

The Brand Proposition

Positioning & building brand personality

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Abstract

Positioning and the creation of a brand personality are becoming more and more important to companies as they try and reach out to customers. As competition becomes harder for nearly all companies and organizations it is becoming more and more important to have that "little extra," that something that makes you different from your competitors. Based on this, the purpose of this thesis is to provide a better understanding on an organization's brand identity. In order to reach this purpose, two research questions are stated focusing on the components of positioning as well as a description of the brand personality. Using the research questions as a guide, a literature study was conducted resulting in a conceptual framework which guided the data collection. A qualitative, case study methodology was used, using focus group interviews to collect empirical evidence. The findings indicate that there can be a conflict in how the brand is positioned in the target markets mind and the brand personality perceived in contrast to the positioning and personality wanted by the brand owner/manager. By identifying the traits and positions of the brand, the brand identity can be better understood.

Sammanfattning

Positionering och skapandet av ett "brand personality" blir mer och mer viktigt för företagen när de ska nå ut till målgruppen. Då konkurrensen ökar i nästan alla branscher är det viktigt att ha "det"; det lilla extra som differentierar en från konkurrenterna. Baserat på detta, är syftet med denna uppsats är att öka förståelsen för organisationers och varumärkens identitet. För att nå detta syfte ställs två forskningsfrågor som är fokuserade på komponenterna av ett varumärkes positionering och på beskrivningen av "brand personality". Med utgångspunkt i forskningsfrågorna genomfördes en litteraturstudie som utmynnade i en teoretisk ram som låg till grund för intervjuerna. En kvalitativ fallstudie var metoden som användes, genom fokusgruppintervjuer samlades data in. Resultaten och slutsatserna i den här studien indikerar att det kan uppstå en konflikt mellan hur ett varumärke vill positionera sig i målgruppens medvetande och hur man vill att personligheten ska uppfattas och hur målgruppen faktiskt uppfattar varumärket. Genom att identifiera ett varumärkes position och vilka personliga egenskaper det utstrålar kan man nå en större förståelse för varumärkets identitet.

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1. Introduction

In this first chapter we will consider the concepts of branding and positioning and the importance of these elements for a strong brand. We will start with the background we will begin with discussing the concepts of branding and describe relevant theories in brand personality and brand positioning. We will then walk you through the problem discussion and finally the research questions.

1.1 Background

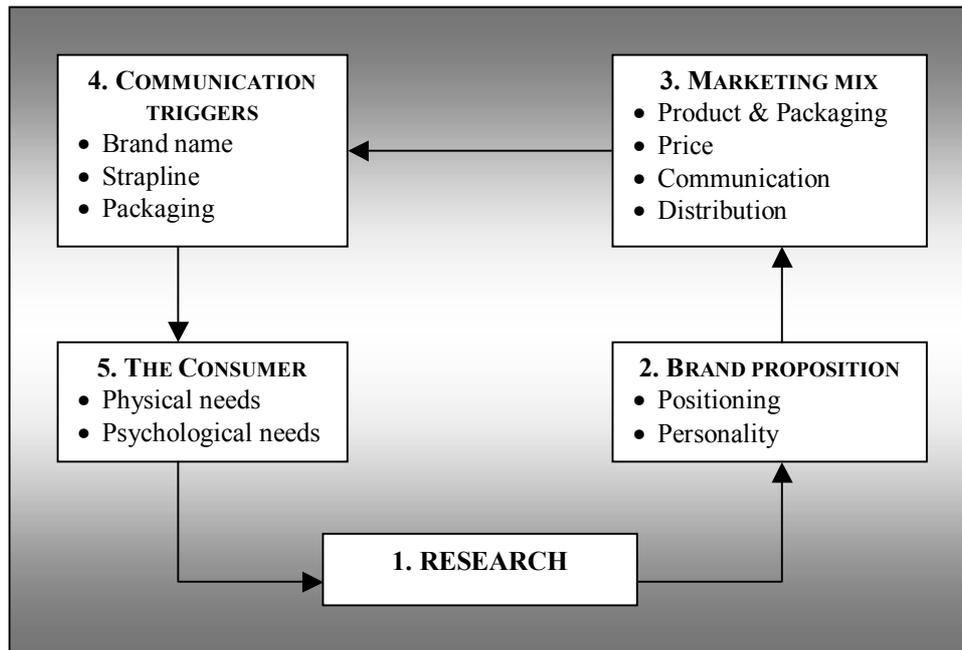
The term brand refers to a name, term, symbol, sign or design used by a firm, to differentiate its offerings from those of its competitors (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2004, p 260). A brand is the sum of its equity, identity, positioning, personality, essence, character, soul, culture, and finally the brand image (Upshaw, 1995, p. 14).

The concept of the brand can be traced back to product marketing where the role of branding and brand management has been primarily to create differentiation and preference for a product or a service in the mind of the customer (Knox & Bickerton, 2000). The development of branding over the past 30 years is characterised by layers of added value built around the core functionality of the product or service to create and maintain distinction in a particular market (ibid.).

