



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
School of Economics and Management

BUSN 39

Master Thesis

MSc International Marketing & Brand Management

# Steering a Corporate Brand in the Automobile Industry to Differentiation: The Brand Personality Wheel

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DATE: 22 MAY 2015  
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## Abstract

**Title:** Steering a Corporate Brand in the Automobile Industry to Differentiation: The Brand Personality Wheel

**Date of the Seminar:** 02 June 2015

**Course:** BUSN 39. Degree project in global marketing

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**Keywords:** Brand personality scale, corporate brands, brand personality, automobile industry, differentiation.

**Thesis purpose:** The thesis purpose of the research study at hand was twofold. First, it was our intention to explore what expressions consumers used when talking about a corporate brand in the automobile industry when there were no boundaries for answers and no references towards the concept of brand personality. Based on the information gained, our second objective was to develop a brand personality scale specific to corporate brands in the automobile industry.

**Methodology:** The methodology we chose was of qualitative and mostly inductive nature. We decided in favor of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method and a form of grounded theory as the method for our data analysis. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that we started our data collection directly at the consumer by asking him/her about corporate brands in the automobile industry for which our developed brand personality scale was intended.

**Theoretical perspective:** The main theories used in the study at hand provide definitions of brands in general and corporate brands in particular, the concept of brand personality, as well as relevant brand personality scales developed through previous research efforts in this field and their accompanying criticism. Furthermore, the literature review provides insight into the ways in which the automobile industry uses brands.

**Empirical data:** In-depth interviews in semi-structured form.

**Conclusion:** The findings of our study showed that respondents linguistically used a wide variety of words when they were free in choosing their descriptions of brands. Furthermore,

respondents took three different paths to accomplish the difficult task of describing the abstract concept of a corporate brand. Based on respondents' expressions, we, in a next step, developed a scale called the Brand Personality Wheel.

Our findings contributed to existing theory focused on brand personality through the different approach we took. Additionally, the Brand Personality Wheel represents the first scale of its kind, which was specifically designed for corporate brands in the automobile industry. Furthermore, our scale serves as a new reference point for brand managers in the automobile industry for the measurement, comparison, adaptation and communication of their brands' personalities, which constitutes the most significant practical contribution of our study.

## Acknowledgement

First of all, we would like to thank all respondents for taking part in our study. Their willingness to share their thoughts with us contributed tremendously to our results. We would not have been able to conduct the study without them.

Furthermore, we are very grateful for Christian Koch's supervision. He guided us through the demanding task of completing a master thesis by providing support and helpful feedback. His much-appreciated input helped us to reach for the best outcome possible.

We also want to thank our families and friends for their mental support and encouragement during these intense times here in Lund.

Last but not least, we would like to thank each other for a great and memorable time during the research process. Writing a master thesis seemed like a challenging task in the beginning but turned out to be a very valuable experience. We truly worked as partners and respected each other. We engaged in constructive arguments, aired our strong opinions, and provided productive feedback to each other. Nevertheless, at the end, we always arrived at mutual consensus and were, therefore, able to successfully arrive at our shared objectives.

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## 1. Introduction

As of May 2015, there are more than 7 billion people living on planet Earth. What is even more impressive than this ever-growing number is the occurrence that no two human beings are exactly alike. There are numerous factors on which people can differ, like appearance, shape, etc., but one significant differentiator is a human's personality. According to the 'Dictionnaire Fondamental de la Psychologie' (cited in Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, p.147) human personality is defined as, "... the set of relatively stable and general dynamic, emotional and affective characteristics of an individual's way of being, in his/her way to react to the situation in which he/she is. In most cases, the word does not include the cognitive aspects of the behavior (intelligence, abilities, knowledge). It always deals with the affective, emotional and dynamic aspects. Personality is [more often than not] described in terms of traits."

Human beings are not the only phenomena that have unique personalities. Brands can have personalities too. According to Valette-Florence and De Barnier, (2013, p. 903) brand personality is defined as, "... an evaluation based on human personality traits applicable and relevant to the brand and cultural context in which they occur." If a brand uses this concept appropriately, it has the potential to serve as a valuable tool in creating differentiation and setting a brand's products or services apart from competitors' offers. Being different and unique is becoming more and more important in the world of business (Biel, 1993, cited in Das, Guin & Datta, 2012).

Similarly to the growth of the world's population, though not as tremendously, also the number of operating companies and therefore of direct and indirect competitors rises every day. Through this development, more and more products and services are available to consumers and it is difficult for corporations to differentiate their offers from the competition. Therefore, consumers have a challenging time comparing and evaluating available offers. Most often, if offers appear identical to consumers, they make a decision in favor of the cheapest item. Since this behavior is not in the interest of businesses, they put increasing emphasis on the development of differentiating factors such as a strong and unique brand. This particularity becomes obvious to customers and makes them choose one product or service over another due to the establishment of an emotional relationship (Aaker, 1996).

According to Melin (2002, cited in Holger & Holmberg, 2002, p. 120), "Consumers choose brands in the same way as they choose friends." To identify brands that could be

‘friends’, the congruence between the brand’s and the consumer’s personality plays an important role (McCracken, 1989, cited in Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011). In order for this ‘match’ to happen, brands need a distinct personality similar to the one of human beings, which can only be present in a strong brand that is built thoroughly. This specific approach to managing a brand and to create the urgently needed differentiating factor, mentioned above, is based on the concept of brand personality (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009).

In order to make use of the benefits the concept of brand personality offers, scholars started to develop scales to measure and adapt it in an appropriate way. The outcomes were so-called ‘Brand Personality Scales’ (see, for example, Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Wejters & De Wulf, 2009; Herbst & Merz, 2011).

### **1.1 Problem Discussion and Research Gap**

Without a doubt, brand personality is not an under-researched topic in the world of brand management. There is a large amount of research available for this concept and its measurement, which was primarily led by Aaker’s development of the ‘Dimensions of Brand Personality’ in 1997. However, other influential scholars contributed to this concept as well and revealed their points of view (see, for example, Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Fournier, 1998; Keller & Richey, 2006), which are not always in agreement.

One heated debate concerning brand personality circles around the relationship between brand identity, brand image, and brand personality. A brand’s identity concerns what a brand stands for (e.g. core values) and what it is. On the other hand, brand image is the way in which consumers perceive the brand. While some scholars argue that brand personality is found on the sender side (corporation) and is therefore part of the brand identity (e.g. Kapferer, 2012), Keller and Richey (2006), Plummer (1984) and Urde (2013), besides others, put the concept on both, the sender and the receiver side (consumers). These researchers express that the concept is part of brand identity but also of brand image. Taking stance regarding the relationship between brand personality, brand identity and brand image is indispensable when investigating the concept of brand personality. The researcher’s view on this issue influences, for example, the collection of data. In order to prevent any confusion or misinterpretation, the researchers hold the conviction that brand personality is part of both, the sender and the receiver side of brand communication, and is therefore co-created by the corporation and consumers. Therefore, brand personality plays a role in the concept of brand identity, as well as brand image.

Despite some disagreements between scholars investigating the concept of brand personality, many similarities can be found in the development of brand personality scales of previous studies. These analogies are the basis for criticism by many scholars (see, for example, Austin, Siguaw & Mattila, 2003 or Avis, Forbes & Ferguson, 2014). We consolidated these overlaps, as well as existing criticism into four categories, which are based on our own analysis and helped us, in a next step, to identify a research gap.

Most empirical studies with the intent of creating a brand personality scale used existing personality characteristics, referred to as ‘traits’, from the popular ‘Big Five’ model, which deals with human personality, and/or from Aaker’s scale developed in 1997 (Das, Guin & Datta, 2012). It is criticized that some of these traits, *influenced by human psychology studies and existing literature in the field of brand personality (1)*, were not applicable to brands.

In addition to the trait generation from human psychology, researchers conducted surveys and interviews. These data collection processes were dominated by the *guidance of respondents towards the concept of personality through the method of ‘personification’ (2)*. Respondents were pushed to think of brands as persons (see, for example, Geuens, Wejters & De Wulf, 2009) and were therefore not able to describe brands being free from imposed frameworks. The appropriateness of personification as a data collection method for brand personality research is therefore questioned.

During the scale development process, researchers reduced and analyzed generated traits through the use of mostly *statistical methods*, such as, for example, factor analysis. The analysis helped them to identify overriding ‘dimensions’ of brand personality. While these methods are said to be more objective and rational, they did *not allow for interpretation (3)* according to Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014), which is crucial when studying a concept as abstract as brand personality.

Additionally, most empirical work on brand personality scales *claimed to be applicable universally within and between categories, and across industries and countries (4)* (see, for example, Aaker, 1997; Geuens, Wejters & De Wulf, 2009). Nevertheless, researchers also developed scales for specific cultural and industrial contexts (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001; Bosnjak, Bochmann & Hufschmidt, 2007; d’Astous & Lévesque, 2003; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). The development of the first scale for the industrial sector by Herbst and Merz (2011) proved that business-to-business (B2B) brands have different personality traits than business-to-consumer (B2C) product brands on which Aaker (1997)

focused her studies on. A universal scale is therefore not distinct enough to serve the needs of a specific industry.

In relation to this point of critique, the majority of available research investigated the brand personality of product brands while stating to be applicable for different types of brands) (e.g. product, service, or corporate brands). This claimed universal applicability neglects the argument that especially corporate brands differ significantly from lower level brands (Balmer & Gray, 2003; De Chernatony, 1999; Keller & Richey, 2006). A corporate brand represents the entire organization, including all board members, employees and the core values, attitudes, beliefs, etc. they hold (Balmer & Gray, 2003). This specific kind of brand is, furthermore, defined mainly by 'who it is', whereas a lower level brand is mostly judged by 'what it does' (Keller & Richey, 2006, p. 74). While these characteristics of a corporate brand help to theoretically separate them from other kinds of brands, it is sometimes difficult to cut a clear line between corporate brands and lower brand levels in the real world. This challenge is closely related to the complexity of brand architectures of large corporations found in some industries. The automobile industry is a good example of this sophisticated structure. It is shaped by few but very large corporations acting as silent mother brands, which oversee multiple strong daughter brands (e.g. VW Group as the mother brand with, for example, Bentley or Audi as daughter brands).

Due to this structure and the definition of corporate brands, it is debatable whether only the mother brand is considered as a corporate brand or if the corporation's strong, often independently acting, daughter brands also fall into the corporate brand category. These daughter brands have their own values, a unique personality, identity, image, and reputation and are therefore seen as corporate brands for the purpose of this paper. For example, it is impossible to state that Skoda and Audi, which are both daughter brands of the Volkswagen Group, have the same image, reputation or target group. They need to be treated as corporate brands and cannot be lumped together because of these differences. Nevertheless, a clear line is drawn between the daughter brands and their product brands and product line brands (e.g. Audi's A3 or BMW's 5 series). Although brands on this level can have their own brand personalities (Aaker, 1997), they do not have brand identities and images as distinct as overriding daughter brands. Therefore, this lowest brand level falls outside the interest of the research study at hand.

A closer look into the automobile industry undermines the highly competitive environment corporations have to operate in today. In order to prevent competing solely on price, more and more emphasis is put on the brand as a strategic asset that helps to differentiate one corporation's offers from those of competitors (Miladin & Babu, 2009). The concept of brand personality plays an important role in these efforts in order to convince the consumers. However, not enough research has been performed so far to connect brand personality and the automobile industry.

The criticism on the development process of past scales, mentioned above, as well as the absence of brand personality scales, which focus primarily on corporate brands, constitute a research gap, which the research study at hand aims to bridge. Aaker (1997) stated that the ideal way to gather personality traits to measure brand personality has not yet been defined. Based on these arguments we concluded that a different research approach for gathering and analyzing brand personality traits was needed. Therefore, we determined to collect brand descriptions of a specific industry from consumers directly without using the concept of personification in order to avoid limitations or obstacles. The complexity of brand architectures, as well as the type of brands of interest for the study, namely corporate brands, guided us in the selection process of an appropriate industry. The result was the decision in favor of the automobile sector.

## 1.2 Thesis Purpose and Research Questions

The empirical study at hand had the intent to investigate brand personality found on the receiver side, namely within customers, and to build a scale, respectively. While it is important for corporations to engage in brand personality building on the sender side, which is easier to control and to build, it is also critical for them to understand the ways in which customers perceive the personality of their brands. Since this 'perceived personality' is more difficult to understand and to measure, the research study at hand prioritized this part of brand personality to help brand managers in this effort. Therefore, the research study at hand focuses on providing insight in two areas. First, the empirical study explores *what* expressions consumers use when talking about a corporate brand in the automobile industry when there are no boundaries for answers and no references towards the concept of brand personality. Second, it explores *what* a brand personality scale for the automobile industry looks like based on the results of the first question. The aim of our qualitative research approach was to discover rather than test dimensions of personality.

For the purpose of this empirical study, we formulated two research questions. These are,

1. When talking about a corporate brand in the automobile industry, what expressions do people use to describe this brand when there is an absence of pre-set boundaries relating to brand personality?
2. Based on the findings from the first research question, what does a consumer originated brand personality scale for the automobile industry look like?

Contrary to previous studies, it was important for us to guarantee an absence of pre-set boundaries of personality dimensions or any other categorizations or concepts during the data collection process.

### 1.3 Research Outline

The research study at hand contains six main parts. It starts out with a brief *Introduction*, which highlights some background information, the discussion of the research problem, including the research gap, as well as the purpose of the thesis. The second part, *Theory*, includes a literature review of the concepts of brands, brand personality, brand personality scales, criticism on these scales and the use of brands in the automobile industry. The third section, *Methodology*, features our chosen research methodology. Afterwards, the chapter *Findings and Analysis* presents the most important results of our study, including the developed Brand Personality Wheel. The next part, *Discussion of the Brand Personality Wheel*, relates our findings to past scales, human personality, relevant concepts and the automobile industry. The *Conclusion*, constituted by a short summary, contributions, limitations, and further research, represents the sixth part of the thesis. Our research paper concludes with the sections *References* and *Appendix*, whereas the latter one has two parts (A and B).

## 2. Theory

In this section, we gathered and reviewed the most important literature for the purpose of the research study at hand. It consists of five major parts. First, we reviewed literature for brands in general and corporate brands in particular (2.1 Definition of a Brand), followed by available theories on brand personality (2.2 Brand Personality). Afterwards, relevant brand personality scales developed through previous research efforts in this field (2.3 Brand Personality Scales) and accompanying criticism (2.4 Criticism on Brand Personality Scales) are presented. The last section of this literature review concerns the way in which the automobile industry uses brands (2.5 The Use of Brands in the Automobile Industry).

### 2.1 Definition of a Brand

While it is simple to picture a brand and to think of what it is, it is not as easy to define it. It becomes even more complicated once a distinction between corporate brands, product brands, service brands, product-line brands, etc. is made. Therefore, most recognized scholars in the field of brand management offer different explanations of what a brand really is but do not distinguish between different kinds of brands. The definitions, presented below, represent only a small number in the set of available explanations but, nevertheless, provide a comprehensive picture of the kinds of factors that play a role in the determination of a brand.

For Aaker (1991, p.110), a brand is, "... a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods or services of one seller from those of competitors", while Keller (1998, p.4) defines it as, "... a product that adds other dimensions to differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need". Also mental associations play a significant role in most of the available conceptualizations of a brand through a value-adding benefit (Kapferer, 2012). An additional definition to the ones mentioned above is contributed by Kapferer (2012, p.12), who, "... understands the brand as a name that symbolizes a long-term engagement, crusade or commitment to a unique set of values, embedded into products, services and behaviors, which make the organization, person or product stand apart or stand out."

#### 2.1.1 Definition of a Corporate Brand

Even though these definitions are intended to be quite universal, it is important to clarify what specific kind of brand one is concerned with. For example, an organization can have one corporate brand as sole strategic representation but it also has the possibility of introducing

another or multiple brand levels in addition or within the corporate brand. Depending on the chosen brand architecture, different strategies and managerial implications apply. Corporate brands, although similar to product brands, have unique characteristics.

Potentially one of the most important differences between a product and a corporate brand lies within the way they are used. While for a product, its brand is mainly a marketing tool in order to increase sales, for a corporation the key is its strategic use, which is a senior management issue (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

Another distinction, which is highlighted by Keller and Richey (2006), is that a corporate brand is to a greater extent defined by ‘Who it is’ than by ‘What it does’, whereby product brands are judged by the latter. Balmer and Gray (2003, p. 978) add to the declaration of corporate brands by expressing that, “... the key difference in conceptualization is that corporate brand values tend to be grounded in the values and affinities of company founders, owners management and personnel, whereas product brand values tend to be contrived and are the product of the not inconsiderable skills of invention held by marketing and advertising creatives.” The mentioned importance of the company’s personnel and employees is also emphasized by Keller and Richey (2006).

Furthermore, a corporate brand has to serve multiple stakeholders and is not just focused on the satisfaction of consumer needs, which makes brand-managing matters more complex (Balmer & Grey, 2003). Even though these brands have to please a wider audience, their main role is still the fulfillment of all stakeholders’ needs, no matter if they are functional or emotional (de Chernatony, 1999). In order to deliver on this task, brands have to signal certitude, trust and emotion, in addition to reducing risk (Kapferer, 2012).

For the purpose of this paper with brand personality as its key concept, it is necessary to highlight one more way in which a corporate brand is unique. According to Keller and Richey (2006), corporate brands differ from lower level brands in the range of possible personality traits they can own. This extended set of personality traits, as a result, leads to a richer range of associations consumers build and recall every time they come into contact with a brand (Keller & Richey, 2006). Product brands, on the other hand, have a much more focused and narrower field of traits they can own.

The distinctive elements, stated above, already indicate the broadness and complexity of the discipline of corporate brand management. It includes concepts such as brand identity,

brand image, brand personality, brand relationships, corporate culture, corporate communication, and reputation. The most relevant concept for the purpose of this paper is brand personality but its importance and connectedness to brand identity and brand image cannot be overlooked. The relationship brand personality has to the other two concepts is examined in more detail below.

## **2.2 Brand Personality**

The concept of brand personality has its origin in the field of human psychology and has been adapted in order to serve brands as well (Aaker, 1997; Keller & Richey, 2006; Plummer, 1984). Plummer (1984, p. 27) provides a definition for human personality by highlighting that it is, "... the way individuals react fairly consistently to a variety of environmental situations". Despite large amounts of research, there is discrepancy regarding the make-up of a human's personality and what factors should be counted towards this category. According to Saucier and Srivastava (2015, p. 283), research deals with two main questions, which are, "What are the units (constructs, variables) that one can use to describe and study personality?" and "In what ways are those units related or organized?".

It is important to highlight that the concept of a human's personality cannot be applied one-to-one for brands because of its origin within the field of human psychology (Plummer, 1984). There are differences between human beings and brands that have to be considered. One important distinguisher is the way personality is developed in both cases. In the case of human beings, individual behavior, physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, and demographic characteristics shape one's personality throughout life (Park, 1986). On the other hand, a brand's personality, as the consumer interprets it, is shaped and influenced every time he or she comes into contact, directly or indirectly, with that particular brand (Plummer, 1984). Therefore, the brand's behavior, expressed through its marketing activities, is of major importance to the construction of a brand's personality (Sweeney & Brandon, 2006). Furthermore, Kapferer (2012) puts particular emphasis on the importance of a corporation's communication in the process of personality development. The concept of brand personality predominantly serves a metaphorical function in order for consumers to be better able to relate to brands and their offerings (Fournier, 1998).

### 2.2.1 Definitions of Brand Personality

Even though it is understandable what is meant by the concept of brand personality and how it differs from a human's personality, agreed-upon definitions of brand personality are lacking in the available literature. One reason for this absence is the disagreement between scholars regarding the influencers in the development process of a brand's personality. Opinions disperse whether the direct and indirect contact the consumer has with a brand is the sole factor or if the development is more complex. Levy (1959), for example, points out that also consumers' demographic characteristics play a role in the development of a brand's personality (e.g. gender, age, class).

The definition that is the most accepted in the field of marketing and brand management according to Freling & Forbes (2005), which is also the broadest, is Aaker's (1997, p. 347) version saying brand personality is, "... the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p.151) criticized parts of Aaker's work and, in a next step, extended her definition as followed, "Brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands." An additional context was added by Valette-Florence and De Barnier, (2013, p. 903) by stating that brand personality is, "... an evaluation based on human personality traits applicable and relevant to the brand and cultural context in which they occur." While these three explanations do not make a distinction regarding the kind of brand, Keller and Richey (2006, p.75) provide a specific definition of corporate brand personality by explaining that, "... corporate brand personality can be defined in terms of the human characteristics or traits of the employees of a corporation as a whole [...] and will therefore reflect the values, words and actions of employees, individually and collectively." While all these definitions differ, they still circulate around the same core.

Out of the definitions, mentioned above, Valette-Florence and De Barnier's (2013) determination of brand personality is the most appropriate for the research study at hand. It is more descriptive than Aaker's definition by adding the factors of relevance, as well as the issue of context to the personality of a brand. These additions are both highly important when studying personalities of brands, which operate in a specific industry. Nevertheless, the emphasis on 'human' personality traits was not appropriate for our research approach. Therefore, Valette-Florence and De Barnier's (2013) definition served as a basis but instead of stressing human personality traits, the study at hand emphasized brand personality traits. Even though, Keller and Richey (2006) provided a definition explicitly for corporate brands, which

was also the kind of brand investigated in the study at hand, it does not represent the most appropriate definition. Its inappropriateness is due to Keller and Richey's (2006) view that employees are the most important influencers of a corporate brand's personality. Contrary, the study at hand focuses on the contribution consumers make to a corporate brand's personality.

### **2.2.2 Relevance of Brand Personality**

As mentioned before, the marketplace, no matter in which industry, is becoming more and more competitive. Therefore, ways in which a company can set itself apart and make itself stand out from the crowd of competitors becomes crucial. One of the key features the use of a thought-through brand personality offers to a corporation is the opportunity to differentiate its brands from the offerings of competitors. According to Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), brand managers use their brand's personality primarily as a differentiating factor from the competition in the same product category or industry, as an initiator to create a preference in consumers for the promoted brand, and as a stable unit when expanding to different parts of the world where cultures vary.

Furthermore, brand managers are always on the lookout for new and better ways to initiate strong emotional connections between their brands and their customers (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger, 2011). The concept of brand personality is a very useful tool in this regard because it helps corporations to increase communication effectiveness (Aaker 1996; Plummer 1984), to make brands more interesting and memorable (Aaker, 1996), and to create unique and favorable associations in customers' minds (Keller, 1993). The usefulness of the brand personality concept is undermined through Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre's (2009) statement that ascribing personality to brands is a natural reaction for human beings and is an efficient driver for the creation of emotional bonds.

Furthermore, giving a brand a unique personality creates feelings and potentially liking on the consumer side, which strengthens the relationship between the brand and its customers even more (Aaker, 1996) and ultimately results in a higher level of loyalty (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009). Fournier (1998, cited in Malär et al., 2011, p. 36) summarizes the effectiveness of the concept of brand personality by expressing that, "Previous research on consumer-brand relationships has clearly demonstrated that understanding the emotional components of such relationships is highly relevant to both marketing academics and practitioners."

