

**Brand Identity vs. Brand Image – A Case Study of
Brand Integration in an Online Dictionary**

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Master's thesis in International Marketing

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Abstract for Master's thesis

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>In today's competitive market, brands should seek to provide special benefits in order to differentiate themselves from others. One way of doing so is by creating a unique brand identity with strong and differentiating value propositions. The brand identity is the internal self-perception of the brand, which implies a promise from the company to the consumer. This identity is communicated externally, resulting in the brand image, which is how external stakeholders actually perceive the brand in their minds. How these concepts are developed and changed through time has been an interesting point of research for several disciplines, especially so for marketers. One important issue for brand managers to consider is how gaps can occur between the internal brand identity and external brand image, meaning that the two sides do not match. A large gap is a sign of a weak brand, while a small gap is a sign of a strong and well-integrated one. Thus, in order to develop and sustain a strong and relevant brand, brands need to regularly evaluate the brand identity and brand image and find out if there are any gaps.</p> <p>Through previous literature, this study explores how brand identity and brand image are created and managed and how gaps can occur between them, as well as strategies for integrating them. It also discusses the topic of brand extensions as a means for changing or strengthening the brand both internally and externally, and proposes a conceptual model summarizing the brand shaping process. With this information in mind, the thesis then makes use of a qualitative, intrinsic single-case study of an online dictionary in order to determine and compare its brand identity and brand image. Through the in-depth interviews with selected brand employees and users, the writer was able to explore the internal and external perceptions of the brand's products, personality, symbols, organizational culture and value propositions. This results in a presentation of the brand identity and brand image as they were perceived at the time of the interviews, followed by a discussion on the brand alignment.</p> <p>Based on the conducted interviews, some key gaps were identified between the case company's brand identity and brand image. For example, the brand employees felt that the main value proposition was the user interaction and contribution, which is an emotional benefit, while users most appreciated the context sentences in the dictionary, a functional benefit. As functional benefits are easier to imitate than emotional ones, this is one point that the brand should put further emphasis on in their communication. The thesis ends with a discussion on these gaps and a set of recommendations to the case company on how they can minimize them in order to strengthen their brand in the future.</p>	
<p>Keywords: Branding, brand identity, brand image, brand extension, brand integration, marketing communications</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the subject of the thesis and explains the motivation of the thesis including the research problem, research aims and research questions. This is followed by the limitations of the research. Finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined, and key terms are defined.

1.1 Background

Globalization, increasing competition, and changes in consumer behavior and demand all form challenges for the modern organization. In order to stand out and get better results, companies need to differentiate themselves from their competitors and be viewed as unique in the eyes of the consumers. And while products can be easy to imitate, branding is what can make a consumer favor one company's product over an almost identical one from a competitor. But branding is by no means a simple process, nor does it guarantee success. In order to become a captivating and strong brand, companies need to invest in strategic brand management, find out what makes the brand unique, and then communicate this as clearly as possible to the consumer.

According to Burmann, Riley, Halaszovich and Schade (2017), the tough market conditions in the 21st century mean that "brands are only successful if their identity provides special benefits, both internally (employees) and externally (consumers)." (p. 6). In other words, for a brand to successfully differentiate itself, it should find its unique brand identity and then communicate it to the consumer. According to Aaker (1996), a brand identity exists to provide direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. It consists of a unique set of brand associations that the brand management wants to create or maintain, and implies a promise from the company to the consumer about the brand's functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits, in order to build a relationship with the consumer. When this brand identity is communicated to the consumer, it results in the external brand image (Keller, 2012). The brand image is the perceived brand identity, which is created by brand associations held in the consumer's

memory. These associations come in all forms and may or may not reflect characteristics of the actual product, and they can be difficult to change once the consumer has made their mind up.

One way of influencing the brand associations is through brand extensions, which are used by companies across various industries (Munteanu, 2015; Keller, 2012). A brand extension can enhance the overall brand image by strengthening a current brand association, improving the favorability of a current association, adding a new brand association, or a combination of these (Keller, 2012; van Gelder, 2003). However, when a brand introduces a product or service which is not part of its core market, it will consequently change the brand identity (Kapferer, 2012). Thus, after a brand extension, the employees need to be consulted on how they view the brand, because if there are big gaps in the internal brand vision, it is impossible to deliver the new desired brand image and to achieve the wanted brand position (de Chernatony, 1999).

Consumers should likewise be consulted on brand extensions, because if consumers do not see a natural fit between the parent brand and the extended brand, both brands are at risk. Wrong associations can hurt the growth of the new brand and weaken existing associations of the original brand. Thus, making the wrong extension can be strategically damaging to a brand (Aaker, 1990).

The internal brand identity and the external brand image are not always the same, in fact they can be quite different from each other. While the brand extension may seem like a great fit in the brand identity, it might not fit at all in the brand image. Therefore, it is important to identify the gap between the brand identity and the brand image, and to continually work on integrating the two, as failure to do so can lead to an unfavourable reputation and poor performance in the market (Roy & Banerjee 2008).

All these factors considered, it is of great importance that companies take actions to evaluate the brand internally and externally, especially following a brand extension, in order to make sure that the brand is on the right track.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Brown et al. (2006), a growing number of researchers from different disciplines including marketing, advertising and sociology, are facing the same questions:

- What do individuals (e.g. managers, employees, customers and other stakeholders) know or believe about an organization?
- How does a focal organization develop, use and/or change this information?
- How do individuals respond to what they know or believe about an organization?

These questions in themselves pose an interesting research topic on brand identity and brand image, both from a theoretical and practical perspective, and require an understanding of several important concepts on both an individual and organizational level. Exploring these issues will thus be the focus of this thesis.

For the practical perspective, the thesis makes use of a case company in the midst of change: Since 2007, online dictionary and language portal bab.la has been trying to establish itself as the go-to source for language learning and translation. In January 2017, bab.la launched a newly designed website, complete with a whole new product: the Living abroad magazine. The result was a brand extension “[f]rom a multilingual dictionary to a community of global citizens” (bab.la 2017a). As such, this was an entry into a new market, which should consequently have changed the internal brand identity (Kapferer, 2012), and the external brand image (Keller, 2012). This, however, depends on to what extent the company has managed to champion the extension both internally and externally.

By determining the brand identity and brand image and identifying the gaps between them, we can determine the weak and strong points of the company’s internal and external brand communication.

The results of this thesis can help marketers understand how brand identity and brand image are formed, how to evaluate them and how to bring the two closer together in order to create a stronger brand and better customer relationships.

1.3 Research Aim and Research Questions

The aims of this thesis can be divided into several sub-aims:

1. Descriptive aim: to determine bab.la's brand identity and brand image
2. Comparative aim: to compare the brand image and brand identity in order to see which aspects of the brand identity that have been successfully communicated to the users, and which aspects that should be further highlighted in their communication
3. Theoretical aim: to develop a conceptual model for the brand identity and brand image forming process based on relevant theory
4. Normative aim: to help bab.la find the gaps in its brand communication.

The following research questions will support in fulfilling the research aims, and are visually illustrated in figure 1:

1. What is the case company's brand identity?
2. What is the case company's brand image?
3. Is there a gap between the case company's brand identity and brand image?
4. How can the case company minimize the gap between its identity and image?

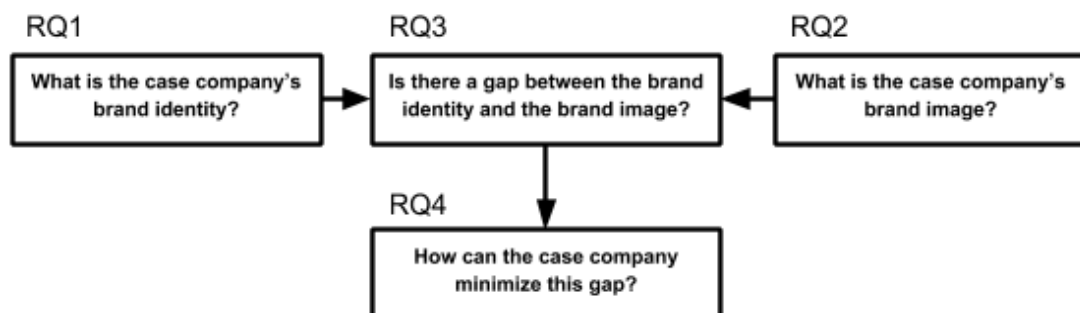


Figure 1: Visual presentation of research questions.

1.4 Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited to bab.la GmbH. The selected data collection method is interviews with bab.la employees and users. Internally, interviewees have been limited to employees who are working directly with marketing. Externally, interviewees have been limited to Polish men and women between 18 and 34 years old, as they form the biggest user group of bab.la (see appendix 1). Thus, the brand image analysis is limited to the Polish market.

Due to the nature of the topic and the method used, the findings from the study are only applicable to the case company. Brands, brand strategies and brand objectives are typically unique to different companies. However, the methods used might be useful for a small online business like the one presented in this case.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters, starting with the introduction. The second chapter is a literature review, which starts with a general overview on how to define ‘brand’ and ‘branding’, before presenting and discussing theory on brand identity, brand image, and brand extensions. The aim of the chapter is to show how these concepts are connected to each other and how they affect each other, as well as to introduce and develop models that can be used for the empirical research and analysis.

Chapter three covers the methodology used in the thesis, including research method, data collection method, and data analysis, and ends with a discussion on the trustworthiness of the data. The aim of the chapter is to explain and justify the methods used for this study.

Chapter four presents the results from the data collection. The chapter is divided into two parts, one for the internal data collection and one for the external. The data is then analyzed in following chapter: chapter five presents the brand identity, brand image

and brand integration of the company based on the collected and analyzed data. The final and sixth chapter concludes the thesis and provides recommended actions for the case company. The thesis ends with comments on the study and suggestions for future research, and a Swedish summary follows.

1.6 Definitions

- **Brand:** A set of benefits and attributes which differentiate the brand from its competitors in the eyes of both the consumers and the employees. It contains information about how a company wishes to be seen and distinguished from other brands, and is reflected in the employees who are identifying with it and bringing the brand to life, and in the consumer who is partly choosing a brand based on the image of themselves that they want to project to the world (Percy, 2003).
- **Brand identity:** The internal self-perception of the brand, consisting of a unique set of brand associations that the brand management wants to create or maintain, and implies a promise from the company to the consumer about the brand's functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits, in order to build a relationship with the consumer (Aaker, 1996).
- **Brand image:** The external perception of the brand, consisting of a set of benefits that consumers and other stakeholders have determined based on marketing activities, social influences and their own experiences (Burmam et al., 2017).
- **Brand integration:** The process of matching brand identity with brand image (Roy & Banerjee, 2008).
- **Brand extension:** The use of an established brand name to enter a new product category (Aaker & Keller, 1990).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the topic area by reviewing previous theory and research in order to apply it to the research at hand.

2.1 Brands

The concept of brands and branding is by no means new – it has been around for hundreds of years. Already in the Middle Ages, the word ‘brand’ was used to talk about the mark that farmers would burn on their livestock as a way to distinguish their property (Keller, 2012). Similarly, when we think of a brand today, we might think of a logo or slogan associated with a particular product or business. Indeed, the American Marketing Association (2017) defines a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and differentiate them from those of competitors.”.

Indeed, in its most basic form, a brand offers orientation – it helps the consumer to choose the most suitable offering for their needs and preferences. But in reality, a brand goes beyond that. According to Jones (2017), a brand also functions as a physical and emotional trigger for a consumer to create a relationship with the products and services being offered by connecting ordinary things with a larger idea and giving them meaning that makes us feel good about them. Kapferer (2012) states that the difference between a weak brand and a strong brand is that the latter is also has an emotive relationship with many of its potential consumers: “It is this attachment, or commitment, that generates the desire to pursue the relationship, from the purchaser’s point of view, which translates to loyalty to the brand.” (p. 87). If the consumer has positive experiences with the brand, it results in brand familiarity, loyalty and trust (Burmann et al., 2017). Thus, a strong and positive brand can bring great customer value because it reduces both the effort and the risk of buying things, while also helping us express ourselves through the purchase and usage of a particular brand (Barwise, 2010).

But the brand is not just impacting the consumers: “it’s just as important as a force that guides and energizes employees.” (Jones, 2017: 2). A brand is also “a plan, a vision, a project” (Kapferer, 2008: 189), which can make people feel more united, positive and engaged, resulting in better recruitment, less internal conflict, and more productive workers (Jones, 2017).

Thus, a brand can be defined as a set of benefits and attributes which differentiate the brand from its competitors in the eyes of both the consumers and the employees. It contains information about how a company wishes to be seen and distinguished from other brands, and is reflected in the employees who are identifying with it and bringing the brand to life, and in the consumer, who is partly choosing a brand based on the image of themselves that they want to project to the world (Percy, 2003).

This definition is also the one used in this thesis, as it both includes an internal and external perspective of the brand, i.e. the brand identity and the brand image.

2.1.1 Branding and Brand Management

Like a brand is more than just a name or a logo, branding and brand management is also more than simply putting a brand name on a product and advertising it. Branding is the active attempt of the company to change people’s ideas and behavior, in order to get them to buy more. It requires long-term dedication along with plenty of resources and knowledge (Kapferer, 2012).

Some of today’s biggest brands, such as Twining, Schweppes, Levi’s or Heinz, have been around since the 18th and 19th century. But it was not until after the 1980s that managers started to realize the value of branding, and that a strong and successful brand could provide financial and strategic value for a company. This idea led to the term *brand equity* – that a successful brand could be one of the most, if not *the* most, valuable possessions of a company (Riezebos, 2003).

Branding is about creating differences, and brand equity is the reason why a branded product can sell for a much higher price than an otherwise identical non-branded product. It is the added value embodied in the product as a result of the brand's marketing programs and activities, and the practice of designing and implementing these activities to build, measure, and manage brand equity is referred to as strategic brand management (Kapferer, 2012). Included in strategic brand management is also building and managing the internal *brand identity*, and naturally also monitoring the external *brand image*. These will be explained in more detail in the subchapters dedicated to these concepts.

2.1.2 E-branding

Some of the biggest and most valuable brands in the world are only available online (BrandZ, 2018). However, pure internet brands or e-brands, such as Google, Amazon or eBay, function in a different context than other brands, as the online environment creates specific conditions, "which are themselves transforming traditional brand management" (Kapferer, 2008: 119). The difference between an e-brand and a regular brand with a web page, is that the latter uses its web page to give information about its products, but for an e-brand, the web page is the product itself. According to Kapferer (2012), internet brands can be characterized by the following:

- They do not have clients, but users, known one by one
- They promise a price advantage
- They prove by experience
- They are permanently adapting and updating
- They are easy to globalize

(Kapferer, 2012: 86)

According to Kapferer (2012), an internet brand is *experiential*, i.e. it is formed through the user experience: "each person forms their own idea by visiting personally, by living the experience" (p. 86). Loyalty is generated through systematically giving the user gratifying experiences. Internet brands are also *relational*. One of the

advantages of internet brands is that they are able to personalize each user's experience by learning from them and demonstrating their knowledge to them, thus creating one to one relationships with the users. Moreover, brand building online is much faster because feedback can be received immediately and from different segments, and can often be implemented faster (Kapferer, 2012). Improving a feature on a website requires less time and effort than reformulating a physical product such as a body lotion, which has to be developed and tested in a lab, then produced in a factory, and finally shipped out to retailers.

For the internet brand, its brand name is its domain name. The home page functions as the lobby of the brand and sets the expectation for the site experience. It can be a static page, safe and familiar, or it can be constantly changing with the latest news. Both of these strategies communicate something about the e-brand itself. The e-brand also communicates through the page's other ergonomic qualities – how it is to use and how much it can be customized to the user's preferences (Kapferer, 2008).

The challenge for e-brands is creating an emotional relationship with its users. According to Kapferer (2012), “[t]he value of a brand is measured by its capacity to create a personal tie of loyalty with the consumer, at a particular price level.” (p. 87) Even though there are advanced digital tools for personalization, studies show that consumers are not likely to feel close to e-brands, meaning that repeat visits do not necessarily translate into a genuine intimate relationship with the brand. Repeatedly visiting a website can also be due to the brand consistently ranking high in Google searches, getting a click and ending up in the browser's “Favourites”-section, meaning that it is more a question of ease than of real brand intimacy, Kapferer (2012) says. The very essence of the pure e-brand is also its greatest feat, because it will always lack the sensory, physical and palpable dimension which we seem to relate to closeness, as demonstrated by the question: “What is left of these brands once the screen is switched off?” (Kapferer, 2012: 87). Olenski (2018) also points out how important face-to-face communication is for genuine relationship building. A smile or gesture from a customer service employee can say more than a thousand words, and cannot be easily translated through a screen. Lately, we see a lot of online only retailers

trying to tackle these challenges by opening physical concept stores, pop-up shops and shop-in-shops. For example, Amazon got successful by selling books online, but recently the e-commerce giant has been opening physical bookstores around the US (McCarthy, 2017). This strategy meets the consumers' need to experience the brand in real life, but it can also help raise brand awareness among people who do not like to buy online.

