective does not acknowledge the collective power of the consumers. Regardless of how connected the consumers are with each other, the Brand Management perspective can only explain the cognitive processes that take place in the consumer's head, which consequently makes it complicated to study how they participate in the formation of shared brand understandings. For example, if culture is not included in the equation, results might become distorted due to different consumers are culturally restricted and therefore the understanding is dependent on who, where and when you study the consumer. This is clearly illustrated by different associations and understandings that were found when comparing Björn Borg's image on the Danish and the Swedish market, even though the brand communication was the same in the two countries.

The Brand Management perspective is suitable when it comes to studying the relationship between the company and the individual consumer, but as argued above, we must question its applicability when it comes to understanding the processes between consumers. Since the CCT analysis revealed that the cultural context and social interaction between the consumers were obvious sources and influencers of the consumers' understandings, we find this questioning justified. To be able to understand how consumers value brands in a social context one must understand the cultural context in which they interact.

The social settings in the focus groups elicited different kinds of associations in terms of "negative" and "positive" and we believe that this fact is important to acknowledge. For instance, even though past experience might have been positive, the research object might contribute with a more negative story to be a part of the group. One might argue that focus groups therefore are a bad method to study brand image but since the new active consumers are argued be more socially connected, we

see it the other way around. Even though brands have personal significance, the social significance became very evident in the focus groups.

Knowledge from two different perspectives has contributed to an extensive explanation of how consumers are participating in the formation of a brand understanding. Due to different standpoints, knowledge on different levels were produced and these levels have helped us to reveal both the personal significance of brands together with the social and cultural significance. This division is not always as evident as the theories predict, they are most likely interlinked in complex ways and this makes the study of brand understanding a complex task. However, by emanating from the CCT perspective one enhances its chances to capture how the consumers are participating in the formation of a shared brand understanding. Companies might still be able to influence, but as argued in our thesis, consumers are active co-authors that interact with and influence each other in the increasingly connected society. The role of co-authors could in that sense be said to be less connected to the management than depicted by the Brand Management perspective and is rather something between the consumers. The company's role therefore turns more into a provider of information intended to construct the understanding than as a foundation for the relationship; instead, here the CCT perspective gives a better explanation for it.

As argued throughout the thesis, the foundation of the CCT perspective states brands as something that exist among consumers, it therefore becomes natural to study "what's shared" and "how it's shared" among the consumers. Through the concept of brand image, the Brand Management perspective is approaching this shared understanding, but due to its cognitive focus it is not hard to see why the applicability is questioned. The basic ideas cannot reach beyond the cognitive aspects, and since the social interaction between the consumers is argued to have a huge influence on the shared understanding, this becomes an obvious Achilles heel. The CCT perspective acknowledges consumers as active co-authors and therefore a shift in

control cannot affect its applicability to the same extent when studying this phenomenon. Besides, without the cultural historical approach within the CCT analysis, we would not have been able to fully understand and explain the motives of the new active consumer.

Research implications & limitations

The research implications on our subject have already been discussed in the previous part but there are still a few implications that we find appropriate to discuss. Our results clearly emphasise the fact that it is important to consider the choice of perspective when analysing a specific phenomena, partly because it has a huge impact on what knowledge that can be produced and partly because changes in the surroundings might have undermined its adequacy. In our case, shifts in the contemporary consumer landscape had resulted in that other factors have gained significance in explaining consumer participation.

Doing things like they always have been done could cause one to continuously do mistakes due to neglecting of the surrounding environment, a situation that we want to emphasise in this thesis. Therefore we find debates between different research perspectives necessary to open up new doors and find new perspectives that can help us to understand a specific phenomenon. As illustrated by this thesis, analysing the same phenomenon from different perspectives is a good way to cultivate new understanding and knowledge since it reveals what can and cannot be captured due to choice of perspective. Besides, making knowledge relative reveals both advantages and disadvantages, which in turn can be used to study how perspectives can complement each other.

We would also like to comment on the fact that we used focus groups as a method for elicitation of empirics. Despite the fact that they did provide us with many opportunities and insights to gather high qualitative data, brand stories were not

captured to the fullest extent as one would have wished for seen from a CCT perspective. In order for us to better understand and analyse the participant's brand stories, we would have needed to stop them in the sharing and asked them to develop and explain the full picture that one gets in more frequently used depth interviews. We managed to catch some brand stories, allowing us to analyse them, showing that it is in fact possible to use focus groups to catch them, but we also see the need for a deeper discussion in the focus groups, which could be an implication for further research using focus groups as method. Since the CCT perspective is addressing both the social and cultural aspects of a brand, focus groups might be an appropriate way to combine them.

Seen from a Brand Management perspective, focus groups might be just the right way to include social and cultural aspects in the equation. Doing a hybrid between old techniques and new ones might enable the researcher to both identify the collectively shared understanding and reveal its significance, in a personal as well as a social/cultural sense.

Managerial implications

Seeing our findings from a managerial perspective we can conclude that the contemporary consumer landscape includes more than just passive receivers. Consumers are active co-authors that both create and send brand messages which are shared and received in situations where the company is not always present. To aim for and exert full control in this situation is inappropriate since it is close to impossible. The consumers are just too connected and too informed. Instead, we suggest that the companies should concentrate on providing the market with the right kind of building material so that the consumers themselves can negotiate their brand understanding, hopefully in line with the desired brand image.

Acknowledging consumers as active participants in the formation of the shared brand understanding will also open up for new ways to work with brands. Even though our findings clearly show that brand messages from the case company had reached through, they also showed that the consumers had cultivated several parts of the understanding themselves. Making room for these negotiations might be a good way to assign personal and social significance to the products. However, how much room that should be allowed and in what situations is something that needs to be further examined. As Facebook, twitter and various channels on the Internet gain even more space in the marketing strategies of tomorrow, the personal contact is moving even further away from the consumers. This calls for sensitivity and humbleness from the company's side, combined with congruent marketing communication in order to develop a successful brand image. Besides, since more and more of the brand value seem to be created among the consumers, companies have to make sure that they understand the values that the consumers assign to the brands.

To be able to both maneuver and understand brand understandings, managers of the future need to embrace aspects from both the CCT perspective as well as from the Brand Management perspective.

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~ Appendix ~

Appendix 1.1 Focus group 1

Respondents

Namn – Ålder, respondentens egna presentation.

Kamilla – 20 år, Student från LTH som gillar att springa, från Söderköping

Peter – 24 år, Gillar kultur och mode, från Jönköping

Olle – 25 år, Älskar att kolla på fotboll, från Lund

Anders – 23 år, Stort intresse för musik, från Lund

Jesper – 26 år, Gillar kultur och skidåkning, från Jönköping

Brand Understanding

Beskriv er uppfattning om Björn Borg som varumärke med hjälp av ett kollage. Vad får ni för associationer, bilder etc. Jämför kollagen och förklara. Varför tror ni det finns olikheter/likheter? Vem eller vad upplever ni har influerat er bild av Björn Borg mest?

Diskussionen utgår ifrån de kollagen som respondenter gjort.

Moderator: Okey, finns det någon slående likhet?

Alla: Killar!

J- Jag tänker på en vän till mig som mer än gärna går runt i BB-saker. Han är väl typ en MQ-kille eller vad man ska säga. Typen man ser på deras reklamer. det känns väldigt mycket MQ. Trendigt på nått sätt men kanske inte så exklusiv. Inte traditionellt i alla fall. Sen, ja killar gillar mer ”brandade” kalsonger, märkena ska synas. BB syns överallt.

P- Jag ser MQ-loggan och färgerna. Kan väl hålla med om att MQ's grejer är lite som Tiger of Sweden, har dålig kvalitet men är hyfsat dyra. men jag hade gärna köpt på dressman om de varit bra kvalitet, precis samma sak med BB. För dyra för sin kvalitet.

Sen ja, kollagen. Glada färger! Paparazzibilder vill jag ha för man ser ofta BB på stora planscher eller i tidningar. Det syns tydligt på kalsongerna att de är BB. Jag fokuserar på att det är en nordisk person, alla är alltid blonda och ljusa i reklamerna. Man ser mer generellt BB märket på killar på stan.

Moderator: Så man skulle med andra ord kunna säga att företaget tillsammans med allmänheten är ansvariga för den bilden som du har av BB?

P- Ja, jag tror det.