Additionally, the concept of brand personality offers the possibility to better segment the market and to more efficiently pick out potential target groups, which, based on their own human personalities, might be more attracted to the brand's personality (Fournier, 1998). The congruency between the brand's personality and the consumer's actual or ideal self is supposed to be key in the development of emotional brand attachment (Malär et al., 2011). In addition, having a strong and unique brand personality also has the potential to increase brand equity. According to Kotler, Wong, Saunders, & Armstrong (2005, p. 556), brand equity is defined as, "... the value of a brand, based on the extent to which it has high brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations." Therefore, it is of major importance for companies (Keller, 1993).

Another important factor that makes the application of the personality concept highly relevant for corporations is the finding that consumers use brands in order to express themselves (Aaker, 1997). According to Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) consumers use the brand's personality for the development of their own identity and self because they are able to 'see' themselves within the brand. Therefore, in most cases, consumers choose brands depending on what they think fits their own current self or the self they want to become in the future (McCracken, 1989, cited in Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011). Nevertheless, whether a consumer matches a brand to his or her actual self or ideal self remains a very complex phenomenon and depends mostly on the product or industry category (Malär et al., 2011). Freling and Forbes (2005, p. 150) summarize the features of brand personality by expressing, "For consumers, brand personality makes a difference in terms of the feeling it generates, the self-expression it allows, the relationships it facilitates, and the simplification of brand choice it enables."

In order for people to be better able to relate to corporations, products, or services, it is important that they are able to make sense out of them. A commonly used technique by human beings to make sense out of non-human phenomena is 'anthropomorphization', which can also be referred to as 'personification'. When people use this concept, they attribute human characteristics to non-human objects by interpreting them through their own experiences and conceptions (Freling & Forbes, 2005). According to Maehle, Otnes, and Supphellen (2011, p. 292) people use this strategy, "... to make non-human objects seem more human, and thus more familiar", which creates comfort and reassurance and therefore reduces uncertainty.

As highlighted by the arguments above, the concept of brand personality is not only highly relevant for corporations in order to differentiate their brands and to be successful, but also helps consumers to understand brands in a better way.

### **2.2.3 Relationship between Brand Personality, Brand Identity and Brand Image**

Two important concepts in brand management, which are closely related to brand personality, are brand identity and brand image. Nevertheless, there is discrepancy where brand personality fits in between the two. Very similar to human beings, identity, also for brands, depends on deeply held values, beliefs, attitudes and convictions. These inner drivers direct people, as well as corporations and their brands, in their behavior, communication, and what they stand for. One important factor in a brand's identity is the identity of the corporation it belongs to. Balmer and Gray (2003, p. 979), refer to this corporate identity as, "... the distinct attributes of an organization and as such addresses the questions 'What are we?' and 'Who are we?'"

The descriptions and the definition, mentioned above, imply that brand identity is found within an organization. On the other hand, brand image resides within customers and other stakeholders, therefore being external to the company. In this situation, the brand is interpreted, "... through many different filters: through experience, through perceptions, misconceptions, the value system of the individuals out there in the world, and, of course, all the noise in the system" (Plummer, 1984, p. 28). Also in this case, the corporation behind the brand and its unique corporate image play a key role. According to Roper and Fill (2012, p. 36) corporate image is, "... the perception that different audiences have of an organization and results from the audience's interpretation and meaning that is ascribed to the cues presented by an organization." This perception of the corporation as a whole influences every brand's identity that it owns.

In Kapferer's (2012) point of view, a brand's identity constitutes of its *physique*, *personality*, *culture*, *relationships*, *customer reflections*, and their *self-image*, which represent the six facets of his Brand Identity Prism (Figure 1). Within this model he labels *physique*, *relationship* and *reflection* as facets, which are external to the corporation, while *personality*, *culture*, and *self-image* are considered as internal. Furthermore, Kapferer (2012) sees a brand's *physique* and *personality* on the sender side of communication, whereas *reflection* and *self-image* are on the receiver side. Therefore, in his opinion, brand personality is an issue that is first, internal and second, on the sender side of corporate communication.

Kapferer’s (2012) Brand Identity Prism provides a very useful tool for measuring and building brand identity. Nevertheless, it is difficult to define for which specific kinds of brands the model was designed. It seems to fit a variety of brand types and, therefore, might lack the specificity and appropriateness a model unique to a certain kind of brand is likely to provide.

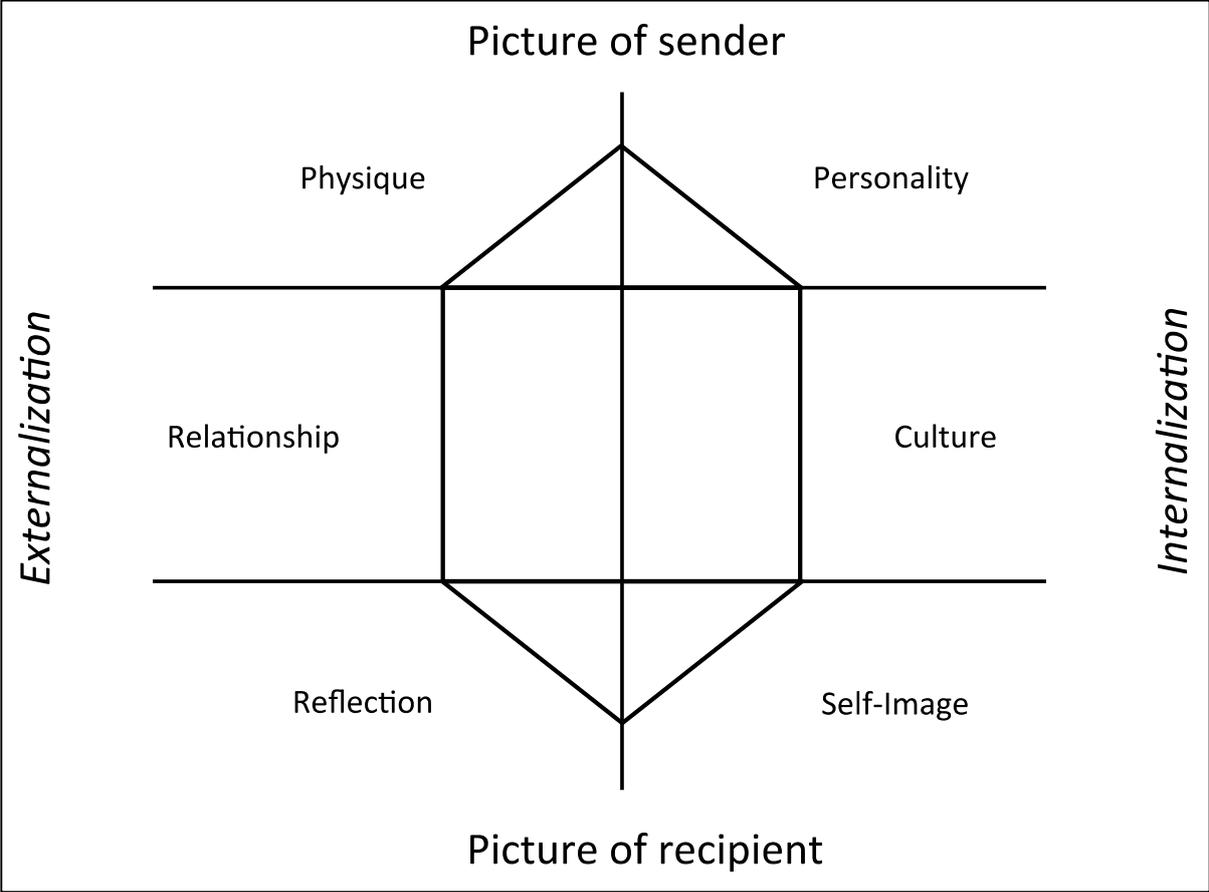


Figure 1: Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2012)

The differences between a corporate brand and a product brand, mentioned earlier, were the initiators for the development of Urde’s (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, which is constituted by nine elements. On the internal side, which can also be referred to as the sender side, are the elements of *mission and vision*, *culture*, and *competences*. On the external or receiver side, there are the elements of *value proposition*, *relationships*, and *position*. Between these two dimensions of sender and receiver, elements that have internal, as well as external components can be found. These elements are *expressions*, *brand core*, and *personality*. Therefore, Urde’s view on a brand’s personality is not solely internal to an organization but also has some external facets that are important in shaping a brand’s personality (see Figure 2).

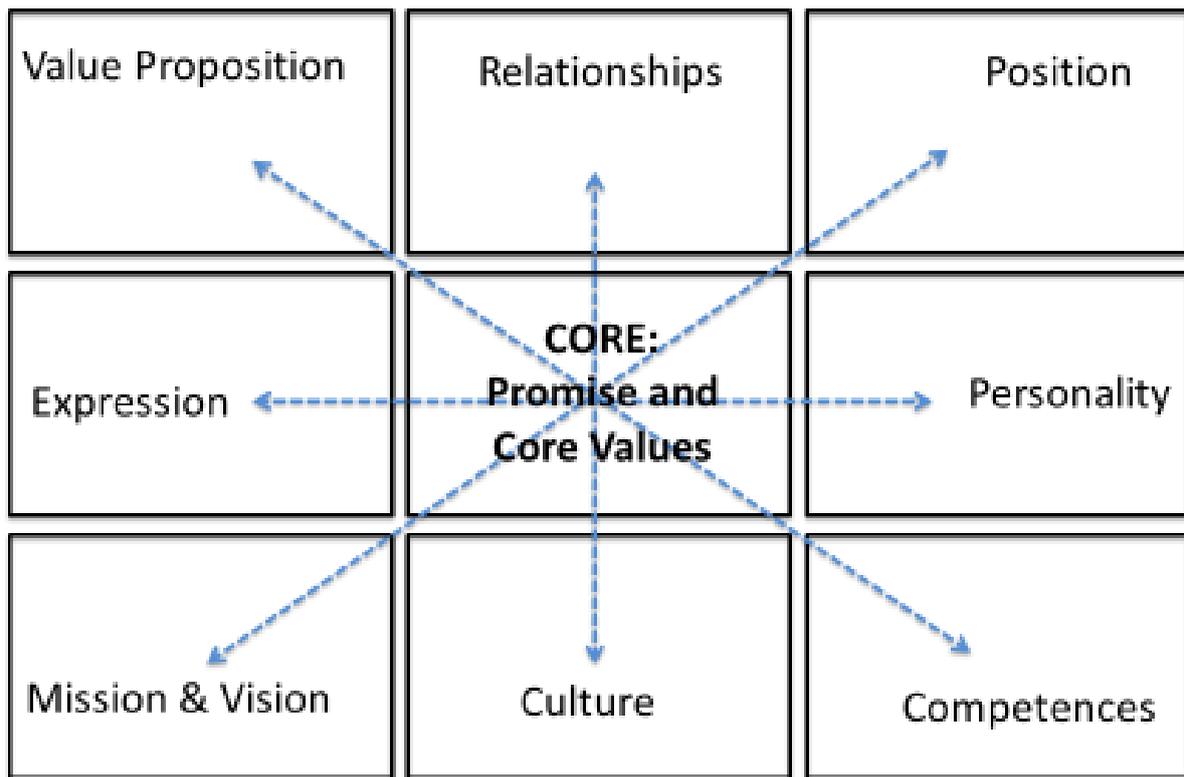


Figure 2: Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (2013)

An additional view, although similar to Urde's (2013) and Keller and Richey's (2006) opinions on brand personality, was offered by Plummer (1984) who argues that there are two facets of brand personality. First, there is the input, which he calls Brand Personality Statement. It is internal to the corporation. Second, there is the Brand Personality Profile, which can be compared to a brand's image. It represents the consumer's perception of the brand. He argues that, "... a brand or its personality are purely the result of communications because there is rarely anything intrinsic to a brand that makes it lively, or exotic, or sophisticated" (Plummer, 1984, p. 29). Therefore, a brand's personality is created through the communication efforts of the corporation, which it performs internally, as well as externally.

As the standpoints of the scholars, mentioned above, show, there is no absolute truth of where a brand's personality fits in with regard to brand identity (internal) and brand image (external). The position depends solely on the interpretation of the brand personality concept by the researcher and his or her philosophical convictions. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that brand personality is present to a certain extent and plays an important role in the concepts of brand identity and brand image.

## 2.3 Brand Personality Scales

In the same way the concept of human personality was used for the development of a brand's personality, human personality scales were the precedents and influencers of brand personality scales. Early work in the development of human personality scales was conducted by Tupes and Christa (1958, cited in Aaker, 1997), Norman (1963), McCrae and Costa (1989) and Goldberg (1990). Even though all these scholars worked predominantly independently of each other, their work showed one agreed upon result, the so-called 'Big Five' personality dimensions. These are the dimensions of *openness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, and *neuroticism*, which are also known as the 'five-factor model' (Goldberg, 1990). This empirical finding attracted a lot of attention over the last decades and often times served as a basis for the development of brand personality scale. Aaker (1997) was one of the researchers who were inspired by the 'Big Five' dimensions and, as a result, developed a five-dimensional scale to investigate the personality of brands. According to Freling and Forbes (2005), human beings tend towards the personification of non-human objects, which represented a supportive argument for the origin of Aaker's (1997) scale in human psychology. Her scale rose to being a first milestone to evaluate the symbolic meaning of brands and has therefore been the basis for most of the research conducted in this field (Austin, Sigauw & Mattila, 2003).

The development of brand personality scales, most often, follows the same research steps and, therefore, produces similar graphical outcomes, more particularly, overriding dimensions with numerous personality traits belonging to them (Das, Guin & Datta, 2012). In the beginning, a pool of traits is needed. Researchers, therefore, source traits from different origins, such as secondary data (e.g. human personality scales) or primary data (own qualitative studies). In a next step, the pool of traits is reduced in order to work with a more manageable number of traits, on the one hand, and in order to make the pool fit to the researchers' definitions of brand personality, on the other hand. Subsequently, scholars analyze the chosen traits through, for example, a factor analysis. This method groups traits together that load highest on one specific factor. Researchers, then, assign names to the evolved factors, which represent the dimensions/factors/facets overriding multiple personality traits. Based on this structure, a brand personality scale is developed. As these scales are used to measure the personality of a brand under study, an evaluation needs to take place. It includes a rating of all personality traits featured in the scale according to the degree of 'fit' between each trait and the respective brand.

### 2.3.1 Excerpt of Brand Personality Scales

A large variety of brand personality scales exist from which we chose the most popular ones for this literature review. Furthermore, it was our intent to present scales, which, together, present a comprehensive picture of available measurement tools. In order to get a better understanding of the different types of scales available, some of them are presented below.

For the development of Aaker’s scale (1997), she used a large number of personality traits, which she sourced from three different origins, namely personality scales found in psychology, scales used by marketers, as well as traits found in her own qualitative studies. The item reduction and subsequent formation of the five factors was done through the use of quantitative surveys and a factor analysis, respectively. Aaker claimed that her scale is a, “... reliable, valid, and generalizable scale ...” (1997, p.347), which measures the proposed factors and can be applied universally for brands in different industries and across categories. It should be kept in mind that she developed her scale in the light of consumer markets (Herbst & Merz, 2011). Aaker’s scale features five main dimensions or factors, which are *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication*, and *ruggedness*, as well as 15 additional facets that she divided according to the dimensions they belong to (Figure 3).

Aaker’s Dimensions of Brand Personality (1997)				
Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Down to Earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper-class	Outdoorsy
Down to earth	Daring	Reliable	Upper-class	Outdoorsy
Family oriented	Trendy	Hard working	Glamorous	Masculine
Small town	Exciting	Secure	Good looking	Western
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Honest	Spirited	Intelligent	Charming	Tough
Sincere	Cool	Technical	Feminine	Rugged
Real	Young	Corporate	Smooth	
Wholesome	Imaginable	Successful		
Wholesome	Imaginable	Successful		
Original	Unique	Leader		
		Confident		
Cheerful	Up-to-date			
Cheerful	Up-to-date			
Sentimental	Independent			
Friendly	Contemporary			

<b>Excitement</b>	Dimension
Daring	Facet
Trendy	Trait

Figure 3: Aaker’s Brand Personality Scale (1997)

Each facet consists of corresponding personality traits, 42 in total. The resulting scale is widely used as a basis for further research and scale development in the branding literature. For example, Maehle, Otnes and Supphellen (2011) used Aaker's scale to identify the kinds of brands consumers perceive as typical for each personality dimension, including their common characteristics.

Despite the dominating role of Aaker's scale in the academic world, various critical voices arose during the last years, resulting in several new scales. These are, for example, a completely new brand personality scale by Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf (2009) or a brand personality scale for B2B brands developed by Herbst and Merz (2011). Some of the new scales highlight the importance of different cultural backgrounds and found different dimensions for different countries (Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001; Bosnjak, Bochmann & Hufschmidt, 2007; Milas & Mlačić, 2007; Sung & Tinkham, 2005) whilst others were developed for specific contexts, such as store personality (d'Astous & Lévesque, 2003) or retail brand personality (Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004).

As mentioned above, Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf (2009) developed a new scale, which originated in their criticism on Aaker's scale. Points of critique were the inclusion of what they saw as 'non-personality' items and the limited generalizability for different research purposes and countries. Consequently, Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf's (2009) new scale was limited to only human personality traits and proved to be applicable for cross-cultural studies. They claimed the scope of application to include within-category, as well as individual brand level comparisons. According to them, their scale is universal and can be used for almost every purpose. To generate personality items that they later on tested through statistical analyses, they used only the real personality traits from Aaker's scale, as well as traits from human personality scales. The authors evaluated and reduced these traits in several steps by using focus groups, amongst other techniques. Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf's (2009) scale includes the dimensions of *responsibility*, *activity*, *aggressiveness*, *simplicity* and *emotionality* (Figure 4). All these dimensions show a high similarity to the 'Big Five' dimensions, unlike Aaker's scale (Das, Guin & Datta, 2012).

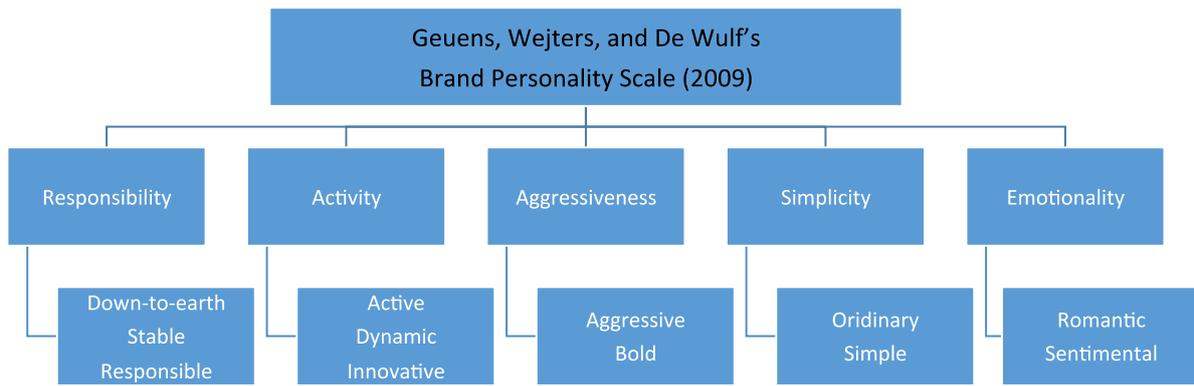


Figure 4: Geuens, Wejters and De Wulf's Brand Personality Scale (2009)

The above-mentioned scales were all applicable to product brands. Keller and Richey (2006) highlighted the importance and difference of personality traits for corporate brands. In their point of view, as mentioned earlier, a corporate brand's personality is defined by the behavior of its employees, as well as the core values of the company. They identified the three dimensions of *heart*, *body* and *mind*, which can be connected to Aristoteles' *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* respectively, as the measurement of corporate brand personality (Figure 5). Nevertheless, they did not make a distinction regarding corporate brands from different industries.

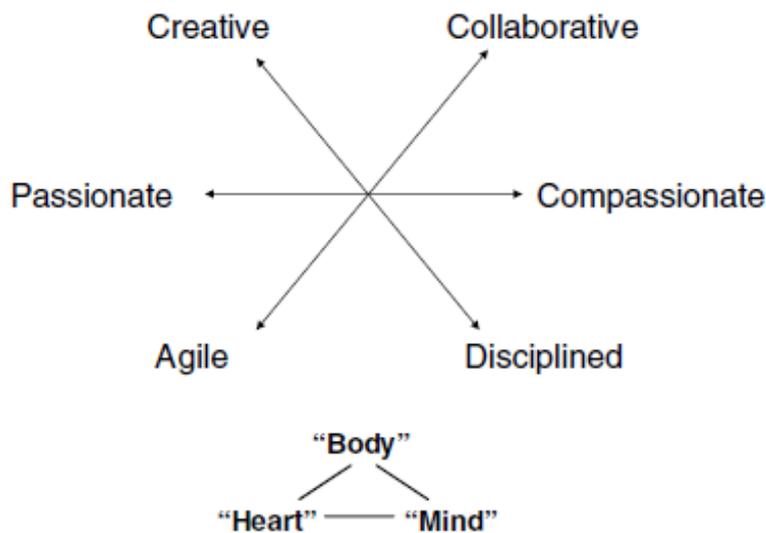


Figure 5: Keller and Richey's Corporate Brand Personality Traits (2006)

The Industrial Brand Personality Scale (IBPS), developed by Herbst and Merz (2011), differentiates itself from previous research as it was developed specifically for brands operating in the B2B sector. It was the first of its kind (Herbst & Merz, 2011). The authors proved that the product brand related scale from Aaker (1997) cannot be applied for the specific context of B2B transactions (Herbst & Merz, 2011). They argued that applying Aaker's framework in an

industrial context could lead to an ineffective positioning of a company. The researchers generated traits used for the IBPS through in-depths interviews with practitioners. Respondents were asked to imagine the company as a person. Additionally, the scholars included a content analysis from companies' mission statements, which was further reduced and tested by using methods such as surveys and factor analysis. A constant comparison of the final traits and identified dimensions with Aaker's scale was omnipresent throughout the study. Herbst and Merz (2011) concluded that industrial brands have different personality traits than consumer brands, which becomes visible in the dimensions of their B2B scale. These are, *performance*, *sensation* and *credibility* (Figure 6). Therefore, companies operating in the B2B sector need to use a scale specifically developed for industrial brands to explore the brand personalities of their brands. This specific kind of scale, furthermore, helps brand managers to successfully build a unique and memorable brand and to differentiate it from competitors.

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Sensation</b>	<b>Credibility</b>
Achievement-oriented <i>Professional</i> <i>Analytical</i> <i>Hard working</i> <i>Intelligent</i> <i>Proactive</i> <i>Educated</i>	Exciting <i>Young</i> <i>Glamorous</i> <i>Cool</i> <i>Trendy</i> <i>Daring</i> <i>Good-looking</i> <i>Adventurous</i> <i>Imaginative</i>	Sincere Real Reliable Down-to-earth Honest Original Trustworthy
Competent <i>Proper</i> <i>Careful</i> <i>Experienced</i> <i>Rational</i> <i>Problem-oriented</i> <i>Diligent</i>	Charming <i>Cheerful</i> <i>Feminine</i> <i>Tempered</i>	
Leading <i>Innovative</i> <i>International-oriented</i> <i>Scientific</i> <i>Creative</i>		

Figure 6: Herbst and Merz's Industrial Brand Personality Scale (2011)

A summary of all analyzed scales can be found in Table 1 below.