So, while the online only world has its fair share of challenges, the companies than can overcome them can become extremely successful, as proven by companies like Amazon.

2.2 Brand Identity

According to Aaker (1996), a brand identity consists of a unique set of brand associations that the brand management wants to create or maintain, and implies a promise from the company to the consumer about the brand's functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits, in order to build a relationship with them. It is aspirational, and exists to provide direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. Kapferer (2008) also states that discovering the essence of brand identity is the best way to understand what the brand means overall. This is important, because it also determines where the brand can go, i.e. how easily it can extend.

This chapter introduces the concept of brand identity, its origin and characteristics, as well as how to determine and evaluate one's brand identity.

2.2.1 Origin

Although the concept of brand identity is relatively new, some of the ideas behind it go as far back as the 1950's. According to Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011), the concept of brand identity was formed by embracing many old concepts and joining

them all together to create a new one. They have analyzed previous literature on branding theory from the 1950's until today in order to find causal relationships among the theories, and developed an evolutionary map based on their findings (see figure 2). The map shows that brand identity has causal connections to seven other concepts: personality, positioning, brand equity, COO, brand communities and subcultures, relational branding, and CSR. This means that brand identity has the strongest causal connection with other concepts overall.

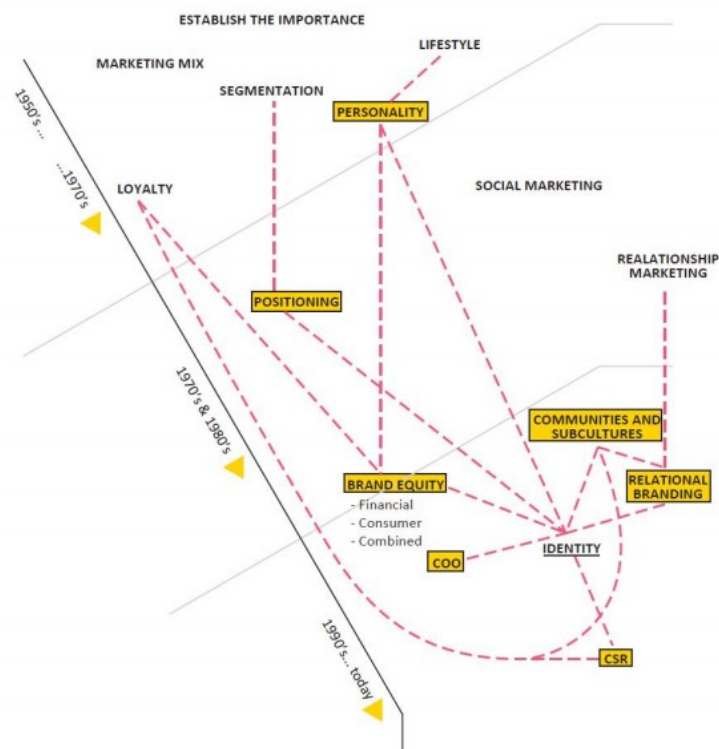


Figure 2: Evolutionary map of branding theory. Source: Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011: 14.

While the nature of brand identity is complex, and thus time consuming and difficult to influence, Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011) argue that future brands need to continuously work on attaining their desired identity if they want to keep up with the competition.

2.2.2 Characteristics

Meffert and Burmann (1996, as cited in Burmann et al., 2017) present four fundamental constitutive characteristics of brand identity, which are based on the way in which the human identity is formed.

The first characteristic of a brand identity is *reciprocity*. This means that the identity is formed and changes through interactions and relationships, especially long-lasting ones, with consumers and other stakeholders. The brand identity can only remain stable and develop if the brand establishes reciprocal relationships with many individual consumers.

The second characteristic is *continuity*, meaning that identity is formed by essential characteristics that have been retained over a period of several years. Essential characteristics describe the essence of the identity, and without them, the identity is lost. The essential characteristics are contrasted by accidental characteristics, which can change without loss of identity (Böhm, 1989 as cited in Burmann et al. 2017).

Thirdly, a brand identity should have *consistency*. This means that the identity represents an integrated, internal and external alignment of all characteristics of a brand and its employees. Only by having a largely consistent brand and avoiding contradictions can a company have a clear brand identity.

Finally, a brand identity should have *individuality* and be unique. This can be the result of one unique individual characteristic or a unique combination of individually common characteristics. Individuality is a problem for many brands, as they are not viewed as unique enough by consumers or their own employees. This leads to poor differentiation and a weaker position in the market.

According to Burmann et al. (2017), a brand identity should include these four characteristics in order to ensure consumer trust and confidence in the brand's capability and motivation.

2.2.3 Aaker's Brand Identity Model

Several models aimed at helping marketing and brand managers to determine brand identity have been developed. This thesis presents one of the most well-known brand identity models, which has been developed by David Aaker in 1996 (figure 3).

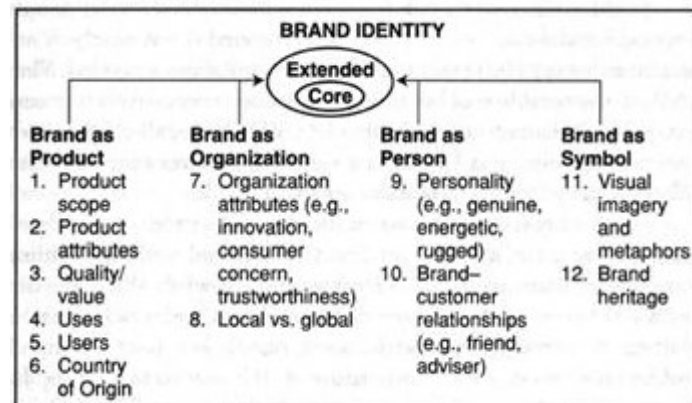


Figure 3: Aaker's brand identity model. Source: Aaker, 1996: 138.

The purpose of the Aaker's model is to help brand strategists ensure that the brand identity has texture and depth by dividing the brand into four perspectives: (1) product, (2) organization, (3) person, and (4) symbol. The goal of the model is "to help the strategist consider different brand elements and patterns that can help clarify, enrich, and differentiate an identity" (Aaker 1996: 137).

The first perspective focuses on the *product* aspect of the brand. Brands can link their identity to different elements of the product or service. The first element is the *product scope*. Here, the focus is on what product or products the brand is associated with. Proof of a strong brand is however not as simple as which product class a given person would think of when the brand is mentioned. Ideally, it should be the other way around – i.e. when the product class is mentioned, people think of that brand. The second element is *product attributes*, that is, attributes that create customer value by offering something new or better than competitors. What sets the brand apart from other companies who are offering similar products and services? Another element is the *quality/value element*. Brands need to provide a minimum level of quality to survive, but quality can also be a core element in the brand identity. Value, on the other hand,

refers to price. Brands can also attempt to link their product to a particular *use occasion*, meaning that although the product can be used in a wide variety of settings, it is closely associated with a specific situation or application, or alternatively, link its identity to a specific type of *user*. Lastly, brands can also associate their identity with the *country or region of origin*, given that the country or region will imply that the brand's products or services are authentic and/or of high quality. For example, IKEA is closely associated with its Swedish roots and Audi is a high-quality German car.

Another perspective forms the brand identity around the *organization*, which is created by the unique people, culture, values, and programs that exist within the company. In some cases, certain attributes can be applied to both the organization and the product: "Quality or innovation, for instance, could be a product-related attribute if it is based on the design and features of a specific product offering. If it is based on organizational culture, values, and programs (and thus transcends a particular product model context), however, it would then be an organizational-related attribute" (Aaker, 1996: 143). Some organizations may also have a combination of the two. The advantage of using organizational attributes to form an identity is that it is a stronger threat to copycats, as it cannot be replicated as easily as an object, and the abstract nature makes it harder for competitors to make claims of superiority. It is also broader and can apply to more than one product class, meaning that a brand which revolves heavily around its values is easier to extend than one which focuses on a single product.

According to Aaker (1996), the *brand-as-person* perspective is a useful way to create a stronger, more interesting brand. Like a person, a brand can also be described as fun, classy, youthful, or active. If identity is successfully communicated to the customer, and they in return identify themselves with the brand, it can create a self-expressive value and a higher inclination to buy. The brand personality also sets the tone for the relationship between the organization and the customer. According to Smit, Van den Berge and Franzen (2003), the stronger and more powerful the personality is, the more bonding there can be between brands and consumers. Aaker (1996) mentions Levi Strauss as a "rugged outdoor companion", while Hallmark is the "warm, emotional relative" (p. 144), for example. The brand personality can also imply a product

attribute, i.e. a feminine and classy skincare brand can suggest that its skincare products are also feminine and classy.

In branding, the identity can also be closely connected to the *symbols* that are used. A symbol “is something that stands for something else” (Fromm 1951, as cited in Barnes, 2017: 6). These symbols are designed to appeal to our intuitive and emotional sides (Jones, 2017). According to Aaker (1996), a strong visual symbol is useful for gaining brand recognition and recall. For example, almost every brand has a logo. Ideally, the logo is designed to reflect the personality of an organisation. But a visual symbol does not necessarily have to be a logo: it can also be a program (e.g. Ronald McDonald House), an employee (e.g. Steve Jobs), a specific design (e.g. Volkswagen Beetle), or a heritage. When we look at these symbols, we are supposed to connect them to a set of positive brand meanings and ideas. The symbols can be metaphorical, meaning that they imply some form of benefit to the consumer. These concept-related symbols try to capture the essence of an object or service. For example, the simple “swoosh”-logo by Nike holds meanings such as motion and speed. They can also be more concrete, pictorial symbols, which clearly represent the object or idea being offered, such as the Mr. Peanut logo, an illustration of a peanut in a top hat (Barnes, 2017).

The sum of these different perspectives and their respective elements is what forms the brand identity. However, not all elements or perspectives are equal, and some are more open to change than others. This depends on their position in the identity structure, which will be explained in more detail below.

2.2.4 Identity Structure

As mentioned earlier, Burmann et al. (2017) names *continuity* as one of the characteristics of a brand identity, which stands for the essential characteristics of the brand, and is contrasted by accidental characteristics, which can change over time. Similarly, Aaker (1996) talks of a brand identity structure consisting of a core identity and an extended identity, illustrated in figure 4.

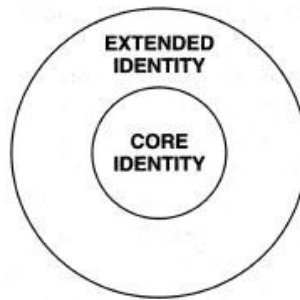


Figure 4: Aaker's identity structure. Source: Aaker, 1996: 146.

According to Aaker (1996), the core identity stands for the most important part of the identity and vital for the success of the brand: "It is the center that remains after you peel away the layers of an onion or the leaves of an artichoke." (p. 145). The associations held within the core identity are meant to remain unchanged over time, even when the company expands the brand into new products or moves into new markets.

The organization can find its core identity by answering the following questions:

- What is the soul of the brand?
- What are the fundamental beliefs and values that drive the brand?
- What are the competencies of the organization behind the brand?
- What does the organization behind the brand stand for?

(Aaker, 1996: 147)

Based on these questions, the core identity is closely connected to the organizational attributes mentioned in Aaker's brand-as-organization part of the identity: the unique people, culture, values, and programs that stand behind the brand.

However, no matter how accurate and well-researched the brand's core identity is, it is often not specific enough to hold all information about the brand identity by itself. This is where the extended brand identity becomes helpful, as it helps to complete the identity by filling in gaps and adding details to further establish what the brand is all about. Each element within the extended identity functions as a driver of the brand identity, but they do not make up the timeless, essential and unchanging parts of it.

The extended identity is easier to change and adapt as the market and consumer needs and demands also change. While the core identity defines the essence of the brand, often reflected by the brand's organizational attributes, the extended identity often determines how to communicate it by making use of the brand's personality. Perhaps surprisingly, the product scope can be part of either the core or the extended identity.

Based on the analysis on the brand's identity and identity structure, marketing managers can make corresponding *value propositions* to use in their marketing communication.

2.2.5 Value Propositions

Based on the brand identity, different values can be proposed and communicated to the consumers in the brand's marketing. The value proposition consists of functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits that aim to lead to a brand-consumer relationship and make the consumer buy the product (Aaker, 1996). The value proposition is similar to what Burmann et al. (2017) refer to as *brand promise*. Like the value proposition, the purpose of the brand promise is to communicate how the brand is useful to the consumer. Burmann et al. (2017) compare the brand promise to how we as people also decide which role and function we would like to fulfil within society, for example through our occupation. Likewise, a brand has to decide what kind of benefit it should provide to the consumer.

Functional benefits are the most obvious form of benefit, as they are based on a product attribute which provides functional utility for the user, and are thus directly linked to consumer decisions and experiences. Functional benefits are easy to communicate and support with scientific facts, and they can be extremely valuable: "If a brand can dominate a key functional benefit, it can dominate a category." (Aaker, 1996: 158). Aaker (1996) gives the example of the toothpaste company Crest, which was the long-running market leader due to its focus on the functional benefit of reducing cavities, which obtained support from the American Dental Association. Other toothpaste

brands had to use weaker functional benefits, such as fresh breath and whiter teeth, without the ADA endorsement. In order to become very successful, brands should therefore choose functional benefits that will appeal to consumers and stand up to competitors. This means “not only creating a product or service that delivers but also communicating that capability to customers” (Aaker, 1996: 159). Still, relying too much on functional benefits can also be a poor strategy as it is harder for consumers to differentiate and easier for competitors to copy. Thus, focusing the brand around a product is not sustainable in the long term. Aaker (1996) recommends expanding the brand identity by also taking into account brand-as-organization, -person, and -symbol. Another solution is to also include emotional and self-expressive benefits in the value proposition.

Emotional benefits refer to benefits that give the customer a positive feeling, such as safe, excited, fashionable or cool, when using the brand’s products or services. For example, Coca Cola’s slogan “Taste the feeling” is a statement that appeals to the consumer’s emotional side. Emotional benefits are especially useful when the product lacks interesting functional benefits, as they “add richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand” (Aaker, 1996: 161). They transform consumption into experience, and result in a stronger and more powerful brand.

While functional and emotional benefits can already empower brands on their own, the strongest brand identities include both kinds of benefits. According to Aaker (1996), most functional benefits have a corresponding feeling, which can be discovered by researching how customers feel when they are buying or using the product. For example, Victoria’s Secret bras provide comfort and support while making the wearer feel feminine, confident and sexy.

Finally, self-expressive benefits allow the customer to express their identity through using the product or service. Each and every one of us have an identity that we wish to communicate to the world, and one way of doing that is by purchasing and using different brands. Emotional and self-expressive benefits differ in that self-expressive benefits are largely found in public settings, i.e. in goods and services that are

consumed publicly, such as cars or clothes. Self-expressive benefits focus on how we want to be perceived rather than to how we want to feel, to hope and aspiration rather than memories and nostalgia, and are permanent rather than transitory (Aaker, 1996). If the brand succeeds in providing a self-expressive benefit, it can form a closer connection to the customer.

Aaker (1996) states that the brand identity and value proposition which brand chooses to be communicate to the public in their marketing is what forms the brand position and will set the expectation for the consumers.

Based on Aaker's (1996) theory on brand identity, brand identity structure, and value proposition, a model was created to summarize these concepts, illustrated in figure 5:

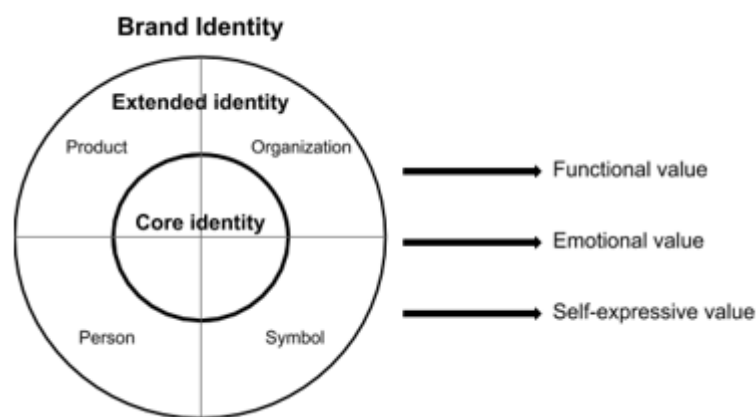


Figure 5: Summary of Aaker's brand identity theory. Based on Aaker, 1996.

This model consists of an inner circle and an outer circle, with the inner one representing the core identity, and the outer one representing the extended identity, as Aaker's own figure presented in figure 4. The circle as a whole is divided into four equal parts, each facet representing one of Aaker's brand identity aspects: product, organization, person and symbol. The sum of the brand identity is what determines the value proposition, which could be a functional value, an emotional value, a self-expressive value or a combination of them.

Aaker (1996) uses Nike as an example to illustrate the differences between core and extended identity. He also defines Nike's value propositions. In figure 6, we use the new model from figure 5 to demonstrate the Nike brand identity according to Aaker (1996).