The building of strong brands is one of the ways in which a company can develop and sustain an advantage over its competitors, and thereby maintain or increase its sales or market share (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). According to Rooney (1995) branding is a powerful and effective tool for businesses and organizations. If brand owners use their products correctly, the payoffs can be substantial. However, if brands are mismanaged, the results can be damaging. Successful brand-building strategies create a distinctive market position for a company, protecting it against the five basic competitive forces; rivalry among existing firms, the bargaining power of supplier, the bargaining power of buyers, the threat of substitutes, and the threat of new entrants (Porter (1980) as referred to in Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). Branding is a technique to build a substantial, differential advantage by playing on the nature of human beings. Only humans can attach meaning and feeling to inanimate objects and random collections of symbols which suggests the appeal of branding is not entirely rational. (O'Malley, 1991)

The associations attached to a firm and its brands can be important business assets. Product attributes and customer benefits are the associations that have obvious relevance because they provide a reason to buy and thus a basis for a brand loyalty (Aaker, 1998). Yet although product attribute associations can be powerful, especially if a brand "owns" a key attribute, they can fail to differentiate because there is a tendency for all brands to position on the most important attributes. Further, an advantage on a product attribute is an easy target that is likely to be copied or surpassed eventually. Finally, a strong product-attribute association limits brand extension options and thus the strategic flexibility of the brand. Strong brands go beyond product attributes and differentiate on brand associations such as, organization associations, brand personality, symbols, emotional benefits, self-expressive benefits (ibid.).

Hankinson and Cowking (1993) describe the brand development and maintenance of strong brand in a five step model called "The branding cycle"(see figure 1.1). The cycle steps contains of; research, brand proposition, marketing mix, communication triggers and the consumers (ibid.).



Figur 1.1 The Branding Cycle
 SOURCE: Hankinson & Cowking, 1993, p 5.

The first step in the process is about research. The research will explore the product usage and the position and personality of competitors in the consumer's minds to find the best position for the new brand. The second step is to plan and implement the brand proposition based on the information provided by the research. The brand proposition according to Hankinson & Cowking (1993) contains of two elements, Positioning and Personality. Ries & Trout (1985) do not agree, according to them it is not possible to distinguish between positioning and personality. Successful branding clearly depends upon implementing the correct combinations of the components of the marketing mix which, intotally; serve to communicate the brand proposition, step three (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). Effective communication will then lead to clear association of the brand proposition with its short forms, the brand name and strap-line which, when combined with distinctive packaging, act as communication triggers, step four (ibid.). The cycle's final step is "the consumer" who by the earlier mentioned triggers will accept or reject the brand, depending on the "fit" between the brand proposition and consumers physical and psychological needs and buying power (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). The cycle then continues, and starts all over again by research to monitor the brands progress (ibid.).

1.2 Problem discussion

A successful brand – one that stands the test of time – is a brand that says something distinctive, and it is this point of distinction that is embodied in the brand proposition (Hankinson & Cowking, 1993). Advertising is often one of the most effective media for communicating with the consumer; this provides an opportunity to establish a relationship with the consumer - in which the advertising can communicate both a personality and a positioning (ibid.).

Kapferer (1997) claims that we have entered a new age of brand identity, which can be viewed as comprising six variables; physic, personality, culture, relationship, reflection and self image. These variables define the brand and delineate the boundaries within which it can change and develop (ibid.).

According to Kotler (2005), “Positioning is the act of designing the company’s offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinctive competitive position in the target customer’s minds”. If a company should be successful in today’s over communicated society, they must create a good position in the mind of the customer. This position should not only consider the company’s own strength and weaknesses it should also consider the competitors (Ries & Trout, 1985, p 27). In order to develop positioning alternatives, it is helpful to determine the image and brand personality of the major competitors. Weaknesses of competitors on relevant attributes or personality traits can represent an opportunity to differentiate and develop advantage, strengths of competitors on important dimensions may represent challenges to exceed them (Aaker, 1998)

So, positioning is not what you do with the product. Positioning is what you do with the proposed customers. In other words, you place the product in the customer minds (Ries & Trout, 1985, p10). As Aaker (1996) states, brand position is the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates an advantage over competing brands. All products and all organisations have a position. An increasing number of organisations are trying to manage the positions occupied by their brands and are using positioning strategies to move to new positions in buyers minds and so generate an advantage over their competitors (Fill, 2002, p 323).

A brand’s personality can be defined as the “face” of the brand, the human characteristics associated with the brand (D. A. Aaker, 1996; Upshaw, 1995). According to J. Aaker (1997) the brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function or as the set of human characteristics associated with the typical user of a brand. A brand with a personality tends to be more memorable and interesting than a brand which is nothing more than a set of attributes (D.A. Aaker, 1998)

1.3 Purpose and research questions

Based on the problem discussion above, the purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding on an organization’s brand identity. In order to reach this purpose, the following research questions are thus stated.

RQ 1. How can the position of the brand be described?

RQ 2. How can the personality of the brand be described?

2 Literature Review

In the previous chapter we discussed and presented the research questions. In this chapter we will narrow down this study down to a specific area of research. But before doing this we will look at theories of the brand identity to better understand them.

2.1 Positioning a brand

To be successful today the organisations have to be aware of today's reality and environment. And the reality that counts is the one in the proposed consumer mind. The fundamentals of positioning is not to create something new or different, but to change or manipulate what is already in the sense of the consumer by tying associations to what already exists (Ries & Trout, 1985, p 12). Or as Fill (2002, p. 321) explains it; "Positioning is not about the product but what the buyer thinks about the product or organization".

Positioning are not verifiable scientific hypotheses. There is a great deal of subjective interpretation and high degree of risk involved in choosing to seek one positioning strategy over another (Upshaw, 1995). Alternative positioning types; feature-driven prompts, problem/solution prompts, target-driven positioning, competition-driven positioning, emotional/psychological positioning, benefit-driven positioning, aspirational positioning and value positioning (ibid.). Positioning is the process whereby information about the organization or the product is communicated in such a way that the object is perceived by the consumer/stakeholder to be differentiated from the competition, to occupy a particular space in the market (Fill, 2002, p 321).