K- Man ser alltid BB loggan, överallt på sommaren. Tror att det till största del är folk i allmänhet som influerat min syn på BB som varumärke. Jag ar inte ens tänkt på det så, typ produktplacering i vekligheten eller nått. Men ja, BB är mycket färger. Som du sa, glada.

A - på tal om kläder, jag var på dressman, jag köper inte kläder där för imagens skull, det beror helt på kvalitet var jag handlar, det ska vara lite sexigt, jag går bara på mina första 5 sekunder, de första som poppar upp i huvudet bildar jag min bild av märket på tar jag. Likheterna mellan kollagen beror på en bra positionering, det ger generella associationer. T.ex. lesbiska tjejer med häng. Personliga uppfattningar av BB har influerat mig, jag har varit anti innan jag köpte mina första par kalsonger.

O- Bara killar känns det som, alla bilder är snygga förutom min för min kille är inte hipp., ganska ful, jag associerar BB något som är ganska dåligt, de andras killar är mkt snyggare, typ fula killar på stranden.

A- jag associerar det inte så mycket med killar utan mer med underkläder. Jag associerar inte till någon person utan mer på produkten, för jag har ingen direkt koppling, har inte sett någon reklam där det står en kille med på planschen.

Vem styr bilden? Vem eller vad upplever du influerar mest vad gäller märken i allmänhet? Företagen själva eller någon annan såsom bloggar, kompisar, kändisar?

K- absolut folk i allmänhet, 17-årig kille i piké tröja typ

O- ja det är typ killar på stranden i surfshorts

K- ja precis!

P- surfshortsen är också BB!

A- Jag tror också att det är lite vad man själv har upplevt av märket. Jag personligen har alltid varit anti BB. Jag har tyckt de var "lame" för att alla hade det, typ fjortisar, därför att alla skulle ha de så ville jag inte ha det. Det känns "lame" för att det var något som alla skulle ha.

J- Min bild av Björn Borg is blurrig men jag associerar dem mest med starka färger och mönster. Jag tror att deras marknadsföring stämmer väl överens med detta men jag får fortfarande ingen klar bild. Känns som om deras deras reklamer inte matchar deras användare eller vad man ska säga."

A- Jag tycker att valet av positionering bestämmer mest, har med att göra att jag last lite marknadsföring första året tror jag, och jag tänker på det när jag ser en film t.ex. Jag ser sådant, då ser man var de vill vara, och man får en klar bild av vilken kategori de vill vara i, och jag köper bara om jag anser de lyckats med att vara där de vill vara,

Jag påverkas av omgivningen egentligen spelar det ingen roll vad företaget försöker vara eller inte. Exempelvis Ben Sherman vill vara i kategorin av engelskt 80-tal, kicker-style mot huligan hållet, så de försöker se ut som liknande märken, men jag tycker det är en flopp för det känns inte äkta. Det är uppenbart att de har kopierat andra märken som gör att jag inte gillar det.

O- alla märken jag tycker om gillar jag för att någon inflytelserik har sagt att de är bra, och då gillar jag det. Om någon kan mycket om märket och övertygar mig så köper jag det, typ på forum. Det krävs en kunnig person för att influera mig, de hade kunnat vara vilket varumärke och produkt som helst. Så när jag köpte den här klockan från Seiko från Japan, så letade jag på massa klock-sidor och hittade en sida som kunde riktigt mycket, inte bara om Japanska klockor utan också om deras historia. BB har typ alla. Kanske mest fjortisar. Då blir det inte samma sak på nått sätt.

Moderator: Spelade varumärket i sig någon roll då?

O- Det hade kunnat vara något annat varumärke också om han hade talat gott om det.

P- Ja, men jag tycker tvärtom också, om folk är okunniga så blir jag väldigt osugen på att köpa märket, typ Ed Hardy, associerar det mycket med min ungdom, det beror på att folk i min skola som var trashiga hade det. Det är lite samma sak med BB. Fjortis-stämpel gör en ganska otaggad på att köpa dem.

Symbolism

Anser ni att de bilder eller associationer som är förknippade med ett varumärke är viktiga? Varför, varför inte?

A- Skitviktigt, Mina första tankar och associationer avgör om jag är positiv eller negativ. Det som man säger om första intryck är sjukt sant, man måste skaffa positiva

associationer för att tycka att ett märke är fett, typ fjortisar, trash, skit och hit och dit håller inte.

K- det finns så många olika märken och associationerna avgör vilket märke man tar. Man har ju inte tid att utvärdera varje tanke man får. Det skulle ju ta en evighet. Så, det kändes lite konstigt att faktiskt tänka vad BB står för. Man har ju aldrig riktigt tänkt på det. Det går ju av sig själv. Men sen, ja, när vi började diskutera märkte jag att jag visst hade tänkt eller vad jag ska säga. Lite weird...

Har ni någon gång köpt något för det symboliska värdet istället för det funktionella? Med andra ord, köpt en produkt eller service där varumärket spelat större roll än det faktiska användandet?

P- ja det har jag, I gymnasiet var det trendigt med smala slipsar och när jag köpte slips till studenten så köpte jag en slips för 1000 spänn och den var jätte smal, verkligen supersmal. Jag ville verkligen sticka ut, vara den som var värst. Den använde jag 1 gång och insåg sen att jag inte kommer kunna använda den igen. Den var dyr och trendig. Symboliska värdet är/var viktigt.

J- jag köpte en dyr skjorta, bara för att den var trendig, man vill att de som ska veta, vet.

O- de som vet att det är coolt ska veta det, inte alla.

A- JL var jättetrendigt man tyckte det för att alla andra tyckte så, det speglar mot ens ego för att man vill sticka ut men samtidigt vara lika. Man köpte Ralph Lauren för att man ville vara cool.

P- lite som dem här Tiger-sköldarna!

Alla instämmer.

O- t.ex. golfklubbor, det ska vara flashigt och se bra ut, de ser bra ut på rangen, jag köper de mest för att det ska se ut som man är grym. Dom kan vara helt värdelösa men se bra ut.

Moderator: För vem är det symboliskt viktigt?

O- Det är nog mest för andra på rangen.

A- det speglar mot ens eget ego. Man vill ha uppmärksamhet och sticka ut.

Moderator: Är det med tanke på att ni vet vad de t betyder för andra som ni köper produkten?

Alla instämmer.

J- Vissa varor är väldigt brandade medan andra syns inte men de kan betyda mycket för en själv ändå.

A- när jag köpte min första stone island tröja på gymnasiet så gjorde jag det för att jag visste vad den symboliserade (huligan). Det var så jävla coolt att ha den.

O- Ja, fast man vet ju också att det kanske inte betyder exakt samma sak. Jag menar, Ed Hardy i Jersey Shore är ju skitfett men hos Peter i Jönköping så var det ju lite annorlunda. Eller?

P- Haha, jo, det var ju inte helt okey...

Har ni något favorit varumärke? Något märke som ligger nära hjärtat eller som ni enbart har bra erfarenheter av? Varför just detta varumärke?

K- Coca-cola. De har bra reklamfilmer, mycket naturlig reklam, man ser den överallt.

P- Och man blir glad!

K- Ja! Man blir glad.

A- och sugen!

A- Stone Island, för dem har bra design och använder nytänkande material, nu har jag blivit mer intresserad av dem för det, t.ex. japanskt fallskärmsmaterial, de är coolt. Symboliken är inte viktig. Jag gillar inte kläder som alla har, Stone Island var inte känt tills nu. De gillade jag för jag vill ha det för mig själv. Imagen har blivit mer känd med huligan våldet och filmer.

O- Seiko, det är för att jag kan så mycket om det varumärket nu och det känns äkta och andas kvalitet.

Participation (in general)

Har du själv engagerat er i varumärken på sista tiden? D.v.s., följer du några bloggar, gillar på Facebook, anti-grupper, diskussioner, forum eller fanclubs?

P- gillat på facebook men det är mest för klädmärken, för att kolla när kollektioner kommer ut, jag tycker inte det är att engagera sig på riktigt dock. Nyhetsbrev och liknande också.

O- Jag har engagerat mig i Android-forum för att snacka ner iphone, de var viktigt för att trycka ner andra som gillade iphone.

A- varför engagera sig?

J- man kan bli engagerad när jag blir arg, mina associationer bidrar till om jag är positiv/ negativ.

K- det finns så många varumärken att man måste ha en klar branding och positionering, de kan man få genom engagemang.