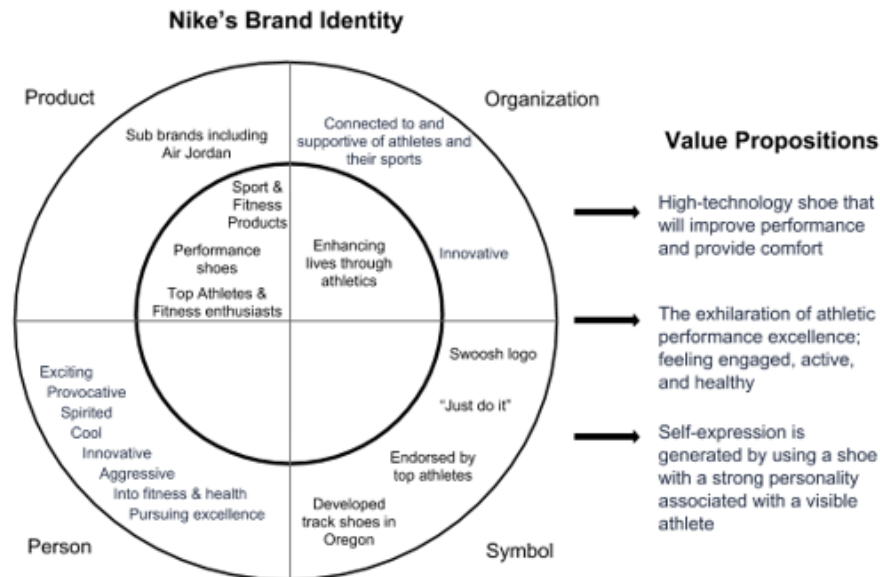


Figure 6: Nike's brand identity according to Aaker (1996).

According to Aaker's (1996) analysis, Nike's core identity is focused on product and organization. Nike's core product scope is sport and fitness products, and especially performance shoes. Their core identity is also focused around their users, consisting of both top athletes and fitness enthusiasts. Nike's products are a result of their core value and motto: enhancing lives through athletics. Thus, the essence of Nike is to improve the lives of athletes and sports enthusiasts by creating great sportswear with a focus on performance shoes.

Everything else about Nike is part of their extended identity. In the product facet, the sub brands contribute to strengthening the core identity. On an organizational level, Nike is innovative, close to the sports community and supports athletes in their communication. The tone of communication is also defined by Nike's personality, which is described as aggressive, cool, and determined, someone spirited and innovative who is always striving to do their best. The relationship with the consumer becomes almost like a coach/coachee relationship: this person is someone who will

push and motivate you to exceed your limits by setting the bar high for themselves. Nike uses symbols in the form of top athlete endorsers, a motivating slogan and their swoosh-logo to demonstrate their personality in a visual way.

Nike's brand identity results in functional, emotional and self-expressive value propositions. From a functional perspective, Nike offers sports shoes that are technologically innovative with a strong focus on performance while also being comfortable. From an emotional perspective, Nike offers excitement and happiness through athletic achievement that leaves the customer feeling engaged, active and healthy. From a self-expressive perspective, using shoes that are endorsed by a specific athlete shows identification with that athlete's personality.

All in all, Nike offers a clear, well-rounded, and cohesive identity, resulting in value propositions from all three categories.

2.2.6 Evaluating Brand Identity

After establishing a brand identity, the issue of evaluating the strength of the identity remains. A strong identity lays a successful foundation for the brand, while a weak one will not be able to compete with other, stronger brands, and must be readjusted.

According to Randall (1997), a strong brand identity is one in which all parts of the brand identity are consistent and supportive of one another. If any part of the brand identity is weak or conflicting with the rest of the identity, it will result in confusion among the consumers. However, consistent does not mean redundant – the same words should not appear in each dimension of the identity. Additionally, the words need to be strong and stand out. The total sum of the individual items should produce a brand identity with a real soul, instead of just an average profile (Kapferer, 2012). Aaker (1996) advises brand managers to bring the brand to life by expanding the extended identity: "A reasonable hypothesis is that within a product class, a larger extended identity means a stronger brand – one that is more memorable, interesting, and

connected to your life.” (p. 149). Aaker (1996) compares a small extended brand identity to an uninteresting and bland person who can be described with just a few words. By strategically and carefully expanding the extended identity, marketers can add more personality and flesh to the brand and create a more compelling experience for the consumers.

Aaker (1996) has also compiled a set of classic mistakes that produce weak brand identities, which he refers to as *brand identity traps*. They demonstrate the value of thinking about the brand from a larger perspective and give insight into what a brand identity should not be.

For example the brand image, i.e. how customers perceive the brand, is useful information for a company. But a brand must not rely too much on its image when defining its identity. Brand identity is strategic and forward-facing, while image is passive and based on past memories and experiences. The brand image trap is risky because it “lets the customer dictate what you are” (Aaker, 1996: 116). Brands need to put in the time and effort when developing their identity, to make sure it also reflects the internal aspirations of the brand, its soul and essence. The external brand image should only remain one source of input in the brand identity instead of *becoming* the brand identity. Kapferer (2012) recommends brand managers to ask themselves which of the many brand image items the brand actually *wants* to identify itself with, and to keep developing those items while still remaining true to its original, internal values.

The brand position, i.e. the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target group, can develop into a trap when too much focus is given to finding a brand position and something to communicate rather than a brand identity. In the end, instead of having a deep, rich brand identity, the company has an advertising line.

Another mistake is to decide on a brand identity based only on what customers are buying. Looking only externally is not the way to find original values and purpose. It also makes it more difficult for employees to embody an identity that comes from

outside rather than inside. Internal communication and using the organizational values as a source for inspiration will result in a stronger brand identity.

Aaker's (1996) final brand identity trap is product-attribute fixation trap. This is the most common mistake that brand managers make. A brand is more than a product or a service, and focusing your brand identity around your product is not sustainable. Products should be a result of internal inspiration based on the identity, goals and values, and not the other way around.

In summary, a strong brand identity is unique, consistent and coherent. It has different sources of input, and includes powerful and inspiring items, some which remain unchanged over time and some which are flexible, and they all that support each other. Most importantly, it is based on the internal values and aims of the organization that together represent the soul of the brand. On the opposite side, a brand identity should not be too restricted or tactical, as that can result in ineffective and flawed brand strategies.

2.3 Brand Image

While brand identity is defined as how the company itself want the brand to be perceived, the brand image instead focuses on how consumers and other stakeholders actually perceive it, defined by the brand associations held in their memory – the associations that come to mind when they see or think about the brand (Keller, 2012). While brand identity is strategic, active and looks to the future, brand image is usually passive and focuses on the past (Aaker, 1996). Brand image also differs from brand awareness in that brand awareness comes *before* brand image, as awareness is a precondition to the existence of a brand image. Once sufficient brand awareness has been established, marketers can focus more on crafting a positive brand image (Burmann et al., 2017; Keller, 2012).

However, forming a positive brand image is difficult, as the brand image is formed in many different ways. The brand's marketing activities are just one form of influence. According to Keller (2012), brand image is formed through all the experiences a consumer has with a brand: direct experience, online surfing, word-of-mouth, articles in the media, and assumptions that the consumer makes based on the brand name or its logo, mother company, country of origin, distribution channel, etc.

Keller (2012) further states that in order to create a positive brand image, companies should take marketing actions that link strong, favorable and unique associations to the brand in consumer memory. Direct experiences are the best way of creating strong brand attributes and benefits, followed by word-of-mouth. A brand's own advertising, on the other hand, form the weakest brand associations. But at the same time, the more personally relevant and consistently presented, the stronger the brand associations are, meaning that advertising can be also be effective as long as it is highly targeted and consistent over time. Similarly, favorability of brand associations is formed by presenting the brand to a consumer in such a way that that consumer is convinced that the brand's attributes and benefits will satisfy their needs and solve their problems. These associations will vary depending on situation or context, meaning that the brand is favored in one situation but not in another (Keller, 2012).

Riezebos (2003) also suggests that the brand image is formed in multiple ways simultaneously. His theory recognizes two types of image forming processes, which he refers to as *inductive and deductive inference*. In the inductive inference process, illustrated in figure 7, the consumer's brand image is formed in three ways: through personal consumption experiences with the branded article, through social influence, i.e. other people's opinions on the brand, and through exposure to the brand's marketing communication such as advertising.

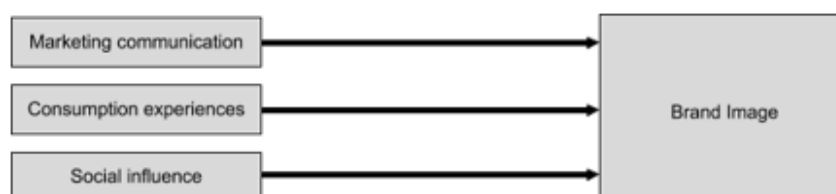


Figure 7: Process of inductive inference on brand image. Source: Riezebos, 2003: 66.

Although Keller (2012) holds advertising as the weakest form of image forming, Riezebos (2003) is of the opinion that ideally, the consumer's first contact with the brand is through image forming advertising. This is because the first impression is crucial for the success of a brand and hard to change afterwards. The brand's marketing communication should therefore also reflect the brand identity as accurately as possible, and set the correct expectations for the consumption experience.

Deductive inference refers to existing brand images which are especially relevant when a brand wishes to extend and wants to transfer brand associations from one product or service to another, and will be further discussed in chapter 2.5 on brand extensions.

According to Burmann et al. (2017), the brand image perceived by the consumer will result in a set of brand benefits, which could be described as the consumers' version of Aaker's (1996) value propositions. While Aaker's (1996) value propositions represent the benefits that the brand is trying to communicate, Burmann et al.'s (2017) brand benefits represent the actual perceived benefits from the consumer's point of view. Brand benefits can be divided into two categories: functional brand benefits and non-functional brand benefits.

Functional brand benefits are based on the consumer's knowledge of the brand's products, services and competences. Functional benefits can be further divided into utilitarian and economic benefits. Utilitarian benefits are concerned with the physical and technical features of the brand's products, similar to Aaker's (1996) functional value proposition mentioned earlier in this chapter. Economic benefits are based on the cost-benefit ratio and financial consequences for the consumer when they are using something from the brand. Burmann et al. (2017) agree with Aaker's conclusion that functional benefits are not sustainable in the long term, as product life cycles are getting shorter and technology is developing more and more rapidly. Thus, increasingly more focus is being given to non-functional benefits, which are similar to Aaker's emotional and self-expressive value propositions. Non-functional benefits are the social, extrinsic benefits and individual, intrinsic benefits. Social benefits are

similar to Aaker's self-expressive value proposition, as they serve also the purpose of satisfying the consumer's need for belonging to a group and expressing themselves in a social context. The individual benefits can be further divided into sensual/aesthetic brand benefits, i.e. beautiful and attractive features, and hedonic brand benefits, which allows the consumer to fulfill their need for personal fulfillment, passion, pleasure, and cognitive and emotional stimulation (Stolle, 2013, as cited in Burmann et al., 2017). The perceived brand benefits are what will determine the brand-customer relationship. A happy and satisfied customer that identifies with the brand may develop a loyal relationship with the brand, which is every brand's goal.

Being aware of one's brand image can also be useful when developing a brand identity. According to Burmann et al. (2017) the brand image will inevitably influence the brand identity through the relationships that it produces, but as stated by Aaker (1996), it is also important not to rely too much on the brand image when building the brand identity, it can have restrictive and damaging consequences.

2.4 Brand Integration

After identifying a company's brand identity and brand image, it is up to the brand manager to try to close the gap between these two as much as possible. A gap occurs when there is a difference between the brand identity and brand image, as illustrated in figure 8. A small gap is a sign of a strong brand, while a big gap is a sign of a weak one (Jones, 2017).

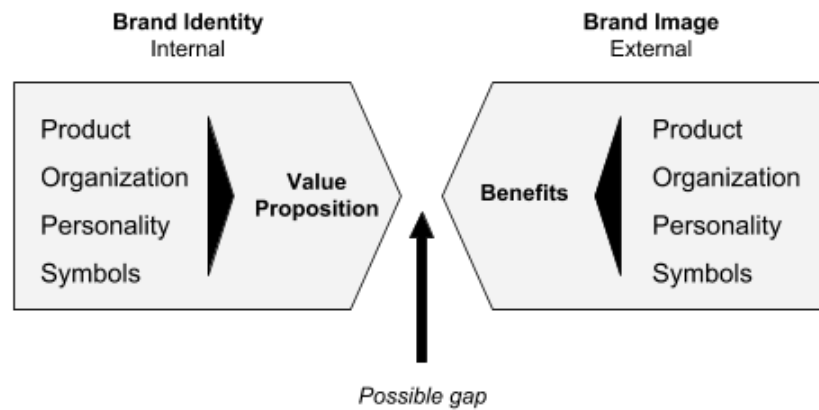


Figure 8: The brand identity/brand image gap.

Roy and Banerjee (2008) refer to the process of matching brand identity with brand image as *brand integration*, and have created two matrices, one for identifying the brand's current state of brand integration, and one for making decisions on future actions. These have been combined into one matrix in figure 9.

Brand Identity	Strong	Blind horse Action: Credibility building	Jackpot Action: Expansion
	Weak	Lame horse Action: Alteration	Dark horse Action: Relationship building
		Poor	Excellent
		Brand Image	

Figure 9: Brand derby matrix/CARE-ing Strategy. Adapted from Roy and Banerjee, 2008: 145.

This matrix has two sides, brand identity and brand image, with each having two states, strong/excellent and weak/poor. After defining one's brand identity and brand image, managers can refer to the four-cell matrix to find out if how successful the integration is and what steps to take next.

According to Roy and Banerjee (2008), if a brand suffers from both a weak identity and a poor image, it's a lame horse, and both image and identity need alteration. The

brand must find its unique selling point and create trust among consumers. Otherwise, it is impossible for the brand to succeed.

If the brand has a strong identity but a poor image, it is referred to as a blind horse. Here, the problem is often found in the positioning of the brand, or from a poor reputation of sister brand. Roy and Banerjee (2008) give the example of Kellogg's: despite its strong brand identity, the brand has failed to succeed in India due to not adapting their products according to the local market. A blind horse brand should focus on building credibility in the market and improving their corporate identity to gain the trust of the consumers.

Brands with a weak identity but an excellent image are dark horses. This means that they have acceptance and potential, and should take advantage of that by creating a communication strategy with focus on building strong relationships with consumers in order to make up for the weak identity.

Lastly, when the brand has succeeded in having both a strong identity and an excellent image, they have hit the jackpot, and the forerunners in the industry. Here, key to remain successful lies in being dynamic. Jackpot brands must aim higher and keep renewing and diversifying itself, for example by expanding the product portfolio, as to not become a "one trick pony" and to avoid copycats mimicking the benefits to gain market share.

2.5 Brand Extensions as Brand Shapers

Launching a new product is a good way for a firm to enter a new market, strengthen the existing brand and keep the product portfolio up to date. According to Keller (2012), a company has three choices for branding when it comes to launching a new product. It can (1) develop a new brand which is tailored to that product, (2) apply one of its existing brands to the new product, or (3) use a combination of a new brand and an existing brand. Approach 2 and 3 will result in a *brand extension*.

Simply put, a brand extension is the “use of an established brand name to enter a new product category” (Aaker & Keller, 1990: 27). Brand extensions can further be categorized into line extensions or category extensions. In a line extension, the parent brand is applied to a new product which is targeted towards a new market segment but still within the same product category as the parent brand. For example, the product can be introduced in a new flavor, form or size. In a category extension, the parent brand is applied to a whole new product category, e.g. a bodycare brand deciding to launch a hair care product (Keller, 2012).

The practice of companies using their existing brands to venture into new markets and to reach new customers is becoming increasingly common. In fact, the vast majority of new products on any one year are brand extensions (Keller, 2012). According to Kapferer (2012), the reason for this is that companies have realized that the brand is the most important asset for a company and a valuable source of competitive advantage when entering a growth market. Taking advantage of an already established and positive brand image is therefore often a smart move. As discussed in the section on brand image, Riezebos (2003) states that a brand image can be loaded with associations through the *inductive inference process*, i.e. consumption experiences, marketing communication and social influence. He also suggests that brand image can be formed through *deductive inference*, which is the process of establishing a brand image through transferring associations from another brand image. In the case of brand extensions, positive associations are transferred from one product (the source) to another product (the target). According to Riezebos (2003), two conditions must be fulfilled in order to perform the image transfer: Firstly, the two products must have something in common, e.g. a brand name, and secondly, the source must hold certain brand associations, so that there is something to transfer to the target. But Kapferer (2012) also points out that a brand name is also a promise, and a brand cannot make different promises with different products. This makes the jump to a different market difficult, as each market has its own specificities. Moreover, Kapferer (2012) states that the brand associations must be relevant to the extension, and the extension should also somehow be superior to the existing competition. Riezebos (2003) agrees that the extension should ideally fit into the core competences or the core associations of the

brand, and presents several strategies for achieving that. For example, the brand can make use of a distinguishing attribute in another product, offer the same product in another form, offer complementary products, offer substitute products, apply expertise in another product class, or transfer an experience world around a brand for other products.