The commercial utility of positioning lies in how the imbuing of trademarks with unique, true and compelling values can influence purchasing decisions and impact upon sales. The entire enterprise of branding itself can be understood as an exercise in positioning; using product experience and marketing initiatives to increase profitability by associating trademarks with compelling consumer values (Marsden, 2002). Positioning is about visibility and recognition of what a product/service represents for a buyer. In markets where the intensity of rivalry and competition are increasing and buyers have greater choice, identification and understanding of a product's intrinsic values become critical (Fill, 2002, p 323). Hankinson and Cowking (1997 p.2) states that a brands positioning "defines the brands point of reference with respect to the competition".

According to Upshaw (1995) positioning campaigns that work often share common characteristics that can serve as a guide for marketers. Some of the most important factors are;

- they are correctly and clearly targeted;
- they promise relevant benefits;
- their promises are backed up with persuasive support;
- they serve as an integrated base with a compelling strategic personality;
- there is a credible brand fit
- they are supported by sufficient market spending.

How a brand is recognized in the marketplace is based largely on its personality, but what it means in someone's life is derived from its positioning (ibid).

According to Kapferer (1997) positioning does not reveal the entire brand's richness of meaning nor reflect all of its potential. The brand is restricted once reduced to four questions.

In this figure (figure 2.1) Kapferer (1997) shows that positioning is a crucial concept. The figure asks the questions:

- **Why?** This question asks about the brand promise and consumer benefit aspect.
- **For whom?** Refers to the target aspect.
- **When?** In what occasions will the product be consumed?
- **Against whom?** This question defines the main competitors whose clients/customers an organization thinks they can win over. (ibid)

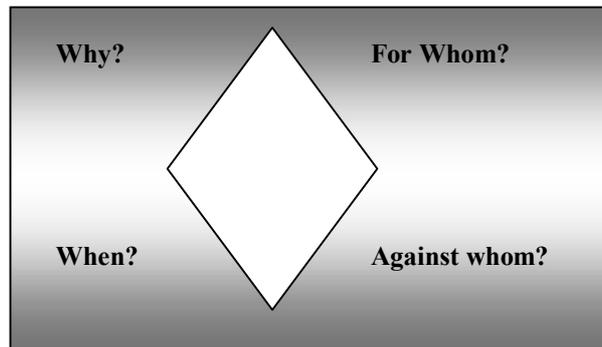
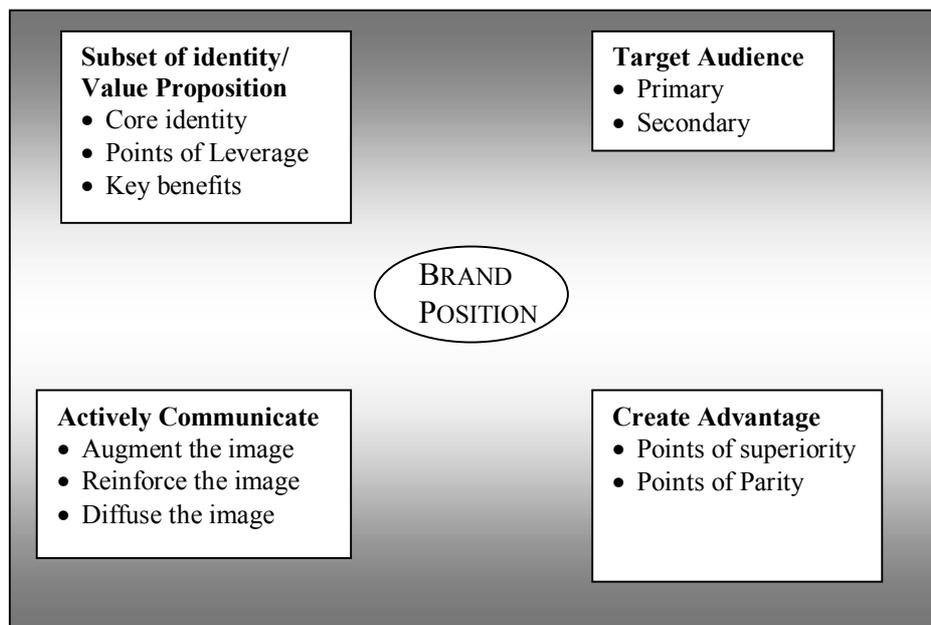


Figure 2.1 Positioning a brand
 SOURCE: Kapferer, 1997, p 97.

Perceptual mapping is a common used tool for determining the position of a brand in the marketplace (Jobber 2001, Fill, 2002). It is a visual representation of consumer perceptions of the brand and its competitors using attributes (dimensions) that are important to consumers (Jobber 2001, p 208). The author also identifies four key steps in developing a perceptual map; identify a set of competing brands, identify important attributes that consumers use when choosing between brands, conduct marketing research and finally plot the brands on a two dimensional map (ibid.).



Figur 2.2 Brand Position
 SOURCE: Aaker, 1996, p184.

Positioning can be seen as a two step process; first indicate to what category the brand should be associated and compared with; secondly, indicate what the brands essential difference and *raison d'être* is in comparison to other products and brands of that category (Kapferer, 1997). To identify a brands position and its future position opportunities, Aaker (1996), uses this figure (see figure 2.2).

2.2 The personality of a brand

For a long time the brand personality has been accepted as a part of the branding theory (Plummer, 1985). The brand personality uses the brand-as-person metaphor to communicate the brand and its relationship to customers (Aaker D, 1997). A brand with a personality tends to be more memorable and interesting than one that is bland and nothing more than a set of attributes (ibid.).

Just as brands are a company's capital, emblems are a brand's capital equity; it serves to personalize the brand identity through a visual symbol other than the brand name (Kapferer, 1997) These symbols help us to understand the brands culture and personality; the are chosen such as the corporate specifications handed over to graphic to pertain to the brands personality traits and values (ibid.).

According to E Boyle (2003) no set of descriptions of the brand personality has yet been developed. Many authors refer to the brand personality as a combination of demographic features such as age, gender, and country-of-origin and culture-of-origin (ibid).