J- oavsett hur man positionerar sig så är det superviktigt för att få fram vad den står för. Om man är sur och vill få det fixat, eller om man får dålig service så vill man få fram det. Då kan jag engagera mig. Finns det redan en hatar-grupp på facebook grupp så går man ju gärna med i den.

A- när man hatar något vill man säga det. Det är inte så att jag går in och säger ”äh vad jag älskar detta märket blabla”.

P- Jag är mer den som älskar märket- typen. Dels när jag gillar det och när det ser bra ut att jag gillar det.

Vad anser ni vara den avgörande skillnaden mellan märken ni engagerar er i och märken ni inte engagerar er i? Med andra ord, vad är den avgörande faktorn för att ni ska engagera er? Vad värdesätter ni?

P- Gillar när det är lite svårt att engagera sig, för det betyder mer, man ska inte ha hört talats om det för att jag ska engagera mig, de ska vara creddigt. Jag värdesätter när det är unikt och när det blir mainstream så kan jag ta bort min like eller om det är fel personer som förknippas med det.

J- om någon man associerar med något dåligt som jag likear så tar jag bort min like. En person eller kändis kan ändra på sådant.

A- Hackett var okänt och när snobbar började ha det så då blev jag äcklad av märket och ville inte ha det längre. De bytte från sina Ralph Lauren polos till Hackett istället. Det var lite mitt märke, det var inte så många som hade det och sen bara boom så hade alla det.

J- alla har väll lite en dröm...

P- jag hittade ett par jeans av märket Level, som jag tyckte väldigt mycket om tills jag kom till Sverige och såg dem på Zoovillage och då var det inte kul längre.

A- Fast man måste erkänna också att det är inte roligt när märket är helt okänt. Man vill inte köpa ett märke som ingen känner till. Man vill typ att en av tio ska veta det.

O- Ja, och man vill att de som vet ska veta. Ett bra exempel är när jag köpte min seiko klocka, det var ett understated märke i Sverige, men man vet att de som kan mycket om japansk klockkultur vet. Vi vet lika mycket.

Anser ni att den bilden ni hade av märket innan har förändrats sedan ni engagerat er? Har den stärkts eller försvagats, mer positiv/negativ?

O- min bild av Android har försvagats för mina engagerade medbröder var inte så bra som jag trodde. Det fanns ingen substans i det dem sa. De engagerade sig på fel grunder.

A- ju mer man läser på och engagerar sig desto mer säker blir man på sin sak. Man blir mer passionerad för att man vet bäst.

Moderator: Kan man alltså säga att när man engagerar sig så stärks ens bild av företaget?

A- ja det tror jag. Om man hela tiden diskuterar och pratar med folk om det så är man tillslut den som är mest påläst och då kommer folk till en och vill få råd. Man känner ett ansvar.

J- jag tror det är ganska klassiskt att folk som engagerar sig också associerar sig med märket. T.ex. din android. (tittar på O.) t.ex. om det kommer massa dåliga nya Android telefoner då blir man personligt engagerad.

P- det känns som att det är större & dyrare grejer som är viktigt här, typ datorer och sådant. Min värld rasar inte samman för att ACNE kommer med en dålig kollektion. Det beror nog på att det är svårt att mäta prestanda.

Identity

Finns det personer i er umgängeskrets som ni förknippar med ett specifikt varumärke? Om du tänker på varumärket, tänker du också på den personen då?

P- Jag tänker på Stone Island och när jag tänker på alec tänker jag på s.i.

K- Jag tänker på en viss typ av människor, man får ju en bild i huvudet av en BB kund.

P- Ja! Precis, typ en kille som spelar innebandy, gymnasieelev. Fjortis-stilen typ.

(alla håller med)

A- jag tror att det handlar om de som snackar och bär märkena.

J- Beror på vilken sorts person man är, vissa pratar både om dåliga och bra saker medans andra bara säger bra saker när de köpt en vara. Vissa är därför lättare än andra att associera med saker och märken än andra. Typ som om man varit på en bra restaurang, man rekommenderar.

P- Vissa personer är väldigt tydliga med vad för varumärken de har. T.ex. om någon frågar om man har en telefon, så svarar de, ja jag har en iphone direkt. De liksom koppar varumärkena till sig själva. Eller t.ex. om någon säger vilken fin tröja du har, ja, tack det är en Stone Island.

O- Min granne är en riktig Toyota granne, men han hade ingen Toyota för två år sedan, han är ingenjör vet jag. Man ser å hans kläder att han är funktionsinriktad och inte flashigt. Men sen så köpte han en toyota så nu associerar jag Toyota med honom. Han har gjort sin research.

P- jag tänker p Stone Island när jag tänker på A, men de kanske är mest för att jag inte varit i kontakt med det märket innan. Det var liksom han som gav mig det första intrycket av det märket. Det är A´s märke typ...

A- jag tänker på RM Williams när jag tänker på J.

J- för att?

A- för att du var den första personen som jag såg såna på.

Moderator: Kan man matcha människor och märken?

J- klassiskt att man relaterar/associerar sig till ett märke och det blir deras identitet, då får man en negativ när man hatar vill man säga det.

J- skulle vara kul att gissa på människor, jag tror man är ganska genomskinlig, man har inte så stort spridning där. Köper man en viss typ av byxor köper man ofta jacka I samma stil. Man är ett slags fack! Man går inte över det facket för imagens skull.

O- en sak när man tycker någon borde ha ett visst märke, t.ex. toyota mannen, han har gjort sin research och man kan bli positivt förbluffad över att folk har tänkt till.

A- så har jag inte tänkt om folk! en VW och en skoda är samma bil men helt

O- en sak när man tycker någon borde ha ett visst märke, man har gjort sin research och kan bli positivt förbluffad över att folk har tänkt till.

J- den klassiska bilden när man ser motsättningar, såsom den lilla tjejen i den stora bilen osv. Det är samma sak med varumärken, man märker av motsättningar. T.ex., tar men den här tidningen(King magazine) så ser man ju att det är mycket audi, hugo boss, rolex , dvs det är inte jättestor spridning av varumärken.

Moderator: om jag har förstått dig rätt, så säger du att märken också kan matchas med varandra?

J- Ja man är i en slags fåra där det finns ett x antal varumärken så är det lättare att ta till sig dem.

A- så har jag inte tänkt om folk! en vw och en skoda är samma bil men helt olika image

Anser ni att dessa personer påverkat er bild av varumärket? Skiljer sig denna bild från den ni tror att andra har?

O- det stärkte min bild av Toyota när jag såg grannen, hade han köpt en BMW hade den blivit suddig igen, med många motsägelser.

P- jag hade ingen riktig uppfattning av Stone Island, jag visste att det var lite halv huliganistiskt, men när A började använda de så fick jag en bild. Det blir mer att det är A har det än människor som A har det. Om t.ex. en fjortis-kille hade på sig sådana kläder så skulle jag ju kanske få en annan uppfattning.

A- man tänker på en viss typ av människa, man får en bild.

Anser ni att ni kan identifiera er/ er livsstil med det varumärket ni köper?

J- man vill ju ofta skapa en slags dröm om att vara något mer än vad man egentligen är. Ett varumärke är något mer en den egentliga produkten.

A- man vill framstå som någonting udda, jag tror att företagen vill att man ska få känslan av att man är speciell, men det är svårt att hitta något specifikt märke, mer stilen kanske.

J- varumärken skapar en livsstil, som t.ex. Stadium har gjort med sitt märke Everest. Dom har lyckats skapa drömmen och viljan att anamma den livsstilen som bergsklättrare och äventyrare.

P- jag tycker inte riktigt samma sak. Jag gillar exempelvis Filippa K. Tillslut så har jag köpt fler och fler plagg och blir lite utav en Filippa k-kille. Jag blir ett typ av märke och det vill jag inte. Man vill ha sin egen stil, man vill alltid vara originell, har man alltid på sitt samma märke och samma saker känns det som att man har kollat i en broschyr.

K- jag håller med, mixa olika stilar, man vill inte vara en skyltdocka.

P- om jag gillar ett märke så köper jag mer av det och blir då “ett märke” och då kan man tappa sin egen stil, man vill alltid vara originell! Man vill inte bara lyssna på Bruce Springsteen bara för att man har hört att det ska vara bra. Man skulle vara som alla andra på högstadiet...

O- Patricks märken ser man aldrig, så jag ser honom inte som ett visst märke.

A- det är inne att vara unik, de har de inte alltid varit.