According to Keller (2012), brand extensions are essential for keeping up with the competition: “For most firms, the question is not whether to extend a brand, but when, where, and how to extend it” (p. 435) On the other hand, Kapferer (2012) states that not every brand should or even could extend itself because their product is too prototypical and their know-how too limited. The ability of the brand to stretch itself is dependent on the deeper brand meaning – the core identity. In figure 10, Kapferer (2012) demonstrates type of brand and its ability to extend further.

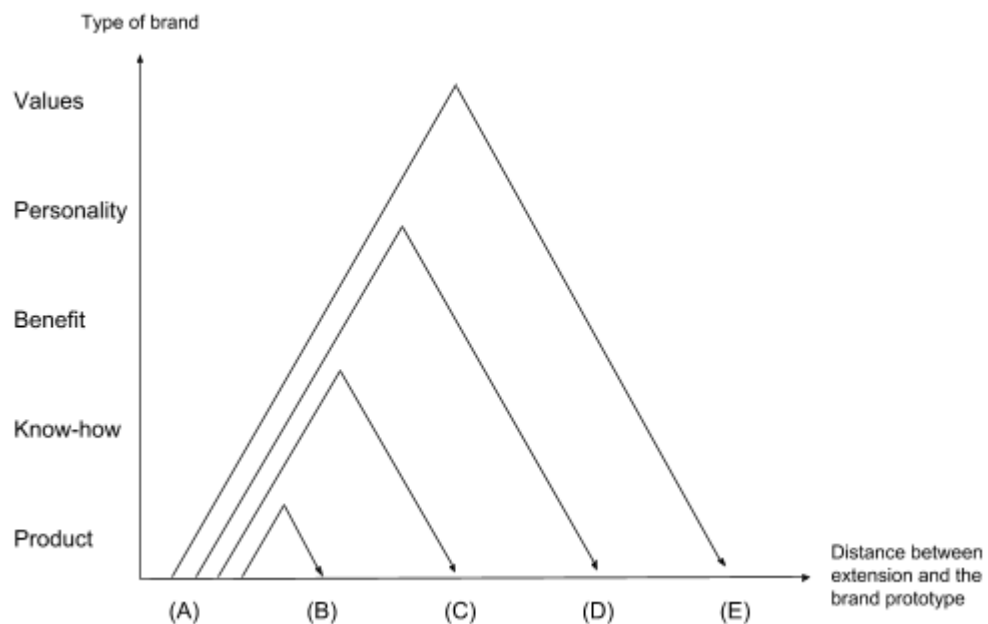


Figure 10: Type of brand and ability to extend further. Source: Kapferer, 2012: 291.

According to this figure, the further a brand wants to extend the brand meaning, the more intangible the brand meaning needs to be. A brand centered around a product has a very limited ability to extend. Change the brand meaning from product to know-how, and it becomes possible for brands like Heinz to produce both ketchup and mustard.

Brands centered around benefit can offer a variety of products providing that same benefit, such as Palmolive offering products like creams, lotions, shower gels, soaps and even dishwashing liquid, all giving the user soft skin. Personality can extend itself even further, but a brand based on core values is the easiest type of brand to extend into new product categories (Kapferer, 2012).

However, brand extensions can also be a strategy for changing the brand type. A successful brand extension can provide several benefits for the parent brand, among those clarifying the brand meaning, i.e. going from a narrow product scope to a wider concept. Brands should avoid limiting themselves too much and miss interesting market opportunities or fall behind more well-planned competitors as a consequence. Creating a broader product portfolio means that the brand can become a “one stop shop” for all the consumer’s needs in that particular area. For example, Weight Watchers started with fitness centers as their core product, and later expanded to low-calorie foods. The brand meaning thus changed from fitness centers in particular to weight loss and maintenance in general (Keller, 2012).

Similarly, a well-executed brand extension can also enhance the parent brand image by strengthening a current brand association, improving the favorability of a current association, adding a new brand association, or a combination of these (Keller, 2012; van Gelder, 2003). Well-chosen brand extensions can improve the credibility in the brand and lead to “improved perceptions of the expertise, trustworthiness, and likability of the company” (Keller, 2012: 439).

While brand extensions may be tempting due to the limited costs and lower introduction risks, they can also turn out to be disastrous: “In the worst case, an ill-conceived brand extension may seriously damage the original product and preclude the establishment of another brand with its unique associations and growth potential.” (Aaker, 1990). Indeed, the introduction of different line or category extensions may confuse or even frustrate consumers: “With 16 varieties of Coke and 35 versions of Crest toothpaste, consumers can easily feel overwhelmed” (Keller, 2012: 441). Even worse, a failed extension can seriously hurt the parent brand image instead of

strengthening it by weakening existing associations or adding new, undesirable ones. And it goes both ways: the associations of the parent brand can also hurt the potential of the extension if they are not a good fit (Aaker, 1990). Thus, brands should carefully determine the strategic fit before launching a new product in order to avoid damaging the brand name. Introducing an extension just for the sake of doing it, whether that is because the brand already has the means, facilities, or image to do so, or because ‘everyone else is doing it’ are all bad reasons that could potentially do more bad than good in the end (van Gelder, 2003).

From this we can conclude that brand extensions are about so much more than just launching a new product. They require a lot of thought and consideration, because they have the potential to change the whole brand. According to Kapferer (2012) brand extensions are such an important topic because “it is about the redefinition of the brand meaning” (p. 264). Following a brand extension, brand managers must ask themselves if the essence of the brand is still intact – if the extension preserves the core identity of the brand. Because of this, van Gelder (2003) recommends performing an internal and external analysis in order to determine the match between the brand and the new product or service. The internal analysis takes place within the organization and focuses on understanding and defining the strategic reasoning behind the extension, employees’ attitudes on the extension, and the consequences that the extension has on the brand identity and the brand’s marketing activities. The external analysis, i.e. the consumers’ perception of the brand extension, is what will ultimately determine the success of the brand extension. It is based on the extension’s ability to deliver value to the client, and shaped by the brand’s marketing activities, and the consumers’ own experiences and judgements.

Extending a brand is no simple procedure and several factors need to be taken into account in order to make the extension as successful as possible. There should be good reasons for the extension and its consequences on the parent brand also needs to be taken into account. Otherwise, it can result in confusion among the consumers and apprehensiveness towards the brand overall.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for this thesis has been laid out. We have discussed brands and branding in general as a form of differentiating products and services, and brand identity in particular as a strategy for finding the essence of the brand and as a way of guiding the brand forward. The consumer perspective, i.e. the brand image, has also been defined and explored. Finally, we have discussed brand extensions and their ability to shape brand identity and image.

In brand management literature, the brand identity is defined as the (internal) self-perception of the brand, while the brand image is defined as the (external) public perception of the brand. Aaker (1996) created the brand identity system consisting of brand-as-product, brand-as-organization, brand-as-person, and brand-as-symbol. The identity can further be divided into core identity and extended identity. The identity forms a value proposition, which is communicated to the target consumers. The consumers scan these marketing messages, along with social influence and their own experiences, and form an image of the brand around their perceptions of the product, organization, personality and symbols. This results in the perceived brand benefits. The perceived brand benefits will ultimately determine the brand-consumer relationship. A positive brand image with benefits that are relevant to the consumer increasing the chances of them becoming a loyal customer. The brand can also launch new products as line or category extensions, resulting in a brand extension. A brand extension can stem from the identity, but it can also function as a strategy for changing the identity – the relationship can go both ways. This entire process has been summarized in figure 11:

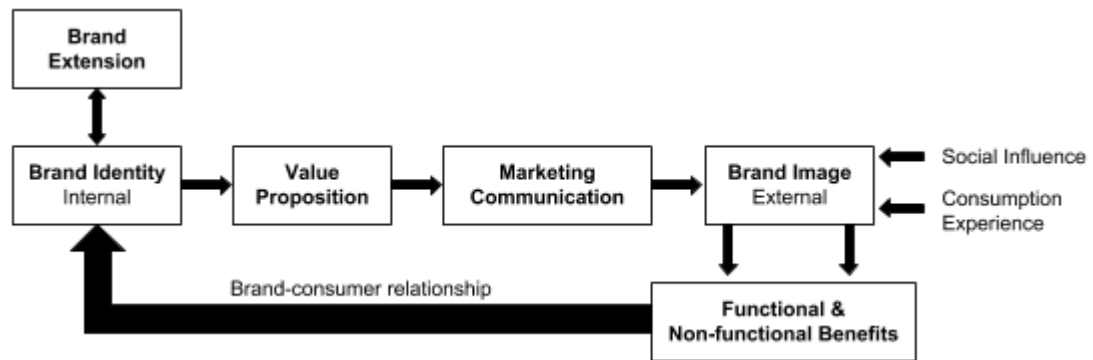


Figure 11: Conceptual model and summary of the brand identity and brand image building process.

The brand identity consists of four aspects, summarized below:

- Product: What are we offering?

Product refers to both physical characteristics of the product, as well as what the product actually does. It stands for product scope, product attributes, quality, value, uses and users.

- Organization: What do we stand for?

Organization stands for the culture, the people and the values behind the brand, and the aims that drive the brand forward.

- Personality: How do we communicate?

Personality stands for the way in which the company conducts itself and what kind of relationship it has with the consumer, described as if the brand was a person. It is based on feelings and emotions.

- Symbols: What metaphors do we use?

Symbols stand for a logo, slogan or other metaphors that the brand uses to further communicate the personality and values of the brand.

On the brand identity side, the sum of these aspects translate to the value proposition, which is a condensed version of the broader brand identity and the first step towards establishing a strong brand. It functions as the ultimate aspiration and motivation for

the brand, and aims to answer the target consumers' brand needs (Burmam et al., 2017). The value proposition is communicated to the consumers through the brand's marketing activities. The aforementioned steps form the internal branding process. These activities, along with the consumer's own experiences and social influences that they are exposed to, will form the brand image. The brand image translates to the functional and non-functional brand benefits in the mind of the consumer. The perceived brand benefits will ultimately determine the brand-customer relationship depending on how well the brand satisfies the customers' wants and needs. The relationship that the customer creates with the brand will also have an effect on the brand identity. As stated by Burmam et al. (2017) earlier in this chapter, reciprocity is one of the four characteristics of a strong brand identity, meaning that identity is formed and changes through long-lasting relationships with consumers and other stakeholders.

Finally, the brand may introduce brand extensions which will result in a change of the brand meaning. A brand extension can alter the whole process in a positive or negative way depending on its success.

This model shows brand identity and image as an ever-developing process. The benefit of this model is that it allows clear analysis through following the process and showing the relationships between different steps, making it easy to compare and find gaps.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with presenting the research method chosen for this thesis, as well as explaining how the data will be collected and analyzed, followed by a discussion on the trustworthiness of the data.

3.1 Research method

This thesis is a case study. A case study is an in-depth, narrow exploration of a single entity, such as an organization, a group of people, a campaign, or an event, which is bound by time and place. It can be quantitative, qualitative, or a mix of the two (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). It can also be intrinsic, instrumental or collective. An intrinsic case study is one that explores a single case without expecting to be able to make any wider generalizations. The case is studied for its own sake. An instrumental case study uses one case to gain insight about a specific theme with the expectation to be able to generalize or build theory from it. Finally, a collective case study uses data from many several instrumental cases in order to coordinate and compare them for theory developing purposes (Stake, 1995).

This case study is a single, intrinsic case study, as it aims to better understanding a specific phenomenon, brand identity and brand image, in a particular context, the case company. While the research is limited in the sense that it cannot be used to make wide generalizations, it still has the potential to give insight on what are considered best practices for certain challenges and therefore help similar organizations which are facing similar issues (Weathington et al., 2012).

The focus of this case study is online dictionary bab.la GmbH, which is also the researcher's employer. bab.la is a German company located in Hamburg. It was founded in 2007 by Andreas Schroeter and Patrick Uecker, and acquired by Oxford University Press in 2015 (bab.la, 2017b). bab.la's primary product is its website, which it describes as "a free online platform for language lovers and an online community of

global citizens” (bab.la, 2017b). It provides 44 dictionaries for 28 languages, verb conjugation for 13 languages, phrasebooks for different categories such as travel, business or academia, language games and quizzes, an international internship platform, and an online magazine called “Living abroad”, where expats share experiences and advice about living in a foreign country in the form of articles (bab.la, 2017b).

This company was chosen due to good access and connections to collect the necessary data needed to perform the research. Moreover, the company had recently given its website a makeover and launched a new product as an attempt to rebrand itself, making it an interesting case for brand research. Also, no similar study has been conducted at the company before. Lastly, the results and insights gained from this study could help and support the case company’s increased focus on brand building in the competitive online market.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research

As this research does not aim to make wider generalizations, but rather to gain deep insight about a problem set in a particular context, it is more appropriate to use a qualitative method. Qualitative research methods are usually associated with interpretivism, meaning that it focuses on “understanding people’s world, interpreting their experiences and making sense out of it.” (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015: 13) This approach is usually used when the researcher seeks to explore a new or less researched area, which is not well defined or well understood by current theory or research.

Qualitative research collects data from natural settings (Horn, 2009). It is highly subjective, and it focuses on words rather than numbers. Studies are small-scale, that is, the researcher uses small samples in order to provide rich, detailed and holistic observation, description, and explanation. The researcher plays an important role, as they are in fact the main research instrument, who will engage with the people participating in the study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Qualitative methods include

interviews, observations, focus groups, and more. The method chosen should disrupt the natural setting as little as possible (Horn, 2009). In qualitative research, the assumption is that people's experiences are context-bound, meaning that they are not independent of time, location, or the mind of the participant (Gupta & Awasthy, 2015).

This research seeks to understand the complex nature of brand identity and brand image. A qualitative method is appropriate as it allows the researcher to get into the topic from a wider perspective without giving pre-made choices or answers which may not reflect the true feelings and attitudes of the people involved, thus potentially exposing new insight and breaking previous assumptions.

3.2 Data Collection

Qualitative data collection requires different sampling techniques than that of quantitative research. Qualitative studies are more flexible and the sampling develops along the research process. The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize a population, but to gain insight into the experiences of specific groups of individuals, or of a specific phenomenon in its setting (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Below, the sources, method and sampling used for data collection in this thesis are explained.

3.2.1 Sources

There are two kinds of data sources: primary and secondary. Primary sources are collected first-hand by the researcher and are meant to be analyzed and answer the research questions. While primary data is useful as it is tailor-made to fit the research and the information is fresh, it is also time-consuming and involves risks such as not getting enough respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The collection of primary sources are explained in more detail in the following sub-chapter 3.3.2 on method.

Secondary sources are data that have already been collected by someone else for a different purpose. The data can be raw or organized, and internal, e.g. derived from the case company, or external, i.e. published for everyone to see (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). In this thesis, secondary data has been utilized as a way of gaining background information and defining the research problem. Internal company information was provided by the case company or found on their web page, and provided knowledge on what kind of empirical data to collect.

3.2.2 Method

The data collection method chosen for this study is interviewing. Interviewing is a qualitative approach that involves an in-depth conversation between the researcher and a person or people of interest, i.e. with qualities that are important to the research objectives (Malhotra, Birks & Wills, 2013).

Interviewing is an effective way of exploring meanings, perceptions and understandings (Horn, 2009), and one-to-one interviews is the most common form of interviewing. The other forms are group interviews or focus groups, which involve several people (Cole & James, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2013) The data collected in interviews is situated within its own social context, meaning that the responses gathered from the interviews are the subjective views of the interviewees: “Interviews, therefore, are an appropriate method to use when you wish to understand the constructs that interviewees use as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular situation, product or issue” (Daymon & Holloway, 2011: 168).

Interviews generally have three different types of structure: unstructured, structured, or semi-structured. Unstructured interviews have no predetermined questions, apart from an opening question. It’s an informal conversation that relies on “the spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003: 239). This type of interview is useful when the research is broad and not well-defined. The researcher’s task is mainly to listen and observe, and the respondent is free to take the

topic to any area they wish (Horn, 2009). This type of interview generates the most amount of data, but at the same time, a lot of the data will not be relevant to the research objective. Structured interviews, on the other hand, resemble survey questionnaires. Every question is predetermined and asked in the same order by the different interviewees. This kind of interview is very limiting and can prohibit interesting ideas and angles from coming up spontaneously. The semi-structured interview is a mix of the previous two. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher has an interview guide at hand, which helps in keeping the interview focused, however, there is still room for flexibility and asking spontaneous questions as the ideas arise on the spot (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

The interviews in this thesis were conducted with employees and users of the case company. The internal interviews aimed not only at finding out information on brand identity, but also on brand strategy, brand extension and brand communication, thus capturing all the internal steps in the brand identity and brand image process shown in figure 11. External interviews covered the remaining steps.

The interviews were in-depth and one-to-one, as they offer the opportunity to dig deeper into the thoughts and ideas of the respondent, while also eliminating the risk that opinions are conformed by social pressure, especially since the internal interviewees from the case company are people from different parts of the organizational hierarchy. In addition, by interviewing people separately, their answers are more easily compared to note interesting differences and similarities, without the risk of someone taking over the discussion.