However Aaker (1997) compared the brand personality to the human personality and identified five personality dimensions called the "Big Five", see figure 2.3.

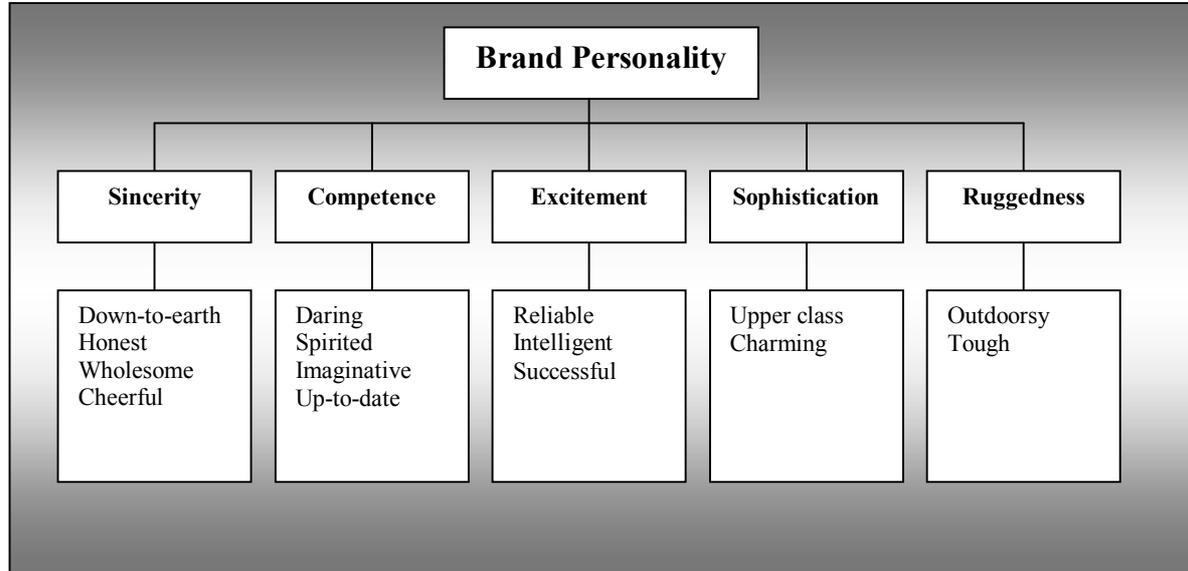


Figure 2.3 The Brand Personality Framework

SOURCE: Aaker, 1997 p 352.

These different dimensions, developed by J. Aaker, including the 14 facets of the brand personality can be used to gain theoretical and practical insight into the antecedents and consequences of brand personality (ibid.).

There is, according to Aaker (1996) several brand personality drivers divided in to product and non-product related characteristics. The primary drivers of the brand personality might be

the product related characteristics, (*table 2.1*). Even the class of a product can affect their personality. A bank, for example, will tend to assume a stereotypical “banker” personality (competent, serious, masculine, older and upper-class), Aaker, 1996.

Product related characteristics	Product related characteristics
Product category (Bank) Package (Gateway computers) Price (Tiffany) Attributes (Coors light)	User Imagery (Levi's 501) Sponsorship (Swatch) Age (Kodak) Ad Style (Obsession) Country of origin (Audi) Company image (The Body Shop) CEO (Bill Gates of Microsoft) Celebrity endorses (Jell-O)

Tabell 2.1 Brand Personality drivers
 SOURCE: Aaker, 1996. p146.

The non-product-related characteristics that also can affect the brand personality include, for example, advertising style, country of origin and the company image, Aaker (1996).

There are several mapping techniques which include principal components analysis, principal co-ordinates analysis and multidimensional scaling; all these techniques can be used to produce brand maps, Hankinson & Cowking (1993). The similarity between brands is measures, in all these techniques, across a large collection of relevant dimensions (*ibid.*).

According to Kapferer (1997) some brands are in top of our minds while others are latent, in analyzing the identity of a brand findings are that the facets of its identity are not equally.

Kapferer (1997) further suggests two dimensions in a cross-combination figure which serves to represent the brand potential and associations to the brand. See figure 2.4.

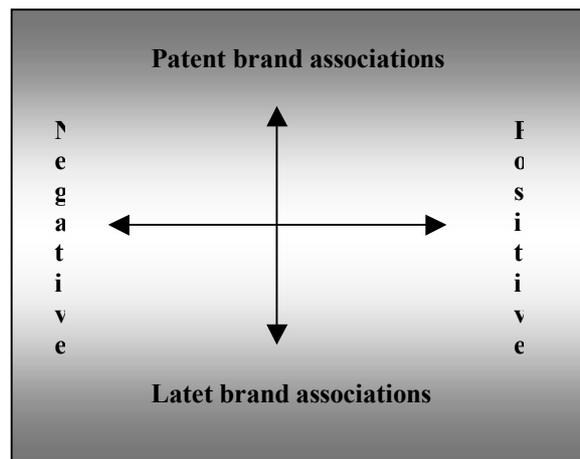


Figure 2.4 Analysis of brand potential
 SOURCE: Kapferer, 1997, p119.

2.3 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied - the key factors, constructs or variables - and the presumed relationship among them (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Furthermore Miles and Huberman (1994) claims that it is easier to create a conceptual framework after presenting the research questions, which will be made in this thesis.

2.3.1 Positioning

Research question number one concerns the positioning of the organization. The main definition of positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image so that they occupy a meaningful and distinctive competitive position in the target customers minds (Kotler, 2005).

The theory that will be used in this thesis is Kapferer (1997) four questions about positioning a brand. This is one of the most recent and relevant theories in the positioning area and because of that this theory will be used in this study.