J- att vara unik är något västerländskt. I Indien eller Japan finns det starka gemenskapskulturer, typ rockabilly, det finns de inte här i samma utsträckning.

A- alla bloggar vill sticka ut på sitt sätt, ha sin touch, det handlar inte bara om att en kändis ska säga det.

P- man måste lägga ner mer tid för att hitta något eget samtidigt som det är mycket svårare.

Participation (Brand Understanding)

*Anser ni att det är möjligt att påverka de bilder som förknippas med ett varumärke?
Har ni exempel på någon som gjort detta? kompisar, du själv, eller andra personer?*

J- både ja & nej, för mig personligen så har jag väl fått en negativ bild av något så är steget ganska långt för att ändra sig.

A- ja, jag hatade converse förut, för jag hade bara poppar-associationer till det märket, men sen när mina kompisar som klär sig bra började använda dem så ändrade jag mig, men jag hatade verkligen det märket och den bilden är helt förändrad nu. Det blev liksom som en trend i hela Sverige.

P- jag tror att det är lättare att stärka sina associationer till ett märke. Om någon cool har ett märke det så vidimerar de min bild sås om ACNE till exempel. Men om en cool har crocs så är de för svårt att ändra. Jag har för negativa associationer till detta. Man måste ändra sin image för att ta det till sig.

O- när jag var yngre så var de så med converse, men nu är det okej för så många som klär sig bra har börjat använda det märket. Mer att man såg att de inte var så fult.

J- både och, svårt att ändra en negativ bild.

Moderator: Skiljer sig er bild från andras på ett märke?

J- ja det tycker jag, beror på hur pass medveten man är, de som är medvetna vill inte erkänna det. Det är på något sätt väldigt likgiltigt utbud vilket beror på att alla tycker typ samma sak.

Moderator: Finns det en allmän bild eller en egen bild?

K- ja, jag läser på LTH, där har alla Haglöfs och Kånken vilket är väldigt coolt där, men mina associationer är inte samma som deras tror jag. För att jag har en annan bakgrund än de flesta där.

O- Ja om man är påläst kan man få en annan bild än den allmänna, typ min klocka. Har man en hög kunskap om t.ex. skor så skiljer sig det nog.

P- innan jag kom hit så tror jag inte att det var många som kände till skorna ”Churches” jag såg dem på forum och fick bra vibes, men sen när jag kom hit så visste alla vad det var för skor och då blev de inte så kul. Just då i Jönköping var jag lite egen med det märket.

O- Just skor är en sådan produkt som jag tror jag skiljer sig mycket baserat på vilken kunskap man har om dem.

A- Nike air max är as bra, men allmänheten tycker det är blattigt. Jag tycker det är trist men för mig är dem väldigt bra och snygga.

Moderator: Skulle ni vilja vara med och göra detta? Varför/ varför inte?

A- jag bryr mig inte om att vara med och påverka

O- jag vill vara med om det är något jag verkligen gillar, och då måste jag lära folk, men jag känner mig töttig efteråt. Om de är en polare som klankar ner så vill jag göra det.

A- beror på om man är påläst (kunna produkten och substitut) om jag har samma uppfattning som omvärlden så har man samma som alla andra. Ju mer du är påläst, desto mer förändras din bild av ett varumärke och man får en annan syn än allmänheten. Om man t.ex. tycker att en Ferrari är den bästa bilden som finns, så har man ganska allmän uppfattning, en som är påläst vet dock att Audi RS6 piskar en Ferrari 440. Då är den inte lika fet längre. Precis samma sak är det med O's klocka,

Seiko har inte så bra rykte i Sverige, men i Japan är den en av de bästa och är man påläst så vet man det.

P- det är många märken som jag tycker om som jag tycker om men som jag ser för mycket av så jag vill därför inte använda dem.

Moderator: Om man har en negativ bild vill man skicka vidare den då?

Alla- Ja!

J- ja det vill jag, om man t.ex. haft en dålig experience.

A- ja om man blivit utsatt för de så kan jag göra det. Det stör mig nr man tar överpris på saker, då säger jag det.

J- många som snackar om matt den är jättebra kvalitet då vill man prata, de som gagnar imagen! men sen om den skulle ta på sig en Kånken så skulle de inte prata om det.

Moderator: Har er bild av något varumärke förändrats?

A- min bild av hm har förändrats, pga. Att de fixat bättre kläder, de gjorde jag inte innan för de var för dåligt och inte hippt längre.

J- håller med om HM

P- jag håller med om hm, men innan trodde jag att Barbour var unikt och exklusivt. De är de inte i lund!

A- tillbaka till HM, jag tror att de har tjänat på att det inte är inne med stora flashiga märken längre, utan små eller inga. Det handlar om att vara unik.

O- nu har jag bytt från euroshopper till ICA för att de har bättre förpackning, de känns ok! Nu känns det fräscht och jag skäms inte längre.

Appendix 1.2 Focus group 2

Respondents

Namn – Ålder, respondentens egen presentation.

Pernilla – 23 år, Från Karlskrona hänger med vänner, tycker om att träna.

Christian – 23 år, Skriver uppsats, har ingen fritid, träffa vänner.

Johan – 27 år, Kommer från Alingsås, idrottar på sin fritid.

Linus – 23 år, Jobbar som sjuksköterska.

Madeleine – 22 år, Från Kristianstad. Hänger mycket med familjen.

Brand Understanding

Beskriv er uppfattning om Björn Borg som varumärke med hjälp av ett kollage. Vad får ni för associationer, bilder etc. Jämför kollagen och förklara. Varför tror ni det finns olikheter/likheter? Vem eller vad upplever ni har influerat er bild av Björn Borg mest?

Diskussionen utgår ifrån de kollagen som respondenterna gjort.

C- Underkläder återkommer och avklätt, lite naket, det är för att alla underklädesreklamer är utformade så. Alla reklamer jag har sett med dem är med avklädda människor.

M- De var typ det första man såg av dem, Björn Borgs underkläder alltså. Sen har andra bilder fyllts på.

J- de flesta köper underkläder där, tror det är därför. Man ser ju varumärket överallt. Inte konstigt att det fastnar liksom.

L- De enda likheterna jag kan se är typ träning och sport.

J- När jag tänker på BB numera så tänker jag på varumärket. Skillnad mellan varumärket och personen BB är att han är gammal men märket BB är mer präglat av unga personer. Det beror på deras kommunikation, de är lite flashiga.

L- Ja som jag sa, det enda jag ser är likheter är typ att de alla berör sport. Precis som min egen bild. Fast ja, ju mer jag tänker ju mer kan jag ju komma på. Brukar inte precis sätta mig ner och ”Oj, vad betyder det här varumärket för mig?” utan det går lite på rutin eller vad man ska säga..

Moderator: Kan det vara så att de olika sammanhangen ni har kommit i kontakt med Björn Borg har påverkat era bilder?

M- Jag tror mer att det är en generationsfråga. Vi som har växt upp under de senaste 20 åren har väl kanske framförallt kommit i kontakt med varumärket BB medan de som var med under hans storhetstid kanske framförallt tänker på tennisspelaren. Det är kanske också det som gör att bilden blir annorlunda på kläderna.

J- Ja, men jag tror också att intresse kan spela roll. Jag menar, om man är intresserad av kläder så lägger man märke till saker på ett helt annat sätt. Typ, BB's underkläder, eller deras skor typ.

Moderator: Vem eller vad upplever ni har influerat er bild av Björn Borg mest?

C- till största del är de planscher och grafisk reklam och sådär. Jag förknippar BB starkt med de situationer jag har kommit i kontakt med deras kalsonger. För mig är de väldigt förknippade med det. Ja och sen kom ju Båstad med där (syftar på sitt

kollage). Jag vet inte om det är för tennisen eller för själva varumärket. Det är svårt att säga.

J- Jag känner att storytelling, typ, mellan vänner har påverkar mest. Men sen finns det ju massa reklamer också. Men jag vet inte riktigt om jag kan komma på någon just nu. Lättare att tänka på var man sett kalsongerna på nått sätt..

M- Ja, men första gången jag kom i kontakt med BB var genom vänner som använde märket och som nog påverkade mig. Gillade man det köpte man också det var det nu än var. Intressen gör också att man ser olika på ett varumärke och vad det betyder för en själv.