Moreover, this study opted for semi-structured interviews, as it was deemed to be the best way of collecting data by remaining somewhat focused on the topic at hand, yet at the same time allowing spontaneous follow-up questions from the researcher, and personal thoughts and topics of interest from the respondents to be brought up at any time. Interview questions were largely based on Aaker's (1996) model, summarized in figure 5. For the internal interview, each employee was asked a set of slightly different questions along with a set of identical ones, as they have different roles and

responsibilities. Internal and external interview guides can be viewed in appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

3.2.3 Sampling

For the internal employee interviews purposive sampling was used, meaning that one's own judgement is used to select cases which will be most helpful in answering the research questions (Saunders et al., 2012). The case company has ten full time employees excluding interns. Three of these are directly involved in marketing: the Product Owner, the Online Marketing Manager, and the Content and Online Marketing Assistant. These three employees were thus selected for the interviews. A summary of the internal interviews is shown in table 1. Interview guides can be found in appendices 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1: Summary of internal interviews

Interviewee (position)	Employee since	Interview date	Duration
Online Marketing Manager	2014	29.09.2017	55 minutes
Product Owner	2015	27.10.2017	30 minutes
Marketing Assistant	2016	27.10.2017	30 minutes

For the external interviews, self-selection sampling was chosen, which is a volunteer sampling technique where individuals are allowed to show their desire to take part in the research. The benefit of this technique is that individuals often choose to participate because they have opinions or feelings regarding the research (Saunders et al., 2012). This is an important point for this research, as opinions and feelings are needed in order to create a brand image.

The user study was limited to Polish users between 18 and 34 years old. This is because they form the case company's biggest user group according to website traffic from Google Analytics (see appendix 1).

The need for interview participants was advertised on the case company's Facebook and Twitter pages. A post was created in November 2017 and set to be visible only to people who live in Poland or speak Polish. Those who were interested in participating were directed to a Google form where they had to insert the following information:

- How long have you been using bab.la?
- How often do you use bab.la?
- Age
- Gender
- Location
- E-mail

The form was open for two days and 48 people responded. Out of the 48 respondents, five users between 20 and 24 years old were chosen for interviews. Out of those five users, three were female and two were male, and they had all been using bab.la for at least one year, which is important as the brand was extended ten months prior. One interviewee was a daily user, and the rest used the website every week. Loyal, frequent users were selected as they were deemed to be more acquainted with the brand.

Interviews took place between late November and late December 2017. The interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes and were conducted over Skype. The user interviews and user profiles have been summarized in table 2. The user interview guide can be found in appendix 5.

Table 2: Summary of external interviews

Interviewee	Sex	Age	User since	Frequency of use	Interview date	Duration
User 1	F	21	5+ years	Weekly	28.11.2017	30 minutes
User 2	M	22	1+ year	Weekly	6.12.2017	25 minutes
User 3	F	24	1 year	Weekly	15.12.2017	35 minutes
User 4	F	20	3+ years	Weekly	16.12.2017	25 minutes
User 5	M	23	1+ year	Daily	19.12.2017	40 minutes

3.3 Data Analysis

After collecting qualitative data, in this case by conducting interviews, this data must be brought to order, first through transcribing, then by organizing, structuring and construing meaning to it. Transcribing means typing down the audio recordings into words, which is often a time-consuming process, but makes analysis easier. Then, the data can be categorized and reorganized by finding relationships and connections (Saunders et al., 2012).

Interviews were transcribed shortly after they were conducted and sent to the participants for validation. Categorizing and coding the data was already considered when developing the interview questions, and because the interview questions themselves were divided into categories based on the theory, it made it easier to group and compare findings. The categories and subcategories for the internal and external interviews can be found in appendix 6.

The small sample also meant that the amount of data was small enough to analyze and find themes and patterns manually without the help of special computer software. Transcriptions were read several times and interesting findings were highlighted and then grouped together under general themes. From there, the data was organized into specific subthemes. An illustration of the categorization structure used is shown in table 3:

Table 3: Illustration of categorization structure used during data analysis

Quote	Subtheme	Theme	Subcategory	Category
"This is the nice point in bab.la, that you can see in which situation which word is most suitable." (User 1)	Context sentences	Positive differentiation	Product attributes	Product
"When you have bab.la you have options, you have using, how it can be used, that word in a meaning" (User 3)				
"For me it's the easy way to find some kind of good translation, and some examples how it is used in sentences, because sometimes, you know, there are many translations and I need the right one, so I like to see it in a sentence so I know that it's the right one" (User 4)				

Findings from employee and user interviews were first kept separate to compare them internally, before being compared to each other. The same categorization structure was used for the analysis of both internal and external interviews.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Reliability is generally defined as the extent to which the results could be reproduced by following the same method. But unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not aim to produce results that could be reproduced. Qualitative research is subjective in nature, as the researcher acts as a research tool and the results and conclusions may be influenced by his or her characteristics and background. Therefore, it would be unlikely for other researchers to achieve the same results, even in similar circumstances and conditions. However, the researcher can and should be aware of their own role and assumptions during the whole research process, and critically reflect on how those could affect the outcome of the study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). In the case of this thesis, the researcher was also an employee of the case company. The researcher has tried therefore to avoid their own preconceptions and opinions as a company employee, in order to not influence the outcome. The interview questions have also been open-ended with no attempt to steer the interviewees towards a certain answer.

According to Horn (2009), validity in qualitative studies refers to the accuracy and thoroughness of the study. Again, the validity of a qualitative study is more on the subjective side and is linked to the sampling method that was used. When the sample is small, as in this study, more emphasis is given to having an in-depth exploration of the participants, as well as having a justified method for the sampling process, meaning that the sample contains the characteristics needed for answering the research questions.

Daymon and Holloway (2011) also present internal and external validity as methods for proving validity in qualitative research. Internal validity refers to how accurately the findings reflect the participants' social world and the research objective. The external interviews were done with Polish users, as the case company's brand is the strongest in Poland. Due to the respondents being Polish and the researcher not, interviews had to be conducted in English. In order to make sure communication was smooth and that the participants could express themselves comfortably in order to provide valid results, only users who felt that they had very strong English skills were asked to participate during the sampling process. Moreover, the thesis gains authenticity by presenting the findings to the participants and asking them to verify, comment, assess, challenge and/or correct the researcher's interpretation, a method called *member checking* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

External validity, on the other hand, refers to how generalizable the findings are, meaning the extent to which the results are applicable to other contexts and settings. This is difficult to achieve in qualitative work, and in this intrinsic case study, it is not what the research is intended to do. Instead, the purpose is to investigate experiences, feelings and thoughts of specific groups of individuals. However, the conceptual model presented in figure 11 is generalizable and can be used in other studies examining the relationships between brand identity, brand image and brand extension.

4 RESULTS

This section deals with presenting the results collected from the internal interviews with bab.la employees and the external interviews with Polish bab.la users.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the results from the internal interviews, including brand identity, value propositions and marketing communication. The second part presents the results from the external interviews with Polish bab.la users and is divided into brand image, brand image influences, and perceived functional and non-functional brand benefits. While the findings from the internal and external interviews will be discussed separately in this chapter, they will be compared against each other in chapter 5.

The purpose of this chapter is to on finding patterns within the two groups in order to form a good understanding of the brand identity and brand image. Relevant quotes and examples from the interviews will also be included to illustrate the findings. The results from the data collection will serve as the basis for the analysis in the following chapter.

4.1 Internal Interviews

4.1.1 Product

bab.la's main product is the multilingual dictionary, which exists in 44 different language combinations, with other language-related products surrounding it, such as verb conjugations and grammar lessons, but according to the interviewees the company is heavily focusing on the dictionary and not as much on the other language products.

When asked what makes bab.la's online dictionary different, the overriding theme is the *interaction with users*. The Product Owner states: "we add words suggested by

users and we reply to every, each user that wants to be informed about a word [...] that's something that makes us different". Similarly, the Online Marketing Manager says that "what makes bab.la different is the approachness [sic] with the user, we are very close to the users, we interact a lot with them and they contribute a lot to the dictionary, they are given the possibility to leave their stamp or their imprint [...] in the content". The Product Owner however also mentions that this leads to misunderstandings in the brand image: "I think that many people perceive bab.la as user-generated content more than it is [...] the idea of bab.la is that there is this huge community adding words to our dictionaries [...] and it's not, this is the perception I think of our brand [...] our branding is that users contribute, but then the content is curated by us". The Marketing Assistant says that in the past, bab.la's strength was in the context sentences, which allowed the users to find different translations for a word depending on the context. However, in recent years, this attribute is also found in competitors such as Linguee. The Marketing Assistant therefore states that "at this moment right now I can honestly say that I don't know how bab.la differs itself from for example Linguee, aside from Living Abroad".

Living Abroad is bab.la's online magazine which was launched in January 2017. This led to a brand extension for bab.la, according to the Online Marketing Manager: "It used to be solely an online dictionary but nowadays it's a bit more than that [short pause] it's a platform that combines language learning and a cultural experience". The Online Marketing Manager states that the website now goes beyond languages and is more about communication, specifically communication that is needed when you move abroad.

Similarly, the Product Owner states that Living Abroad is a new branding strategy which aims at attracting young expats: "by looking at our users, we saw that they are young users, they want to use language in context for practical reasons and that is why we thought that the magazine Living Abroad is a good fit and something that could make us different and special". However, the Marketing Assistant doubts the fit and questions the connection between the dictionary and the magazine: "For me there is a huge gap there that there is nothing in between to connect both of them, I mean the

common link should be language, but the articles we write are not about language, you know? [...] It's more about culture.” By contrast, the Online Marketing Manager sees a clear connection between the two, namely breaking down communication barriers: “it was all about building bridges to avoid all these communication barriers and communication is more than just a language [...] communication goes beyond words, it's the culture, the cultural nuances of the country where you're moving to, so the connection for me was natural”. According to the Product Owner, the magazine is seen as a side project which may or may not take off, and if it doesn't, the company must find something else to focus on and to differentiate itself through something else: “It's an experiment, yeah, until we get what would work”.

According to Aaker (1996), brands can associate themselves with a specific type of user. The Online Marketing Manager explains that bab.la would like to associate itself with young, multilingual and educated people, especially with the new product: “we would ideally reach more young people because the product we are offering now, let's face it, the magazine is not gonna be read by the older generation cause probably they won't move abroad”. The Marketing Assistant has a similar opinion: “the users that matter in a way are the students”. The company would therefore like the brand to be more closely associated with the younger generation of language learners, such as students or young professionals.

In terms of quality, the company is constantly trying to improve the quality of its content and to establish itself as a higher quality brand. According to the Product Owner, focus is on improving the content by adding deep information in the form of different senses and adding more structure to the entries. The aim has changed from creating large dictionaries in many languages to improving what they already have.

4.1.2 Organization

The organizational culture of bab.la is an important part of the brand identity. The team consists of young, multilingual and multicultural expats who are using different

languages every day. This is a direct reflection of the users that the company wants to target and associate themselves with. The Product Owner also states that this had a big influence on the choice of brand extension, as it came from the team's own expertise and experiences – being in a new country (Germany) and therefore adjusting to a new language and culture and being able to share one's own experiences. Having a young and international team also impacts the company culture:

“It's like a family [...] we take care of each other as people before as colleagues [...] we're expats, and we're living here, we're supporting each other because we know less people, we don't have our support network from home”

The Marketing Assistant also sees the cultural diversity as a strength: “I like the idea of everybody coming from a part of the world, I think that certainly adds positivity”. The diversity within the team is directly connected to the company value of being open-minded, according to the Online Marketing Manager:

“Open-mindedness is another value of bab.la and I see this a lot now that we are recruiting people from India, from Africa [...] we are welcoming and we are looking forward of having all of these different cultures into our office and learn from it and to grow as a dictionary”

Another core value is open communication, which the Online Marketing Manager describes as being naturally reinforced through the open office environment and the lack of physical walls.

Putting the user first is a core value of bab.la. When asked about the overall goal for bab.la, the Product Owner states: “listening to the users and delivering a product to the users”. The Marketing Assistant likewise states that the bab.la team is at the user's disposal and that they work for the users. According to the Product Owner, one of the company's core competences is its ability to adapt itself and its goals according to what's needed. This is also a characteristic of e-brands in general – they are constantly adapting and updating themselves, and can implement feedback very quickly (Kapferer, 2012).

However, when asked if the vision and the goals are shared throughout the company, the Online Marketing Manager's answer is skeptical: "No, I don't think so. I think it's a bit unclear". Indeed, the Marketing Assistant, who is at the bottom of the hierarchy, feels confused and left out: "I can't see the bigger picture right now because for me things are confusing and I'm not in the middle of everything to hear all the details". This indicates that the internal communication is not working as well as it should be. The Online Marketing Manager is hoping for clarity: "I think it is time that bab.la sets clear goals, a clear motto, clear objectives of what we want to achieve". This is especially in reference to the Living Abroad magazine: "we need to set the goals we want to achieve with the magazine 'cause it's the new product [...] there are clearer goals regarding the dictionary than the magazine". The Product Owner agrees with this: "Right now, I think it's very sporadic, and it's too much without a plan probably and we will need to formalize".

4.1.3 Personality

The interviewees answer the question about the bab.la brand personality from different standpoints. The Product Owner describes someone who is very similar to the ideal bab.la user. According to the Product Owner, bab.la is an outgoing young woman who loves to travel and who has many friends from all around the world. She is curious and always learning something new.

The Online Marketing Manager describes bab.la as an informal, easy-going and open-minded person who is proud of himself or herself, and who likes to have fun. This personality is grounded in the company culture: "I feel I'm describing the atmosphere inside of the office [...] but yeah the people inside of the office are really who in the end who make bab.la possible".

Finally, the Marketing Assistant describes the personality through the relationship with the user: bab.la is like a dog – loyal, friendly and caring to the person that they serve:

“There is this, this care thing, you know that animals have and I think it’s included in the brand of loving languages, we love what we do [...] we work for the users, that’s a doggie for me”

Thus, the bab.la personality does not only define the relationship between the brand and the users, but is the result of the brand’s values and the internal and external relationships – staff to user as well as staff to staff.

4.1.4 Symbol

bab.la’s visual identity is mainly centered around the color blue, which dominates the website. But after the new website launch, another color, orange-red, was introduced in an effort to visually separate the language product and the Living Abroad product. Moreover, the Product Owner states that after the relaunch, the page design is more heavily targeting the branding concept of communication because the user feedback button is more visible than before, thus also acting as a form of symbolism for interaction and being receptive to listening to the user.

The slogan, “Loving Languages”, conveys the spirit of the brand. The care for languages and the strive for interaction are both embodied in the logo, which consists of a speech bubble. However, according to the Online Marketing Manager, the slogan “Loving Languages” is in need of an update because it does not convey the new extended brand: “It needs an update, because Loving Languages is too restrictive. It is what we used to be and it is still our main product [...] but if we wanna, if we want also expats to come to our site and people to associate our brand with not just languages but also cultural exchange, multiculturalism, this is more than languages, this goes beyond so we do need a new motto” (Online Marketing Manager). The Product Owner agrees and also considers options for a new slogan: “We’ve been thinking for a while whether changing to Loving and Living Languages because of this new branding strategy of Living Abroad”.

4.1.5 Value Propositions

Based on the employee interviews, brand benefits from mainly the product-related and emotional categories can be proposed. Product-wise, bab.la offers a dictionary with the added benefit of interaction between the user and the company. Users can easily contact the editor and give feedback or request a translation. The editors are also quick to reply: “we answer right away, within 24 hours, latest 48”, according to the Online Marketing Manager. This is also related to the emotional value of feeling like the company cares about the user and that the users are contributing to the content, that they are being listened to and that their feedback is truly taken into consideration. In fact, users often write back to thank the editors for the quick reply (Online Marketing Manager) and to express their surprise at receiving personalised responses: “sometimes you receive these replies that users are saying, wow, there is actually someone replying to me, there is somebody behind this dictionary” (Product Owner). The Product Owner states that bab.la does not just offer communication in the form of translations, but also *real* communication in the form of language discussions: “it’s not person to screen, the screen is between the bab.la editor and the user”. Furthermore, bab.la offers more than just translations – they also give information and advice about culture and life in other countries through their Living Abroad magazine, thus also serving those who need more than just linguistic knowledge as they travel and live around the world. bab.la wants to offer both linguistic and cultural information for the people who are ready to use their foreign language skills in practical situations. From a self-expressive point of view, the Online Marketing Manager believes that people who use bab.la want to be perceived as citizens of the world, as cosmopolitans – people who are familiar and at ease with many different countries and cultures.

4.1.6 Marketing Communication

This section explores bab.la’s current marketing communication efforts as they influence the brand image. The purpose of marketing communication is to raise brand

awareness and to share the set value propositions in order to catch the target consumers' interest, or to shape or change existing consumer perceptions of the brand.

As bab.la's product is its website, it is an e-brand and the brand is formed through the user's experience of the site (Kapferer, 2012). The website is thus the main form of brand communication. According to the Online Marketing Manager, the company relies heavily on search engine optimization (SEO) in its marketing, as most visitors find them through Google. Aside from the website, the only other communication channel is social media. The company is active on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The company does not invest a lot in marketing in terms of money, but recently there has been more time and effort put into the marketing content. The Online Marketing Manager states that the company should go further with more social media campaigns and more partnerships with other players in the same niche in order to raise brand awareness, and that they have had several proposals but they have not engaged. The Online Marketing Manager suspects that the upper management does not care enough about brand building to invest in it, and that maybe this is what is preventing bab.la from building a brand.