<b>Author (Year)</b>	<b>Purpose of the study</b>	<b>Sources and collection of traits</b>	<b>Approach to data collection</b>	<b>Data analysis method</b>	<b>Applicability of the resulting scale</b>	<b>Nr. of dimensions being similar to the 'Big Five' dimensions</b>
Aaker (1997)	Brand Personality in General (focused on consumer market)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowed from human psychology literature</li> <li>• Borrowed from Personality Scales from marketers</li> <li>• Generated through free association task by consumers</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>• Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Universally applicable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brands in different industries</li> <li>• Individual brands</li> <li>• Across and within categories</li> </ul>	3 out of 5*
Arora and Stoner (2009)	Brand Personality in General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowed from relevant literature in academic and trade sources</li> <li>• Borrowed from Aaker's (1997) scale (all 42 traits)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured questionnaire based on Aaker's (1997) five personality dimensions</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>• Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Not stated	Not stated
Bosnjak, Bochmann and Hufschmidt (2007)	Brand Personality in General (German cultural context)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generated through free association task by German consumers (description of brand as a person)</li> <li>• Borrowed from Aaker's (1997) scale (all 42 traits translated to German)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>• Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Symbolic use of brands in the German cultural context	4 out of 4**
Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido (2001)	Brand Personality in General (comparison of Big Five dimensions to brand personality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowed from literature (adjectives for each of the Big Five dimensions, identified as most useful for the Italian market)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a brand (perceived personality of brands and participants' own personality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Not stated	2 out of 2*

d'Astous and Lévesque (2003)	Store Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borrowed from Aaker's (1997) scale (all 42 traits)</li> <li>Borrowed from literature</li> <li>Generated through qualitative interviews (description of retail stores as a person)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a store brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Applicable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stores (but not shopping centers)</li> <li>Different consumer segments</li> </ul>	4 out of 5*
Geuens, Wejters and De Wulf (2009)	Brand Personality in General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only true personality traits -</li> <li>Borrowed from Personality Scales (i.a. Aaker 1997; Costa &amp; McCrae 1992)</li> <li>Generated through focus groups (description of the personality of a brand in participants' own words)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Universally applicable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within-category</li> <li>Individual brand level comparisons</li> <li>Cross-cultural validity (US and nine other European countries)</li> </ul>	5 out of 5*
Helgeson and Supphellen (2004)	Retail Brand Personality (Brand Personality and Self Congruity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated through qualitative interviews targeted at brands under investigation (description of retail stores as a person)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a retail brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Results based on female evaluations of retail brands in the Swedish clothing industry	1 out of 2*
Herbst and Merz (2011)	Industrial Brand Personality Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated from in-depths interviews with practitioners (description of company as a person)</li> <li>Generated from a content analysis from companies' mission statements</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to an industrial brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Universally applicable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrial brands</li> </ul>	Not stated
Sung and Tinkham (2005)	Brand Personality in General (cross-cultural context in the US and Korea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated through free association task of American and Korean participants</li> <li>Borrowed from Aaker's (1997) scale (all 42 traits)</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Brands in the respective cultural settings	4 out of 8* (for each country) 2 culture specific dimensions for each country
Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013)	Brand Personality for print media brands in a French context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generated through an earlier research using projective qualitative studies, amongst others, only based on print media brands</li> </ul>	Rating the fit of personality traits to a print media brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploratory Factor Analysis</li> <li>Confirmatory Factor Analysis</li> </ul>	Print media brands	Not stated

\* Das, Guin and Datta (2012)

\*\* Geuens, Wejters and De Wulf (2009)

Table 1: Overview of Brand Personality Scales

## **2.4 Critique on Brand Personality Scales**

There are many different scales measuring brand personality, but not all of them are congruent in their make-up. Das, Guin and Datta's (2012) academic work, in which the researchers analyzed multiple brand personality scales, resulted in the disclosure of common methodological issues of previous scales. As acknowledged, these research studies specifically aimed at generating new scales and were not only occupied with brand personality research in a broader sense. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), as well as Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014) state that most research papers nowadays have their basis in Aaker's scale. This mutual foundation resulted in many similarities in brand personality research, which some scholars chose as the basis for criticism (see, for example, Austin, Siguaw & Mattila, 2003; Avis, Forbes & Ferguson, 2014). In short, the criticism deals with four major areas of concern. These are, the dependence of trait generation on human psychology and existing research, the guidance of respondents towards the concept of personality, the use of only statistical methods of data analysis, and the stated universal applicability of most of the scales. For the purpose of this research, we consolidated these overlaps and the existing critique into corresponding groups, which are summarized below.

### **2.4.1 Influence of Human Psychology Studies and Existing Literature**

All research studies occupied with the development of brand personality scales generated personality traits as a very first step. Oftentimes, these traits were not developed but just 'taken' from existing scales (e.g. the 'Big Five') or derived from earlier literature in this field (e.g. Aaker's scale of 1997). This process implies that gathered personality traits did not emerge out of data corresponding to the type of brands under study but that they were taken for granted from existing research. However, it must be said that there were studies in which researchers generated traits directly from answers of respondents through the use of qualitative interviews. For example, Herbst and Merz (2011), as well as Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013) used this kind of approach in their data collection processes. These researchers sourced the traits they used for their scale development processes directly from the type of brand under study instead of copying personality traits from human psychology.

The absence of generating own data is not the main issue of this point of criticism. The concern rather deals with the use of traits that were generated for an application outside the

brand personality theory but were then used to develop scales within this specific field. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) argued that when using the concept of personality, which is taken from psychology, one should adhere to these roots. For the development of human personality scales, psychologists excluded adjectives dealing with cognitive abilities, such as 'competence', when describing personalities as these researchers argued that these characteristics are not part of a person's personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). However, it can be seen in Aaker's scale that they are included when measuring brand personality. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), therefore, suggested to stick to the definition of 'personality' delivered by psychologists in order to be clear on what should be included in the measurement of personality and what should be excluded. Additionally, human personality scales use traits that might not be relevant for brands (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Caprara, Barbaranelli & Guido, 2001), which means that not all of them can be taken undoubtedly. The criticism of these authors relates to the use of traits in some scales that do not measure true personality but relate to classical dimensions of, for example, product performance. A study by Romaniuk and Ehrenberg (2012) showed that some brand personality traits are directly associated with a product category. For example, the trait 'energetic' is most associated with energizer drinks.

Furthermore, Bosnjak, Bochmann and Hufschmidt (2007), among others, criticized the absence of negative traits in Aaker's (1997) scale although consumers attribute both positive and negative traits to brands. Their point of critique was supported by Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014) who, during the data collection process of their study, realized that respondents do use negative descriptions for brands. Additionally, the use of socio-demographic characteristics such as 'gender', 'age' and 'social class' were questioned (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). These items are part of group characteristics but are not part of an individual's personality. Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf (2009) saw the unclear definition of brand personality as the reason for the construction of dimensions that do not only measure personality, but, for example, perceived user characteristics.

The influence of human psychology and human personality scales on brand personality is omnipresent. As a consequence, blurred lines between these two fields of research, as well as an unclear structure of the development of brand personality scales occurred.

#### **2.4.2 Influence of the Concept of Personification**

When interviewing respondents in order to generate more personality traits for her study, Aaker (1997, p. 350) asked, “We would like you to think of each brand as if it was a person. This may sound unusual, but think of the set of human characteristics associated with each brand.” The obvious guidance of respondents towards the concept of personality, as seen in Aaker’s way of talking to her respondents, was repeated in many other studies. While developing a B2B personality scale, Herbst and Merz (2011) asked their participants to imagine their company and the ones of their competitors as persons. During the use of various methods for generating only true personality traits, Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf (2009) asked their respondents to describe the personality of a brand in their own words. As these approaches show, respondents were pushed to think of brands as persons and that there was seldom room for own thoughts. The leading questions used in these examples can have a measurable effect on the perception of individuals (Loftus, 2005, cited in Avis, Forbes & Ferguson, 2014).

One of the main premises of brand personality theory is the fact that consumers tend to load brands with personality traits in a natural way (Aaker, 1997). Furthermore, also Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p. 14) state that, “... consumers do perceive brands as having personality traits.” Contrary to their view, Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014) argue that if this were true, there would be no need to ask participants to imagine a brand as a person because they would do it naturally. They are concerned that the use of the concept of personification during the scale development process ‘creates’ the personality of brands whereas it should actually ‘measure’ it. A missing justification in previous research studies why personification was used or why it was a valid method for this kind of data collection is part of Avis, Forbes and Ferguson’s (2014) concerns. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) found that projection technique is simply a very popular method among researchers in this field. Due to the high amount of followers of Aaker’s scale, personification is an established concept among most other researchers in the brand personality field.

In case respondents had a difficult time to imagine brands as persons and to subsequently rate presented personality traits, they were still forced to do so through the presented method. Usually, it resulted in the accomplishment of this task. When these forced choices were compared to free choices, Barnard and Ehrenberg (1990) found that forced

choices led to additional associations and that respondents did not think freely. Romaniuk and Ehrenberg (2012), two of the few researchers who did not use personification as a research method, used a free choice method to evaluate if descriptive personality traits were applicable to a brand. They detected that only nine percent of brand users thought of the presented traits as appropriate to describe a brand, from which 13 traits were also used in the ‘five-factor’ model. Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014), therefore, suggested the free choice method instead of forced choices or leading questions. Furthermore, these researchers detected in their study that respondents were able to imbue rocks with personality, “... simply because they were asked to perceive one ...” (Avis, Forbes & Ferguson, 2014, p. 466). They blamed the findings on the used method of personification and the intentional creation of personality.

The use of the method of personification is questioned in the field of brand personality research. Several scholars suggest other approaches, which are more open and should, therefore, prevent respondents from intentionally creating personality for brands.

### **2.4.3 Influence of Quantitative Research Methods**

As mentioned earlier, researchers, in most cases, reduced the generated traits for their brand personality scales through personal judgment (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003) and subsequently analyzed them by using a factor analysis. The previous section identified the projective technique of ‘personification’ as part of the underlying data collection method. Plummer (1984) argued that the resulting responses from these projective techniques need some interpretation. However, in previous research efforts results were taken ‘as-is’. According to Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014), there was no reason presented why a statistical analysis was used. By quantifying data, there was no room for interpretation of results.

Taking responses ‘as they are’ without further interpretation can lead to unusual results according to Avis, Forbes, and Ferguson (2014). In their research, they faced quantified outcomes for which it was difficult to find explanations that made sense and could be used for the purpose of their study. A quantifying technique might not be the best way to make sense out of data resulting from a method that produces results that are not tangible from the beginning (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2009). Furthermore, Heding, Knudtzen, and Bjerre (2009) mentioned that qualitative research is more suitable to understand the symbolic consumption of brands. Avis, Forbes and Ferguson (2014) used some form of interviews for

the second part of their study. As a result, they were able to identify some underlying thoughts and reasons for the respondents' choices but there was still room for more.

The quantification of data, which dominated previous empirical work, does not allow scholars to interpret their findings in brand personality research. As a result, motivations of respondents cannot be detected although they would present a more comprehensive picture of brand personality from a consumer perspective.

#### **2.4.4 Influence of Desire for Universally Applicable Scales**

We already mentioned that most researchers claimed that their scales are universally applicable (see, for example, Geuens, Wejters, & De Wulf, 2009). Aaker (1997) saw her scale to be generalizable and applied universally for brands in different industries, for individual brands, as well as across and within categories. Austin, Siguaw and Mattila (2003) opposed her statement by saying that her scale can be successfully used for brands across industries but lacks applicability when used for individual brands or brands within a specific product category. Brands are usually measured at an individual level (Austin, Siguaw & Mattila, 2003) but Aaker never measured how well her scale performs at this level. Therefore, it is difficult to clearly define what Aaker's intention of use for her brand personality scale was (Austin, Siguaw & Mattila, 2003).

Furthermore, Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido (2001, p. 377) stated that, "... descriptors of human personality convey different meanings when attributed to different brands" This statement was seized by Austin, Siguaw and Mattila (2003) who found, during the debriefing of their own study, that respondents admitted that they interpreted the same trait differently for different brands. When evaluating the trait 'cool' respondents viewed it as 'in fashion' for one brand while they saw it as 'cold' for another brand. Caprara, Barbaranelli and Guido (2001) labeled this phenomenon 'brand-adjective interaction'. This finding proposed that single brands trigger consumers to interpret traits in different ways due to the brand's unique characteristics. It also implies that scales cannot be used universally if such differences occur when rating traits. Levy (1986, cited in Batra, Lenk & Wedel, 2010) detected a similar phenomenon, which he called 'category personality'. This concept means, more specifically, that complete categories (e.g. beverages) can have their own personalities and not just the brands operating in these categories. Batra, Lenk and Wedel's (2010) empirical study

connected to both findings by undermining that some items have different meanings for brands in different categories. Their argument confirmed Austin, Sigauw and Mattila's (2003) statement about the debriefing process of their study.

Additionally, Austin, Sigauw and Mattila (2003) argued that it is far from likely that brand personality scales can be developed to be used universally for any brand, on any level and for any context. There rather is more research needed to develop scales that are more distinct in their context, such as, for example, highly specific scales. One example thereof is the 'Industry Brand Personality Scale' developed by Herbst and Merz (2011), which we introduced earlier. They found that a scale developed for the product brand sector, as the one from Aaker, does not serve the need to measure the personality of a brand from the industrial sector. Additionally, Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2013, p. 897) identified scales to be either, "overly 'global' [...] or overly 'reduced' in terms of the product category being investigated." For the purpose of their research, they developed dimensions for print media brands in France that take the context of the brand's environment into consideration. Their outcome was therefore more targeted than a universal scale.

The examples, mentioned above, show that most brand personality scales were constructed too broadly and were not tailored to the context they were applied in later. This universality occurred despite the argument that more specific scales might be better suited for effectively managing and differentiating a brand.

## **2.5 The Use of Brands in the Automobile Industry**

The automobile industry consists of the passenger car market, which is the sole focus of this study, the light truck market and the motorcycle market (Datamonitor, 2011). The industry has gone through major changes during the last couple of decades. This time was shaped by a high amount of outsourcing of activities (Ciravegna, Romano & Pilkington, 2013), as well as by many substantial mergers and acquisitions (Ecarma, 2014). Most big players in the car industry decided to give away the control over many activities, except for the development of their engines and their marketing and brand management activities. These decisions highlight the importance of these two key areas in being successful as a car manufacturer. The second significant change in the industry, caused by mergers and acquisitions, resulted in a lower number of major players in the industry, as well as a significant shift in power. This

development resulted in a fierce rivalry among the few multinational corporations left in the marketplace (Datamonitor, 2011).

Along with takeovers of other corporations and their brands comes the difficulty of integrating them into a company's existing portfolio. In the case of the automobile industry, many times, the acquired brands are very strong, have their own values, and an identity of their own. Therefore, the predominant form of brand architecture in the car industry today is called 'house of brands', which includes one silent mother brand and multiple daughter brands acting for themselves. According to Kapferer (2012), this strategy is characterized by a high amount of freedom in choices, separated marketing and advertising efforts from the mother brand, and unique brand values for each daughter brand.

As mentioned earlier, when talking about definitions of a brand, it is difficult for scholars to draw an ultimate line between corporate brands and product brands. This disagreement in theory is also visible in practice, especially in the automobile industry where mergers and acquisitions are common and 'houses of brands' are the architecture of choice. Due to the integration of strong brands into existing portfolios, it is debatable if only the silent mother brand is considered as a corporate brand or if each daughter brand, acting for itself, can also be seen as a corporate brand due to its individual values, personality, identity, image and reputation.

One example where the brand architecture of a 'house of brands' becomes visible is within the Volkswagen Group (Volkswagen Group, n.d.). In this case, the Volkswagen Group acts as silent mother overlooking all of her independently acting daughter brands such as Audi, Bentley, Bugatti, Ducati, Lamborghini, MAN, Porsche, Scania, Seat, Skoda, VW, and VW Commercial Vehicles (see Figure 7). This brand architecture prevents the loss of brand value, which would have been the case if these strong brands were integrated to Volkswagen by just renaming them according to the mother brand (Kapferer, 2012). Within these daughter brands, there are several product or product line brands (e.g. Audi with its A1 or A3 cars). Besides the example of the VW Group, there are multiple other corporations with the same brand architecture within the automobile industry.



Figure 7: Brand Architecture Volkswagen Group (modified from Volkswagen Group, n.d.)

Due to the dominance of few big players in the automobile industry, as well as other factors, the automobile industry is no exception to the increasingly competitive business world, which corporations have to face nowadays. The tremendous amount of pressure and competition can be seen in aggressive pricing strategies, cash rebates, and incentives for dealers throughout the car-selling business worldwide (Löffler & Decker, 2012). Another consequence of the cost pressure is the use of similar product bases and common platforms for different car models and even different brands, which significantly increases product similarity (Hirsch, Kakkar, Singh & Wilk, 2015). In order not to have to compete solely on price and to be able to achieve distinction between the similar car models, it is important for corporations to find differentiating factors.

The unique aspects set the corporation and its products apart by adding value and therefore decreasing consumers' price sensitivity. The strategic use of the corporate brand can be such a distinguisher. According to Miladin and Babu (2009), car manufacturers and their brand managers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of their brands as strategic assets and that they need maintenance and enhancement on a regular basis.

Furthermore, the researchers highlight the importance of a brand's product and service characteristics, which are directly related to the corporation's image, in the process of differentiation from competitors (Miladin & Babu, 2009). In addition, also Kum, Bergkvist, Lee and Leong (2012) argue for the importance of a strong brand, especially in industries where emotional aspects play a role and where consumers are highly involved in purchase decisions. Also the automobile industry belongs to these categories (Huang, Mitchell and Rosenaum-Elliott, 2012), even though there are functional elements involved as well.

While it is self-explanatory that corporations operating in the automobile industry use brands just like every other company, it is not as obvious that they use the concept of brand personality specifically. Already Evan's empirical work in 1968 was concerned with the relationship between a car buyer's human personality and the chosen car-manufacturing brand. Nevertheless, at that point in time there was controversy regarding the reliability of studies on this topic because of controversial results of studies conducted by different researchers. Since then, many studies have confirmed the usefulness of the brand personality concept (see, for example, Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 1993; Plummer, 1984) and, therefore, make it highly relevant and attractive for the automobile industry as well.

## **3. Methodology**

The combination of criticism on past brand personality scales, our ontological and epistemological standpoints, the object of study, and the data needed led to the decision of conducting a qualitative and mostly inductive study (3.2 Research Strategy) in the form of semi-structured interviews (3.3 Data Collection Method). We chose a data analysis method based on the principles of grounded theory for the study at hand as it best suited finding answers to the proposed research questions (3.4 Data Analysis). Ethical considerations (3.5 Ethical Issues) and reflections on the chosen design (3.6 Reflections on Research Design) are also included at the end of this section.

### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

Whenever research is conducted, read, or interpreted, it is important to understand the assumptions and attitudes the researchers performing the study hold. To uncover these predispositions, their ontological and epistemological standpoints should be taken into consideration.

#### **3.1.1 Ontology**

The position that is closest to our view on the nature of the world is ‘constructionism’ as it expresses that, “...social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena ‘out there’ from those involved in construction” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 386). Therefore, both, human personalities, as well as corporate brand personalities, are not definite phenomena. Their meanings are constructed and defined by social actors. In the case of brands, their personalities are built by the corporation, as well as by consumers, and are furthermore in an infinite state of change (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Even if companies would like to define the personalities of their brands, they cannot neglect the fact that they are, at the same time, co-created by consumers. This input by consumers to the construction process of the phenomenon of brand personality is the focus of the empirical study at hand.

#### **3.1.2 Epistemology**

Epistemology can be best described as the way of obtaining knowledge. It is important to know how researchers make sense out of what they see. In our opinion, there is no absolute truth

about the world available in so many instances in life. Events, actions and feelings have different meanings for different people and these interpretations vary based on the context and the environment. All these meanings cannot be captured through one universal concept. Important knowledge or information would be lost if a scientific model was used to explain it (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The objects of the study, people, need to be seen as human beings, which implies a different approach than for natural objects (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, an ‘interpretative’ view best reflects our epistemological standpoint. Furthermore, the objective of our research study was not to explain the phenomenon of brand personality but rather to try to understand it and to make sense out of it. The personality of brands can be named, expressed and measured. However, the meanings consumers attach to these expressions can only be interpreted by the researchers.

## **3.2 Research Strategy**

The development of an appropriate research design starts with the research question, which implies a certain object of study. This object of study then defines a specific kind of material that is needed. In order to get the asked-for material, an appropriate method is selected that defines the data collection process, as well as the analysis.

### **3.2.1 Object of Study and Empirical Material Needed**

The two research questions driving the research process were formulated as followed,

- 1. ‘When talking about a corporate brand in the automobile industry, what expressions do people use to describe this brand when there is an absence of pre-set boundaries relating to brand personality?’*
- 2. ‘Based on the findings from the first research question, what does a consumer originated brand personality scale for the automobile industry look like?’*

There were two aspects that guided us in the formulation of the first research question. First, we did not intend to uncover a specific kind of words (e.g. adjectives) but were interested in the full range of expressions people use when they are confronted with the task of describing a brand. The second aspect undermining the first research question was our objective of completely preventing predefined boundaries or hints to the concept of brand personality. After the analysis of the descriptions of brands derived from the first research question, the second

research question served to construct a brand personality scale for the automobile industry and provided information about its design.

Derived from the research questions, stated above, the object of study was ‘verbal expressions’. These expressions were, in most cases, related to peoples’ attitudes, experiences, perceptions, feelings or meanings. Even though, these personal stages were not the object of study, they helped us to understand ‘expressions’.

The empirical material needed to successfully conduct the research was ‘spoken words’ or language. Simple expressions or measurable descriptions could have been gained from quantitative research processes, whereas finding out how respondents describe a brand, being free from limiting boundaries of existing concepts or theories, needed a qualitative approach.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative and Inductive Approach**

The most appropriate research strategy for the object of study and the empirical material needed was a qualitative and mostly inductive approach. It was, furthermore, in harmony with our ontological and epistemological standpoints, as well as with our intent of taking criticism placed on previous brand personality scales into account.

Qualitative research is known for an unstructured way of collecting data, therefore allowing more flexibility during the data gathering process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Researchers have different viewpoints on whether there is only the quantification of research or a more philosophical difference between qualitative and quantitative research strategies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In our case, the philosophical difference that qualitative research explores the connection between the actions of respondents and their social environments, is the determining reason for choosing a qualitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 16), furthermore, support this decision by saying, “There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research, but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants [...]”. Nevertheless, also the empirical material needed and the time constraint supported this decision.

Besides choosing a qualitative approach, it was furthermore, important to us to be as inductive as possible. Being inductive implies being free from any prior knowledge about the research topic and not being ‘contaminated’ by ideas, theories or expectations about the issue

under study and its results. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), this is only possible to its full extent in theoretical terms. Therefore, in order for us to be able to formulate the research questions, mentioned above, and to decide on the most appropriate research approach for the problem at hand, the identification of criticism on prior research in the field of brand personality was necessary. The difference between being deductive and inductive also concerns the moment of theory generation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the case of a deductive research approach theory leads to observations or findings. Contrary, in the research study at hand, this process took place the other way around; the conducted interviews and the resulting findings led us to theory.