L- Ja, jag lade märket till varumärket för första gången på riktigt när jag var i Turkiet. Många kompisar köpte BB kalsonger där billigt. Då blev det lite att jag ville köpa märket för att mina vänner hade det. Vänner påverkar mig mycket, om det är många som använder någonting.

Moderator: Vem eller vad upplever ni influerar mest vad gäller märken i allmänhet? Företagen själva eller någon annan så som bloggar, kompisar, kändisar osv.

C- Jag tror det är kändisar och offentliga personer, det påverkar jävligt mycket. Ta till exempel ”We”, bara snygga och trevliga personer som har det, och sen kan det ju vara att man ser upp till någon viss person. Men ja, sen är det väl kanske väldigt styrt från företagets sida men ändå.

J- Med vissa produkter är det som om man är med i en gemenskap om man köper samma vara. Om ens vänner har det så vill man gärna ha det med, liksom, och säger de att det är en bra produkt påverkar det en och man kan få tillhöra en klick. Om någon säger ”Apple-dator” så tänker jag ju inte på Apples reklamer. Jag tänker nog mer på ryktet i min umgängeskrets.

M- Apple har blivit en statussymbol och man är beredd att betala för det för det symboliserar något bra. Det kvittar egentligen vilken ”i” produkt det är. Man får tillhöra en skara som folk kanske ser upp till och som tycks ha koll.

P- Hmm, ja jag håller med. Nu är jag inte så mycket för Apple men jag har kompisar som gillar Mulberry och genom dem har jag börjat gilla det och tycka att det är ett fint märke med bra kvalitet.

Symbolism

Moderator: Anser ni att de bilder eller associationer som är förknippade med ett varumärke är viktiga? Varför, varför inte?

L- ja det är viktigt men jag skaffar mig lätt förutfattade meningar om varumärken. T.ex. om HM har jag en förutfattad mening om att det deras kläder passar dåligt och krymper i tvätten. Även fast jag vet att dem blivit bättre väljer jag att inte alltid köpa där på grund av det. Imagen är nog rätt viktig för att sälja.

Moderator: Är image viktigt? Är det viktigt för er?

Alla- Ja!

C- Vad man vill förmedla är viktigt och hur man gör detta. Det spelar ju roll för hur man uppfattas av andra. Kvalité är ju en sådan sak till exempel.

J- En bild ger ett första intryck och sen bygger man vidare på det och därför måste man upprätthålla det. Ju dyrare produkten är desto viktigare är imagen.

M- Och sen tror jag också att modellen, som de använder i reklamerna, är jätteviktig. Dte ser man hu bara på vilken ”knäpp” Nike fick av den här Tiger Woods-affären. Han var ju inte aktuell som modell längre när han hade varit otrogen. Just därför att man ser den här modellen framför sig som bär kläderna

Moderator: Är det någon som tycker att image är oviktigt?

J- Hmm, ja, det beror ju på vilken typ av produkt. Sådant som man inte har råd att köpa så ofta spelar betydligt mer roll. Kanske inte sådant som är billigt. Mjök och bröd till exempel. Det vill man ju bara ha och sen ut. Jag har ingen större tanke där faktiskt.

M- Fast, jag kan ändå tycka att det är viktigt. Det finns ju en image i livsmedelsprodukter också. Det här med att köpa miljö-märkt eller KRAV-märkt och sådär. Och sen där här att man försöker få folk att välja mer nyttig och hälsosam mat. Man kanske inte tänker på det när man står i affären men man får nog massa bilder i huvudet när man står och plockar. Produkterna speglar ju någonting. Förmodligen sådant som reklamen ”proppat” på en.

L- Nä, men som jag sa innan. Man tänker ju på det automatiskt utan att tänka på det, på nått sätt.

Moderator: Har ni någon gång köpt något för det symboliska värdet istället för det funktionella? Med andra, köpt en produkt eller service där varumärket spelat större roll än det faktiska användandet?

C- Ja det är klart man har men jag kommer inte ihåg det bara.

M- Ja, men det har man, speciellt på högstadiet kanske. Jag vet inte om ni kommer ihåg de här JL-tröjorna?

Alla nickar eller instämmer.

M- Ja, alla gick omkring i dem och man skulle ha en sådan tröja bara. Jag tror det är så att folk hoppar på trender ganska fort bara för att omgivningen väljer det. Champion, den där tjocktröjan som alla hade, var ju likadant. Alla hade den då men

nu är den nästan helt borta eller? Har inte sett den på ett tag i alla fall. Wordfeud är lite samma sak.

C- Ja, förr var det ju mycket jazz-byxor och sådant. Inte för att jag köpte det men de flesta ville ju ha det. Och sådana här Buffalo-skor.

Moderator: Vem tror ni det är symboliskt för?

P- Omgivningen. Man vill ju passa in och sen om några kändisar hat det så passar det ju bra. Man vill ha det mer liksom.

L- Jag håller nog med om det mesta. Det är viktigt att kommunicera till andra, inte bara sig själv.

C- Ja, fast, ibland kan man köpa eller ta på sig saker bara för att man själv ska känna sig bättre, fina kläder kan hjälpa en att få någonting gjort. Man kan liksom inte sitta i ”mjukisbyxor” framför datorn hela dagen.

M- Sen tänkte jag på det här med att ibland kan man göra tvärtemot trenderna också för att vara originell. Till exempel, min skola låg mitt emot en estet-skola och där försökte alla göra tvärtom hela tiden och ja, på det sättet blir ju dem liksom en massa i sig.

Moderator: Har ni något favorit varumärke? Något märke som ligger nära hjärtat eller som ni enbart har bra erfarenheter av? Varför just detta varumärke?

L- Playboy! När jag hittade dessa skor (pekar på sina Playboy's) så hade jag länge letat efter en sko som passade min stil. Och ja, det finns väl ett visst symbolvärde i dem med tanke på att jag aldrig hade köpt dom om de inte passade min livsstil eller vad man ska säga.

J- Jah, ja, jag gillar Mac. Det blir svårt att gå tillbaka nu men jag tror det handlar om produkten i säg. I början var det för att det var coolt och för att den är grym! Sen har jag märkt att jag nu på sista tiden börjat handla allt mer i butiker som MQ och liknande, och jag tror att det kan vara någon form av smygande effekt av att jag börjat läsa på ekonomprogrammet. Innan jag började läsa var jag väl inte beredd att bära skjorta varje dag men nu är det något jag gör för att anpassat mig efter vad jag ska bli. Jag tror jag har anammat ”ekonomtenden” för att passa in i framtida yrken. Man ska ju representera någon. Det tar dock emot att inse att man har anpassat sig, det vill man ju egentligen inte... Sen samtidigt har jag trätt in i den identiteten. ”Jag är ekonom” liksom. När jag kom hit så såg jag folk som gick till skolan i kavaj och jag tänkte: ”vad är grejen” liksom men nu skulle jag faktiskt kunna tänka mig att ha på mig det.

Participation (in general)

Moderator: Har du själv engagerat er i varumärken på sista tiden? D.v.s., följer du några bloggar, gillar på Facebook, anti-grupper, diskussioner, forum eller fanclubs till exempel?

C- Njä, men vi pratade ju om Mac innan. Nu har jag ingen Mac men jag tyckte att Samsungs, eller var det HTC:s reklam där dem drev med Apple var riktigt bra. De skulle släppa en ny iPhone och så var alla helt ”tossiga”. Den tyckte jag var nått roligt så den spred jag typ. Delade den på Facebook, de gjorde jag för att knäppa dem andra på näsan. Jag ”gillar” inte på Facebook i övrigt, det känns inte som något jag gör. Det känns lite omotiverat.

J- Jag ”gillar” bara reklamer om de är roliga och så. Man gör det ju så ofta så jag har ingen riktig koll på vilka varumärken som faktiskt är inblandade.

L- Jag har engagerat mig mycket mindre i allt utom mitt yrke! Jag har gått över till att kolla mer på sjuksköterska grejer eftersom det är mitt yrke, än typ kläder och stilar. Man har inte tid att engagera sig. På högskolan pratade man hela tiden med andra och då ville man hålla sig uppdaterad. Det sociala sammanhanget var viktigt på ett helt annat sätt. På jobbet nu är vi mer ”anonyma” i våra rockar. Det kanske är en av anledningarna.

Moderator: Är det någon annan som upplevt detta. Att det är jobbigt att engagera sig i varumärken eller likande?