4.2 External Interviews

4.2.1 Product

All interviewees use bab.la mainly for its dictionaries. Two of the users also mention using the conjugation tool.

The interviewees describe bab.la as a good translation service. They were asked to compare bab.la with its competitors, which can help identify the brand's strengths and weaknesses (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). The usability and simplicity of the website came up in most of the interviews:

"I think the simplicity is really the key of this website and I like it a lot" – User

1

“It’s really easy to use it” – User 3

“It’s really easy for me to get around this site” – User 4

The interviewees also thought that the site is well-designed, which is also connected to the simplicity in some of the cases:

“The design of the website I think it’s cool because it’s fresh, there is not too much information” – User 3

Of course, the quality of the service is also an important aspect. The interviewees enjoy using bab.la also because of the large amount of translations and the ability to see the translations in context. This is what they felt made bab.la stand out from its competitors:

“For me, it’s awesome because it’s, it’s something new, it’s not like Google translator when you put some words or maybe sentences, because when you have bab.la you have options, you have using, how it can be used, that word in a meaning, and of course in bab.la, it’s interesting because you have many, many words” – User 3

“For me it’s the easy way to find some kind of good translation, and some examples how it is used in sentences, because sometimes, you know, there are many translations and I need the right one, so I like to see it in a sentence so I know that it’s the right one” – User 4

Google Translator was most often mentioned as a competitor to bab.la. According to User 3 and User 5, the difference between bab.la and Google Translate is that bab.la is better for actual language learners. User 3 states that Google’s translation tool only gives you the translation but not the ability to understand the meaning in context. It does not improve your language skills because it does not help you understand how the word is used, and it also blocks your creativity. By using bab.la’s dictionary and looking at the examples, you can take that knowledge and apply it to your own situation: “It helps you to create something by your own, not only translate something [...] you have to think how to write, how to, how to create something like sentence, and after reading using, you can write your own sentence” (User 3).

Similarly, User 5 thinks that “bab.la is better for people who are really studying something [...] it's like for people who are using a dictionary regularly”. User 5 admits to using Google Translate when he just needs a quick translation, but thinks that bab.la is easier to use when you need more grammatical information: “Rarely I'm using [Google Translate] to translate words, because Google Translate is harder to use if it goes about actually getting a translation and articles [...] It is easier to use for example bab.la than Google Translate when I want to get articles”. Moreover, User 3 finds that bab.la is more reliable because the translations come from dictionary editors and the examples are from real texts and not machine-made: “I know there is not a computer inside”. User 1 only uses Google Translate for Czech translations, which are not offered by bab.la, and prefers bab.la in all other cases.

All interviewees associate bab.la with young people, especially students, who want to learn foreign languages for either practical or personal purposes:

“On one hand, these people are students I think between let's say 15 years old until 25, where they need some things for school, but also on the other hand I think that there can be quite many users of people who are not forced to study some languages, but they just want to and they are doing it for developing themselves, like, I would say about 25 years old.” – User 1

“I would say someone in maybe their twenties [...] a person who is still learning and needs the languages to develop the skills and the experience in what they do [...] [a typical user] would be a student for me, in their mid-20, I'd say” – User 2

The users that the interviewees describe also hold many similarities to themselves: young students or professionals who are interested in languages:

“I think the typical user is just a student, just like me” – User 4

When asked if they had ever read bab.la's online magazine about living abroad, only two of the five interviewees, User 4 and User 5, were aware that bab.la has such a magazine. User 4 has never actually read it, and User 5 states: “I read probably just one to three articles and it was nice but it didn't make me sticking to it”. Still, all users

believe that a magazine about living abroad fits into the brand and that they could see themselves using it if they lived abroad.

4.2.2 Organization

The organizational aspect of the brand is where the interviewees had the most difficulty. None of the interviewees were aware of any organizational values or goals.

User 5 stated that bab.la lacks a real history:

“Right now bab.la is for something like, it's just a website, but I don't know what's the genesis of that website, do you know? Like I'm using this website but I don't know who is the creator, I don't know, I know actually nothing about this”.

User 3 and User 4 imagined that the people who work at bab.la are passionate about what they do, and that the work is more than just a job, it's also self-fulfilling:

“I think in bab.la work young people who likes their job, and people who want to make more to learn English for other people who like learning English [...] it's not ‘okay I work there and there’, but I think they are happy they work there and they want to create something new, something fresh, something interesting, so I think the website is only the result from people. So if we see the nice website, nice people have to create that. So I think they are open-minded, they're friendly, like, the same like the bab.la for me.” – User 3

“I see them as linguists, I think, because maybe the dictionaries are really a lot of work to do, and I think they really love these languages so they just like to you know make translations, build the dictionaries for others” – User 4

User 3 and User 4's descriptions of the employees are also connected to their description of bab.la's brand personality.

4.2.3 Personality

Several of the same keywords come up when describing the brand personality of bab.la. Almost all interviewees use the word “helpful” and “friendly” to describe

bab.la's brand personality. Other closely connected words such as "smiling" and "kind" are also mentioned among the users:

"It would be a very communicative and helpful person, let's say it would be a she, so she would like to at least try to help me in every case I would need her help, she would give me some advice from her experience" – User 1

"Always helpful, smiling, always there for you" – User 2

"I think it would be a kind, helpful and honest person" – User 4

The personality described by the users paint a picture of someone who you feel close to, a friend that you can trust to help you when you need them. These descriptions can also imply that the brand's products are helpful and reliable to use. Moreover, the interviewees stated that the personality that they had described was someone they felt they could relate to, again making the brand more approachable and setting a good basis for a strong user-brand relationship.

4.2.4 Symbol

All interviewees associate bab.la with the color blue. Three of them also mention the color white. Three of the interviewers also know what the logo looks when asked to describe it. User 2 states: "If I see this on the internet without any text I will be probably 100% sure that this will be bab.la". When asked about what the logo symbolizes to them, the overriding theme was open communication:

"It just comes to me as something that this is a dictionary, it encourages you to communicate with other people, to not have any boundaries between languages, just.. just talk." – User 1

"I would say that just for me it means just place where you can speak what you basically think, speak what you want, there is a freedom of speech there" – User 2

"I think it represents a way for me to connect with other people [...] it's a way to understand them or for better understanding of them" – User 4

The logo, which is blue and simple, is easy to remember by users. Although a logo should ideally reflect the personality of an organization, this one does not seem to strongly reflect the personality described by the users. However, it does communicate a positive organizational value connected to languages without explicitly stating it. It does not define the brand as only a dictionary but as a communication enabler, thus not overly limiting or restricting the brand from a logo standpoint.

4.2.5 Brand Image Influences

The users' brand image largely stems from their experience with the bab.la website. As the interviewees were collected through Facebook, all of them are naturally also following bab.la, however this is the only social media channel that they followed. The interviewees state that they regularly see bab.la's posts in their Facebook feed, and have very positive experiences with them:

"I like them a lot, most of them they are quite funny and I like to comment on them or react, yeah, really nice and I can learn a lot from these posts which are for example, how do you say umbrella in your language?" – User 1

"I like it a lot, I read all the posts, on Facebook mainly, just with pleasure" – User 2

"Mostly I remember about the words in other languages, like for example an umbrella and how does it look in other languages, so I think it's really fitting for this kind of page on Facebook" – User 4

In the case of these interviewees, their positive image of the brand is therefore reinforced through its social media activities.

4.2.6 Functional and Non-Functional Benefits

The relationship between the user and the brand is the final step of the brand identity and brand image building process. The relationship is determined by how satisfied the user is with the brand's offering. A loyal relationship in the form of frequent website

usage was one criteria in the sampling process, and all the interviewees use bab.la at least every week. The focus of the research was to determine the reasons for their loyalty. These reasons can be divided into functional and non-functional benefits.

Burmann et al. (2017) define functional brand benefits as based on the consumer's knowledge of the brand's products, services and competences. Since bab.la is free to use, its functional benefits are utilitarian rather than economic, as many other free dictionaries exist on the web.

The interviewees enjoy using bab.la because of its simplicity and user-friendliness. They find the web design attractive and the product easy to use. Moreover, the dictionaries are large, meaning that users can trust that their search will have a good-quality result. A key feature is also the ability to see the translation in context through the example sentences. This helps language learners choose the best translation option for their situation.

Non-functional benefits are benefits that aid self-expression, personal fulfillment, passion, pleasure, and cognitive and emotional stimulation (Stolle 2013, as cited in Burmann et al. 2017). As a dictionary, it helps language learners advance their foreign language skills by providing them the linguistic tools they need in order to teach themselves. Moreover, the positive brand personality, viewed as helpful, friendly, reliable and knowledgeable, creates added value, by making the brand appear more like a friend than a teacher or even a machine. In addition, the interviewed users feel that the brand personality they described is someone that they could relate to. This results in a self-expressive value where the user is able to identify with the brand.

5 ANALYSIS

Based on the results from the interviews, an analysis of the brand identity, brand image and brand integration is presented in this chapter.

5.1 Brand Identity

5.1.1 Multilingualism and multiculturalism

bab.la's identity is strongly rooted in translation and multilingualism, as this concept is connected to all aspects of the brand: product, organization, person, and symbol. Above all, this part of the identity is a result of the nature of the core product, the multilingual dictionary, which requires a diverse team of people speaking different languages. Symbolically, the bab.la logo, a speech bubble, fits the theme of language and communication, and the slogan, "Loving languages", also describes the bab.la personality and spirit, and the core value that connects the bab.la employees and the target users. The users that bab.la wants to be associated with are students and young professionals who are learning languages in order to develop themselves and to become more international.

Following the launch of the new product, the Living Abroad magazine, bab.la attempted to go beyond just multilingualism and translation, and go into travel and multiculturalism, or multicultural communication. The idea behind the extension was to offer a complementary product to the dictionary and to differentiate bab.la from its competitors. The company thought that the people who are using a dictionary are often expats living in a country where a foreign language is spoken, but also students who are interested in moving abroad. According to Kapferer (2012), a product brand can only extend itself into a know-how brand, which bab.la arguably did, as it was the knowledge held within the team of expats that inspired the new product launch of Living Abroad. This new product was a category extension, meant to shift the focus of the brand from a multilingual translation product to the wider, more general concept

of multicultural communication know-how, involving both multilingualism (the dictionary) and multiculturalism (the magazine).

However, there are problems with the internal communication, which makes it harder for employees to see the identity clearly after the extension. As mentioned by Aaker (1990), extensions can damage the parent brand if the fit is not clear, and in this case, the management has not successfully explained the connection between the new product and the existing brand, thus potentially weakening existing associations in the minds of the employees. Moreover, there is no formal strategy or specified goal for the magazine, which also leaves employees frustrated and confused. The company should involve all employees more, to make sure that they know what they are working towards and what the overall goals of the company and its products are. The Product Owner mentions the idea of changing the slogan to “Living and Loving Languages”, but this would only make sense if the company is also really ready to fully champion the Living Abroad project.

5.1.2 User-focus

Another core value of bab.la is the user focus. Under every translation entry is a feedback button, which users can use to send suggestions, ask questions and request new translations from the bab.la editors, and they will receive a reply quickly, within 48 hours. In this way, the users are involved in continually updating the website and improving the content. This is seen as another main differentiator of bab.la, and an added value for the users.

Moreover, the PO's responses to bab.la's core competences and goals are both focused on listening to the users and adapting the product according to them. However, the strong user impact on the brand could be another reason why it is hard for the employees to see the overall picture and goals of the organization, as relying too much on external factors in the brand identity is part of Aaker's (1996) brand identity traps. A brand identity should be strategic and forward-facing in contrast to the brand image

which is passive and based on past memories and experiences. Listening to the users is obviously important, but they should remain one source of inspiration, not dictate the brand completely.

5.1.3 Friendly, caring, open-minded and easy-going

Though the described brand personalities are different among the internal interviewees, they hold similarities and form connections with the other brand aspects, and paint the picture of a kind and outgoing person who cares for their friends and who enjoys new experiences. Attributes like curious, open-minded and caring fit with the focus on user interaction and enabling multicultural communication and set the tone for the relationship with the users, but also within the team: not only do bab.la employees help and support users (language learners), the team members also help and support each other as they adjust to a new country.

5.2 Brand Image

5.2.1 Simple, beautiful and reliable

bab.la is seen as a reliable tool for language learners. From the user interviews, we can see that the brand has strong functional benefits in the eyes of the users: the dictionaries are large, you can see translations in context, and view additional grammatical information. It is seen as a dictionary for serious language learners and superior to competitors such as Google translator due to the information depth and higher reliability and accuracy of the results.

5.2.2 Friendly, helpful and relatable

When describing the imagined user base of bab.la, the interviewees describe people very similar to themselves: young, educated, and interested in languages. Also, when asked to describe the personality of the company, the users use positive adjectives such as helpful, kind, and honest, and also stating that they can also personally relate to these traits. This suggests that bab.la is a very relatable and approachable brand that really solves a problem for its users in a genuine way.

5.3 Brand Integration

Brand integration is the process of matching brand identity with brand image (Roy & Banerjee, 2008). It is a way of determining the strength of the brand and to see which parts of the brand identity that have been successfully communicated, and which ones have not. In order to easily compare the brand identity and brand image, we use figure X to illustrate the differences and similarities between the two:

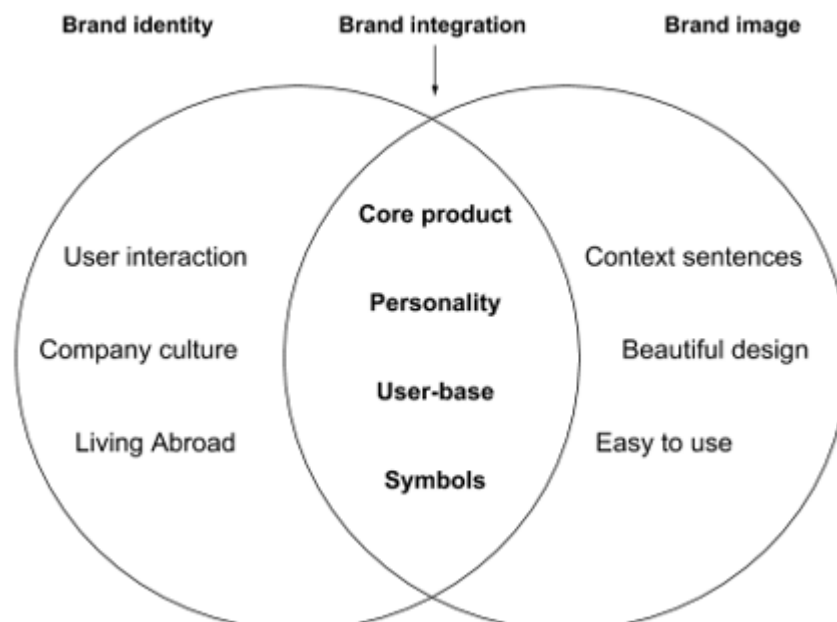


Figure 12: Brand integration of bab.la.

In this two-circle model, the overlapping area represents the brand items which are found in both the brand identity and the brand image. For example, bab.la's core product is the multilingual dictionary, which was clear from both the internal and the external interviews. This is what is given the most emphasis on internally, and also the most used product among the interviewed users. Also, the brand personality was largely consistent between the external and the internal interviewees: friendly, helpful and supportive. Moreover, both sides agreed that the user base consists of young people, such as students and young professionals, as well as pure language enthusiasts. Finally, the symbols such as the logo and the color blue were described by both employees and users.

Outside the overlapping circle we can see items which were brought up in the respective interviews that did not match internally and externally. Internally, bab.la views its main differentiator as the user interaction and the ability for users to be part of creating and expanding the dictionary, an emotional benefit where the users feel important and part of the product. However, what the users like the most about the website in comparison to other similar sites is the functional experience of using it – they find the dictionary helpful and easy to use, practical because of the context sentences and also pleasing to the eye due to the design.

Moreover, the company culture with focus on multiculturalism and diversity is seen a key driver of the brand identity, but in the external interviews, users did not know anything about the company behind the dictionary. As User 5 pointed out, bab.la lacks a real genesis. Although the company has failed to explicitly communicate its organizational values, the speech bubble logo has succeeded in symbolically conveying the value of open communication. Still, this is one aspect of the brand communication that the company should put more emphasis on.

Living Abroad is bab.la's newest product and was created in an effort to expand into a new product category, as a way of making bab.la different while also complementing the existing products. Based on Kapferer's (2012) theory on types of brands and their ability to extend (see figure 12), it is possible that the company tried to extend itself

from a product brand (language learning products) to a know-how brand (multilingualism and multiculturalism), as it was the knowledge held within the team of expats that inspired the new product launch of Living Abroad. According to the Online Marketing Manager, the aim was to shift from being solely an online dictionary to being a platform that combines language learning and a cultural experience. However, the interviewed Polish bab.la users still only associate bab.la with language learning and translation, and the most of them not even aware that the magazine existed. This indicated that the magazine is not given enough visibility on the website. At the same time, the users stated that they could see the connection between the bab.la dictionary and the new product, meaning that there is still potential for the extension from a user perspective. Thus, highlighting the new product and what it means for the brand is something that the company needs to work on further.