### **3.3 Data Collection Method**

The following section outlines the way in which we gathered the empirical material needed. A cross-sectional design, also known as social survey design (Bryman & Bell, 2011), more specifically the in-depth interview in a semi-structured way was selected as research method for our study.

#### **3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Qualitative interviews can be unstructured or semi-structured. Seeing the world through the eyes of the consumer presumes that the researcher is guided by the answers the respondent gives, which involves being responsive to unanticipated matters and flexible in the interview structure (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The intensity of the structure, therefore, depends on the research objective (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Initially, we thought of unstructured interviews as being appropriate for the research study at hand. In our opinion, it best fit the requirement of not setting any boundaries for the interviews and not pressing respondents into a scheme of thinking. However, we had to decide in favor of a semi-structured design, which is defined by the presence of some pre-defined questions that should, nevertheless, not interfere with the natural flow of the interview. The amount of structure we decided on for the purpose of our interviews still allowed respondents to think freely and did not limit them by setting major boundaries. Furthermore, due to the time constraint accompanying our study, this method ensured that comparable and analyzable data was gathered and that the research was completed in time.

Semi-structured interviews provided the possibility to not just scratch on the surface of peoples' expressions. This data collection method allowed to go into more detail and to uncover the drivers of respondents' expressions and their ultimate meaning to respondents. Since this information is personal, it was important to establish a certain level of trust and credibility, which could only take place through personal communication, face-to-face. Therefore, it was crucial to conduct personal interviews instead of, for example, focus groups to reveal respondents' individual thoughts without being influenced by others (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). Furthermore, in previous research studies about brand personality, respondents were limited due to the existence of pre-set questions or closed answers, which led people towards the concept of brand personality. Another benefit the semi-structured interview provided was the ability to stay in control over the interviewing process. This reduced the chances of ambiguity and misconceptions about the asked questions and therefore made the data more valuable and useful in the end.

As a last note in this section, we want to point out that our stance on interviews is, as defined by Alvesson (2003, p.16), of romantic nature, which intends, "... a more genuine human interaction, [which] believes in establishing rapport, trust, and commitment between interviewer and interviewees, in particular in the interview situation." For the purpose of this research, it was important to see people as human beings who need to be treated differently than natural objects (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **3.3.2 Sampling Method**

Considering the time and budget constraints, as well as our research objectives, we chose non-probability sampling as the most feasible sampling method (Malhotra, 2010). More particularly, we used convenience sampling and at a later point in time also snowball sampling. The main premise of the convenience sampling method is the selection of participants based on convenience and connection. Judgmental sampling, which could have been another choice in our situation, relies even more on the personal judgment of the researchers (Malhotra, 2010). The selection of this method would have meant that, in some cases, participants would not have been chosen for various reasons. Since we interviewed everybody who was willing to participate, our sampling is truly based on convenience and therefore cannot be categorized as judgmental sampling. Consequently, there is no randomization involved in our sampling,

implying that no generalizations of the results of the study at hand can be made to the whole population. The results are true for the sample alone. Besides these limitations, the use of a non-probability sampling method is acceptable for our study since qualitative research is more concerned with in-depth analysis and therefore representativeness and generalizability are not as important as in quantitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Based on our research approach, it was our intent to recruit respondents for our interviews on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, participants needed to fulfill two criteria. The first one was to not be involved in marketing or branding in order to prevent bias. The second criterion was that participants had to be students or young-professionals, which we see as the next generation of consumers for the automobile industry. Furthermore, it was our intention to include the same number of male and female participants in the study. The automobile industry is often seen as being dominated by males, although there is evidence that 85% of buying decisions regarding a new car are influenced by women (Dychtwald, 2010, cited in Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, 2013). Another reason for having both sexes equally represented was our belief that men and women relate to brands in the automobile industry in different ways. Additionally, we considered that males and females would use different kinds of expressions and therefore would enrich our data collection, which we consider to be an important factor in answering the first research question.

We recruited three male participants with a post in a Facebook Group for international students in Lund, Sweden. Since we did not find any female participants through this channel and method, even after repeated postings, we asked the last male participant for help. According to the method of snowball sampling, we asked if he knew a female student or young professional not involved in marketing who would be willing to participate in our study. The sampling method of snowball sampling is used when the issue under study deals with a sensitive topic or if respondents are hard to reach, whereas the latter one was the reason for us to use it (Malhotra, 2010). We were able to recruit five more participants, four females and one male, through snowball sampling. Although two participants live in Germany, they were interviewed face-to-face to be consistent in the interviewing structure.

The fifth and sixth interviews were rather short and not much new data was generated. Nevertheless, we still wanted to ensure that a saturation of data is reached in order to be

confident in the decision to end the data collection process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, we decided to conduct two more interviews. The analysis of the last two interviews ended with the realization that this intended point of saturation was reached. We found that the already established data structure from the first six interviews was similar to the one resulting from the additional two interviews. Nevertheless, we have to point out that a few new ideas did occur but had no impact on overall results anymore. This occurrence took place despite the fact that the last two interviews were longer than some of the previous ones.

The selected sample, therefore, included eight respondents, four males and four females. An overview of the participants in our study can be seen in Table 2.

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>Date - Length – Place of Interview</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Involvement with automobile industry</b>
1	24.03.15 – 30 min – Lund	Finn	Male	Sweden	Young Professional	High
2	26.03.15 – 20 min – Lund	Axel	Male	Sweden	Student	High
3	27.03.15 – 22 min – Lund	Vincent	Male	Canada	Student	High
4	31.03.15 – 19 min – Lund	Emma	Female	Sweden	Student	Medium
5	31.03.15 – 14 min – Lund	Sophia	Female	Sweden	Student	Low
6	31.03.15 – 13 min – Lund	Kaja	Female	Slovenia	Student	Low
7	21.04.15 – 28 min – Hamburg	Max	Male	Germany	Young Professional	Medium
8	22.04.15 – 37 min – Hamburg	Lisa	Female	German	Young Professional	Medium

Table 2: Sample Overview

### **3.3.3 Interview Design**

Before the start of the interviews, we informed respondents that the conversation would be recorded on tape and, in a second step, transcribed to allow analysis. Afterwards, the actual

interview process, consisting of two different phases, started. First, after establishing some trust through informal conversation with the interviewee and getting to know him or her better, we asked the respondent to describe a brand by using three words. We held the opinion that one or two words would not have generated enough data for our research purpose. On the other hand, asking for a higher number of words might have been too difficult for respondents, especially if their involvement with the automobile industry is low. We wanted to prevent answers, which respondents gave just for the sake of answering. Instead, we were interested in descriptions, which truly reflected respondents' thoughts of the chosen brands. Therefore, we concluded that three words represented a good mean. This procedure took place three times during one interview, since there were three brands every respondent was asked to describe. Also in the case of the number of brands, we decided to ask for three different ones, since a smaller number would not have generated enough data while a higher amount of brands would have overwhelmed respondents. It was important for us that participants, themselves, chose their three brands voluntarily due to our belief that they describe a self-chosen brand in a richer way than if brands were imposed on them by us.

The second phase always followed right after the description of one brand in three words. Therefore, it took place three times during one interview as well. We asked respondents to reveal the motivations of their choices from the first part of the interview. This step intended to find out underlying motivations and meanings related to the chosen expressions. At this point of the interviews the interview guide including the content of the briefing, back up questions, and the debriefing (see 8.1 Appendix A) was of major importance. It contained follow-up questions targeted at the reasons of respondents' answers, which is referred to as 'laddering' in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2012). We used 'laddering down' to obtain concrete examples about the phenomena respondents described and to animate them to recall certain events they related to the brand they described. After going through both interview steps three times, we debriefed respondents by explaining the whole extent of our research project to them.

In general, one researcher led through the interview process in order to ensure a high level of consistency, even though both researchers were present when an interview was conducted. These circumstances changed for the interviews in Germany, as only one interviewer was present.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

In order to develop an industry specific brand personality scale from a consumer perspective and to find an answer to the second research question, presented earlier, we decided to use a form of grounded theory to analyze and categorize data. The main reason for this choice was the structure of results this method provided us with and the possibility to interpret results. The coding process already grouped personality traits into different overriding categories, which eased the development of a brand personality scale later on.

#### 3.4.1 Open Coding Process

Data analysis based on the principles of grounded theory consists of three overlapping processes, namely, *Open Coding*, *Axial Coding* and *Selective Coding* (Moghaddam, 2006). *Open Coding* should already be applied during the stage of data collection, which involves analyzing interview transcripts line-by-line in order to identify essential codes emerging from the data (Glaser & Holton, 2004). The second step in the process of conducting grounded theory is called *Axial Coding*. Through constant comparison, the codes developed during the process of *Open Coding* are grouped together to categories to show the connections amongst them (Moghaddam, 2006). The relationships between the categories developed by *Axial Coding* provide the basis for the process of *Selective Coding*. It ties together the identified concepts in order to summarize them to a *Core Category*. This category is the basis for the emerging theory and explains the studied phenomenon (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Nevertheless, this last step was not applicable to the study at hand, since we were not interested in finding one overriding category. Instead, we repeated the second step, *Axial Coding*, one more time in order to be able to get a structure, which we were able to base our brand personality scale on.

Furthermore, when using grounded theory it is important to be inductive, which is only possible if the majority of engagement with theory takes place after the data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The time constraint of ten weeks for the completion of our study, amongst other reasons, made it necessary for us to follow Strauss's moderate point of view on grounded theory. He suggests to, "... familiarizing oneself with prior research and using structured, and somewhat mechanistic, processes to make sense out of the data" (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, both cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012, p. 59). Since grounded theory can be seen more as research paradigm than a strictly followed method, there is, "room

for interpretation and adaptation”, which makes changes possible (Papathanassis & Knolle, 2010, p. 216).

In the research study at hand, we generated data for the analysis through own qualitative research only and were not influenced by previous studies or scales to a large extent. The starting points of the data collection process were the research questions instead of the available theory. The process of data collection produced two sets of data, which both researchers analyzed together. The first set of data consisted of the three expressions respondents used when describing a brand, whereas the second set was made up of flowing text, which we gathered through asking respondents to go into detail regarding their choices of expressions.

In the beginning, we reviewed all interviews and identified the three expressions respondents used. Afterwards, we analyzed the data gathered through the interviews line-by-line and, in a first step, coded in-text passages manually for every interview. This procedure resulted in Open Codes, which we then collected, together with their corresponding quotes, in one table for each interview. During this process we discussed and if needed revised the codes we found during reading the interviews for the first time. Furthermore, we also compared new codes to established ones. Both researchers expressed their opinions and thoughts about the labeling process, which was intended to raise the level of objectivity. We repeated this procedure for each interview.

If similar but not identical codes emerged, we still separated them (see, for example, the Open Codes of *‘similar’*, *‘neutral’* and *‘normal’*). It was important to us to display the variety of expressions respondents used to describe brands. Therefore, we used ‘In Vivo Codes’ (Given, 2008). The technique of ‘In Vivo Coding’ is defined as taking one word from the collected data and to use it in an unaltered form as a code for the following data analysis. Therefore, the code exactly matches the original data. By applying this concept, we were able to capture key elements of respondents’ descriptions and to stay close to the words they used. One example of an ‘In Vivo Code’ is the Open Code *‘average’*, which was based on the quote, “... *drivers that do not stand out. Average.*” In case it was not possible to use ‘In Vivo Codes’, we chose conceptual codes representing a broader topic if the corresponding quotes expressed the same meaning (Given, 2008). The Open Code of *‘promising’*, which was constructed based on the following quote from Emma, “*I think it is a growing brand*” is a representative example.

After filling one table per interview, we consolidated all quotes from all interviews into one table and sorted them according to the Open Codes they belonged to (see 8.2 Appendix B). This comprehensive document provided an overview of relationships between answers of different respondents. We, once again, checked if our chosen Open Codes captured all meanings from the in-text quotes or if some quotes related to a different code in a better way.

### 3.4.2 Further Coding Process and Scale Generation

In order to conclude the coding process, we grouped all single Open Codes according to their underlying meanings into so-called ‘characteristics’, which represented the step of *Axial Coding*, explained above. For all ‘characteristics’ new names were found, which summarized multiple related Open Codes. The only exceptions were the groups with the Open Codes ‘braggy’ and ‘rooted’. In these two cases, the specific Open Codes themselves best expressed the meaning of other codes in their group. Therefore, we adopted the Open Codes ‘braggy’ and ‘rooted’ without changes to present a whole ‘characteristic’. We intended to find sophisticated words that were widely known and imaginable for both, practitioners and consumers to ensure the applicability of the outcome.

In a subsequent step, we grouped the generated ‘characteristics’ into overriding ‘facets’. The purpose of these ‘facets’ was to best express all ‘characteristics’ and Open Codes within them by finding a comprehensive name for each group of ‘characteristics’. As we already mentioned, our previous experience with existing scale cannot be neglected. However, it was our aim not to be guided as much as possible by these scales and their naming. Therefore, we avoided the use of these scales as direct references during the coding process.

The final outcome of the coding process can be found in 4.2 The Brand Personality Wheel. An example is presented in Table 3 below.

Open Codes	Characteristics	Facets
Place of origin	Rooted	Core
Rooted		
Original		
Credible	Authentic	
Trustworthy		
Confident		

Table 3: Excerpt of Final Coding

Based on these final outcomes of the coding process, in a last step, we developed a brand personality scale for the automobile industry, which is called the Brand Personality Wheel (see 4.3 The Brand Personality Wheel).

### **3.5 Ethical Issues**

Our research approach built on the blank minds of respondents and the importance of an absence of influence of the concept of brand personality. Therefore, we only revealed the main topic of ‘brands in the automobile industry’ to participants in the beginning of each interview. If respondents had been aware of the topic being brand personality, they might have tried to describe brands as persons. This possibility had to be avoided by any means, as it would have spoiled the approach of this research. We were aware of the ethical concerns regarding disguising parts of the true purpose of the study. To minimize this issue a debriefing took place after the interview in which we unveiled the whole extent of the research purpose to the respondent (see 8.1 Appendix A). We took this measure to not violate the rights of the respondents (Malhotra, 2010).

Furthermore, respondents had the choice of participating on a voluntary basis. We invited them to an interview in a neutral environment without any obligations. Our objective was to have an engaging conversation on eye-level in a relaxed setting. Although we saw the power relationship between the interviewers and the respondent as equal for this research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012), we were aware of our power and did not misuse this power in any way.

### **3.6 Reflections on Research Design**

Every research design has its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is important to be reflexive of our choices and reasons. A qualitative research design and the subsequent analysis are more subjective in nature and therefore less generalizable and value-free than quantitative research approaches (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Nevertheless, as long as we are aware of our roles in the interpretation of data and the production of knowledge, it is possible to limit subjectivity to a certain extent. It is important to keep in mind that being subjective and interpreting meaning from findings is part of our epistemological standpoint and therefore an indispensable part of this study. Nevertheless, in order to avoid being biased, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and

Jackson (2012) emphasize to not use one's own referencing frame when analyzing data, which we kept in mind during the data analysis process.

An additional problematic incident that has the potential to impact the quality and usefulness of conducted research is the interview bias. It is initiated by the way questions are asked or the way they are interpreted by the researcher. Using open questions and a less structured interviewing process helped to lessen this impact in our study (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012).

Another obstacle, as pointed out by Alvesson (2003), is that many times respondents answer questions based on what they think they should say in order to fit into society and to be considered 'normal'. Interviews are not a pure natural occurrence and it cannot be assumed that participants behave or talk in their usual ways (Alvesson, 2003). We became aware of this behavior during the analysis of the interviews. Many respondents expressed doubts about their answers or added sentences like, "I do not know" or "I guess" to their statements. We acknowledged this occurrence but it did not significantly influence the results of the study.

We were, furthermore, sensible to the fact that it is possible that some inductive research findings provide generalizations instead of new theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This circumstance becomes especially visible when grounded theory is used as a method of data analysis. However, it was not the aim of our study to generalize results, as it would be for a quantitative study. Instead, we tried to understand the ways in which respondents describe corporate brands in the automobile industry. Furthermore, we were interested in the make-up and look of an industry specific scale.

Even though there are some weaknesses that accompany the chosen research strategy, the advantages related to gathering the needed data, finding answers to the research questions, and to the development of the intended scale prevail.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

The findings of the study at hand are presented in the following section. The first part (4.1 Expression Collection) presents results from the 72 expressions, while the next section (4.2 Brand Descriptions) explains how respondents described brands in the automobile industry. The third part (4.3 The Brand Personality Wheel) describes the newly developed brand personality scale for the purpose of this study.

### 4.1 Expression Collection

As we discussed in the beginning, this study aimed at discovering expressions respondents use to describe a corporate brand in the automobile industry when they are not tied to pre-set answers or pushed into the concept of personification. The following findings provide an answer to the research question that was formulated as,

*‘When talking about a corporate brand in the automobile industry, what expressions do people use to describe this brand when there is an absence of pre-set boundaries relating to brand personality?’*

The results of the analysis of the ‘Expression Collection’, containing all three-word expressions used by respondents, differed from findings of previous research studies in this field. As respondents were free in the way of choosing descriptions for corporate brands, they linguistically used a broad variety of words. Contrary to previous studies, the expressions used for the development of a brand personality scale were defined by respondents and not through theoretical concepts. We did not exclude a single expression from our list to make the collection ‘fit’ to a certain definition.

#### 4.1.1 Brand Choice

Since respondents were free to choose any brand that came to their minds, most of them chose brands with which they have or had a personal connection. Table 4 displays some of the reasons underlying respondents’ choices.

Finn	<i>‘I have driven the sports variant of Audi.’</i>
Axel	<i>‘Because I had one.’</i>
Lucas	<i>‘... one time I might own such an expensive car.’</i>
Emma	<i>‘My parents have one now.’</i>

Sophia	<i>'Almost all my friends have [a Volvo]. [...] My Grandma has a Toyota and my mum has a Toyota.'</i>
Karla	<i>'Because my family had like a few of them.'</i>
Max	<i>'My father used to drive one. [...] My mother used to drive one.'</i>
Lisa	<i>'... because my first car was a Volkswagen...'</i>

Table 4: Respondents' Brand Choices

One reason for this choice is that it is easier for people to describe brands they are familiar with. Since the concept of corporate brands is abstract and respondents struggled in describing them, they orientated themselves with the help of brands they experienced through their families, friends or by themselves. Huang, Mitchell and Rosenbaum-Elliott (2012) found that if consumers have frequent experiences with a brand, they are able to talk about that brand in more detail. Therefore, results can be used in a better way for the development of a scale. This richer description by respondents is also important for our study and its underlying approach.

Connected to this finding regarding the familiarity with a brand, is our detection that respondents used different reference points when describing brands. If they did not know a brand based on personal experience, they referred to the image of the brand, which they knew from the brand's advertising. For example, Lisa said, *"To be honest, I said fun because I thought of one TV ad ..."* Furthermore, respondents also called brands' commercials back into their memories during the process of selecting a brand. Lisa was very concrete by saying, *"What I do right now is to think of TV ads because I cannot remember any brands right now."* As the communication of brands played a significant role in the selection process, it is worth mentioning that respondents, in most cases, referred to products that were either highly advertised or were the 'flagship products' of a certain brand. For example, Max said, *"... because I thought of the upper class cars of Audi..."*

#### 4.1.2 Content

The critical analysis of the three-word expressions in the context of the performed in-depth interviews revealed that respondents have difficulties describing the abstract concept of a corporate brand without any guidelines or concepts that they could refer to. If respondents were not able to describe a corporate brand in the automobile industry directly, they used the detours of describing a product or a typical consumer, whereas the latter can be seen as a form of

personification. Nevertheless, this concept in its original form, more particularly seeing the brand itself as a person only occurred to a limited extent. Figure 8 graphically represents this behavior.

These detours are similar to the early findings of Aaker (1997). She also detected that consumers referred to people that are associated with the brand, as well as to product related characteristics. The difference is that in her study this behavior occurred in order to imbue brands with personality traits, while, in our study, it took place to simplify the description of brands. Nevertheless, respondents ascribed personality traits to brands directly in some instances.

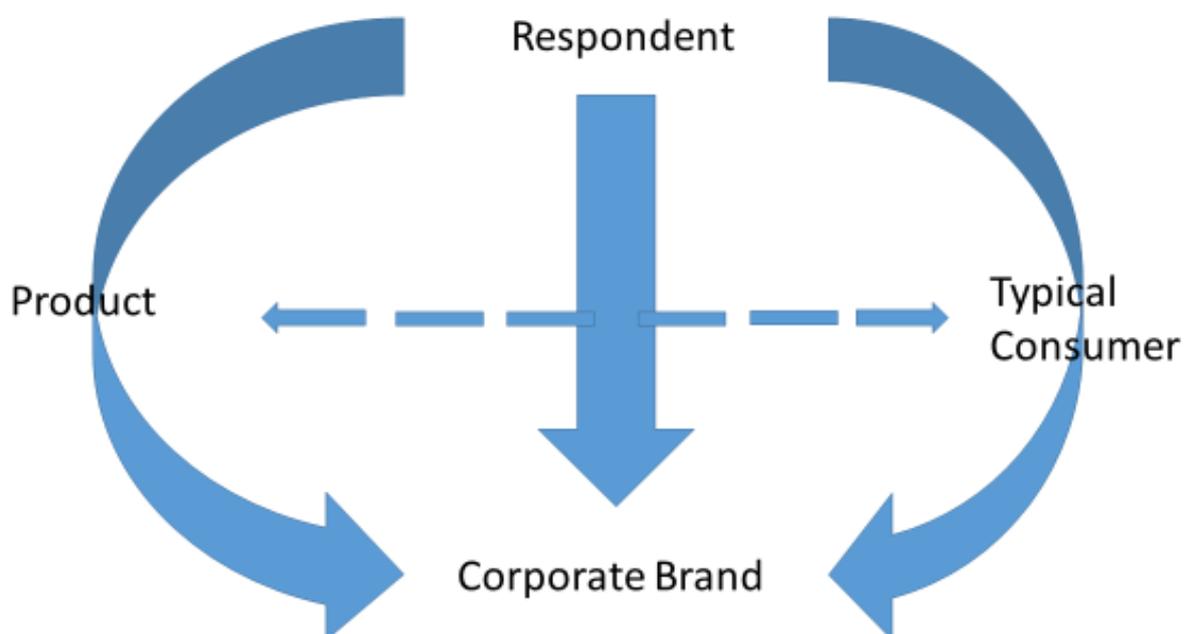


Figure 8: Detour Model

All expressions are shown in Table 5 below. We categorized them according to the three different ways respondents used to describe a brand (Brand, Product, and Typical Consumer). The 'Expression Collection' reflects our intent to show the variety of expression respondents used for brands in a single industry without inferring their choices. A richer set of data, compared to previous research, was produced regarding both, linguistics and content.

We used the context of the expressions in which they appeared in to categorize them according to the three columns. If it was clearly visible that the respondent talked about the

brand or if we, at least, did not detect any connection to a specific car model, we grouped the expression into the column ‘brand’. A concrete connection to the product determined the grouping of an expression into the ‘product’ column. The ‘typical consumer’ column only contains expressions that were used in the context of consumers of these brands.