M- Ja, den första tanken som kommer upp i mitt huvud är att alla är så mycket mer insatta idag. Jag känner att det blir svårt att mäta sig med alla. Det blir ju att man bara har tid över att göra något halvhjärtat och då kan man lika bra strunta i det. Att vara insatt tar ju så mycket tid!

C- Ja, och sen tycker jag att det här med ålder, kanske, spelar in. Ålder spelar någon roll, när man var yngre så brydde man sig mer, hade mer tid på något sätt. Nu är man mer bekväm. Faller tillbaka på det som finns på något sätt.

L- Ja, man var mer konfrontativ när man var yngre.

Moderator: Anser ni att den bilden ni hade av märket innan har förändrats sedan ni engagerat er? Har den stärkts eller försvagats, mer positiv/negativ.

C- För min del, med det här reklam-exemplet, var det nog mer att bilden jag hade bekräftades. Det var ju massa roliga kommentarer som föll in bra på folk jag kände och så. Jag hade en uppfattning sen innan, framförallt om Apple.

Moderator: Vad känner du inför Samsung då? De som faktiskt gjorde reklamen.

C- Nä, men jag tyckte det var rätt coolt faktiskt. Dom fick väl en lite mer ”uppstickar”-roll. Framförallt mot Apple, en fett cool roll.

Identity

Moderator: Finns det personer i er umgängeskrets som ni förknippar med ett specifikt varumärke. Om du tänker på varumärket, tänker du också på den personen då?

P- Ja, en som jag förknippar med Apple, tänker jag på henne tänker jag inte Apple precis men tvärtom så tänker jag på henne när jag tänker Apple.

M- Ja, samma här Har en kompis som har Apple som största sitt intresse. Det blir mycket tävla där. Typ, ”jasså, du har bara den mobilen” eller ”har du inte den appen?”

J- Xbox. Jag och en polare spelade mycket när vi gick på gymnasiet. När jag inte umgås med honom blir det inte så mycket spelande men när jag kommer hem är det det vi gör. När man går förbi spelbutiker så tänker jag ofta på honom och lite tvärt om faktiskt.

L- Jag kan inte komma på någon...

M- Min sambo bara måste ha ett speciellt sko-märke. Det är det enda skomärket som sitter bra men det är inte så många affärer som säljer det. Bara ett märke som går, inget annat funkar. Han beställer via nätet, har aldrig sett det någon annan stans. Det blir ju lite så att det märket direkt förknippas med honom och ja, ibland även tvärtom.

J- Jo med parfymer, en som alltid använder samma parfym. Det blir nästan alltid så att när jag ser henne så tänker jag på den parfymen.

Moderator: Skulle man kunna säga att märken och människor kan matchas?

M- Det är nästan som om märket och personen smälter samma, personen tar över märket och gör det till sitt genom att visa det dagligen och säga ”det här är jag”.

J- Om man tar min kompis med Xboxet så är det kanske inte själva Xboxet jag tänker på utan mer spelen men det blir ju att samma tankar går igång. Men det är nog generellt så att folk har gemensamma erfarenheter som skapar det här.

M- Ja, och som du sa med parfymer. Det är rätt märkligt men det händer ju att man känner en doft och direkt så tänker man på en viss person.

P- Jag känner väl lite samma sak. Min Apple-kompis förknippar jag kanske framförallt med Apple och kvalitet. Hon är mycket mer kvalitet än kvantitet och jag tror att det är den bilden som lever vidare. Lika dant men min kompis som gillade Mulberry.

Moderator: Anser ni att dessa personer påverkat er bild av varumärket? Skiljer sig denna bild från den ni tror andra har?

P- ja positivt, jag gillade inte alls Apple förut men han fick mig att prova och jag måste säga att jag förändrat min syn nu. Kanske för att jag gillar honom som person, min kompis asså.

M- När det gäller min pojkväns skor så kände jag inte till märket innan så det är han som har presenterat märket för mig. Det är svårt att få tag i och är inte så välkänt.

Moderator: Anser du att du kan identifiera dig (eller din livsstil) med de varumärken du köper? Finns det kategorier av varumärken, dvs. flera stycken märken, eller är det framförallt ett.

C- Ja, det är en kategori av varumärken, de förändras över tiden, det handlar om mognad och intressen, var man står i livet, undermedvetet för det mesta tror jag. Man tar studierna mer på allvar nu och då måste jag klä mig som att jag gör det också. Det stämmer ju lite överens med det vi sa om skjortorna innan.

L- under högskolan hittade man sin personlighet när man börjar jobba så försvinner det lite, det sitter ju fortfarande i men, men inte lika påtaglig. Miljön påverkar mig mycket, tycker jag. Det känns inte lika allvarligt på jobbet längre.

Moderator: Känner du att du hittat din identitet nu då?

L- Nej, total schizofren är jag.

Alla skrattar.

M- I och med att jag varvar högskolan med praktik så tycker jag att jag ändrar min stil baserat på var jag är. När jag ska på praktik så ska man vara ganska bra täckt, inga utmanande kläder osv, Det är nått jag inte tänker på när man ska till skolan. Där är man er sig själv.

Moderator: Känner ni att det är samma sak med varumärken? Att ni anpassar dem efter tillfälle och situation?

C- Ja, men mer kategorier av varumärken. Det är ju lite skillnad på att vara med kompisarna hemifrån och med kompisarna i skolan. Man anpassar nog sig lite undermedvetet. Tror jag, haha, eller?

Participation (Brand Understanding)

Moderator: Finns det märken eller kategorier av märken som ni vill förknippas med?

C- Jag gillar Nike, det gör jag. De är sportigt, man är lite atlet typ, speglar att man är fit och jag känner att det matchar mig på nått sätt, eller jag vill i alla fall att det ska göra det!

J- Jag tror inte man skulle vilja erkänna om det är så. Men det är ju klart att man har varumärken som känns som sina egna på nått sätt.

Moderator: Har du något exempel?

J- Ja, men om vi går tillbaka till skjortorna har det väl blivit min grej. Jag ser ekonom ut här men hemma är jag mer ”casual”. Jag är kanske mer ute efter en stil än en specifik produkt och jag får ofta höra det när jag kommer hem, typ ”Ah, här kommer den jävla ekonomen”.

M- Ja, det är lite samma för mig. Jag tänker inte på något specifikt varumärke när jag inreder min lägenhet utan går mer efter olika trender, stilmässiga trender typ. Jag ska ju så klart trivas med stilen och produkterna men det ska vara hippt också. Inte så mycket varumärken utan mer trender. Det ska vara lite personligt men trendigt.

Moderator: Är det någon annan som känner likadant? D.v.s., att det är en stil som man vill förknippas med snarare än ett specifikt varumärke?

C- Ja, så är det nog.

J- Ja, många gånger är det nog svårt men det beror ju helt på vilka produkter man pratar om. När det gäller kläder kan det ju absolut vara så att stilen spelar roll men specifika plagg kan ju vara viktiga i säg. Allt beror ju på ens egna preferenser i det fallet. Däremot tror jag att specifika varumärken kan ingå i en viss stil. Till exempel sportkläder som Nike och Adidas eller lyx märken och så vidare.

Moderator: Anser ni att det är möjligt att påverka de bilder som förknippas med ett varumärke? Har ni exempel på någon som gjort detta. Kompisar, du själv, eller andra personer?

C- Ja absolut, genom att hitta på en ny linje, typ genom marknadsföring kan väl företagen påverka. Som konsument tror jag det är betydligt svårare men i närmsta

kretsen kan man påverka. Det är ju bara att tala gott om ett varumärke eller typ att informera sina vänner.

Moderator: Tror ni att den bilden ni själva har av ett varumärke kan skilja sig från den ni tror allmänheten har?

J- Ja, absolut! Mina föräldrar bojkottade franska viner för att de hade provsprängningar av kärnvapen 1998, de påverkade sina vänners bild av Frankrike och därför också deras konsumtion. Jag tror att det är framförallt sånt här som påverkar. Negativa upplevelser man är mån om att berätta vidare för att man är upprör eller nått.

Moderator: Men tror ni att det är möjligt att påverka allmänhetens bild av ett varumärke?

C- Ja, det kan man väl göra. Om man verkligen, verkligen vill. Men det är inte lätt. Ofta handlar det om skandaler eller liknande.

M- Man kan ju i alla fall nu ut till den större massan om man startar en facebook-grupp eller liknande.

J- Ja, men det handlar nog mer om att man måste skapa en känsla. Som berör folk, då är det möjligt. Det måste matcha någons intresse, livsstil eller nått sådant typ.