According to Aaker (1996), Randall (1997), and Kapferer (2012), a strong brand identity is unique and coherent, and consists of items that remain unchanged over time, as well as flexible items which can be adapted according to the market. It has strong internal values and aims, and functions as an inspiration for the brand on how to move forward.

bab.la has a strong core identity, largely revolving around multilingualism, user focus and the strive to help users and promote multilingualism. These values are embodied in all the different brand facets: from the core products, dictionaries, the team, multilinguals, the personality – young, caring and supportive –, and finally the symbols: a speech bubble and the slogan. All of these concepts work well together and support one another, and there is no conflict.

The core identity also matches well to the external brand image. The brand image is also strong, as we can see a lot of cohesion and similar elements between the external interviews. Thus, one could argue that bab.la used to have the jackpot, which Roy and Banerjee (2008) describe as having both a strong brand identity and an excellent brand image. Roy and Banerjee's (2008) recommended action for jackpot brands is expansion, which is exactly what bab.la did by launching the online magazine Living

Abroad. However, following the launch, bab.la's brand identity has weakened as the fit, vision and goals of the new product has not been communicated well enough within the team, leading to confusion. The brand's ideal identity is now different from its actual identity. So while the brand image is still excellent, the brand identity is weakened, meaning that bab.la is a dark horse according to Roy and Banerjee's (2008) definition. For dark horses, the recommended action is to create a communication strategy with focus on building strong relationships with the users in order to make up for the weak identity. From the Online Marketing Manager stating that bab.la is now also a cultural platform, to the Product Owner describing the new product as an experiment, and the Marketing Assistant not understanding the relevance of the new product to the bab.la brand, it is clear that the company needs to strengthen its identity again by clearing up any confusion and deciding the role of the new product. The company therefore needs to create a communication strategy both internally and externally in order to strengthen the brand identity and also the relationships with the users. By sharing the company's story, it can become an even more interesting brand and deliver something more than just functional benefits for the users.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Brand identity is defined as the organization's inner perception of itself. This identity is then communicated to the consumer through marketing activities, with this reflection resulting in the brand image. The challenge that marketers are often facing is integrating the brand identity and the brand image. The sender and the recipient may not always understand the marketing messages in the same way, and there are many other factors besides the brand's own communication that can influence the external brand image.

By exploring bab.la's brand identity and brand image, and the gap between the two, we have reached our conclusions and recommendations on what the company should adjust in its marketing communication in order to achieve better brand integration and to strengthen their position in the industry.

6.1 Recommendations

The purpose of this thesis has been to research and determine the case company's brand identity and brand image, and how well these two are integrated. After conducting interviews and analyzing them, we have identified three significant gaps between the brand that the company wishes to communicate with the actual image that the users have of the brand. Minimizing these gaps will be the focus of our recommendations.

The first significant gap is the main differentiating attribute of bab.la. According to the employees, the user interaction is what makes bab.la stand out among its competitors, but according to the users that were interviewed, it's the context sentences and the web design. This is a risk for the company, because the perceived benefits described by the users are functional benefits which is easy to imitate, and there are other dictionaries such as Linguee already doing context sentences. The user interaction, on the other hand, has a strong emotional benefit and can lead to stronger user relationships, and

this is harder to imitate. bab.la should therefore stress this more in their marketing communication and on their website.

The second gap is the brand as organization. bab.la has a strong company culture and the team behind the dictionary is similar to the users that the company wants to reach – young, multilingual and international – and the company values diversity and open communication. However, the users are not at all aware of the company’s story and genesis – this is another competitive advantage that could lead to better user relationships and that is also hard for other companies to imitate. bab.la needs to share its story, vision and values with the users so that they can learn more about the company and get more non-functional benefits of using it.

The third and final gap is the brand extension of Living Abroad. This new project was supposed to be another differentiating factor for the company, but it has not reached the users. There can be several reasons for this. bab.la’s decision to extend its brand was opportunistic rather than strategic, according to the Product Owner. The new product does not fit in the slogan “Loving languages” and there is a clear divide between the dictionary and the magazine. Visually, the dictionary is blue and the magazine is red, and the magazine is not visible on the dictionary pages which is where the existing users are. From the user interviews, we can see that the Polish users can see the fit of the magazine in bab.la’s brand, and that they would read it if they were expats. The bigger issue is the fact that most of them were not aware that the product exists. Thus, the communicated identity is also different from the actual and ideal identities.

It seems that the company does not want to fully integrate the new product into the brand before they can determine its success, but if loyal users who visit the website on a weekly basis are not even aware of its existence, the question becomes if it has not been successful because it has not been properly integrated into the brand. If the company believes that the people they are targeting with the new product, i.e. expats, are already using the dictionary, then they should make it as easy as possible for them to find the new product. Moreover, the management has not succeeded in explaining

the role and fit of the new product to all the employees. The lack of communication and goals concerning the extension has weakened the brand identity. The company therefore needs to communicate and clarify this extension and what it means for the brand both internally and externally, as their lack of decisiveness among the senior management and the inability to clearly communicate decisions within the company leads to valuable marketing and time investments going to waste. As long as bab.la does not push its culture and travel content, it will stay a dictionary brand. Thus, the company needs a proper strategy and vision for the product if they want to give the new product the best possible chance to succeed. Perhaps this means changing the marketing to increase visibility and understanding, but perhaps it also means adapting the product to better fit the current brand.

A sign of a strong brand is the emotive relationship with users and consumers. By keeping up the functional benefits while also providing more emotional values, and expanding and becoming more than a dictionary, bab.la can create stronger relationships with current users while also reaching new ones. But first, the company must set a clear and realistic strategy and vision which is understood and championed by all employees, so that they can bring the brand to life. In this way, bab.la has the best chances of diversifying, staying relevant and standing out against the competition in a sustainable way.

6.2 Author's comments

This thesis provides insight into bab.la's brand identity and brand image at the time these topics were researched. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, this means that these results are merely a snapshot and only valid within their own context. Qualitative research is also highly subjective and the author's role cannot be forgotten. This means that producing an identical result each time is impossible. Moreover, the data collection and processing was done by one person, meaning that the width and depth of the research had to be limited. Still, a larger or more in-depth survey could have been done in order to obtain more accuracy and insight. Also, as the external sampling consisted of Polish users, cultural factors may influence the results. The research could

thus be replicated with users from other countries to compare the results. Related to this, although good English skills were a prerequisite for the interviewees, there were cases where the Polish interviewees had trouble finding the right words for what they wanted to say. Thus, whenever possible, being able to conduct the interview in the respondent's mother tongue would be recommended. Lastly, including expat users in the sample could have provided more insight on the Living Abroad extension as it targets people living in foreign countries.

This thesis has produced interesting insight on the topics of how brand identity and brand image are formed and evaluated, how to integrate them, and how they can be shaped through brand extensions. The results answer the research questions, which is a sign of a successful study. The case company can use the results from this thesis as they wish.

7 SUMMARY IN SWEDISH

7.1 Inledning

Ett varumärke består av två sidor: varumärkesidentiteten och varumärkesbilden. Varumärkesidentiteten står för hur företaget uppfattar sig självt, hur det skiljer sig från andra företag och vad det kan erbjuda sina kunder, och fungerar som en slags målsättning och inspiration för företaget (Aaker, 1996). Denna identitet kommuniceras sedan utåt och resulterar i den externa varumärkesbilden, dvs. hur konsumenterna egentligen uppfattar varumärket och dess fördelar (Keller, 2012). Hur varumärkesidentiteten och -bilden skapas och förändras har intresserat forskare från flera olika discipliner, inte minst marknadsförare (Brown et al., 2006). Varumärkesidentiteten och -bilden kan nämligen skilja sig mycket ifrån varandra och det kan finnas klyftor mellan dem. En stor klyfta är ett tecken på ett svagt varumärke, och vice versa (Jones, 2017). Därför är det viktigt för företag att regelbundet utvärdera sin varumärkesidentitet och -bild för att kunna skapa och upprätthålla ett starkt och relevant varumärke. Annars löper man risken att det uppstår missförstånd eller ogynnsamma varumärkesassociationer.

7.2 Avhandlingens syfte och forskningsfrågor

Sedan 2007 har online-lexikonet och språkportalen bab.la försökt etablera sig som en källa för språkinlärning och översättning. Genom att undersöka bab.las varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild och identifiera luckorna mellan dem kan vi bestämma de svaga och starka punkterna i företagets interna och externa varumärkeskommunikation. Resultaten av denna avhandling kan hjälpa marknadsförare att förstå hur varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild bildas, hur man mäter dem och hur man för de två närmare varandra för att skapa ett starkare och enhetligare varumärke och bättre kundrelationer.

Följande forskningsfrågor har valts för att nå forskningsmålen:

1. Vad är bab.las varumärkesidentitet?
2. Vad är bab.las varumärkesbild?
3. Finns det skillnader mellan bab.las varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild?
4. Hur kan bab.la minimera dessa skillnader?

Denna studie är begränsad till bab.la GmbH. I och med det ämne och den metod som har valts, är resultatens relevans begränsade till fallföretaget. Varumärken, varumärkesstrategier och varumärkesmål är vanligtvis unika för olika företag. De metoder som används kan dock vara användbara för ett litet onlineföretag som det som presenteras i det här fallet.

7.3 Teori

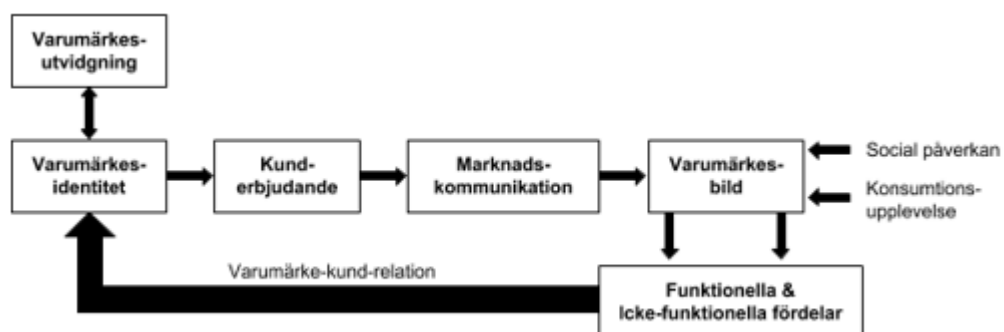
Inom varumärkeslitteratur definieras varumärkesidentiteten som varumärkets interna självuppfattning, medan varumärkesbilden är den externa, offentliga uppfattningen av varumärket (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2013). Aaker (1996) har skapat en modell för varumärkesidentiteten, där varumärkesidentiteten baserar sig på varumärket som produkt, organisation, person och symbol. Med produkt menas till exempel produktens fysiska särdrag, vad produkten egentligen används för, vem som använder den och vid vilka tillfällen. Med organisation menas den unika kulturen, människorna och värderingarna bakom varumärket som driver det framåt. Person står för varumärkets personlighet och reflekterar hur varumärket betar sig samt fungerar som en utgångspunkt för hur varumärket förhåller sig till konsumenten. Symbol i sin tur står för logotyp, slogan eller andra metaforer som varumärket använder sig av för att kommunicera sin personlighet och sina värderingar till offentligheten.

Identiteten kan vidare delas in i kärnidentiteten, som består av det essentiella och oföränderliga, och den utvidgade identiteten, som kan justeras enligt marknadens behov. Identiteten formar ett kunderbjudande som sedan kommuniceras till målgruppen via varumärkets marknadsföring. Kunderbjudandet är de funktionella, emotionella eller självförverkligande fördelarna som varumärket erbjuder, och strävar efter att fylla målgruppens behov (Aaker, 1996). Men konsumentens varumärkesbild skapas inte enbart genom marknadsföring. Den påverkas också av sociala inflytanden såsom rekommendationer från vänner, samt personliga upplevelser och erfarenheter

(Riezebos, 2003). Detta resulterar i sin tur i de uppfattade fördelarna med varumärket. Dessa kan vara funktionella eller icke-funktionella. Funktionella fördelar är till exempel tekniska eller kostnadsrelaterade, medan icke-funktionella fördelar är statusgivande eller självförverkligande för konsumenten (Burmann et al., 2017). Dessa fördelar kommer i sin tur att avgöra hurdan relation kunden har till varumärket. En positiv varumärkesbild med relevanta fördelar som möter konsumentens behov ökar chanserna att denne blir en lojal kund. Relationen som konsumenten skapar med varumärket kommer också att påverka varumärkesidentiteten, eftersom den formas och förändras genom långvariga relationer med konsumenter och andra intressenter (Burmann et al., 2017).

Slutligen kan varumärket också lansera nya produkter och på så sätt utvidga sitt varumärke. Varumärkesutvidgningar kan härstamma från varumärkesidentiteten, och fokuserar då på att förstärka varumärket, men den kan även fungera som en strategi för att förändra varumärket. Varumärkesidentiteten och -utvidgningen påverkar varandra parallellt, och en varumärkesutvidgning kan påverka hela processen negativt eller positivt beroende på sin framgång (Riezebos, 2003; Kapferer, 2012).

Hela processen kring hur varumärkesidentiteten och varumärkesbilden bildas och påverkar varandra har sammanfattats i figur 1:



Figur 13: Modell för hur varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild bildas

Denna modell visar varumärkesidentiteten och varumärkesbilden som en dynamisk process som ständigt utvecklas. Genom att följa och undersöka varje steg i processen kan man analysera relationerna mellan de olika delarna och hur de påverkar varandra.

7.4 Metodval

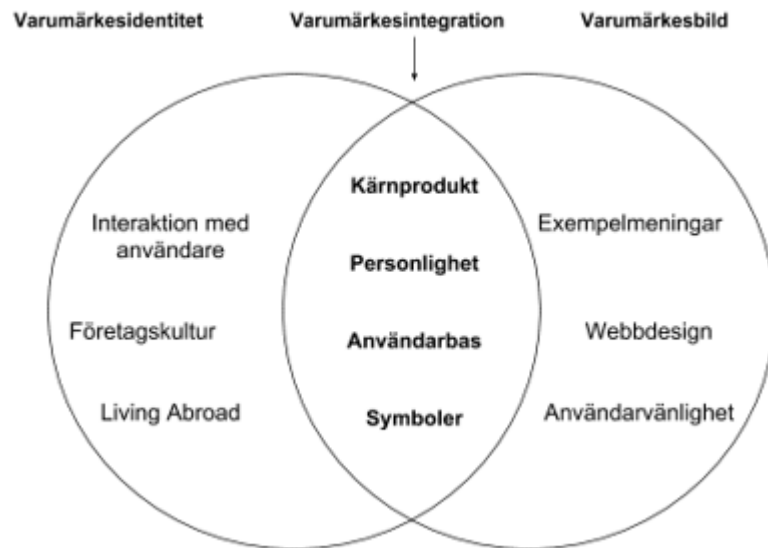
Denna studie är en enskild, inre fallstudie som siktar på att få bättre förståelse kring ett specifikt fenomen – varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild – i en särskild kontext, det valda företaget. Trots att forskningen är begränsad i fråga om att den inte kan användas för att göra generella slutsatser, har den ändå potential att ge insikter till de bästa sätten att möta särskilda utmaningar och kan därför hjälpa liknande organisationer med liknande problem (Weathington et al., 2012).

Då målet med denna forskning inte är att generalisera utan att få djupare insikt i ett specifikt problem, är det mer lämpligt att använda en kvalitativ metod. Kvalitativa metoder används ofta då man vill utforska ett nytt eller mindre studerat område. Den valda datainsamlingsmetoden är semi-strukturerade djupintervjuer med bab.las anställda och användare. Internt har intervjuer varit begränsade till de anställda som arbetar direkt med marknadsföring. Externt har intervjuer varit begränsade till polska män och kvinnor mellan 18 och 34 år, eftersom de utgör bab.las största användargrupp (se bilaga 1). De valda användarna har använt bab.la i minst 1 år och minst en gång i veckan.

Totalt genomfördes tre interna intervjuer och fem externa.

7.5 Resultatbeskrivning

På basis av de genomförda intervjuerna angående bab.las varumärkesidentitet och -bild har följande figur sammanställts:



Figur 14: bab.las varumärkesintegration

I den ovanstående figuren representerar det överlappande området de varumärkesassociationer som kunde hittas både i varumärkesidentiteten och -bilden. Till exempel ansåg både bab.las anställda och användare att varumärkets kärnprodukt är det flerspråkiga lexikonet. Detta var den produkten som gavs mest fokus inom företaget, och även den mest använda produkten mellan användarna. Även varumärkets personlighet beskrevs som vänlig, hjälpsam och stöttande både internt och externt. Dessutom var båda sidorna överens om att bab.las användare består av unga människor såsom studeranden och nyutexaminerade arbetande, samt språkentusiaster.