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Product</b>	<b>Typical Consumer</b>
Advanced *	Biofuel	Average*
Affordable *	Black *	Careless driving
Asian *	Built quality	City-Driver
California	Enjoyment of driving	Douchebags
Detroit	Cheap *	Families
Eminem	Comfort	Manly *
Environment	Comfortable *	Men
Expensive *	Family-cars (II)	New-rich *
Focused *	Fast * (II)	Rich *
French*	High-class car	
Fun	High price	
Future	Luxury	
German *	Middle-class car	
German Quality	Nice cars	
Good reputation	Normal*	
GM	Not expensive *	
Japanese *	Quality (II)	
Lost reputation	Reliability	
Massive brand	Reliable*	
Non-emotional *	Round *	
Not Swedish *	Safety (II)	
Over-estimated *	Safe *	
Perfectionists	Simple *	
Pioneer for Quattro	Small/flexible *	
Reputation	Speed	
Swedish *	Sporty cars (III)	
Tradition	Very secure *	
Under-estimated *	Stylish *	
Up and coming *		

\* Adjectives

(II) Indicates multiple occurrences

Table 5: Expression Collection

If it was not clear whether respondents described the product, the brand, or the consumer, we made a decision depending on what word matched which column in the most

appropriate way. For example, the expression ‘*speed*’ is connected to all car models and therefore also, in some way, attached to the overriding brand (see, for example, “... *every model is based on speed*”). However, a brand cannot be ‘*speed*’ and the expression was therefore put in the ‘product’ column. Another example is the expression ‘*middle-class car*’, which is somehow related to the consumer group being able to afford such a car but is more descriptive of the product itself. Therefore, we grouped it with other expressions regarding products.

Although this study does not aim at quantifying qualitative findings, it sometimes helps to better picture results. Out of the 72 expressions used during the first step of the interview, 31 (about 43%) were adjectives. This kind of expressions is similar to the ones used in previous studies that were constructed with the intention of personifying a brand. If seen from a linguistic perspective, some of the adjectives in the ‘brand’ and ‘product’ column could be used to describe a person (for example, ‘*under-estimated*’, ‘*normal*’, ‘*cheap*’ or ‘*simple*’). However, if analyzed within the context of the interviews, respondents used them in a different way. One example is Emma’s description saying, “... *cheap because it [car] does not cost that much.*” The used expressions, furthermore, included cognitive factors (‘*advanced*’), affective factors (‘*non-emotional*’), as well as descriptions of social class (‘*new-rich*’). They were all included in the collection. One focus of our approach was to present an equal gender distribution in order to present differences or similarities for how men and women relate to brands in the automobile industry. The most significant difference can be seen in the expressions found in the ‘typical consumer’ column as female respondents contributed all of them.

The following analysis of the three ways to describe a brand is based on the ‘Expression Collection’ (Table 5).

## **4.2 Brand Descriptions**

Being free in their way of thinking and talking, in some cases, respondents described a corporate brand in the automobile industry directly. Nevertheless, if they were not able to do so, respondents used a brand’s products, as well as its typical consumers to describe the abstract concept of a corporate brand.

### 4.2.1 Direct Description of the Brand

Although the concept of corporate brands is abstract, consumers were able to describe a corporate brand in the automobile industry in many instances. From a linguistic standpoint, respondents used many different words to describe a corporate brand, (e.g. ‘*environment*’ (noun), ‘*focused*’ (adjective), ‘*advanced*’ (cognitive factor), ‘*non-emotional*’ (affective factor)). As Lucas expressed it, “*Tesla is the future. [...] It is one of the only brands that presently is electric ...*” His statement, among many others, showed that respondents referred directly to the brand they were describing.

We found that many respondents saw brands in the automobile industry as being rooted in the country where the brand originates. For example, Emma described Volvo with ‘*tradition*’. She thinks that, “*... people still think of it as a Swedish brand and therefore it is familiar and you connect with it better. See it in a positive way.*” Many respondents did not only link the country of origin with the respective brand but also with a characteristic of the brand. It shows that the country of origin of a brand in the automobile industry has a significant influence on respondents. Some examples were, ‘*BMW – quality - German*’, ‘*Peugeot – crappy – French*’, ‘*Volvo – Safety – Sweden*’, ‘*Kia – cheap – Asian*’, ‘*Toyota – normal – Japanese*’. It is worth mentioning that the choice of the exact wording for the country of origin was mostly done in adjectives, saying ‘*Swedish*’ instead of Sweden, except for the two cases of ‘*Detroit*’ and ‘*California*’.

Although we briefed respondents to focus on their own thoughts about brands, many of them used expressions that were influenced by the communication strategy and the reputation of a brand. Since one of the objectives of a company’s marketing and communication strategy is the formation of favorable brand associations within consumers’ minds, the occurrence of this external influence was no surprise. Furthermore, also the brand’s behavior and the contact the consumer has with a brand influence the perceptions customers have about a brand’s personality (Plummer, 1984). However, the explicit mentioning of expressions such as ‘*reputation*’, ‘*good reputation*’, ‘*underestimated*’, ‘*overestimated*’ and ‘*lost reputation*’ undermined the importance of these external influences on consumers’ opinions about corporate brands in the automobile industry.

Furthermore, the descriptions showed that respondents related certain brands in the automobile industry to their own or other persons' personalities. In order to express oneself and to show what one stands for, certain brands seemed to be seen as if they fit one's character. Axel said, "Also if you are interested in cars, you want to have a car that says you are interested in cars and like driving and then you can sort of have a BMW and not a minivan. [...]" On the other hand, Emma said, "... but there are some brands I would not want", which showed clearly that she related the characteristics of brands to her own personality. This finding relates to McCracken's (1989, cited in Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011) argument that consumers choose brand that fit their own self and avoid those that do not fit.

Two interesting examples for the purpose of this study occurred when respondents personified a brand. Axel said, "*If they were humans, they would be perfectionists. [...] Sometimes a corporation describes its brands as a person because they want to project qualities and images, the lifestyle chosen ...*" Finn, furthermore, named Audi as being a 'Pioneer'. He explained his thought by saying, "*They are very famous for their 'Quattro', their four-wheel drive. I think they were the first who invented that. I see them as the pioneer.*" These examples represented the only two times during the interviews when a direct personification of a brand occurred. Prior research about brand personality was based on the argument that consumers imbue personality traits to brands naturally. Our study showed that when being free from limiting boundaries respondents mostly used other ways to describe corporate brands in the automobile industry.

The description of one specific brand particularly highlighted that the combination of a company's communication, its products and its typical consumers were ways for consumers to relate to brands. Max used 'affordable' to describe Peugeot. He made sure that it was not about the product but that, "... *it describes the brand.*" He connected his choice to the behavior of the brand expressed through the company's communication in advertisements, "... *Peugeot shows fancy spots...*", to the featured products, "...*driving their Peugeot 206...*" and to the consumer group Peugeot wants to attract, "... *The younger people, for example, or people that are not that rich [...] they can afford a Peugeot.*" The two detours over the product and the typical consumer are analyzed in the following two sections.

#### 4.2.2 Detour Over the Product

Due to the concept of corporate brands being abstract, respondents described brands from the automobile industry with the help of a product. Being completely free in their way of thinking some respondents described car models instead of the corporate brand behind them. Even if the researchers tried to tackle that challenge by leading the focus back to the corporate brand, many respondents still talked about the product. This occurrence was prevalent throughout all interviews and not tied to the car knowledge or interest of respondents. *Interviewer: “What do you think Volkswagen stands for? How do they present themselves?” Emma: “I think it is like an every-day car but it is still high quality and it is not like a fancy car with a lot of extras and fancy things.”* [Emphasis added by researchers]

The example above showed that the product was only a tool to describe the corporate brand, which was what the respondents ultimately wanted to do. Max, for example said, “... *a stylish car. A stylish brand.*” ‘Luxury’ in Lisa’s eyes, came from her opinion about the specific cars, although she connected the expression to the brand in the end. “*They [cars] have such high-end interior design with leather and everything. I do not know if you can buy any Porsche [brand] with a cheap design inside*” [Emphasis added by researchers]

We found industry specific words, in our case, for the automobile industry, throughout the interviews in connection to the description of the corporate brands. These are, for example, ‘*very secure*’ and ‘*safety/safe*’, ‘*quality*’ and ‘*high price*’, ‘*fast*’ and ‘*speed*’. This connection between, for example, price and product is supported through research conducted by Batra, Lehmann, and Singh (1993, cited in Ambroise & Valette-Florence, 2010) who found that a brand’s price and product features influence conclusions consumers draw about a brand’s personality. Kum et al. (2012) stated that, based on product types, consumers tend to assign a personality to a product. In the researchers’ point of view, this impact is especially strong for functional products and therefore also applies to cars since they, at least to some extent, have a functional component as well.

Furthermore, it became obvious that respondents used vehicle installations to undermine certain statements. Finn, for example, talked about, “... *the suspension, the seats, the navigation systems*” after being asked for the reason underlying his choice of the expression ‘*comfort*’. The high amount of expressions directly related to products, in the case at hand, car

models, were an indication of their importance for the concept of brand personality in the automobile industry. The analysis of the relationship of brands to a specific category by Batra, Lenk and Wedel (2010) showed that complete categories can have their own personalities, which influence brands in these business sectors.

There were examples where the target group of the brand influenced the description of the product. The use of expressions, such as *'high-class car'*, *'middle-class car'*, *'family-cars'* or *'sporty cars'*, described for which car type, on the one hand, and for which customer type, on the other hand, the brand stood for. These occurrences showed that the two detours, product and typical consumer, are connected as well. The latter one is described in the next section.

#### **4.2.3 Detour Over the Typical Consumer**

In some instances respondents applied a form of personification when they were not able to describe the brand directly. In this case they described brands from the automobile industry with the help of a character, a typical consumer, to express certain characteristics of the brand, (e.g. the segment the brand stands for).

Ascribing personality to brands automatically, as stated by Hedning, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), only occurred to a small extent in our study. However, we found the strong tendency for humans to express their opinions about a brand in the form of persons in a different way, which we see as an altered form of personification. The application of this concept ranged from, *"... drivers that do not stand out. Average"* [Karla] to, *"... very manly, I would say and new rich too, [...], the people that are new-rich buy that car"* [Sophia] or, *"... he drives a BMW, then he must be someone"* [Finn]. These findings are supported by multiple researchers who found that people who are associated with a brand (e.g. users, staff) influence consumers in their perception of brand personality (Aaker, 1997; Batra, Lehmann & Singh, 1993, cited in Ambroise & Valette-Florence, 2010; Caprara, Barbaranelli & Guido, 2001).

A more concrete form of personification occurred when Karla described BMW with the expression *'douchebags'*. When the interviewer asked if she thought the brand also stood for this word, she replied, *"I do not know. I know people who drive that and they are a lot like that."* As mentioned before, Freling and Forbes (2005) found that human beings tend to personify non-human objects, such as, for example, brands. In our study, respondents applied

this personification twice to brands directly. However, they used an altered form of this concept when they talked about typical consumers.

Further examples show that brands can stand for a very concrete target group and can express themselves through it. Lisa says, *“The Porsche design and everything I think of, [...] belts and wallets and everything. I do not know if they have anything for women. It is all for men. The brands, the ads I see in magazines, it is always in magazines for men.”* The association of brands and consumer groups got visible in more instances. For example, Max explained, *“A car for middle-class workers [...] Business-men are only driving BMW, Mercedes, Jaguar.”* Lisa said, *“I think of families driving in a Volkswagen.”* Additionally, Emma mentioned that companies try to be connected to a specific target group, *“... my view is that they want to present themselves like a family car.”*

The findings of the detailed analysis of the ‘Expression Collection’, mentioned above, led us to an answer to the first research question of this paper. When there was an absence of the concept of brand personality, consumers used expressions, which can be sorted according to the three categories of brand, product and typical consumer. Personification occurred in an altered form. This answer allowed us to proceed to the second research question of this empirical study, which is covered below.

### 4.3 The Brand Personality Wheel

The analysis of the conducted interviews, together with the expressions used by respondents, resulted in the formation of 97 Open Codes, which are shown in Table 6 below.

Open Codes	Characteristics	Facets
Place of origin	Rooted	Core
Rooted		
Original		
Traditional		
Credible	Authentic	
Trustworthy		
Confident		
Serious		

Advanced	Innovative	Core		
Trendsetter				
Modern				
Futuristic				
Novel				
Forward-looking				
Environmentally-friendly				
Technologically advanced				
Strong	Powerful	Core		
Sporty				
Masculine				
Powerful				
Mighty				
Big				
Robust				
Influential			Leading	Expressiveness
Independent				
Proactive				
Popular				
Well-known				
Macho	Braggy	Expressiveness		
Over-estimated				
Show-off				
Braggy				
Admired	Appealing		Expressiveness	
Attractive				
Popular				
Desirable				
Recognized				
Prestigious				
Status symbol				
Stylish				
Emotional	Inspiring	Expressiveness		
Fascinating				
Stimulating				
Wild				
Fulfilling				
Addictive				
Successful	Ambitious		Expressiveness	
Promising				
Competitive				

Single-minded	Focused - Flexible	Inimitability
Focused		
Ignorant		
Consistent		
Perfectionistic		
Adaptable		
Multifunctional		
Aware		
Average	Extraordinary - Average	
Similar		
Normal		
Neutral		
Standard		
Under-estimated		
Considerate		
Faceless		
Faded		
Dependent		
Undetermined		
Unemotional		
Boring		
Exclusive		
Luxurious		
Unique		
Exotic		
Fancy		
Remarkable		
Performance	Car make-up	Product
Comfort		
Appearance		
Vehicle installations		
Quality	Quality	
Crappy		
Safety	Safety	
Security		
Reliability	Reliability	
Affordable		
Cheap		
Expensive	Price	



The Brand Personality Wheel features *nineteen* characteristics, which represent the items that are evaluated when measuring a brand's personality. They are separated into *five* distinct facets and spread across *three* areas. The model consists of the 'Center', which represents the heart of the brand's personality. In this central area the facet *Core* can be found. The second area of brand personality is defined as 'Intermediate Layer'. It is still highly relevant to the concept of brand personality and its application in the automobile industry. Nevertheless, it is not the heart and soul of the brand but rather represents the next area outside the center. This layer features the facets *Expressiveness* and *Inimitability*. The outer area is considered as the 'Supporting Layer'. It is not directly related to a brand's personality but, based on our findings, has a significant impact on it. This area features the facets *Consumer* and *Product*, which turned out to be crucial for the automobile industry and could therefore not be neglected.

#### **4.3.1 The Center**

The heart and soul of a brand's personality in the automobile industry, represented by the *Core* facet, is defined by the characteristics *rooted*, *authentic*, *innovative*, and *powerful*. The trait *rooted* shows that the brand has a history and is known for its belonging to a certain city, country or continent. If a brand is evaluated high on this characteristic, it might be considered as a heritage brand. Belonging to this category means that a brand's history is made a priority. Furthermore, Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007) highlighted that a heritage brand is defined by possessing a track record, longevity, long-held core values, and symbols reflecting its past. The characteristics *authentic* and *powerful* add to the credibility of the brand's personality. The trait *innovative* and its location within the *Center* of the model is a clear sign that brands in the automobile industry are strongly defined by technology and being up-to-date in this regard.

#### **4.3.2 The Intermediate Layer**

The middle layer of the Brand Personality Wheel, as stated above, features the facets of *Expressiveness* and *Inimitability*. The first one is made up of the five characteristics of *leading*, *braggy*, *appealing*, *inspiring* and *ambitious*. As the name of the facet already implies, these traits help in expressing the brand's personality and in the communication efforts of the brand.

The second facet in this layer, *Inimitability*, features the characteristics of *focused* – *flexible*, and *extraordinary* – *average*. The two characteristics each represent dimensions in

which the two words represent the extreme ends of each. This facet provides information on the degree to which a brand and its offered products are easy to be imitated by competitors. The design of these characteristics, does not match the ‘one-word format’ of other characteristics in the model. This difference is due to the occurrence of expressions used by respondents, which concerned the same characteristic but the opposing extreme on each side. This appearance of opposing words was only significant when talking about the facet of *Inimitability*. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to set the two extremes of the characteristics by listing two words in order to avoid confusion or the misuse of the Brand Personality Wheel.

### **4.3.3 The Supporting Layer**

Even though this model is about brand personality, as the name implies, the outer layer is not directly concerned with brand personality. This ‘Supporting Layer’, with its facets of *Consumer* and *Product* arose out of respondents’ answers showing such a high significance to the definition of a brand in the automobile industry that it seemed wrong to ignore them.

The *Consumer* facet exhibits the characteristics of *level of maturity*, *willingness to pay*, and *benefits sought (functional – emotional)*. The first characteristic in this facet, for example, deals with the stage of life a consumer is in and therefore determines what brands and personality traits he or she is attracted to. An important factor within this process is the concept of congruence between what the brand stands for and what the consumer thinks he or she wants to represent. This characteristic, as well as the other two characteristics in this facet, to a considerable extent, define a brand’s personality, no matter if the corporation intended to attract this user group or not. The facet *Product* features the characteristics of *car make-up (performance – comfort)*, *safety*, *reliability*, *quality*, and *price*. Especially in the automobile industry a brand and what it stands for is highly impacted by the products it offers. Therefore, these characteristics describing a car and its features are an important part of the Brand Personality Wheel.

Similar to the characteristics found in the facet *Inimitability*, mentioned earlier, also the facets *Consumer* and *Product* feature characteristics that do not match the ‘one-word format’ of other characteristics in this brand personality scale. This adapted format is based on the impossibility of numerically evaluating *benefits sought* or *car make-up*. Instead, it is possible to judge these categories if they are specified in more detail. Therefore, we decided to set the

endpoints as *emotional* and *functional* in the case of the consumer and as *performance* and *comfort* in the case of the product. This decision makes the process of evaluation easier.

#### **4.3.4 Measurement Guidelines**

Despite the existence of the ‘Supporting Layer’ featuring only an indirect connection to a brand’s personality in the automobile industry, the Brand Personality Wheel is still considered as a brand personality scale. All characteristics within the ‘Center’ and ‘Intermediate Layer’ are personality traits and can be measured accordingly. The ‘Supporting Layer’ is a necessary addition to defining the brand personality of a brand operating specifically in the automobile industry.

In order to determine a brand’s personality, all characteristics have to be rated on a Likert scale between one and five, whether they fit the brand ‘not at all’ (1) or ‘very much’ (5). For example, when starting at the ‘Center’ of the Brand Personality Wheel, the brand manager needs to assess how *innovative* his or her brand is. Depending on what the brand stands for, what it sees as important and the decisions and actions the brand agrees on, it is rated on this characteristic. This step has to be repeated for each characteristic. Within the facet of *Inimitability*, this procedure looks slightly different. Instead of rating the brand based on one characteristic, there are two endpoints available that constitute one characteristic. A brand’s personality can lie somewhere between these characteristics depending on what its intentions and strategy are. Once all characteristics within the Brand Personality Wheel are rated, a brand’s current personality is defined and can, in a next step, be used as a basis for further managerial decisions.

#### **4.3.5 Internal and External Sides of the Model**

Once a closer look at the Brand Personality Wheel is taken, it becomes obvious that there is an internal side, which is controlled by the corporation, and an external side, which is shaped by the consumers (see Figure 9). The bottom half of the model concerns facets and characteristics, which can be controlled and influenced by the corporation itself. For example, the degree to which a corporation is *Inimitable* depends on the strategy it decides on and the decisions it makes. Furthermore, the qualities of a specific car the corporation decides to manufacture and what levels of, for example, *quality* or *price* it features is agreed upon within the corporation.

On the other hand, the upper half of the model features facets and characteristics, which are difficult or impossible for the corporation to control. Although the corporation determines the communication of the brand, it is the consumer, in the end, who interprets the brand's way of expression. For example, the degree to which a brand is seen as *leading*, *appealing* or *ambitious* is, to a large extent, defined by the consumers and the way they see and interpret these characteristics. Furthermore, the benefits a customer seeks are also very personal and reside within him or her. Nevertheless, consumers' personalities, as well as a corporation's products reflect back on the brand, its personality, and the way it is perceived.

Also in the case of the second research question featured in our study, we were able to find an answer. Based on the findings of the first research question a brand personality scale in the automobile industry turned out to have the look of the introduced Brand Personality Wheel with all its different layers, facets, and characteristics. As intended, it serves as a corporate brand personality scale for the automobile industry specifically.

## **5. Discussion of the Brand Personality Wheel**

After the presentation of the findings of our study, it is now important to put them into context. We related them to previous scales (5.1 Relation to other Personality Scales), to human personality research (5.2 Relation to Human Personality), to important concepts within brand management (5.3 Relation to Relevant Concepts), as well as to the automobile industry (5.4 Relation to the Automobile Industry).

### **5.1 Relation to other Personality Scales**

When comparing different brand personality scales, there are two major distinguishers that highlight the differences between them. These are the scales' designs and their contents.

#### **5.1.1 Design**

The specific design of the Brand Personality Wheel with its different layers and circular design differs from the predominant design of past brand personality scales, which had the form of a classical horizontal representation (see, for example, Aaker, 1997 or Geuens, Wejters, & De Wulf, 2009). Besides the better-suited graphical representation of the evolved facets and characteristics and the possibility of displaying the decreasing importance of the different layers by a circle, also the image of a steering wheel shaped the model's design. Since we created the model at hand specifically for the automobile industry, the name, as well as the design were influenced by the language and symbols of this business sector.

The chosen layout of our Brand Personality Wheel is similar to the graphical representation of the six traits within the three dimensions of corporate brand personality, defined by Keller and Richey (2006). However, the researchers of this study defined corporate brand personality as the characteristics employees working for a company hold, which is not in line with our view on corporate brand personality. This round design represents the only graphical similarity we found between the Brand Personality Wheel and previous scales considered for the purpose of our study.

Furthermore, numerous brand personality scales created in the past feature overriding dimensions including several personality traits, displayed beneath (see, for example, Aaker, 1997). This structure can be related to the use of statistical methods, more specifically, the

application of factor analysis. This data analysis method created a specific amount of factors, labeled as ‘dimensions’, to which researchers assigned the personality traits with the highest loadings. In contrast to previous empirical work, the study at hand featured a form of grounded theory to analyze data. The coding process also resulted in five facets, which are similar to the ‘dimensions’ used in preceding studies.

One important difference is that only three of these five facets deal with brand personality. The other two facets, which constitute the ‘Supporting Layer’ of the Brand Personality Wheel, concern a brand’s consumers and products. One plausible reason for the occurrence of these ‘additional’ facets is our chosen approach. Respondents were able to speak about brands without guidelines and therefore their answers were focused on personality to a lower extent. Another plausible reason is our intention of creating a brand personality scale for one particular industry. This aim and the resulting differences are strengthened by the findings of Herbst and Merz (2011) who developed a scale tailored to the B2B sector. They found one specific dimension, named *performance*, which is distinct and relevant to industrial brands but does not show a direct connection to personality. Our decision to include the facets *Consumer* and *Product* in a brand personality scale is furthermore supported by Kum et al. (2012) who suggested including the product type level and the typical consumer when drawing conclusions about a brand’s personality from the consumer perspective.