Moderator: Skulle ni vilja vara med och göra detta? Varför/ varför inte?

J- Jag gillar inte att skylta med varumärken.

M- Ja om någon man gillar ska köpa en produkt som man själv inte gillar. Om den är på jakt efter t.ex. en telefon så är de ju det positiva man berättar först och sen om man haft några dåliga erfarenheter.

Moderator: Vill man förmedla sin bild av varumärket till andra? Märken ni tycker om, märken ni inte tycker om. Finns det någon skillnad?

M- Ja, om man har varit i kontakt med en produkt som man tycker är dålig så vill man ju berätta det men de är kanske inte det första man säger, men om dom specifikt frågar vilken mobil de ska köpa så säger jag ju min mening baserat på mina erfarenheter.

Moderator: Har ni varit med om att er bild av ett varumärke har ändrats? Efter en specifik händelse eller bara i allmänhet?

J- ICA, Ipen. Ica är bra, deras reklamer, Ipen var till en början bra men de har blivit tråkiga nu. Man märkte att det gick hem hos tittarna men nu är de bara drygt.

L- Ja en kompis ändrade min uppfattning. Fick mig att ändra syn på HM, och fick mig att börja köpa, det går lite fram och tillbaka om jag köper eller inte. Den gamla bilden lever typ kvar parallellt med den nya. Sen tror jag typ skandaler är kan ändra mycket. Ta BP till exempel. Blev lite av en social tabu att gilla det.

M- En reklam jag tycker är himla konstig är kicks, de gör att min bild av affären är konstig! Jag brukar inte handla där men jag förstår inte vad de vill med den och då blir min bild på hela kicks konstig.

C- Tele2 reklamen med fåret är också dålig. Jag vet inte riktigt vad de vill? Det har nog ändrat min bild av företaget lite. Jag tycker den är lite billig, och man drar det i långbänk. Det har väl gått från att jag gillade till att jag numera undviker dem.

M- Ja, speciellt nu när han har adopterat en vit får-bebis, så nu få jag en dålig bild av dem som rasistiska. Jag vet inte om man gjorde det för att man fått pikar kanske. Sen också en reklam med en svart tjej med ett asiatiskt barn som gjorde reklam för lotions fick mig att reagera. Reklam måste vara väldigt politiskt korrekt, det är ganska lätt att se igenom.

Appendix 2. Collages

1

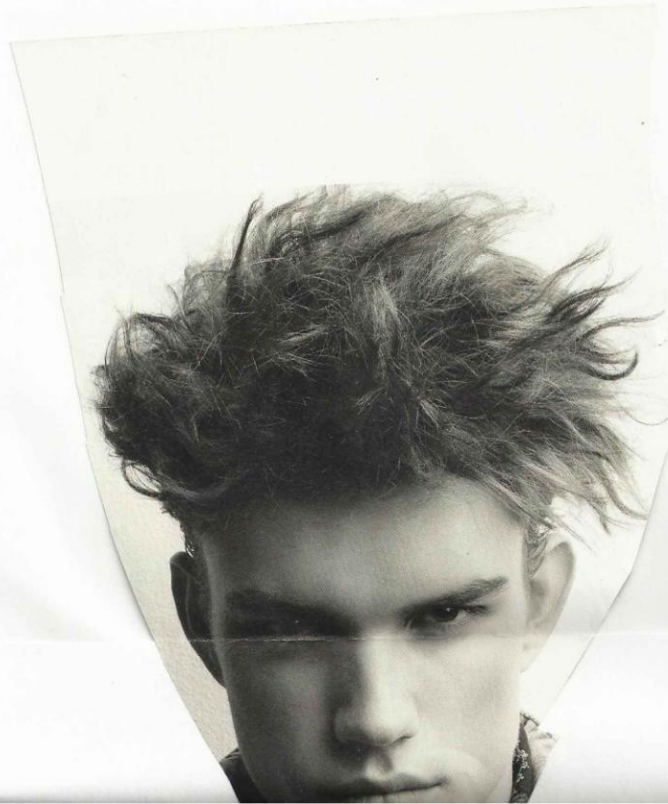




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Sjper 2. trängs
under kläder



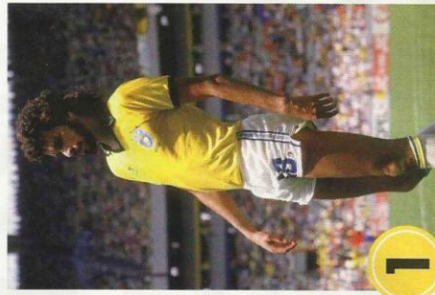
Börn Boog boy.





ÖRSPÅL

Idrott

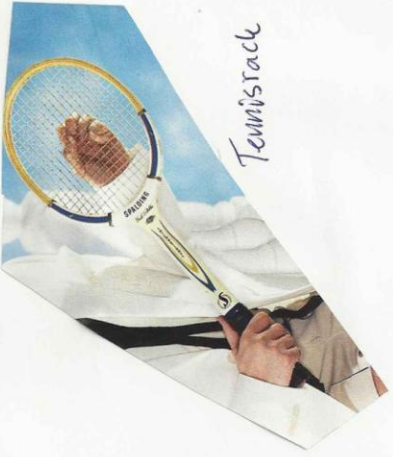


1

SOCRATES, BRASILIEN (VM I SPANIEN 1982)
Socrates var en av de mest framgångsrika spelarna i VM i Spanien 1982. Han var en av de bästa spelarna i den blåa tröjan för Brasilien. Han blev också utvald till världslaget. Sedan spelade han för aren i nummer 6, precis som jag.