- **Why?** This question asks about the brand promise and consumer benefit aspect.
- **For whom?** Refers to the target aspect.
- **When?** In what occasions will the product be consumed?
- **Against whom?** This question defines the main competitors whose clients/customers we think we can win over (ibid.).

2.3.2 Brand personality

The second research question concerns the brand personality of an organization. According to D. Aaker (1997) the brand personality uses the brand-as-person metaphor to communicate the brand and its relationship to customers. The reason for using this theory is that it is one of the most extensive and mostly used theories in the area.

J. Aaker (1997) compared the brand personality to the human personality and identified five personality dimensions called the "Big Five".

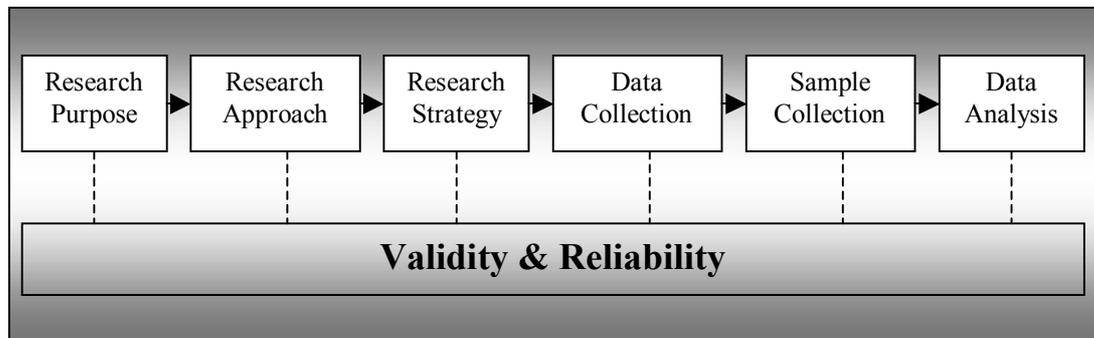
Brand Personality

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sincerity<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Down to earth○ Honest○ Wholesome○ Cheerful• Competence<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Daring○ Spirited○ Imaginative○ Up-to-date | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excitement<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reliable○ Intelligent○ Successful• Sophistication<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Upper class○ Charming• Ruggedness<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Outdoorsy○ Tough |
|---|---|

These different dimensions can be used to gain theoretical and practical insight into the antecedents and consequences of brand personality (ibid.).

3. Methodology

This chapter will present how we will find answers to our research questions and fulfil our purpose. We will explain how to collect the data needed and how our samples will be selected.



Figur 3.1 Schematic Presentation of the Methodology

SOURCE: Adapted from Foster 1998, p. 81.

3.

1 Purpose of research

According to Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1997), the purpose with research is to state what is to be accomplished by conducting research and how the results of the research can be used. There are three common types of purposes for scientific research: explore, describe, and/or explain (Yin, 2003; Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001).

Exploratory studies are most suitable when no clear theory exists, when the problem is hard to demarcate and when the important characteristics and relations are hard to determine (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). Exploratory research is used when modest amount have been written about the problem (Winter, 1992). According to Saunders et al. (2003, p. 96) the aim of an exploratory research approach is to find out; “what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light.” This approach is especially useful when one want to clarify the understanding of a basic problem. There are three principal ways of conducting exploratory research;

- a search of literature
- talking to experts in the subject
- conducting focus group interviews (ibid.)

Descriptive research may be an extension of, or a forerunner to, exploratory research. It is necessary to have a clear picture of the phenomena on which you wish to collect data prior to the collection of data (Saunders et al., 2003, p 97). The object of descriptive research is “to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations” (ibid.). According to Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1997) descriptive research is most suitable when the problem is clearly structured and when there are no intentions to find relationships between causes and effects. The describing involves a choice of perspective, aspects, level, terms and concepts, as well as to observe, register, systematize, classify and interpret (ibid.).

Explanatory studies are studies that establish causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2003, p 97). Or as Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (2001) suggests that the explanatory

research means to analyze the cause and effect relationships. The emphasis is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships (Saunders et al., 2003, p 98).

This study involves all of the three purposes discussed above. The research purpose of this study is initially exploratory since we will conduct exploratory research to gain a deeper understanding to answer our research questions. The study is also descriptive as data is collected and analyzed. Finally we will begin to explain while answering our research questions, so the study will also be explanatory.

3.2 Research approach

In this study a qualitative approach is most suitable for the purpose of this thesis. There is no aim to make generalizations but to gain a deeper understanding of the area researched. In order to collect as deep and rich data as possible we are going to use qualitative methods.

Qualitative research is the name of several different types of social science research approaches. There are some common characteristics in these types of research that gives the concept of qualitative research a significant meaning; the interest of meaning and people's interpretations, and the interest of behavioural patterns (Denscombe, 1998). Qualitative research can be a part of the information collection and there by have a value by it self and it can also be used as a base for building theory. No of the descriptions are ever "clean"- they are always the result of the researcher's interpretation (ibid.). Qualitative research is based on meanings expressed through words (Saunders et al., 2003). To capture the richness of qualitative data they cannot be collected in a standardized way (ibid.).

3.3 Research strategy

According to Denscombe (2000), there is no right or wrong strategy, but some strategies are more suitable than others in consideration to the purpose and research approach. The strategy that we have found are the best suited for our thesis is to conduct a case study. As the approach is qualitative and the research questions are "how-questions" we find that that a case study is the most appropriate for us. According to Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (2001) a case study involves the investigation of few entities but in many aspects. The case study accepts the fact that there are many different views of the object of the study (ibid.). The decision to use a case study as a procedure in the research is a strategic decision which is relative to the extent on the research (Denscombe, 2000). It does not tell you what method(s) you shall use. This is one of the strong aspects in choosing case studies as strategy – it gives you the opportunity to use different methods depending on the circumstances and the special situations that may occur (ibid.).