Once the Brand Personality Wheel was finalized, we compared it to other models in the field of brand management. Since our search for ‘round’ models delivered too many results, we only compared it to models that featured the word ‘wheel’ in their names. In most cases, we found graphical similarities and general overlaps between our scale and the consulted other models. These matches were, for example, a likewise core area or a part of the models dealing with the way a brand expresses itself. The most representative example of the scrutinized models, which features these overlaps, is the Brand Wheel created by Bates North America (Cameron & Green, 2012). It is shown in Figure 10.

Its purpose lies in defining a brand’s functional and emotional building blocks. Similar to our scale, it also consists of multiple concepts within the field of brand management, like brand essence, brand personality and core values. Nevertheless, this model is intended for the development of a brand in general and not for the evaluation of a brand’s personality.

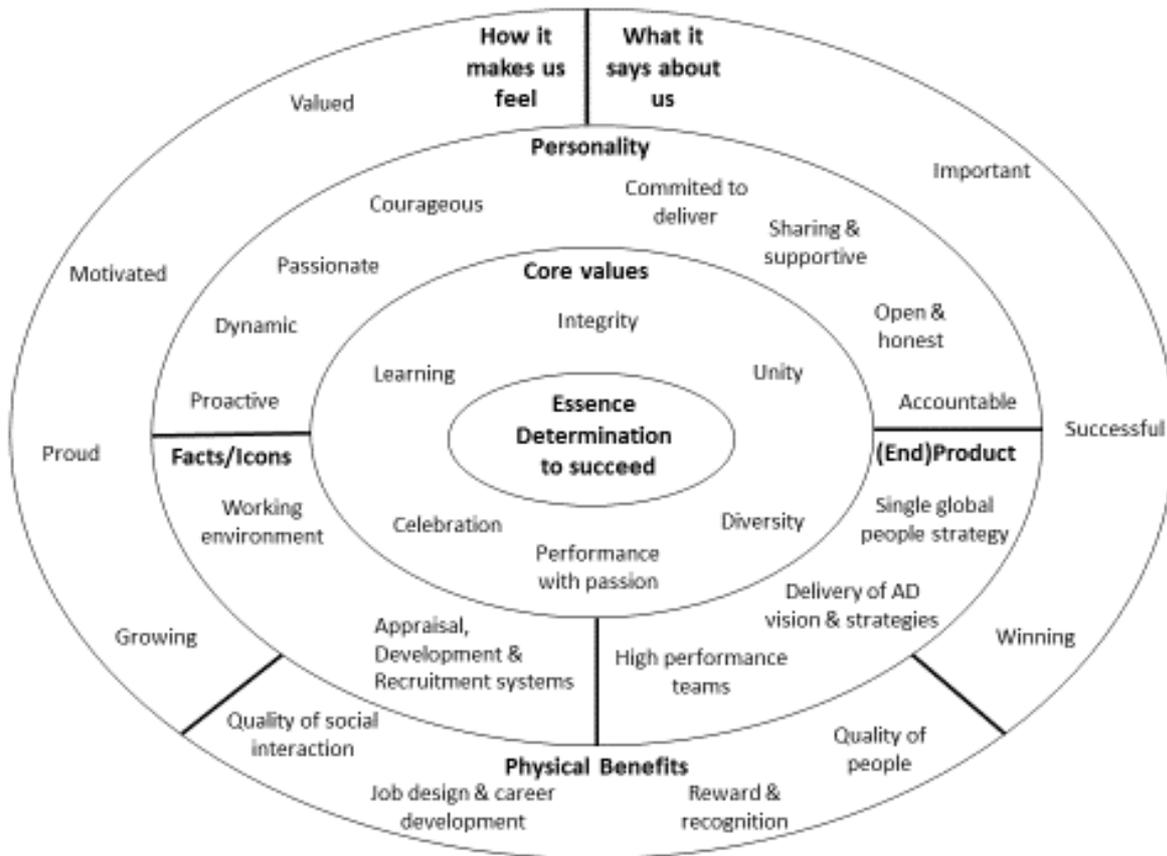


Figure 10: Cameron and Green's Brand Wheel (2012)

Furthermore, Cameron and Green's Brand Wheel does not distinguish between product and corporate brands. These differences in application, which occurred in the case of most of the investigated 'wheel' models, were not the only distinctions. Not a single graphical representation presented a high overlap with the facets or characteristics of the Brand Personality Wheel developed through the study at hand. Furthermore, none of the investigated models appeared to be a brand personality scale. It is also important to point out that most of the 'wheel' models we found were created by practitioners in order to make their own work easier and did not originate from empirical studies (e.g. Cameron & Green, 2012).

Graphical representations, as the Brand Wheel mentioned above, can be sorted into three main categories, namely *frameworks*, *models* and *scales*. It is important to be distinctive where our Brand Personality Wheel can be grouped in. First of all, a *framework* gives an overview about related items and can be used to present these relations considering scientific research (WebFinance Inc, 2015). It is seen as a guideline showing direction and constraints of

research (e.g. PESTEL framework). Contrary, a *model* serves to present a simplified version of a complex phenomenon or structure (WebFinance Inc, 2015) with the goal to ease understanding by excluding irrelevant parts. One example is Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (2013), mentioned earlier. It explains the complicated structure of the identity of a corporate brand but at the same time reduces it to just nine building blocks, which makes the concept easier to understand. According to Malhotra (2010), a *scale* has the measurement of characteristics of objects as its basic premise (Malhotra, 2010). The measurement aspect of a scale, according to Malhotra, means to assign, "... numbers [...] to characteristics of objects according to certain pre-specified rules" (2010, p. 282). The intent of our Brand Personality Wheel is that consumers and practitioners assign numbers to all characteristics in the 'wheel' based on the rules mentioned in 4.3.4 Measurement Guidelines. Following Malhotra's (2010) explanations of a *scale* and the given definitions of *framework* and *model*, our Brand Personality Wheel can be truly considered being a scale.

### 5.1.2 Content

The content of a brand personality scale, more specifically its personality traits and dimensions, as well as their origin differ from scale to scale. The authors of earlier research efforts in this field specified the nature of the traits that they included in their studies by defining which words are acceptable to be included and which words need to be excluded per definition (see, for example, the critique of Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003 or the approach of Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf, 2009). This is valid for both, the traits researchers generated for the scale development, as well as the resulting traits that they included in final scales. As our research approach intended to focus on consumer's views on brand personality in the automobile industry, we kept all expressions consumers used during the interviews. This is contrary to previous research approaches and resulting scales. Therefore, traits other researchers excluded from their scales do occur in our scale. This inclusion highlights the approach, as well as the goal of our scale.

Geuens, Wejters, and De Wulf (2009), for example, excluded traits referring to 'Emotional Stability', which seemed to be inappropriate for brands in their point of view. Contrary, we detected that expressions used by the respondents, as well as the whole interviews were coined by emotions. In our point of view, the reason for this occurrence is the chosen

industry for our study. Besides a functional aspect, cars also inhere an emotional factor for many people. Therefore, these expressions were not neglected for our study and are represented in both, the Open Codes (see, for example, *'fascinating'*) and the final characteristics (*'inspiring'* and *'appealing'*) of the Brand Personality Wheel. Another questionable integration for past scales, according to Azoulay and Kapferer (2003), were traits referring to *'social class'* and *'gender'*. The researchers see them as group characteristics and argue that they do not belong to a single entity's personality. Aaker (1997) included these traits in her scale, represented by the personality traits of, for example, *'feminine'*, *'masculine'* or *'upper class'*. These kinds of traits, in some form, are featured in our resulting scale as well (see, for example, the Open Code *'rich'* within the characteristic *'willingness to pay'*).

Despite only deleting traits, Guido (1997, cited in Caprara, Barbaranelli & Guido, 2001) found that traits extraneous to human personality dealing with, for example, brand functionality (*'useful'* or *'easy'*) should be added to the trait pool. This is an important argument for the integration of our characteristic *'benefits sought'*, which defines the functional and emotional benefits consumers expect from a brand. Keeping all expressions of consumers, furthermore, led to the inclusion of negative words (see the expression of, for example, *'under-estimated'*, the generated Open Code of, for example, *'boring'* or the facet *'braggy'*). Aaker (1997) purposely did not include negative traits in her brand personality scale as she argued that the potential approach of a consumer to a brand should be measured rather than a consumer's avoidance. In her eyes, these potential approaches can be caught in a better way by positive traits than by negative words. Bosnjak, Bochmann and Hufschmidt (2007), as well as Roper and Fill (2012) criticized this behavior since it diluted the evaluation of a brand. By excluding negative traits, the measurement is only concentrated on feedback companies want to hear instead of also taking possible negative brand associations from consumers into account. Sweeney and Brandon (2006) undermined the relevance of the 'dark' side of a brand. They argued that making use of these negative traits is crucial in order to attract younger target groups, which can be considered somewhat more rebellious than their older fellow men. For example, d'Astous and Lévesque's (2003) personality scale for store brands features a dimension called *'Unpleasantness'*, which includes only negative traits.

Due to including all kinds of expression in our study, the use of our newly developed scale provides a more comprehensive representation of a brand's personality in the automobile

industry. Negative traits can be important for either the deliberate positioning of automobile brands (*'braggy'*) or to find out whether a brand is connected to a more negative trait (for example, *'average'*). This evaluation allows the company to adapt the perceived personality of its brand. For example, according to Sweeney and Brandon (2006), brand managers of a car brand might decide to position their brands as *'arrogant'* or *'aloof'* on purpose because they think they are perceived as too *tame'*. It can be argued that it is possible for the company to find out about a negative personality of its brand by seeing low ratings on positive traits. However, in our point of view, it does not show the whole picture of a brand and does not provide as many information as the use of a scale including negative traits would provide.

The already outlined issue of 'brand-adjective interaction' (Caprara, Barbaranelli & Guido, 2001), which points out that traits can have different meanings if they are related to brands in different industries is non-existent in our scale. Since we sourced traits specifically for the industry they are applied in, this major pitfall of previous scales has no influence on the evaluation of results. It can therefore be said that, for example, when evaluating a brand with the help of our developed Brand Personality Wheel, the trait *'reliability'* has the same meaning for all respondents. In relation to this issue, our approach can be compared to the one of Bosnjak, Bochmann and Hufschmidt (2007). Their goal was to produce a scale suitable for the German culture. Therefore, they only sourced traits they intend to use from German consumers.

According to Levy (1986, cited in Batra, Lenk & Wedel, 2010), not only the different perceptions of the same personality traits for different industries play a role, also the concept of 'category personality' matters. He stated that, "... a primary source of meaning is the product (category) itself." (p. 216-217). We extend this statement by saying that some traits do not only have different meanings in different categories but that there are characteristics that only occur for a certain category or industry. Their presence is driven by the products of that category and is reflected in our *Product* facet. We consider its inclusion as necessary to show a comprehensive picture of a brand's personality in the automobile industry. Our view is strengthened by Aaker's study (1996). He argued that, in some product categories, personality traits exist, which all brands belonging to this group share (for example, hotels being seen as *'friendly'*). These traits reflect the personalities of the respective categories and, therefore, influence the personality of brands operating within this sector. As a result, Aaker (1996) expressed that these common traits need to be included in the pool of brand personality traits

that are used for the development of a scale thereof. Another concept that relates to the discussion of this ‘category personality’ is Keller, Sternthal and Tybout’s (2002) research on ‘points-of-parity’ and ‘points-of-difference’ in the positioning of a brand. ‘Points-of-parity’ are aspects a brand shares with its competitors, which are necessary to be considered by certain buyer groups. ‘Points-of-difference’, on the other hand, are benefits that are unique to a brand and therefore essential in creating differentiation from competitors. In order to be successful, it is important for brand managers to balance the presence of similarities and differences between their brands and the brands of their competitors

## 5.2 Relation to Human Personality

Since the factors of the ‘Big Five’ human personality scale (see 2.2 Brand Personality) of *openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism*, had a tremendous impact on the theory of brand personality, it is the norm to compare newly developed ‘dimensions’, or in our case ‘facets’ to the ‘Big Five’ (see the last column in Table 1 found in 2.3.1 Excerpt of Brand Personality Scales). It has to be said that there is a low level of conformity between facets of the Brand Personality Wheel and the ‘Big Five’. However, a connection between the facet of *Expressiveness* and the personality trait of *extraversion*, which Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p. 148) defined as, “... openness to others, sociability, impulsivity and likeability to feel positive emotions” can be made. Both of them are concerned with the interaction of a corporation or a human being with the outside world

The occurrence of just one overlap and the remaining differences in personality traits may be caused by the Brand Personality Wheel’s intention of being specific to corporate brands and not human beings, as well as unique to a single industry, namely the automobile industry. This particularity of our research study rejects the possibility of sourcing brand personality traits from human psychology and the ‘Big Five’ (Das, Guin & Datta, 2012). If the intention is to create a scale specifically designed for brands and/or a single industry, personality traits should be gathered from a source different than human psychology, for example, from customers of the specific industry.

### 5.3 Relation to Relevant Concepts

With regards to the Brand Personality Wheel, this section discusses the theory of brand essence, as well as the concepts of brand identity, brand image and their connection to brand personality.

#### 5.3.1 Brand Essence

The first concept that has to be discussed in relation to the Brand Personality Wheel is brand essence. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, cited in Van Rekom, Jacobs, Verlegh & Podnar, 2006, p. 116), this concept is, "... often captured by a brief phrase, a single thought that captures the soul of the brand, and this is linked to all of the core elements of the brand's identity ...". Even though this statement points out that a brand's essence is part of a brand's identity, this point of view is once again debatable in a similar way as the relationship between brand personality, identity, and image. Van Rekom et al. (2006) highlight that brand essence is co-created by consumers and therefore becomes part of their property as well. In this case, the concept of brand essence is not only part of a brand's identity but also has a relationship to its image.

Therefore, when looking at the Brand Personality Wheel, we consider the center of the model with the *Core* facet and its characteristics of *rooted, authentic, innovative, and powerful* as the essence of the automobile industry. Since the definition of brand essence, mentioned in the previous paragraph, asks for a 'brief phrase or single thought', not all four traits of the *Core* of the Brand Personality Wheel can be the essence of a single brand. Instead, depending on which characteristic a brand is evaluated the highest, this characteristic might represent the brand's essence. As seen in our model, the automobile industry's brand essence has an internal part, which is related to the identity and an external part, which is connected to the image. This belonging to both parts of a brand goes hand in hand with Van Rekom et al.'s (2006) view that brand essence is co-created by consumers.

#### 5.3.2 Brand Identity and Brand Image

At this point it is important to call back into memory that the concepts of brand identity and brand image are constituted by multiple building blocks. One of them is brand personality. For example, according to Urde (2013), to define a corporate brand's identity it also needs a brand's mission and vision, culture, competencies, expressions, brand core, value proposition,

relationships and its position in addition to brand personality. The same is true for brand image. There are many other factors besides consumers' interpretations of a brand's personality that define the brand's image (e.g. products, communication). Therefore, it is important to see brand personality as just one, though significant, part of these bigger concepts.

With this thought in mind, it is, at this point, important to put the concept of brand identity and its building blocks, namely core values, into context. Even though the bottom and internal half of the Brand Personality Wheel does not feature core values as obviously as other brand identity models (e.g. Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (2013)), these values are still embedded in the facets and characteristics found in this part of the model. For example, whether or not a corporation and its brand stand for being '*innovative*' depends on the degree to which innovation is rooted within the corporation, its culture, and its values. If '*innovative*' plays an important role in answering Balmer and Gray's (2003, p. 979) questions regarding brand identity of 'What are we' and 'Who are we?', then this characteristic is central to the corporation's identity and therefore a significant part of its brand identity. It can be seen that the corporation's and brand's deeply held values, beliefs, attitudes and convictions, which together make up the brand's identity, underlie all facets and characteristics of the bottom half of our scale. Through this example it becomes clear that a connection can be made between the bottom half of the Brand Personality Wheel and the concept of brand identity.

In the same way as the bottom (internal) half of the Brand Personality Wheel can be connected to brand identity, the upper (external) half of the model can be related to brand image. The consumer and his or her perception of the brand play an important role in the interpretation of facets and characteristics in this top half. For example, the impression to what extent a brand appears as '*braggy*' or '*stimulating*' varies depending on the person asked. One respondent might call one brand '*braggy*' while a different person rather sees it as '*honest*' or '*upright*'. These differences in interpretation also appeared during the interviews when, for example, Finn related BMW to '*enjoyment of driving*', while Karla connected '*careless driving*' to the same brand. These interpretations depend on the individual person's different filters, set of references, experiences, attitudes, etc. (Plummer, 1984).

The detailed discussions of the concepts of brand identity and brand image (see 2.2.3 Relationship to Brand Identity and Brand Image) were accompanied by the question of where

brand personality fits in between them. After putting the Brand Personality Wheel in context of brand identity and brand image, it becomes visible that it is a part of both of them. It features areas, which belong to both concepts. Therefore, the scale represents a similar view as held by Keller and Richey (2006), Plummer (1984), Urde (2013) and the researchers' view (see 1.2 Problem Discussion and Research Gap) that a brand's personality is found on the sender or internal side of the communication process, as well as on the external or receiver side.

#### 5.4 Relation to the Automobile Industry

For the automobile industry, as well as for many other industries, brand personality is a valuable concept. As mentioned earlier, the consolidation within the automobile industry with the outcome of a few major players and the resulting cost pressure become visible, among others, in similar product bases and common platforms used for products of different brands. These similarities exist, furthermore, due to the outsourcing of most production processes. Despite the urge to be different, it is sometimes necessary for a brand to share some product characteristics with competitors. These so-called category 'points-of-parity' express aspects of a product that 'allow' it, in the eyes of consumers, to belong to a specific category and to, therefore, be part of their brand choices (Kotler & Keller, 2012). These category 'points-of-parity' can be compared to the category specific personality traits of Aaker (1996). He argued that, despite the aim to differentiate itself, a brand needs to possess personality traits that consumers see as being essential for a category (e.g. banks need to be seen as *reliable*). This implies that a brand does not only need shared tangible product features but also shared intangible personality characteristics in order to be successful. As we created our Brand Personality Wheel based on the automobile industry specifically, it can be argued that the characteristic that are included in the 'wheel' represent the personality characteristics that are important for the specific industry.

Despite essential similarities, the aspects of a brand that consumers perceive as 'points-of-difference' are its true differentiators. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), desirability, deliverability, and differentiability determine successful and unique brand features. As mentioned before, mergers and acquisitions shaped the automobile industry, which resulted in complex brand architectures. In most cases, one mother brand oversees many independent daughter brands, which all have to be managed and differentiated. A brand's distinct

personality can be a useful differentiator in this effort. For consumers, brand personality is all about the relationship it enables and the feeling it evokes (Freling & Forbes, 2005). The application of our Brand Personality Wheel provides the possibility to achieve a distinct position in this regard.

However, if a corporation focuses too much on differentiating its brands, this behavior can trigger competitors to introduce competitive ‘points-of-parity’ (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The competition uses them to offset the corporations’ ‘points-of-difference’. If, for example, a luxury and sports car brand does not feature a four-wheel drive, it is excluded from the consideration set of the group of potential buyers that value a four-wheel drive in their cars. If the company would introduce a four-wheel drive to some of its car models its intention is not to compete with brands known for their four-wheel drive but rather to be considered by a larger target group. Introducing the four-wheel drive is not a ‘point-of-difference’ as it is not the main benefit that sets the brand and its products apart from the competition, but rather a competitive ‘point-of-parity’ that it needs to have.

Lastly, cars have always been seen as status products, which, most likely, comes along with a high involvement level in the consumer’s decision making process. This high level of caring might also exist because many people express themselves through the brand in the automobile industry they consume. Consequently, consumers try to align the personalities of these brands with their actual or ideal self (McCracken, 1989, cited in Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011).

Our Brand Personality Wheel helps brand managers of corporate brands in the automobile industry to find the balance between industry similarities of their products and the distinctions of their brand. For this reason, besides the other arguments, presented above, the strategic use of brands in the automobile industry and the clear differentiation of them are more important than ever before.

## 6. Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief summary of the research study at hand (6.1 Summary), as well as its contributions to existing knowledge in theoretical and practical terms (6.2 Contributions). The research paper closes with pointing towards the major limitations of our empirical work (6.3 Limitations) and a suggestion for further research connected to this research study (6.4 Further Research).

### 6.1 Summary

Brand management is becoming increasingly important in a world where more and more industries and markets fight the trend of products becoming commodities. Having a strong brand and taking care of it can be seen as one way to survive and to be profitable, especially under these circumstances. An important part of creating a strong brand is the development of a unique and clear brand personality.

A lot of research has been conducted in this field and scales measuring this phenomenon were developed. Nevertheless, a lot of criticism accompanied these research efforts. These points of critique made us approach the creation of a brand personality scale in a different way. We decided to start with the consumer, who ultimately needs to be convinced of a brand's offers and decides whether or not a corporation can survive. Unlike other studies in this research area, we focused on a single industry, namely the automobile industry, and solely on corporate brands. The final scale grew out of codes, which we collected through a qualitative and mostly inductive research approach with in-depth interviews as a tool. We then analyzed participants' responses through the help of a form of grounded theory.

This approach resulted in the finding that describing a corporate brand in the automobile industry was rather difficult for respondents if they were free in their way of thinking and talking. The expressions they used to describe these brands showed that if they were not able to specify a brand directly, they used a brand's products, as well as its typical consumers to describe the abstract concept of a corporate brand. While we see the description of the typical consumer as an altered form of personification, this concept also occurred in its original form, although rarely. Furthermore, the analysis of the gathered data allowed the

development of the Brand Personality Wheel. This graphical representation is intended to serve as a brand personality scale, which is unique to corporate brands in the automobile industry.

In comparison to other brand personality scales, the different approach taken in the research study at hand led to results, which do not match past research findings in many instances. This otherness can be seen in the content, more specifically in the expressions consumers used to describe brands, as well as in the wheel's circular design with different layers representing different levels of importance. These differences can, furthermore, be explained by the intent of the scale to be specific to corporate brands in the automobile industry.

## **6.2 Contributions**

The research study at hand contributes to existing theory, as well as to knowledge valuable to practitioners who manage a corporate brand in the automobile industry.

### **6.2.1 Theoretical Contributions**

In theoretical terms, this research added to existing literature in three ways. First, we used a different research approach than previous studies in the field of brand personality scale development. Second, we confirmed that personification is a useful tool for consumers in making sense out of corporate brands, even though it appeared in an alternate form in our study. Third, the newly developed brand personality scale, called the Brand Personality Wheel, contributes to existing literature by being the first scale specifically developed for corporate brands in the automobile industry.

1) Our approach took into account the criticism of different scholars on Aaker's (1997) predominant scale in the research area of brand personality and the numerous similar scales it entailed. Therefore, we were convinced that a different method would be more appropriate in designing a brand personality scale.

The research study at hand features a qualitative and mostly inductive research strategy consisting of in-depth interviews with consumers as the only data generation method. This approach, as well as the method of analysis based on a form of grounded theory, allows interpretation of consumers' responses about the relatively abstract concept of corporate brands. Furthermore, the conducted research was specifically designed to exclusively yield results for the automobile industry and therefore we sourced personality traits closely tied to

this business sector. Additionally, the research study at hand clearly cut a line between corporate brands (mother brands and daughter brands) and lower level brands in the automobile industry. The specificity of our research study resulting from its clear focus on the automobile industry and corporate brands only, gave all tasks and activities within the research process a clear direction.