Kalsonger & underkläder



Tennisstick

Surfarkämler



Turkiel




Sport



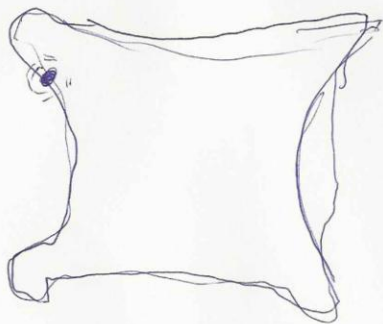
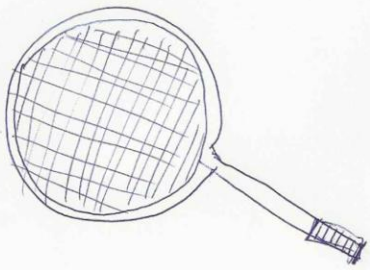
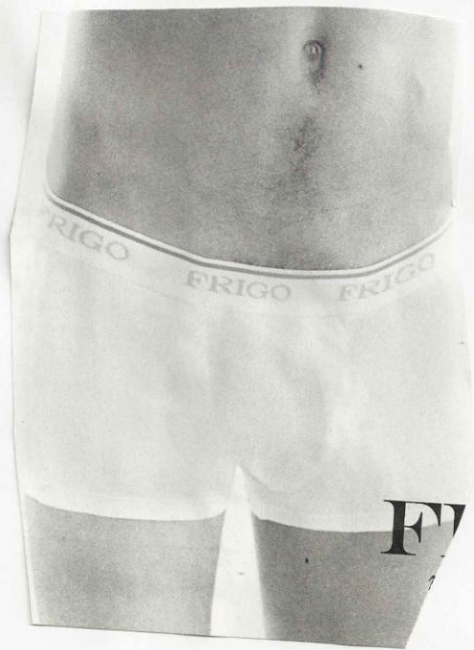
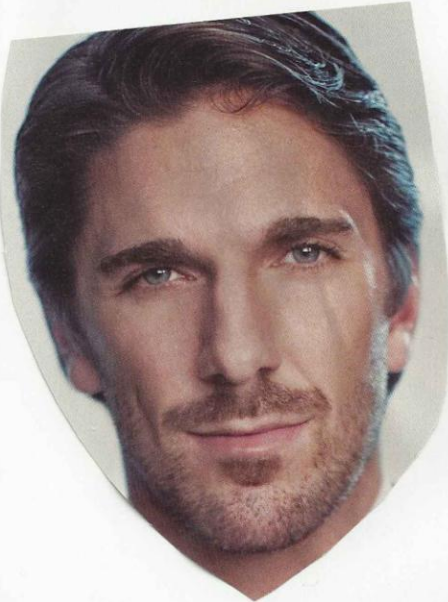
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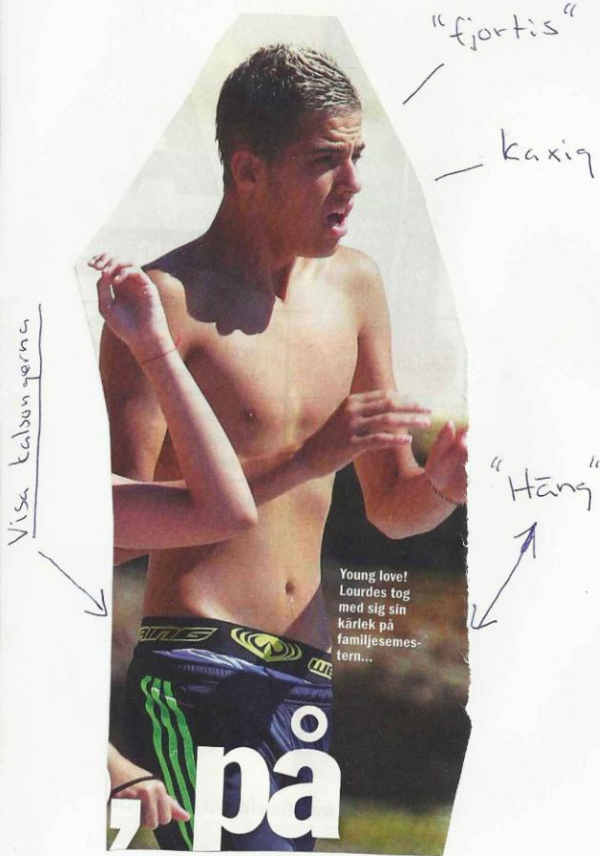
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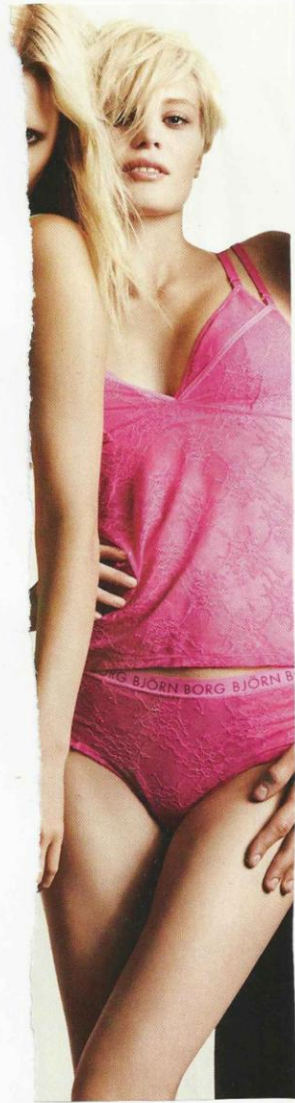
Färgglatt



Badkläder

Under-
kläder

Basic.



Appendix 3. Interview Laura Lawaetz

Som bakgrund till vår intervju skulle vi vilja att Du först tog del utav kollagen som fokusgrupperna gjort och kommenterar dem, utifrån Er branding strategy.

Var det dessa bilder som Du hade kunnat förvänta Dig skulle tas upp?

Varför/varför inte?

Billederne og ordene er generelt i god overensstemmelse med det ønskede brand image. Ord som sporty, farverig og undertøj er spot-on på brandet. Umiddelbart er billederne yngre end den målgruppe vi kommunikerer til, men hvis vi snakker ”kommerciel målgruppe” så passer det meget godt!

Överensstämmer bilderna med Er önskade image?

Ja det synes jeg. Men ord som ”fjortig” og ”kaxig” hentyder til en type som er en smule yngre end den målgruppe vi kommunikerer til. Vores kommercielle målgruppe er 13-60 årige men vores ”kommunikative målgruppe” er de 18-30 fyre! Det er derfor sandt at vi har unge kunder, men i vores markedsføring forsøger vi altid at tale til et mere modent publikum.

Tror Du detta är en vanligt förekommande bild av Björn Borg?

Ja det tror jeg. Men jeg tror dog at resultatet havde været anderledes hvis I havde interviewet danskere i stedet. I Danmark har Björn Borg et lidt andet image, vi er positioneret højere, priserne er højere og kunderne er lidt ældre. Men generelt passer ord som farverig og sporty rigtig godt på vores brand.

Stämmer bilderna med valet av Er positionering?

Ja det synes jeg. Billederne passer godt på vores positionering. Men som sagt giver collagerne et meget ungt udtryk som virker en smule yngre end den målgruppe vi kommunikerer til i vores markedsføring!

Vill ni bli förknippade med dessa bilder och varumärken som tas upp i kollagen?

Ja det vil vi gerne. Jeg er lettet over at der trods alt ikke er mere sex / mere sexede billeder! Vi forsøger altid gennem vores kommunikation at slå på andre instrument, fortælle en historie i stedet for bare at vise lækre modeller i undertøj. Det er klart at undertøj forbindes med nøgenhed, men vi er glade for at billederne i folks bevidsthed ikke er mere sexede end de er. Vi forsøger netop at være anderledes end JBS, Muchachomalo og andre undertøjsbrands der udelukkende spiller på sex som virkemiddel! Ord som farverig og sporty er vi glade for at blive relateret til.

Finns det associationer i kollagen som är nya för Er?

Jeg vidste ikke hvad en MQ-kille var. Men efter at have googlet MQ kan jeg se at det er en butikskæde der bl.a. forhandler Diesel, Peak, Fred Perry, G-Star, Calvin Klein, Levi's etc., hvilket bestemt er mærker som vi gerne vil associeres med! Så uden at vide helt hvad en MQ-kille er (?) så lyder det som om at det også passer godt til vores positionering!

Finns det några bilder/ associationer som Ni kommunicerar ut medvetet?

Ja helt klart. Vores markedsføring er altid meget farverig. Både bogstaveligt talt men også i overført betydning. Vi forsøger altid at skille os ud fra mængden og vi spiller på vores nordiske/skandinaviske rødder. Selvom vi ikke kommunikerer direkte om Björn Borg som den tennisstjerne han var, så er vi stolte at vores sporty arv hvilket både kommer til udtryk i design og markedsføring!

Hur ser Er kommunikationsstrategi ut? Kommuniserar Ni ut samma saker i alla mediekkanaler? Om inte, varför?

Ja det gör vi. Eller gjorde vi! Vi lancerer nemlig Björn Borg Sport til efteråret, et helt nyt subbrand med løbetøj, tennistøj, fitnessstøj mm. Her vil vi både benytte os af outdoor som tidligere men også bevæge os ind i sportsmedier som iForm, FitLiving, Aktiv Træning, Løbemagasinet mm (danske sportmagasiner). Vores tøj er ikke kun lækkert at se på, men har også en høj funktionalitet og vi vil gerne have respekt fra sportsbranchen og ikke kun modebranchen. Det kommer derfor til at blive en lidt anden måde vi vil kommunikere Björn Borg Sport på, men stadig med den samme humoristiske, intelligente og uhøjtidelige tone. Vi vil gerne skille os ud fra de mere seriøse brands som Nike osv der er meget højtidelige i deres måde at kommunikere på – we want to have fun. Og budskabet bliver noget i retning af ”Björn Borg says ja to looking like a champion”.

Men vi har ikke forskellige budskaber til online, outdoor eller print. Her er alt det samme! Det er klart at vi tilpasser annoncer til outdoor (større logo osv.), men vi har en overordnet strategi som vi følger i alle kanaler!

Hur vill Ni att Björn Borg ska uppfattas?

Fun, liberated, colourful, intelligent, young-minded, daring etc.

Skiljer sig kommunikationen och den önskade imagen mellan den Danska och Svenska marknaden? Om ja, på vilket sätt?

Som nævnt ovenfor så er det svenske image yngre end det danske! Undertøjet er dyrt i Danmark ift i Sverige hvilket giver os en højere positionering. F.eks. er der langt flere 50-årige danskere der går med Björn Borg i Danmark ift i Sverige!

Desuden er brandet nok mere forbundet med sport og tennisstjerne Björn Borg i Sverige ift i Danmark. I Danmark er der mange unge (folk under 25) som ikke aner hvem Björn Borg er! I Danmark er der mange unge der tror at vi ”bare” er et undertøjsbrand og som ikke kender den sporty arv som vi har fra Björn Borg ligeså godt som svenskerne gør!