3.4 Data Collection

We have chosen to work with primary and secondary data to collect the information needed to reach the purpose of this thesis. The primary data will be collected through interviews with two focus groups. The secondary data will be collected through documentation.

After we have determined the research strategy we had to decide on how to collect the empirical data to go with our purpose of this thesis. Empirical data must be collected to

understand the research area more (Erikson & Wiedersheim, 2001). According to Denscombe (2000) there are two types of data that can be collected; primary and secondary. The secondary data has already been collected while the primary data is collected for a specific purpose by the researcher. Further, Denscombe states that the main sources for collecting data are questionnaires, interviews, observations and documentation. Yin (2003) also adds archival record the sources used to collect data, and divides observations into two categories; direct and participant's observations. The most complex way of gathering data through this process is by using case studies because all these sources complement each other, they all have strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths with interviewing a focus group is that it is a good way of exploring the attitudes and values to subjects that are not sensitive, the depth of the information and that the equipment needed for the interviews is simple (Denscombe, 2000). Further, some weaknesses to having a focus group is the difficulty of documenting the discussion, when everybody in the focus group speaks at the same time, it's time-consuming, the focus group can be affected by the researchers and not answer the truth (ibid.).

The types of documentations used in this study will be books, magazines and web-pages to find out how the organization positions them selves. The strength with using documentation as a secondary data is that cost efficiency and easy to get hold of, Denscombe (2000). The opposite, the weakness, is that the researcher has to decide if the data is valid or not, when researcher's uses written data it means that somebody else has written it for another purpose (ibid.). The final weakness that Denscombe (2000) mention is that the documents are more likely to be based on the interpretations of the author than on the give an objective assessment.

3.5 Sample selection

The next step for us is to find relevant samples from where to collect the empirical data. According to Yin (2003) a single case study has the opportunity to include subunits of analyses and this can lead to better insight of the focus groups values and attitudes.

The case study will be conducted by researching the brand positioning and brand personality of Luleå University of Technology.

3.5.1 Choice of respondents

In order for us to collect the data needed we have chosen Swedish students from *Västerås Fria Gymnasium* in Västerås. We have taken contact with Katarina Eklöf, who is the owner of the school, and she gave us permission to use two classes for the focus groups. The reason for choosing these students is that they are all about to finish upper secondary school and some of them might even start studying at a university, therefore we think that they have values and attitudes that can help to reach the purpose of this thesis. Another reason for choosing a group that knows each other is that according to Morgan (1997) the participants must feel comfortable with talking to one another.

3.5.2 Choice of documentation

During the focus group interviews the group will be able discuss with us and see examples from print advertisements that Luleå University of Technology uses. We have chosen ads that are aimed for the future students that apply to the University during this spring. The purpose of showing the ads is better understood if the positioning of the University is successful and to

see if the student recognize the ads and how they interpret them. Each group discussion will last about 30 minutes. As the interviews are conducted during school hours the time will be limited as the students need to be in classes.

3.6 Data Analysis

Denscombe (2000) and Miles and Huberman (1994) states that in qualitative research words are the main units used in an analysis. This unit requires processing that according to Miles and Huberman (1994) consists of three current flows of activities:

- Data reduction
- Data display
- Conclusion drawing and verification

The first flow, data reduction, refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcription (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data display is described as an organized and compressed assembly of information that permits conclusions drawing and action. The last flows of analysis activity leads the researcher to start sorting out the collected data and interpret it, this is made by noting regulations, patterns, explanations, casual flows and propositions (ibid.).

Yin (2003) declares case study should begin with a general analytic strategy, he states that before starting analyzing we have to choose between three strategies;

- Relying on the theoretical propositions
- Thinking about rival explanations
- Developing a case description

The strategy will help us to treat the evidence fairly, produce compelling analytic conclusions, and rule out alternative interpretations. This strategy will also help us to use the tools and make manipulations more effectively and efficiently (ibid.).

The analyzing process has two steps that we can follow: within-case and cross-case analyses (Yin, 2003, Miles & Huberman, 1994). We are going to use within-case analyze which compares the collected data with the theories that were used.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two ways of measuring whether a study is of high quality or not (Denscombe, 1998). Validity can be explained as the ability to measure what you actually intended to measure (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). Validity is about the data and the methods used and how the data can be considered exact, true and accurate (Denscombe, 1998). Reliability means that another researcher using the same approach should be able to come up with the same results (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). A reliable study are consequent and trustworthy (Denscombe, 1998).

Swedish will be the language used when conducting the focus-group interviews in this study. We are aware that there is a risk for translation errors. But since the people we will interview have Swedish as mother tongue we decided to do the interviews in Swedish to avoid language

3. Methodology

barriers. To minimize that risk of translation errors, and to ensure reliability, we will use different dictionaries and we, both of the researchers, will work with the translation.

In order to establish validity of the research, we will use an interview-guide in the meetings with the focus groups. We will follow the same guide in both of the groups. See appendix A.

4. Empirical Data

In the previous chapter the methodology of this study was discussed. In this chapter the empirical data collected during the focus groups will be presented. The data collection was conducted by two focus group sessions which followed the order of the conceptual framework.

The interviews were conducted in two focus groups with five respectively six students aged between 18 and 19 years old. The focus groups were mixed males and females, four females and seven males. All of the respondents are at their final year of upper secondary school at the combined program of social science and technology at *Västerås Fria Gymnasium*. The session started with some small talk around the student's current situation to gain confidence among the group and towards the moderator.