In previous studies, the majority of data, more particularly personality traits, had its origin in the theory of human psychology. These traits were therefore not directly related to brands or a specific industry but rather to human beings. Additionally, statistical methods for the analysis of the generated data dominated these research efforts, which did not provide many opportunities for the interpretation of results. Furthermore, in previous studies a clear distinction between the kinds of brands the research results are applicable to was missing, which, in some cases, resulted in inconsistencies and room for errors. Nevertheless, many of these available studies claimed to be universally applicable across industries.

2) Furthermore, this research study added to existing findings by confirming that personification is a useful tool for consumers in making sense out of brands. Nevertheless, participants in our study did not use this concept in the usual way of seeing the brand itself as a person, which Aaker (1997), among others, claimed human beings do naturally. Respondents in our study rather applied an altered form of personification when using the detour over the typical consumer while describing a brand. Therefore, we contributed to the critique of Avis, Forbes, and Ferguson (2014) that there is no need to push respondents to focus on the concept of personality as they do it naturally, though in a modified way. If respondents are pushed to use personification, it is possible that they assign personalities to brands, which are artificially constructed, as it was the case in Kum et al.'s (2012) study. Therefore, we do not recommend that researchers force the concept of personification on respondents during the data collection process. Nevertheless, we argue that personification is a useful technique for consumers to make sense out of brands.

3) Lastly, the newly developed brand personality scale contributes to existing literature by being the first scale specifically developed for corporate brands in the automobile industry. The results of our research study showed that it is possible to develop a brand personality scale through our approach, which differed from predominant methods. The Brand Personality

Wheel highlights that a scale developed for a special purpose differs tremendously from previous scales. One of these differences is the existence of industry-specific facets, which are, in our scale, represented by the facets *Consumer* and *Product*. The significance of these parts of the scale supports the argument from Herbst and Merz (2011) that universally applicable scales from the past cannot be used for every purpose.

### **6.2.2 Practical Contributions and Managerial Implications**

An important practical contribution of this study is the creation of a new reference point for brand managers during the four steps of how to measure, compare, adapt and communicate their brands' personalities with the help of a new scale. According to Sweeney and Brandon (2006), it is crucial that a brand manager fully knows and understands the personality of his or her brand. Only if this is the case, he or she is able to recognize problems, as well as opportunities, which are related to this concept.

1) Measure - Depending on the situation a brand manager is in, he or she can use the Brand Personality Wheel to find out what brand personality make-up a new brand at the point of release should own or what he or she thinks a currently active brand represents. Therefore, in order to determine and measure brand personality, the brand manager has to, first, assign a numerical value to all characteristics within the scale according to what he or she thinks the brand stands for. After evaluating each characteristic, the brand manager knows how the personality of his or her brand is or should be constituted. After this internal process, it is, in a subsequent step, possible to ask the consumer to evaluate the brand on the characteristics within the Brand Personality Wheel. By measuring brand personality from a consumer perspective, the brand manager gains insight into the perceived personality of his or her brand.

2) Compare - Through the two measurement steps, mentioned above, the intended personality and the actual personality are determined and their congruence can be compared. The Brand Personality Wheel also offers the opportunity to compare a brand's personality to those of competitors. A brand manager can evaluate a competitor's brand based on his or her best knowledge by going through the same evaluation process, mentioned above. Once the brand manager's own brand and the competitor's brand are assessed, results can be compared and strengths and weaknesses can be uncovered. Another area where the Brand Personality Wheel can be applied is to compare a mother brand's personality to the personality of the daughter. In

this case, it is possible to uncover the overlaps or distinctions between the two brand personalities. In the automobile industry, this form of application is considered as highly important since the brand architectures of corporations in this industry are very complex. The automobile sector is shaped by the presence of many silent mother brands with independently acting daughter brands with their unique identity, image, reputation and brand personality. Therefore, the use of the Brand Personality Wheel can help in ensuring that this structure is kept and that individual daughter brands do not become too similar to their silent mother brands.

3) Adapt - Once these scoring activities are completed, the brand manager can, by comparing results, see where adaptations to current strategies have to be made. Furthermore, it reveals where the brand already performs as intended. After a certain period of time, the evaluation of the brand's personality should be repeated and results should be reviewed in order to see changes and improvements based on strategic adaptations made earlier.

4) Communicate - Once the measurement, comparison and adaptation processes are completed, it is time for the brand manager to make decisions regarding the communication of the brand's personality. For this particular task he or she can go back to the evaluation of the facet *Consumer* within the Brand Personality Wheel. This facet provides valuable information about the typical consumer and target group. It reveals their level of maturity, what they are willing to pay, as well as the benefits these people seek when buying a car. Depending on the results, the brand manager can improve the brand's communication efforts.

Overall, the resulting scale of our empirical study offers the practical benefits of being more concrete and easier for practitioners to relate to. These benefits have two reasons. First, the facets and characteristics featured in the Brand Personality Wheel evolved out of consumer responses. This origin makes them more comprehensible than personality traits drawn from, for example, theory in human psychology. Many times, if a concept has its origin in theory and the world of science, it has the potential of being difficult to grasp for people without the specified knowledge of the researcher. Secondly, we developed the scale for the automobile industry specifically. Therefore, a practitioner does not face the possible problem that his or her brand is rated against personality traits, which are by no means applicable to his or her brand.

### 6.3 Limitations

Even though the research study at hand delivered results through which we were able to answer the two research questions, it does not come without limitations. First and foremost, the predetermined time frame for our study was only ten weeks, which restricted us to a considerable extent in the selection of a comprehensive research methodology. Without being tied to the time frame, we would have included an additional quantitative study in order to test the validity of the characteristics and facets within the Brand Personality Wheel.

Regarding the participants in the conducted study, it has to be pointed out that they were either students or young professionals, which represents only a very narrow group of the whole population and of the target group of the automobile industry. Even though they contributed valuable insights, it is possible that other population groups would have delivered different results since most of the participants have never bought or owned a car. However, this group of people is considered as future buyers of automobiles and is therefore of significant interest to corporations in this industry. Furthermore, the sample used for the purpose of this study was quite limited regarding the nationalities of respondents. The majority of them were Swedish, which was due to the circumstance that both researchers study at Lund University in Sweden. There is the possibility that this concentration of location could have had an impact on research results. For example, the descriptions of brands could have been influenced by the Swedish culture.

### 6.4 Further Research

Based on the limitations, mentioned above, it would be, in a first step, recommendable to test and evaluate the 97 Open Codes sourced from the interviews in an extensive quantitative study. More specifically, we suggest to analyze data with the help of, for example, a factor analysis. While we hold the opinion that a qualitative research approach was important in order to arrive at the Brand Personality Wheel, we see it as appropriate to test the characteristics through statistical measures now that the development process is finished. This examination determines if the generated characteristics and ‘five-facet structure’ hold true when a much larger and diverse group of people is asked about brands in the automobile industry. Our research results need to be validated by using a more representative sample, which is not limited to students and young professionals or restricted in location. Furthermore, a probability sampling method

ensures that the results can be projected to the entire target population and that generalizations can be made.

Additionally, we suggest to investigate the different ways in which males and females describe brands in the automobile industry. We already found discrepancies in their expressions and the way they talked about brands, but the reasons underlying these differences, as well as the extent of them need further research.

Based on our research approach, which put the consumer at the heart of the study, we did, on purpose, exclude practitioners from our sample. Therefore, we did not take their thoughts and point of views into account for the development of the Brand Personality Wheel. Nevertheless, now that the scale is finalized, it is advisable to test the ease and efficiency of the application of the Brand Personality Wheel in the automobile industry. Therefore, it is crucial to ask practitioners for their impressions regarding the relevance and appropriateness of characteristics and facets featured within our scale. After receiving this input and making potential adjustments, the next step consists of the distribution of a survey to consumers of the automobile industry. This questionnaire asks respondents for the numerical evaluation of all characteristics featured in the brand personality scale for a given car brand, as described in 4.3.4 Measurement Guidelines. The statistical analysis of the survey provides feedback on the usefulness, accuracy and reliability of the Brand Personality Wheel and if it fulfills its intended function.

Furthermore, it is important that additional research in the field of brand personality makes use of the particular research approach taken in the study at hand. Our methodology, including a qualitative and mostly inductive study, which featured interviews with consumers and a form of grounded theory, differs from the approaches used in past studies. We are still convinced that this approach is more suited to gain additional insights into the abstract concept of brand personality, which is difficult to attain without interpretation on the side of the researcher.

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## 8. Appendix

This section has two parts. Appendix A features the interview guide, which we used during the conducted interviews. Appendix B includes a comprehensive table in which we consolidated all quotes from the interviews. These in-text passages are sorted according to the Open Codes they belonged to.

### 8.1. Appendix A

The interview guide we used during the data collection, provided below, contains the content of the briefing, back up questions, and the debriefing.

#### **Interview Guide**

##### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this interview is to talk about brands in the car industry. It is very important to us that you state your own opinions about a brand. It is also important that you talk about the car brand itself and not about a model or a specific car.

- Maybe you can tell us a little bit about your background, where you are from, what you study or your profession?

##### **Step One:**

The interview has two steps and the first one would be that you think about a brand and to describe it with three words.

- What three words would you use to describe his brand?

##### **Step Two:**

We will now go through each word you mentioned in more detail.

- What made you say XY?
- What experiences do you have with this brand?
- What stories do you have to tell?
- What feelings do you associate with this brand?

We would like to also ask you about the importance of brands when buying a car and the automobile industry in general.

- Are brands important and why do you think brands are important when buying a car?
- What do you think about the automobile industry in general?

**Debrief:**

The heart of our study is brand personality. There are a lot of brand personality scales available that help to build, measure and adapt a brand’s personality. Most of them are universal but we try to develop one for the automobile industry in particular. We also try to have a different approach than other research studies. A lot of previous scholars asked their respondents “How would you imagine this brand as a person?” So, they were very focused and pushed people to thinking of brands as persons. We decided not to say that before but rather to be very open and just see if respondents really provide these personality traits. We are interested in personality traits, which come up naturally, and if people associate personality with cars or brands. We try to do it the other way around.

**8.2 Appendix B**

**Coding All Interviews**

In-text passages	Codes	Count
<p>Built-quality</p> <p>These models that I have, they have, it is a chain instead of a rubber belt. It feels more confident.</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>I mean everybody knows that Mercedes is a high quality luxury car ...</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>They do high quality products.</p> <p>There is a large majority that is the lowest quality that is the biggest.</p> <p>Yeah, I think it [corporate brand] has influence because they want to get more money so they drop the price and make less quality project.</p>	<p>Quality (Car)</p>	<p>23</p>

<p>Quality</p> <p>I think it is a quality thing.</p> <p>... but German cars are ... I just think of them as quality cars.</p> <p>... but it is still high quality ...</p> <p>I do not see it as stable or maybe it is a little less quality in those cars.</p> <p>My picture is that it has pretty good cars even though it is cheap.</p> <p>I think Sweden has quite a good reputation for quality.</p> <p>They do not break down.</p> <p>They were breaking down.</p> <p>And then the newer models were not that good anymore and people stopped buying them.</p> <p>BMW is known in the whole world for being really good ...</p> <p>German quality</p> <p>I do not know the English word "Deutsche Wertarbeit".</p> <p>As I said in the beginning I connect them to German quality.</p> <p>Their slogan is "Vorsprung durch Technik". That means "Being advanced through technology". And I think that's what you actually want to know. What they stand for. They want to stand for quality and technological advancements. Being better than the competition of course.</p> <p>Germany stands all over the world for high quality.</p> <p>Yes, because they produce the best cars. We have BMW, Audi, Volkswagen, Mercedes. They are demanded in all over the world.</p> <p>Because of their quality. Not only Audi. But Audi says it specifically in their slogan.</p> <p>BMW has really good quality cars. Same as Audi. Same as Mercedes.</p> <p>And big brands and good quality brands from Germany.</p> <p>It shows you solid, good manufacturing.</p>		
<p>Enjoyment when driving</p> <p>They are also good at driving.</p> <p>So, it is different driving styles I would say [comparing BMW and Volvo].</p>	<p>Driving Experience (Car)</p>	<p>8</p>

<p>... it does not feel comfortable driving in a calm manner.</p> <p>So, it has become, I think who drives a BMW, he buys it not only for the brand but it matters a bit but also for the driving experience.</p> <p>The other thing is what I perceive when I sit in the car and if I feel surrounded by safety or they do a lot electronic stuff.</p> <p>If I think of buying a car and never did it, I, first of all, I would think of the experience we had in our family. Experience based on driving experience ...</p> <p>I never thought of buying a Mini and then I registered to this platform and I did the car sharing five times now and I am so in love with this Mini right now. I knew a lot of people told me that it is a fast car and that it is a great driving experience and stuff like this.</p> <p>... but it is very nice to drive this car.</p>		
<p>Reliable</p> <p>Reliability</p> <p>They are famous because they can roll a lot of miles, they survive a lot.</p> <p>... if you buy a car you believe that some cars will be good for longer because of the brand ...</p> <p>Reliable. It is not connected to a lot of maintenance. A lot of miles before they break.</p> <p>... if I think of Volvo I think of a car, which is very robust and you can go three or four hours more in the car ...</p>	Reliability (Car)	6
<p>He must have it good financially.</p> <p>It was within the price range I wanted to pay.</p> <p>... but if you want to show off, and want to show everyone that you are rich and have a sports car ...</p> <p>But about Peugeot, you might think it is crap, it is French, it is cheap.</p> <p>I think they have too much money.</p> <p>Rich</p> <p>Like upper middle class maybe.</p>	Rich (People)	9

<p>Only people who earn enough money can afford it.</p>		
<p>When I was younger I could not afford that car when it was new  ...  So, not everybody can afford them.  Not many people are able to buy it.  Well, it is not really that middle class people can afford that, at least not new.  ... so they could afford it ...  So, not everybody can afford them.  Only people who earn enough money can afford it.  Affordable  Almost everybody can afford it.  That the younger people, for example, or people that are not that rich or do not have those really really well paid jobs, they can afford a Peugeot. Also a new one.  ... and who can afford such a car ...</p>	<p>Affordable</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>Expensive  ... they are expensive.  High price  Expensive  They have been costing more money ...  Because the prices are not that high but not as high as for other cars.  They are not that expensive.  ... not too expensive ...  I think image is very important when you sell expensive cars maybe not much when you sell cheap cars.  ... just showing the dream because cars are expensive.  I mean it is expensive so it is high class.  BMW is known in the whole world for being really good, being really fast, being expensive too.  Yes, it is an expensive brand. No matter which model you take, there is nothing like a cheap BMW, which everybody can afford.</p>	<p>Expensive (Price)</p>	<p>17</p>

<p>And there are not a lot of people who can buy such an expensive car with their own money ...</p> <p>If I could afford to buy such an expensive car, I would go for Audi.</p> <p>They can sell it for such incredible high prices because they have this good image of being strong and fast and everything and that is why they can charge these high prices.</p> <p>And I think of the price the car costs.</p> <p>They want to because it is an expensive car, so it means I have money.</p>		
<p>Cheap because it does not cost that much.</p> <p>My picture is that it has pretty good cars even though it is cheap.</p> <p>I think it is fairly cheap ...</p> <p>If you take cars from Japan or from South-East Asia, then I think the people would think of cheap cars.</p>	Cheap (Price)	4
<p>Desirable for getting stolen.</p> <p>... especially it was a old boy dream.</p> <p>One dream, one time maybe I might own an expensive car.</p> <p>... just showing the dream because cars are expensive.</p> <p>Ferrari is a dream.</p> <p>They are demanded all over the world.</p>	Desirable	6
<p>I was very pumped up.</p>	Stimulating	
<p>I like German cars.</p> <p>... both that it is Swedish but also because of the history being Swedish ...</p> <p>... they are also quite nice like French cars ...</p> <p>Mostly because they are a bit behind the Germans maybe.</p> <p>Porsche maybe, a German brand that I maybe like.</p> <p>But about Peugeot, you might think it is crap, it is French ...</p> <p>As like a bit Nordic or the Nordic and Scandinavian feeling in its design language and feel and so on.</p> <p>Detroit</p> <p>It is based in Detroit.</p>	Place of origin	57

<p>It is really important since like there are not many American brands. From that point and for Americans, they can buy a car from America.</p> <p>I mean the headquarters is in the US at least.</p> <p>I do not know about Germans but there is sure is some national thing, like maybe the Japanese prefer Honda, Nissan, etc. Sweden as well with Volvo. I have seen so many Volvo and SAAB outside.</p> <p>Because Chrysler is one of the only American brands that is not with GM.</p> <p>California</p> <p>Headquarters is in Silicon Valley, California.</p> <p>Yeah, first of all the environmental part, like California is one of the only two parts of the world who are in the carbon market presently.</p> <p>It is in Silicon Valley, so it is technology as well.</p> <p>German</p> <p>... but German cars are ... I just think of them as quality cars.</p> <p>And it is Asian.</p> <p>Well, I said one originally European brand, so I thought of Asia as well.</p> <p>I think it is because I thought about Sweden and it is like, what should I say. Like it is not Swedish right now, I think it is Chinese or something. But I think that people still think of it as a Swedish brand and therefore it is familiar and you connect with it better.</p> <p>See it in a positive way.</p> <p>I think Sweden has quite a good reputation for quality.</p> <p>Well, or at least in the Swedish commercial they use a lot of, like the scenery is really Swedish, up in the mountains and they use a lot of Swedish celebrities, like really connecting to Sweden.</p> <p>... like the Asian brands in general.</p> <p>Swedish</p> <p>Not-Swedish</p>		
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Well because, they were Swedish from the beginning and Swedish people have been proud that Volvo was Swedish but then they have been selling out bigger and bigger parts of Volvo to China, so it is not Swedish any more.

Well, for Swedish people at least it is like 'not Swedish' anymore. We still look at it as a Swedish thing, but it is not anymore. I do not know for other countries, maybe not that much, it does not matter if it is Swedish or Chinese. It depends on what the country thinks about Sweden or China.

Japanese

I think Toyota is a Japanese car ...

It does not feel Japanese.

I do not think they are promoting it as Japanese.

French

It is a French car. A French brand. But I do not think they want to have this French image. It is just in my mind that it is a French brand.

As I said in the beginning I connect them to German quality. Germany stands all over the world for high quality. And big brands and good quality brands from Germany. It is not like German cars. Like Volkswagen or Mercedes. They are really proud of being German. And they say it sometimes during their advertisement. You would not say "good quality from France". Because France does not have the image in the whole world of producing high-class cars. It is the German brands that are high class cars and not French cars. There is no reason from them for saying, ok we are from France. It is not like being a baguette, it is from France. And everybody says "oh it is from France, they make the best baguette". But cars...

It is not like for a German car. If there would pop up a new brand and they say we are from Germany, it would be an advantage.

If you take cars from Japan or from South-East Asia, then I think the people would think of cheap cars. It is Honda, Hyundai,

<p>Mazda, all the small cheap cars. From France, Peugeot is just Peugeot. And big brands and good quality brands from Germany. If I watch a TV ad and you show me a black car, yeah, I think more of Porsche, BMW, you know the very German car brands. If you show me an ad with a red Renault, for example, it is more, I do not know if it depends on the country the cars come from. I would think of German car brands because of the experience. The only thing I know of Germany or which I relate to Germany is Volkswagen“ ...</p> <p>So, he told me, “If I think of Germany I think of the advertising they do in the UK and they do one where you only see a black car and then the voice says, “Volkswagen das Auto“ and he even said it to me in German.</p> <p>If you think of a country I do not relate it to a car brand but this is what they did in his ... his friend was standing next to him. He was like, “Oh yeah yeah Volkswagen das Auto.“</p> <p>I think it is important to a lot of potential buyers where the car is made and designed and where it comes from. Because even when you think about people from the UK and the US, they think of German safe cars.</p> <p>Yeah, I can only think of Germany if I think of the origin because I do not know if the US has a car that I can think of or that has a special branding that I can remember. I only think of the Germans or for example Finland or is it Norway where Volvo comes from.</p>		
<p>... but then I had to move on. I did not want to stick with the same brand. I wanted to try out BMW.</p> <p>I wanted to change.</p> <p>Because I do not know when that will be [having his first car].</p> <p>First of all, depending on what I need at that moment. If I need space, for example, but if not then I would go with more performance.</p> <p>At least if you, if it is not your first car, if you had a few cars, then you, I think it is quite common to get attached to brands, or get a special opinion of brands. Like "I had this kind of brand and it</p>	<p>Level of maturity (People)</p>	<p>5</p>

<p>broke down all the time, so I will not buy that car" and probably as you get older I think you are like more, more into a specific brand.</p> <p>I think maybe like price is more important than, instead of a specific brand.</p>		
<p>So, I bought my first BMW and I was so happy with it.</p> <p>It was like fulfilling my dream. I wanted to have this as well.</p>	Fulfilling	2
<p>Seven years newer and newer model.</p> <p>Because they have to change pretty much.</p> <p>And the Volvo had some time when, I think now it is fine, like a new way to market themselves.</p> <p>It is, they changed segments for a while, moving to the more expensive like premium segment.</p> <p>That might be why Peugeot struggles and why they have not redeveloped a brand identity.</p>	Adaptable	5
<p>It is the whole feeling. The sound when you close the door, the touch, the feeling of the materials. It is, you can really feel it in a sense the built quality. In fact, I feel good when I am sitting.</p> <p>It feels good. I mean just the sound of the engine. It is quite nice.</p> <p>Mechanics, it is the beauty of the models, all the small details you can see, the sound of the car. [...] Everything together. It makes something really nice.</p> <p>Really cool.</p> <p>You push the pedal and you go to 100 in some seconds.</p>	Fascinating	5
<p>There is a big difference between cars and brands.</p> <p>Now it seems they got something, also something a bit unique ...</p> <p>... to be clear what you want people to perceive about your company in this case.</p> <p>Because everything is novel in the car, and the wood, the leather.</p> <p>Every piece is made by hand.</p> <p>If you do this, you are separating your brand from people living in the countryside ...</p>	Unique	5
<p>... and good reputation...</p> <p>I think Sweden has quite a good reputation for quality.</p>	Reputation	21

Because the feeling towards Volvo is very high ...

... if you buy a car you believe that some cars will be good for longer because of the brand ...

Yeah, I think it has that image.

Lost reputation...

... I think it is just ... if the cars broke down and everybody started talking and everybody said 'oh no Renault is bad, you should not buy that car' and then everybody who was buying a new car thinking of something else. Maybe it was not even about breaking down that much although I know many people. The cars that our family had, like extended family all broke. Maybe it was not that much of that but it is more like people started talking and then people who had no experience heard that 'oh they break down' and decided not to buy them.

When people heard that they are supposed to be not that good they just bought something else.

I think they are still known as a safe brand ...

BMW is known in the whole world for being really good, being really fast, being expensive too.

I think I connect the brand to high-class cars and to the image they have.

Because France does not have the image in the whole world of producing high-class cars.

The Germans. Daimler, Audi. Because of their image. They can sell it for such incredible high prices because they have this good image of being strong and fast and everything and that is why they can charge these high prices. Because the businessmen, they choose these cars. And they pay these exaggerated prices, or the companies do. You could even sell it for 20.000 less and they would still make profit. But they have this really good image, that is why the companies pay these prices.