Utanför det överlappande området ser vi associationer och fördelar som togs upp i de interna intervjuerna men inte i de externa, och vice versa. Internt, anser bab.la att dess mest differentierade faktor är interaktionen med användarna och att användarna kan vara med och påverka och utöka innehållet i lexikonet, vilket är ett emotionellt kunderbjudande vars syfte är att få användarna att känna sig viktiga och som en del av lexikonet. Men enligt användarna själva är det bästa med webbsidan den funktionella upplevelsen, hur webbsidan fungerar och ser ut. De anser att bab.la är hjälpsamt och lätt att använda, praktiskt på grund av exempelmeningarna, och de gillar även webbdesignen.

Företagskulturen sätter högt värde på multikulturalism och mångfald, och ses som en viktig del av varumärkesidentiteten. Men externt kände användarna inte till någonting om företaget bakom lexikonet. Som användare 5 nämnde, saknar bab.la en riktig historia. Trots att företaget har misslyckats med att tydligt och klart kommunicera sina värderingar, har dess logga i form av en pratbubbla lyckats förmedla värderingen om öppen kommunikation enligt användarna. Detta är ändå något som företaget borde lägga mer vikt på i sin varumärkeskommunikation.

Living Abroad, bab.las onlinemagasin, är bab.las nyaste produkt och var ett steg in i en ny produktkategori. Enligt bab.las Online Marketing Manager var målet med produkten att ändra bab.las varumärke till något mer än ett onlinelexikon, mer specifikt till en plattform som kombinerar språkinlärning och kulturella upplevelser. Dock associerade de polska användarna endast bab.la med språkinlärning och översättning, och de flesta visste inte ens om onlinemagasinet. De ansåg ändå att ett sådant onlinemagasin passar in i varumärket. Dessutom har varumärkesidentiteten försvagats sedan lanseringen av Living Abroad. Företagets vision och mål med produkten inte har kommunicerats internt, vilket har lett till förvirring inom teamet, då man har olika uppfattningar om vad produkten betyder för identiteten. bab.la bör därför fundera ut hur produkten passar in i identiteten och hur man bör kommunicera detta till teamet, men även till användarna.

7.6 Analys

bab.la har en stark kärnidentitet som kretsar kring en strävan efter att hjälpa användare och främja flerspråkighet. Dessa värden är synliga i alla olika delar av varumärket: ordböckerna och teamet bakom dem, personligheten – omtänksam och stödjande – och slutligen symbolerna: en pratbubbla och varumärkets slogan ”Loving languages”. Alla dessa delar fungerar bra tillsammans och stöder varandra, och det finns ingen konflikt.

Kärnidentiteten matchar också bra till den externa varumärkesbilden. Varumärkesbilden är också stark, eftersom vi kan se många liknande element mellan de externa intervjuerna. Således kan man argumentera för att bab.la brukade vara ett

”jackpotvarumärke”, dvs. ett varumärke som har både en stark varumärkesidentitet och en utmärkt varumärkesbild (Roy & Banerjee, 2008). Den rekommenderade åtgärden för jackpotvarumärken är en varumärkesutvidgning, vilket är precis vad bab.la gjorde genom att lansera onlinemagasinet Living Abroad. Efter lanseringen har dock bab.la varumärkesidentitet försvagats eftersom visionen och målen för den nya produkten inte har kommunicerats tillräckligt bra internt, vilket har lett till förvirring. Varumärkets ideala identitet skiljer sig nu från dess faktiska identitet. Så medan varumärkesbilden fortfarande är utmärkt blir varumärkesidentiteten försvagad, vilket betyder att bab.la är en ”dark horse” enligt Roy och Banerjees (2008) definition. För mörka hästar är den rekommenderade åtgärden att skapa en kommunikationsstrategi med fokus på att skapa starka relationer med användarna för att kompensera för den svaga identiteten. Eftersom en anställd säger att bab.la nu också är en kulturplattform, medan en annan beskriver den nya produkten som ett experiment, och slutligen förstår en av dem inte hur den nya produkten passar in i varumärket, är det klart att företaget måste stärka sin identitet igen genom att rensa upp förvirring och besluta om den nya produktens roll för verksamheten. Företaget behöver därför definiera målet med produkten och skapa en kommunikationsstrategi både internt och externt för att stärka varumärkesidentiteten och även relationerna med användarna. Genom att dela företagets historia kan det bli ett ännu mer intressant varumärke och leverera något mer än bara funktionella fördelar för användarna.

7.6 Diskussion och slutsats

Varumärkesidentiteten definieras som organisationens inre uppfattning om sig själv. Denna identitet kommuniceras sedan till konsumenten genom marknadsaktiviteter, och resulterar i varumärkesbilden. Den utmaning som marknadsförare ofta står inför är att integrera varumärkesidentiteten och varumärkesbilden. Avsändaren och mottagaren uppfattar inte alltid marknadsföringskommunikationen på samma sätt, och det finns många andra faktorer utöver varumärkets egen kommunikation som kan påverka den externa varumärkesbilden.

Genom att utforska bab.la varumärkesidentitet och varumärkesbild och luckorna mellan de två har vi nått våra slutsatser och rekommendationer om vad företaget bör anpassa i sin marknadsföringskommunikation för att uppnå bättre varumärkesintegration och stärka sin ställning inom branschen. Vi har identifierat tre signifikanta luckor mellan det varumärke som företaget vill kommunicera och den faktiska bilden som användarna har av varumärket. En minimering av dessa luckor kommer att utgöra fokuset av våra rekommendationer.

Den första signifikanta luckan är den viktigaste differentierande faktorn för bab.la. Enligt de anställda är det interaktionen med användarna som gör att bab.la sticker ut bland sina konkurrenter, men enligt användarna själva är det exempelmeningarna och webbdesignen. Det här är en risk för företaget, eftersom de uppfattade fördelarna som beskrivs av användarna är funktionella fördelar som är lätta att imitera, och det finns andra ordböcker som Linguee som redan erbjuder liknande fördelar. Användarinteraktionen har å andra sidan en stark känslomässig fördel och kan leda till starkare användarrelationer, och detta är svårare att imitera. bab.la bör därför betona detta mer i sin marknadsföringskommunikation och på deras hemsida.

Den andra luckan är varumärket som organisation. bab.la har en stark företagskultur och teamet bakom lexikonet liknar de användare som företaget vill nå – unga, flerspråkiga och internationella – och företaget värdesätter mångfald och öppen kommunikation. Användarna är emellertid inte medvetna om företagets historia och värderingar. Det här är en annan konkurrensfördel som kunde leda till bättre användarrelationer och som också svår för andra företag att imitera. bab.la behöver dela sin historia, vision och värderingar med användarna så att de kan lära sig mer om företaget och få uppleva fler icke-funktionella fördelar med att använda sig av deras produkter.

Den tredje och sista luckan är varumärkesutvidgningen, Living Abroad. Detta nya projekt skulle vara en annan differentierande faktor för företaget, men det har inte nått användarna. Det kan finnas flera skäl till detta. bab.las beslut att utvidga sitt varumärke var opportunistiskt snarare än strategiskt och det råder förvirring inom teamet om vad

den nya produktens roll egentligen är. Den nya produkten passar inte i slagordet "Loving languages" och det finns en tydlig uppdelning mellan ordboken och magasinet. Visuellt sett är lexikonet blått och magasinet rött, och magasinet är inte synligt i lexikonet, vilket ju är där de befintliga användarna befinner sig. Från användarintervjuerna kunde vi se att de polska användarna kan se hur magasinet passar in i bab.las varumärke och att de skulle kunna tänka sig att läsa det om de var en del av målgruppen. Det större problemet är att de flesta inte var medvetna om att produkten existerar. Således skiljer sig den kommunicerade identiteten från de faktiska och ideala identiteterna.

Ett tecken på ett starkt varumärke är en god integration mellan den interna varumärkesidentiteten och den externa varumärkesbilden. bab.la har delvis lyckats i sin varumärkeskommunikation då varumärkesbilden är väldigt positiv bland de intervjuade användarna. Dock bör företaget fortsätta jobba på att skapa ett enhetligt varumärke både inåt och utåt, och satsa mera på att kommunicera även de emotionella fördelarna. På så sätt kan bab.la stärka sin relation med nuvarande användare och även nå nya i framtiden.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – The Case Company’s User Demographics

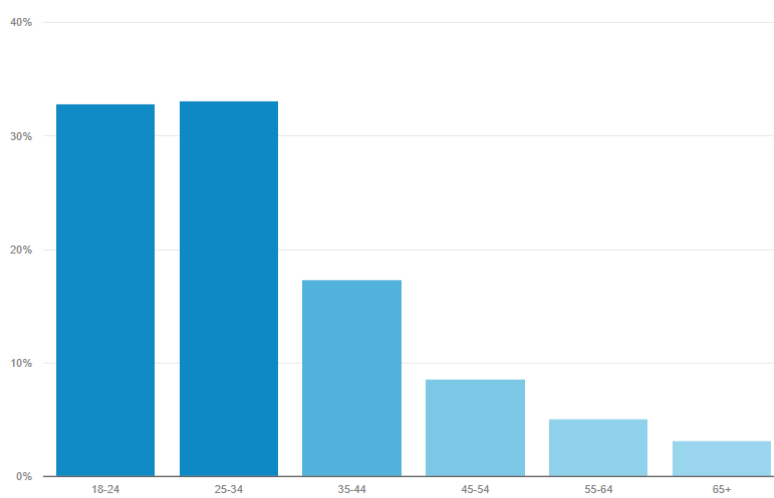
Bab.la’s website traffic from 1.10.2016 to 1.10.2017. Source: Google Analytics

1. Website traffic sorted by country

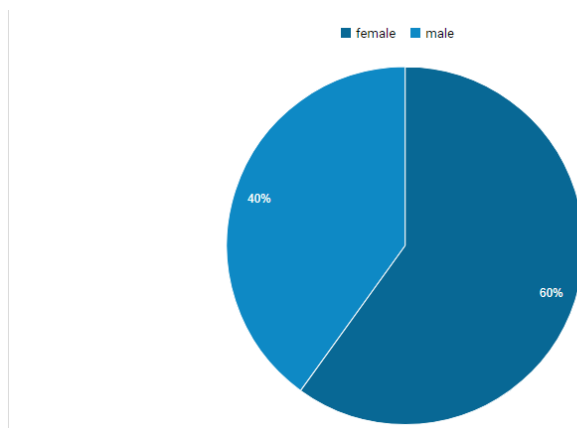
Land	Sitzungen	% Sitzungen
1.  Poland	109.853.112	17,84 %
2.  Brazil	58.260.186	9,46 %
3.  Italy	45.862.653	7,45 %
4.  Germany	41.714.563	6,77 %
5.  Russia	30.730.941	4,99 %
6.  Sweden	29.702.982	4,82 %
7.  United States	26.868.159	4,36 %
8.  Indonesia	22.828.805	3,71 %
9.  United Kingdom	20.228.612	3,29 %
10.  Spain	17.410.350	2,83 %

[Vollständigen Bericht anzeigen](#)

2. Polish users sorted by age



3. Polish users sorted by sex



Appendix 2 – Online Marketing Manager Interview Guide

Profile

Tell me about yourself, how long have you worked within the company? What is your title?

Brand Identity

What do the terms “brand” and “brand identity” mean to you?

What is your opinion on the importance of branding for a business?

Is it the same way for a dictionary?

Brand as Product

How would you describe bab.la as a web page?

What kind of product or products is bab.la most strongly associated with?

What makes bab.la stand out in comparison with the other dictionaries?

What level of quality does bab.la offer?

When do you see a user using your product?

Who do you see as the typical bab.la user? Who are you targeting?

How does bab.la want to make people feel when they visit bab.la?

Brand as Organization

Which is, according to you, the common goal within the company, what do you want to achieve?

What are the values of the company? What do you stand for? Motto?

How are you reaching your vision? What are your core competences?

What is the company culture like? (startup?) How is your vision shared throughout the company?

How would you describe the bab.la community? How do you commit to your community?

Do you organize any campaigns that users that take part in? Why?

Is the bab.la brand consistent globally? How do you compete with local dictionaries?

How do you prove credibility?

Brand as Person

If bab.la was a person, who or what would they be like? Use adjectives

What image of oneself do you think a bab.la user wants to create?

What characteristics does bab.la have that you can showcase through marketing?

What relationship can be created between bab.la and its users and followers?

Brand as Symbol

What symbolizes bab.la? Logo, tagline, color

When meanings and ideas do you think that the bab.la logo gives to a user?

Summary (if not answered before)

How do you create brand awareness? Through which channels?

How is brand identity and goals shared? Are there official guidelines?

Do you think branding is valued in the company?

Appendix 3 – Product Owner Interview Guide

Profile

Tell me about yourself, how long have you worked within the company? What is your title?

Brand Identity

What do the terms “brand” and “brand identity” mean to you?

What is your opinion on the importance of branding for a business?

Is it the same way for a dictionary?

Brand as Product

What is bab.la? What does bab.la offer?

What makes bab.la stand out in comparison with the other dictionaries?

When do you see a user using your product?

Who do you see as the typical bab.la user? Is there an “ideal” user?

How does bab.la want to make people feel when they use bab.la?

Brand as Symbol

Do you keep branding in mind when you are designing and developing the web page?

What symbolizes bab.la?

Do you have a slogan?

Brand as Person

If bab.la was a person, who or what would they be like? Use adjectives

What image of oneself do you think a typical bab.la user has? (How do they want to portray themselves by using a product like bab.la, example branded clothing)

What relationship can be created between bab.la and its users and followers?

Brand as Organization

Which is, according to you, the common goal within the company, what do you want to achieve? Is the vision shared throughout the company?

What is the company culture like?

What are the values of the company? (What do you stand for?)

What are your core competences?

How do you assure quality and prove credibility?

Summary (if not answered before)

How would you describe the bab.la brand?

Has the brand changed since you’ve been here?

What is the brand image that you want to give to the user?

Appendix 4 – Marketing Assistant Interview Guide

Profile

Tell me about yourself, how long have you worked within the company? What is your title?

Brand Identity

What do the terms “brand” and “brand identity” mean to you?
What is your opinion on the importance of branding for a business?
Is it the same way for a dictionary?

Brand as Product

What is bab.la? What does bab.la offer?
When do you see a user using bab.la?
Who do you see as the typical bab.la user?
How do you think people feel when they use bab.la?

Brand as Symbol

What symbols, logos, slogans and colors does bab.la use?

Brand as Person

If bab.la was a person, who or what would they be like? Use adjectives

Brand as Organization

Which is, according to you, the common goal within the company, what do you want to achieve? Is the vision shared throughout the company?
What are the values of the company? What do you stand for?
What is the company culture like?
How would you describe the bab.la community? How do you commit to your community?

Branding and social media

Do you keep branding in mind when creating social media content? What is the brand image that you want to give to the user? How much of yourself do you put into your social media marketing? (Brand persona vs own persona) How would you describe the bab.la community on social media? Do you think a lot of the SM followers are also users?

Appendix 5 – User Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What is your background? Your relationship with languages?
2. When using an online dictionary, what are the most important factors for you?
3. Do you think it's important for an online dictionary to have a brand?
4. When you think of bab.la, what are the first words that come to mind?
5. Do any symbols or colors come to mind? (What does the logo represent to you?)
6. When do you use bab.la?
7. When and why did you first become a user of bab.la?
8. Why do you continue to be a user of bab.la?
9. Which products do you use?
10. Who do you think is the typical user of bab.la?
11. Who do you consider to be competitors of bab.la?
12. How is bab.la better than its competitors?
13. How is bab.la worse than its competitors?
14. If bab.la was a person, who or what would they be like?
15. Can you relate to this personality?
16. How do you imagine the people who work at bab.la? (What do you think they care about?)
17. Are you aware of values of bab.la?
18. If you were describing the brand to others, what would you say, and would you recommend it?
19. Did you notice a change on the website at the beginning of the year? (What kind of change?)
20. (How do you like the new website?)
21. Have you read our blog Living Abroad? Do you think a blog about living abroad fits into what you know about bab.la?
22. If you were thinking about moving to e.g. Germany, could you see yourself reading bab.la's Living Abroad articles?
23. Do you follow bab.la on social media? Which channels?
24. Do you think your image of the bab.la brand has changed by following us on social media?
25. Do you think that you will use bab.la also in the future?

Appendix 6 – 1st and 2nd Level Categorization for Data Analysis

Brand Identity

- General
 - Brand
- Product
 - Product scope
 - Product attributes
 - Quality
 - Uses
 - Users
- Organization
 - People
 - Goal
 - Values
 - Culture
 - Core competences
- Personality
- Symbols
- Value Propositions
 - Product-related
 - Emotional
 - Self-expressive
- Brand extension
 - Strategy
 - Fit
- Other

Brand Image

- General
 - Brand
- Product
 - Product scope
 - Product attributes
 - Quality
 - Uses
 - Users
- Organization
 - People
 - Values
 - Culture
- Personality
- Symbols
- Brand benefits
 - Functional
 - Non-functional
- Brand extension
 - Awareness
 - Fit
- Other