4.1 The positioning of the Brand

The first question asked was what aspects were most important when applying for university studies- *Why?* Most of the respondents answered that the geographic location was one of the most important aspects. Not too far from home and with good communications to their hometown. "It should be close to home, Norrland is so far away" said one of the respondents. The living standard and the supply of apartments that are available on campus or around the University is a minor issue according to the respondents. Other aspects that were important to the respondents were the quality of the education, the reputation of the university and also how the future employers find the status of the university. As one of the female - respondents answered "You do not apply for a school or a programme with a bad reputation or any reputation at all". The important traits for identifying the status of a University or of a programme according to the respondents;

- The future salary paid after an education at the specific University;
- Information gained by the University homepage and current or alumni students;
- The catalogue – if the environment looks classic;
- If the University is well known among future employers, parents, friends etc.

The second question asked; *"for whom"* was if they ever heard about Luleå University of Technology and who they thought that Luleå University of Technology are targeting. All of the respondents except one had heard about Luleå University of technology. "Engineers, as the name of the University is technical" said one respondent which was the view that most of the respondents held. Many of them came with the conclusion that Luleå University of Technology only is targeting future engineers because of the name. They also thought that many potential students refused to look at the catalogue because of the name and since think the name is misleading. All though some of the respondents thought that the university was also targeting business students and some thought that they were targeting anyone who wants to study.

"When" and where have you heard about Luleå University of technology was the third question asked to understand the position of the University in the respondents mind. Most of the respondents had received the catalogue by mail and some of them have seen advertising ads in news papers. Some of them had not opened the catalogue or even less read it or thrown it in the garbage as soon as they received it. Two of the respondent had not got the catalogue, but their older siblings had. Another common way that came up as ways to get to know more

about specific Universities is to visit them, or that the University sends student-ambassadors to inform in class about the university-life. During the second session one of the respondents said that she had heard about Luleå University of Technology through advertising since, according to her, this is the University who uses most advertising. “There is a lot of advertising for Luleå University of Technology so I visited their webpage” she said.

The final question regarding the positioning was “*Against whom?*” which were asked as which University/Högskola the respondents has as their first, second and third choice when applying for higher education. The most common and popular Universities among the respondents was Uppsala, Lund and Stockholm. Also Örebro was one of the favourites. Only two of the respondents could even think about moving up north to Luleå. The reason for the unwillingness to move north is the distance to home and the climate and the lack of reputation/status. One of the positive aspects of Luleå University of Technology; is according to one of the respondents “It sounds better to study at a University than at a Högskola”

4.2 The personality of the Brand

Before going into the second research question about the personality of the brand the respondents were exposed to the catalogue and some information folders about Luleå University of Technology. Then the respondents were asked what traits they felt were attached to the brand of Luleå University of Technology. The spontaneous reactions we got from the respondents were; “*cold*”, “*cosy*” and “*dark*” one of the respondents even thought that the catalogue was used for promoting ski trips because of the landscape and all the snow.

According to the respondents the personality of this brand is *down-to-earth* as the pictures show the nature and surrounding of the University. But at the same time some of the respondents do *not* think the brand is *honest* since they thought that the advertising should be on “the school not on snow and landscape”. The respondents think that the image that Luleå University of Technology is sending out is giving a false image of them selves.

Most of the respondents find the slogan of Luleå University of Technology to be *exaggerated* and *non trust worthy* as the University should be better known if it had “world-class research and education”. One comment was that; “Luleå University of technology is not as know as... Oxford or Uppsala University. That is world class”. And another response was; “Does anyone outside Sweden even know that Luleå University of technology exists?”. However after a short discussion and analyze about the slogan the respondents came to a conclusion that the slogan must mean that the University has educations and research that can be measured with the educations and research that *are* of world class. One of the respondents also pointed out that she interpreted the slogan as if Luleå University of Technology is a school that *is* of world class, but she agreed with the other respondents when answering that Uppsala University or University of Oxford is world class.

Competence; the respondents find the University to have a lot of competence as they have many different areas of research and education. At the same time the respondents find the name of the University to seem to have a lot of *competence*. Some of the respondents think the name “Luleå University of Technology” will scare some future “non-technological” students who do not know that there is more to this University than just technology. They also think that technique is associated with; *smart*, *up-to-date*, *development* and *corny*. After a glance at the catalogue they found the University more interesting and *exiting*. Later during the second session a respondent repeated that the “*status* is important, I what to study at a University not a Högskola”

4. Empirical Data

None of the respondents found Luleå University of Technology to be *upper-class*, which was more connected to Uppsala, Stockholm and Lund. Luleå was associated with *cosy* in the darkness and the snow than *classy* and *exclusive*. The respondents did not see any *charm* in the brand of Luleå University of Technology since they thought that it was too sporty and skiing oriented for their taste. All of the respondents agreed that the image of the University “healthy” since according to a female-respondent “it is so sporty”.

5. Analysis

In this chapter the data collected will be compared with the theory in order to the research questions. A within case analysis will be conducted to our focus group session, by comparing the empirical data with the conceptual framework shown in chapter two.

5.1 Positioning a brand

According to Kapferer (1997) the most useful theory to understand the positioning of a brand is by asking these questions.

- **Why?** This question asks about the brand promise and consumer benefit aspect.
- **For whom?** Refers to the target aspect.
- **When?** In what occasions will the product be consumed?
- **Against whom?** This question defines the main competitors whose clients/customers we think we can win over (ibid.).

According to the respondents the most important factors when choosing University to apply for was; the geographical location; the quality of education and the reputation of the University. This might be an issue for Luleå University of technology as most of the respondents and most of the Swedish student's live in the south parts of the country. Another important factor that the respondents said is that they rather not go to the winter cold and the advertising shows a lot of snow and coldness.