Because Volkswagen is "the" car. That's what they say in their advertising. They say "Das Auto." Meaning "the car". And then Volkswagen is the brand and Audi fits into it. In the mind of the

people it is a different brand I think, it is, but then you say they are also from Volkswagen. Das Auto.

Yes it is important because if you present the car as safe, for example in a TV ad, you reach people or a target group that prefers very safe cars but what you associate with safe. It means big airbag and everything like this. A big car is always more safe to people than a smaller one, even if it is a Volkswagen Polo. It is a smaller car but they do their marketing with, "We use airbags. We use the safety system and other ones. And you will never get a sleep in this car." Yeah, that is what they do in their marketing. It is safe if you see the TV ad.

One part is of course marketing is what they always do. If they say it is safe, you believe it is safe or they hope you believe that it is safe.

Safety, I feel safe and the other thing is, of course, if my parents tell me that it is a very safe car then I am thinking I am buying a Volkswagen right now. So, I have a lot of surroundings that tell me if it is safe I do it and for me personally then I believe it is safe even if it not.

I would base it on other feedback from other friends and I would go into the Internet and read some feedback, comments, everything like this.

But then I would if someone tells me "But I am driving a Volvo it is a great car" yeah I would think of going to a Volvo seller and maybe doing a test drive. I am very open. But I do not know, if someone would tell me „I am driving a very good Toyota“ I would not know. This is because I do not know anyone who drives a Toyota. This is the fact. Maybe if I had somebody in my family who is driving a Toyota and is so addicted to Toyota.

Reputation

Because if you say "I drive a Porsche" no matter who says it, it always creates a reaction from the person who is in front of you but if you are in the upper class ... It always creates a reaction like, "Wow you are driving a Porsche." And I think if you think

<p>of the people who are driving a Porsche, most of them know what reputation they create when they are driving to the streets with a brand like Porsche.</p> <p>And I think if you think of the people who are driving a Porsche, most of them know what reputation they create when they are driving to the streets with a brand like Porsche.</p>		
<p>... because of the history being Swedish ...</p> <p>... they need to change the image of it. Without losing your identity I think. Because you need to find a way for BMW to like, even though they need to adapt you still want to sell the same image as before.</p> <p>They did not really know what image they should try to project and then they sort of fail.</p> <p>Well, or at least in the Swedish commercial they use a lot of, like the scenery is really Swedish, up in the mountains and they use a lot of Swedish celebrities, like really connecting to Sweden.</p>	Rooted	4
<p>... it is famous all over the world.</p> <p>They are very famous for their 'Quattro'</p> <p>BMW is known in the whole world for being really good, being really fast, being expensive too.</p>	Well-known	3
<p>... they are very successful in crash tests. They always think of security at Volvo.</p> <p>Secure</p>	Security (Car)	2
<p>... at Volvo they have a special radar that if you do not press the break the car will break for you if it senses that the object is coming nearer. They have distance control. If you are not keeping the lane and you are coming in the midsection it senses the lines and then it will warn you to stick to your lane. So yeah a lot of, it is called city safety and if you come to a pedestrian area the car can stop by itself.</p> <p>Yeah it is the suspension, the seats, the navigation systems.</p> <p>Because they are quite good in producing powerful engines.</p> <p>Because everything is novel in the car, and the wood, the leather.</p> <p>Every piece is made by hand.</p>	Vehicle installations (Car)	3

<p>... I feel proud having a Volvo. It feels good.</p> <p>Well because, they were Swedish from the beginning and Swedish people have been proud that Volvo was Swedish.</p>	Recognized	2
I think Volvo, you drive more carefully. You are driving as the car should drive ...	Considerate	
They want a bit action. Only the engine revs up high.	Wild	
I think I will always stick to BMW.	Trustworthy	
<p>I think it is sporty, sporty cars.</p> <p>... I think they are trying to make sporty cars.</p> <p>... and BMW is a sporty car ...</p> <p>... not very much focused about sport (Volvo).</p> <p>It stands for sporty, sporty cars.</p> <p>It is like they are supposed to be sporty ...</p> <p>... I think it is a very sporty car.</p>	Sporty	7
<p>They always race against each other [BMW and Audi].</p> <p>That one has 610 horsepowers. So, if a Ferrari comes at the side, it can defeat it [talking of Audi RS6].</p> <p>Mostly because they are a bit behind the Germans maybe.</p> <p>Because they will always be worst in competition or just behind ...</p> <p>GM</p> <p>Being better than the competition of course.</p>	Competitive	6
<p>I think they were the first who invented that. I see them as the pioneer.</p> <p>It is like always been at the forefront of technology ...</p>	Trendsetter	2
<p>If you drive carefully it behaves like a normal car. You drive them pretty normal until you push the throttle. Then it becomes a monster.</p> <p>It is like a normal car you can use every day but a more sporty design ...</p> <p>I think a lot of families have that. I think they make some sports cars...</p>	Multifunctional	6

<p>A car for middle-class workers. Almost everybody can afford it.</p> <p>They are sold a lot on the second hand market. Also young people are driving Peugeot.</p> <p>I know they have smaller cars as well.</p>		
<p>So, I have always respect for Audi.</p>	Credible	
<p>And because I like the design ...</p> <p>I find them beautiful ['5 Series'].</p> <p>They are nicer now than they have been [regarding design].</p> <p>... because all the brands they have some design language ...</p> <p>And also much more design focused and like designer furniture</p> <p>...</p> <p>... it is the beauty of the models, all the small details you can see...</p> <p>Round</p> <p>... and the form of the car is very round. The Volvo car is very straight, very straight lines. Toyota is curvier.</p> <p>... but a more sporty design ...</p> <p>I never see a colorful BMW, only black, or dark blue.</p> <p>If you stand in front of the R8, you see, it looks really good.</p> <p>Because I like the style. The appearance.</p> <p>Black</p> <p>We had a black VW and this is the color they always use in their marketing.</p> <p>And the other point is I would buy it because it looks nice.</p> <p>I like the design ...</p> <p>They have such high-end interior design with leather and everything and I do not know if you can buy any Porsche with a cheap design inside.</p> <p>And from the outside and the appearance and the design. It shows you always black, brown cars ...</p> <p>Yeah, I think of the leather seats and the luxury stuff inside.</p> <p>The Porsche design and everything I think of, I mean they are doing this kind of Porsche design stuff, belts and wallets and everything.</p>	Appearance	18

<p>Because they are quite good in producing powerful engines. Simple mechanical ... It is not the same regarding mechanical but the engine is the same. Speed ... brands that has higher horse power in their cars. It permits you to go at a higher speed in every model and every model is based on speed. You push the pedal and you go to 100 in some seconds. Fast BMW is known in the whole world for being really good, being really fast ... It is like, there is nothing like a slow BMW. There are BMW's that are even faster. It is not like a Volkswagen and then you take the Polo, still it is a Volkswagen, but it is a Polo. But then you have the BMW and even the smallest version, the Mini for example, still it is fast. It is just fast. Maybe I said that because I thought of the upper class cars of Audi and they are all really fast. Because their advertisement that is shown on TV, they are not showing as Audi does, these mighty cars, driving around, really strong and fast.</p>	Performance	12
<p>It is only like the Toyota Prius, the hybrid engines I see on the road. ... and you have the environmental things. Environment It is supposed to be more environmentally friendly and people love to see the future in that. People are in their minds more interested in this new technology and the environment and like to see that and other brands try to do those projects without real success.</p>	Environmentally-friendly	8

<p>Yeah, first of all the environmental part, like California is one of the only two parts of the world who are in the carbon market presently.</p> <p>It is mostly environmentally.</p> <p>Biofuel</p> <p>Because I think I have seen a lot of these combi-cars that have biofuel and natural gas.</p>		
<p>Yeah, I think so [that the brand plays a role when buying a new car] because a car brand for some people, it has become like a symbol, like a status symbol.</p> <p>But then I would say expensive, status symbol.</p> <p>It is very much about status.</p> <p>It stands for being a status symbol, for example. I think everybody who owns a BMW is really proud.</p> <p>Because if you say “I drive a Porsche“ no matter who says it, it always creates a reaction from the person who is in front of you ...</p> <p>For me the car is a status symbol ...</p>	Status symbol	6
<p>Yeah, he drives a BMW then he must be someone.</p> <p>I think they promote themselves as a sporty brand more than they actually are a sporty brand ...</p> <p>... but if you want to show off, and want to show everyone that you are rich and have a sports car, you might want to buy something yellow, red, or Italian.</p> <p>And I was looking into car commercials a little bit critical I think.</p> <p>Because I am very technically interested and I think I have an idea of the technology behind the car and then when you look into the commercial you are sometimes like ‘What?’ it does not add up.</p>	Braggy	4
<p>... and custom-made [the car].</p> <p>... like Ferrari and you never have one.</p> <p>They want to be a brand for people who have money and who can afford such a car and who love luxury.</p>	Exclusive	3
<p>Then I think they are a bit underestimated ...</p>	Under-estimated	3

<p>... a bit better than you think.</p> <p>Quality has always been viewed as very bad for the French cars in general, but they are not as bad as you think.</p>		
<p>Because a lot of people think they are crap.</p> <p>But about Peugeot, you might think it is crap...</p>	Crappy	2
<p>... they are quite nice [...] you know, comfortable and so on.</p> <p>And they are often comfortable.</p> <p>... for me the Volkswagen has a lot of space.</p>	Comfort	3
<p>So, a bit simpler ...</p> <p>... Chrysler is a basic car for everybody ...</p> <p>I think it is like an every-day car ...</p> <p>So, it is just like one of the brands.</p> <p>It is not like those drivers stand out. It is just like there are Nissan cars on the road ...</p> <p>... and drivers who do not stand out. Average.</p> <p>They are sold a lot on the second hand market.</p>	Average	7
<p>... attractive. That is another thing.</p>	Attractive	
<p>They have a strong brand ...</p> <p>It is a very strong brand ...</p> <p>It is a strong brand...</p> <p>That is where you get a strong brand. If you offer different things all the time you are not going to be strong. Like Volvo had a strong brand when it was all about safety and then they kind of lost that when others caught up on that.</p> <p>Because their advertisement that is shown on TV, they are not showing as Audi does, these mighty cars, driving around, really strong and fast.</p>	Strong	5
<p>And they use strong words and things ...</p>	Confident	
<p>They are a bit over-estimated.</p>	Over-estimated	
<p>Then they are also very advanced.</p>	Advanced	
<p>... I think they are trying to make [...] or fun cars.</p> <p>You know, if you would do it with a yellow car it would be more a fun car, a car, which is for very open-minded people. I do not know, they drive through the city and a more easy-going lifestyle.</p>	Emotional	4

<p>Fun</p> <p>I said fun because I thought of one TV ad where I could see two people driving in a Smart with loud music and they drove through the city from A to B and it was at night. So, maybe they drove from one part to the other one but I cannot remember. They went very fast and they smiled and they laughed very loud.</p>		
<p>Also if you are interested in cars you want to have a car that says you are interested in cars, and like driving. Then you can sort of have a BMW and not a minivan.</p> <p>I think the people that have been rich they do not want a BMW, because people that want to show that they have money buys BMW.</p> <p>... you want to have a better car than your neighbor and stuff. I know a lot of people that care about that and that maybe some of them are even, like they buy an older model of an expensive brand instead of buying a new car from some cheaper brand because they want to have that brand so they can have that brand but I do not know.</p> <p>He can show, "Okay, I can afford to drive a BMW."</p>	Show-off	4
<p>Yes, they are successful in selling the image that they do.</p> <p>... just that is the image that they are selling.</p> <p>And they have not really been successful in promoting them.</p> <p>And sometimes they repeat things as facts until they get accepted as facts.</p> <p>For example BMW are talking about the perfect balance, like weight distribution. And they always say 50/50 is great, but it depends on the application. And some of these things get accepted like from journalists and when they talk about perfect balance, they refer to how BMW is promoting its offers. They shape very much people's perception about those things.</p> <p>I think they [commercials] influence like quite good.</p>	Influential	6
<p>They are very focused in some way...</p> <p>... they have a good idea about their target group.</p>	Focused	7

<p>... and a clear focus on what they [brands] want to project themselves.</p> <p>... they are also focused on the manly sports ...</p> <p>I think they are focused, like all these really expensive cars are focused on corporate companies.</p> <p>You have to reach one target group in cities for example in Germany and you have to focus your marketing only on this.</p> <p>... you do your branding for the person who lives in the city, who is busy and who needs parking spot.</p>		
<p>I do not think the French ones have that focus or something like brand identity ...</p>	Undetermined	
<p>Also that they spend very much resources or engineering efforts, for example, that might not be the most emotional car. It is a little bit clinical like in the hospital. It is like sterile ...</p> <p>Well, it is not as emotional as other sport car manufacturers. It is more emotional than VW or Skoda but compared to Ferrari and the Italian brands, which are much more like that.</p>	Unemotional	2
<p>... like repeated and practiced until perfection ...</p> <p>If they were humans, they would be perfectionist [referring to Porsche].</p>	Perfectionistic	2
<p>It is a strong brand, but it was very, very good ...</p> <p>Like Volvo had a strong brand when it was all about safety and then they kind of lost that when others caught up on that.</p> <p>Jaguar had amazing cars but now everybody can afford it. It is no more a dream car.</p> <p>You can now compare it more to Mercedes and BMW that are expensive but they can be bought.</p> <p>Because the feeling towards Volvo is very high but maybe a little over time. Maybe the new generation will not have the same feeling towards Volvo compared to the old.</p> <p>... but it has become something for people that are newly rich or higher middle class or something.</p>	Faded	7

<p>It is like that brand had a reputation once but not anymore.</p> <p>Because like, at least in Slovenia people used to think ‘oh that is good cars’.</p> <p>They used to buy them a lot but now apparently they broke down a lot. They stopped buying them.</p>		
<p>... and also they [brands] have some consistency and a clear focus on what they want to project themselves.</p> <p>Yes and I think that has to do with consistency of marketing. Like BMW has been selling their cars as the same thing for 20-30 years now. They stuck to that.</p> <p>And then once it is accepted as a fact, lie if you say something is good long enough, for everyone else, like assuming to do it.</p> <p>This is why I think you need a very strong marketing strategy and consistency to be clear what you want people to perceive about your company in this case.</p> <p>... it is something that you have heard for a long time.</p> <p>Like commercials and stuff, it is always the same.</p> <p>... but I also think that of course it is important for them like the same things, like safety, like this car will not break down, because that is what the customer wants from a car.</p> <p>It is consistent in having these characteristics [expensive, fast].</p>	Consistent	8
<p>But like French car companies sometimes when they are doing bad financially they try to rush things out and maybe will update an old model too long ...</p>	Impatient	
<p>I mean everybody knows that Mercedes is a high quality luxury car ...</p> <p>I think that the association of a black car is always a bit of luxury.</p> <p>If you do it with black, it is more serious, a bit of luxury.</p> <p>Luxury</p> <p>They are so high-end.</p> <p>Yeah, I think of the leather seats and the luxury stuff inside.</p> <p>... and who love luxury.</p>	Luxurious	7
<p>Safety is still important.</p> <p>I would say safety ...</p>	Safety (Car)	15

<p>They are really early with these crash tests.</p> <p>It is a stable car, good safety.</p> <p>... like safety, like this car will not break down, because that is what the customer wants from a car.</p> <p>Safe</p> <p>Well they have tested it and it was rated highest in safety levels.</p> <p>They are safe.</p> <p>... and that it is safe.</p> <p>I think they are still known as a safe brand ...</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>My parents always told us or when we talked about it they always said it is a very safe car. Volkswagen, Mercedes, BMW, they are always safe car.</p> <p>Yes it is important because if you present the car as safe, for example in a TV ad, you reach people or a target group that prefers very safe cars but what you associate with safe. It means big airbag and everything like this. A big car is always more safe to people than a smaller one, even if it is a Volkswagen Polo.</p> <p>One part is of course marketing is what they always do. If they say it is safe, you believe it is safe or they hope you believe that it is safe.</p> <p>Safety, I feel safe and the other thing is, of course, if my parents tell me that it is a very safe car then I am thinking I am buying a Volkswagen right now. So, I have a lot of surroundings that tell me if it is safe I do it and for me personally then I believe it is safe even if it not.</p>		
<p>Sort of being in control of your image.</p>	<p>Aware</p>	
<p>I think you need to be more active, so that the general opinion cannot be 'your cars are crap'. If you are always one step ahead</p> <p>...</p>	<p>Proactive</p>	
<p>Because it is one of the exotic brands ...</p>	<p>Exotic</p>	
<p>Because everything is novel in the car ...</p>	<p>Novel</p>	
<p>Yeah admired.</p>	<p>Admired</p>	

<p>Because Chrysler is one of the only American brands that is not with GM.</p> <p>They are the owners. So, they have more power than the one under.</p>	Independent	2
<p>They are not interesting anymore.</p> <p>... it is not really exciting</p>	Boring	2
<p>Future</p> <p>Because it is one of the only brands that presently is electric and getting bigger and bigger. There is much more people buying this model than any other. It is new technology. It is all electric cars. It is supposed to be more environmentally friendly and people love to see the future in that.</p> <p>Tesla is future.</p>	Futuristic	3
<p>It is new technology. It is all electric cars.</p> <p>People are in their minds more interested in this new technology and the environment and like to see that and other brands try to do those projects without real success.</p> <p>It is in Silicon Valley, so it is technology as well. Every permit is easy connection with Google or any other company that is there and wants to make an intelligent car with them.</p>	Forward-looking	3
<p>Tesla is future and likely to succeed, and successful job ...</p>	Successful	
<p>There are less and less brands that are known. They are all related to a big brand, like Chrysler and Fiat together. All other brands try to buy other brands to create big empires.</p>	Dependent	
<p>... you can have the same structure for two models but two different brands.</p>	Faceless	
<p>So, they have more power than the one under.</p>	Powerful	
<p>They have a tradition.</p> <p>I would say safety and tradition ...</p>	Traditional	2
<p>... and it is not like a fancy car with a lot of extras and fancy things.</p>	Fancy	
<p>Like a stable, good car.</p> <p>It is a stable car, good safety.</p>	Stable (Car)	3

<p>I do not see it as stable or maybe it is a little less quality in those cars.</p>		
<p>It is cheap. ... I would pay more attention to cars that are like from these cheaper brands, like the Asian brands in general.</p>	Cheap (Brand)	2
<p>I do not know how to say, it is up and coming, I see it as a brand that is more and more common. Well, I think it is a more and more common car. So, I think it is a growing brand.</p>	Promising	2
<p>... and I think about like family cars. Well, I think that is like with combining the first 2 makes it a family car. I think that my view is that they want to present themselves like this is a family car, they do a lot of these larger cars. Also like families have that. I think mostly families buy it. I think they are focused, like all these really expensive cars are focused on corporate companies. And there are not a lot of people who can buy such an expensive car with their own money and then they get it from their company as a compensation, included in their compensation package. High-class car I mean it is expensive so it is high class. Only people who earn enough money can afford it. That means it is a high-class car. I think I connect the brand to high-class cars and to the image they have. Middle-class car Because other than BMW or Audi, they don't have any, maybe they have but it is not the, they don't have these really big, fast cars. A car for middle-class workers. Almost everybody can afford it. They are sold a lot on the second hand market. Also young people are driving Peugeot. They are not designed for businessmen. Businessmen they are only driving BMW, Mercedes, Jaguar. All those cars which are really expensive.</p>	Single-minded	21

<p>It is a family car.</p> <p>Because we always had a Combi, I do not know the English word, and I always think of families driving in a Volkswagen. For me it is not the type of car you drive when you are a single person.</p> <p>If I have to think of a Volkswagen, first I think of a family car with a lot of space ...</p> <p>It is not the familiar car, like a family car Volkswagen.</p> <p>Small, flexible but this relates to small ...</p> <p>City driver</p> <p>Yeah, small and flexible relates to my, well if I think of Smart I think of cars that fit in every parking gap. No, not every one but I think of two Smarts fitting into a parking lot, which is for one car.</p> <p>And flexible because this is the other one I thought of because city driver, you are driving through a busy city with very few parking spots and you always find a parking spot with a Smart in the city.</p> <p>Yes sure, not to the countryside. Yeah maybe there are people who drive in the countryside but for me it makes more sense to drive a Smart in the city to find a parking spot.</p> <p>It is not a family car.</p> <p>And it is not the car you use to go on holiday because you do not have that much space.</p>		
<p>So, it is similar to Volkswagen.</p> <p>I think it (car industry) is quite similar. They express themselves in similar ways. Like commercials and stuff, it is always the same.</p> <p>... because they were not better in any way than other cars.</p> <p>Because they are always competing on price or Frenchness.</p>	Similar	3
<p>They do that really functional cars. There is a lot of baggage space.</p> <p>... if it is a person who uses the car for business ...</p>	Functional (Car)	2
<p>... but I mean sometimes if you do something different, you remember it ...</p>	Remarkable	
<p>... because that is what the customer wants from a car.</p>	Satisfying (Car)	2

... or if it is a family that would love to have a car with a lot of space, fun, and music.		
Normal And normal, (...), it is a car a lot of people have. It is like a normal car you can use every day ...	Normal	3
Maybe to be modern in the forms and how it is, that is why it looks like it does. Yeah, maybe the whole brand stands for being modern ...	Modern	2
... it is very manly ... It is like they are supposed to be sporty and manly ... Men I always think of men who say, "I would love to drive a Porsche." The Porsche design and everything I think of, I mean they are doing this kind of Porsche design stuff, belts and wallets and everything. I do not know if they have anything for women. It is all for men. This is what they do. The brands, the ads I see in magazines, it is always in magazines for men. No, it is always the ads in the magazines and it is always a Porsche watch. They are always created with a man.	Masculine	5
I would say and new-rich ... ... the people that are new-rich buy that car. I think the people that have been rich they do not want a BMW, because people that want to show that they have money buys BMW.	New-rich	3
And it is also a little bit prestige. Yeah, maybe the whole brand stands for being modern and prestige ... I think they want the prestige ... It always creates a reaction like, "Wow you are driving a Porsche."	Prestigious	4
They not really care about other people when they drive. Careless driving Douchebags	Macho	4

Yeah, like every time I drive and someone is behind me and tries to speed me up it is a BMW.		
It is just neutral.	Neutral	
They are efficient. The most important is that it is efficient. That it does not burn that much gas ... You do your shopping but it is not that much. You use it for to go from A to B to C.	Efficient (Car)	3
A massive brand that was bought by many people.	Standard	
Stylish The composition of the car itself. From the outside ... In my personal eyes, yes, a stylish car. A stylish brand. Because I like the style ... It is just that from Audi, I better like the style	Stylish	4
They want to stand for quality and technological advancements.	Technologically advanced	
... they are not showing as Audi does, these mighty cars, driving around, really strong and fast.	Mighty	
And big brands and good quality brands from Germany.	Big	
If you do it with black, it is more serious ... Serious brand, I mean Smart is a serious brand because when I think of Smart I think of Mercedes.	Serious	2
... who is driving a Toyota and is so addicted to Toyota.	Addictive	
If I think of drive now I always think of Mini. Car To Go always and only uses Smart. You share a car here, it is always a Smart.	Popular	2
... if I think of Volvo I think of a car, which is very robust ...	Robust	