The respondents think that Luleå University of Technology might miss some applications for future students because of its name. Which we think can be issues for the University since a lot of students seem to think that this is only a technical University. This is can be analysed as a sign that Luleå University of Technology dose not have a successful positioning. According to the respondents they have not heard nor seen any advertising that was aimed for future business, media or social science students.

Most of the respondents had heard about Luleå University of Technology through friends or relatives. This shows that the University can also depend on the power of the word-of-mouth although not as much as better known Universities.

When we asked the respondents which Universities they were most interested in applying for the most common answer was Uppsala. According to the respondents Uppsala was most interesting because of its status and is a well known brand. Which Luleå according to them were not. Uppsala also was better geographical located. Most of the respondents feel that the phrase "Research & education of world-class" is misleading and do not agree whit the phrase since they do not think that this University is as well known as Uppsala University or the University of Oxford in Great Britain.

5.2 Personality of a brand

The theory used to reach the goal of answering research question two is the model called “Big Five” by Aaker (1997). The model is divided into five dimensions of personality that can be compared with the human traits of personality. The five dimensions are:

- **Sincerity**
 - Down to earth
 - Honest
 - Wholesome
 - Cheerful
- **Competence**
 - Daring
 - Spirited
 - Imaginative
 - Up-to-date
- **Excitement**
 - Reliable
 - Intelligent
 - Successful
- **Sophistication**
 - Upper class
 - Charming
- **Ruggedness**
 - Outdoorsy
 - Tough

After the respondents had been exposed for Luleå University of Technology’s advertisement, catalogue and some information materials the discussion lead to some interesting findings. The case study showed that almost all of the respondents saw Luleå University of Technology as a *cold* school since most of the ads were based on the climate of northern Sweden and also the logotype of Luleå University of Technology has a dark blue colour that also can be associated to cold. But at the same time the brand of Luleå University of Technology is associated with *cosiness* since there is more darkness than sun in Luleå in the winter time when most education are conducted. The personality can also be described as *down-to-earth* from the ads as there are much nature and outdoor-views in the pictures.

The fact that Luleå University of Technology is a University is very important to the respondents since they thought that this made the school more interesting. They will rather study at a university than a högskola. This gives the school a combination of the two personality dimensions; *sophistication* and *competence*, shown in the model by Aaker (1997). Another trait which is a sign of the brands sophistication and competence is that Luleå University of Technology is a *technological* University. This also gives a feeling that the University is *up-to-date* and *smart* since they associate technique with; development, research and high-tech.

Because of the slogan used for positioning the brand of Luleå University of Technology, “Research & education of world-class”, the respondents feel that the University personality is *dishonest*.

6. Findings and conclusions

In this final chapter the findings and conclusions will be presented. The result from the case study will be presented as answered to the research questions asked in chapter one. The findings and conclusions for each question will be answered in separate sections. The chapter ends with implications for Luleå University of Technology, implications for existing theory and implications for future studies.

6.1 How can the position of the brand be described?

The position of the brand can be described as the position in the target markets mind the brand holds. The position gives the brand the positive or negative connotations attached to the brand by its target. This can be understood by asking the question asked above. The findings are that the positioning can be described by understanding the perceptions of the brand and its position among its competitors. Here we found that an important factor for the positioning of the brand in this case was the fact that it was a University and not a Högskola which raise its status among its competitors.

Another finding was the importance of the pictures in the advertising, as they give a lot of connotations about the brand and how the brand will be positioned in the customer minds. As an example if the pictures are snowy and “wintery” the position and image of the brand can be connected to cold; and winter activities.

The pictures and the brand name gives the customer a hint for whom the brand is targeting, this can be a negative factor as the brand can narrow it self down by its name. Even if the intention is to reach a broader target this can be difficult if the pictures and the name together seem to aim a specific group. At the same time it can be positive, if the brand is targeting a very small target market, the brand name and image of the pictures can be a way of reaching this specific target group.

The geographic location of the brand can be of importance. If it is located in an unattractive area for the target market it can be negative for the brand to promote this trait as the culture or the image of the culture can be different according to the customers. The geographical position can be connected with a country of origin effect which gives the target group connotations about the brand connected to its location.

Another way the brand can strengthen its position is by the powerful word-of-mouth element. As many of the respondents in this study listened to current students, parents and other opinion leaders it seems important for a brands position to have strong ambassadors for the brand.

In conclusion we have found these factors to be of importance when position a brand: One important factor to think about is who the brand wants to target. Another factor found was the importance of using pictures and texts that the target group find appealing. The last factor was the importance of status – the higher status the more attractive positioning the brand gets.

6. Findings and conclusions

6.2 How can the personality of the brand be described?

The research showed that there are components of the brand personality that are attached to the brand. The important components that were found for the brand personality can be described as followed;

- Sophistication/competence
- Status
- Well-known

The personality of a brand can be described with both sophistication and competence. The sophistication of a brand depends on the image of the brand. The slogan of the brand is of great importance and that the slogan is trustworthy. The competence of the personality can also be shown by the slogan, but the target can also see the competence in the available information sheets or catalogues.

Another element that was found to be of importance to the personality of a brand and the sophistication/competence is the usage of words. The more connotations to intelligence the word brings the more sophisticated the brand seems. This gives both a positive and negative associations to the brand. It affects the brand in a negative way if the target interprets the brand to be “too good” for them. However in a positive this makes the target group to feel more special when using the brand. The usage of words shows that a brand personality is not always understood by the target market as the organization behind the brand intended. This may lead to conflict for the customers who will get confused by the contradictory message. The sophistication and competence of a brand also contributes to the status of the brand.

Another personality-factor that was found was the appearance of status. Nowadays it is very important where the students study. Before building a relationship to a new brand the customers talk to; friends, relatives and search on the web, to find information about the reputation and status of the brand. Well-known brands seem to have both higher status and reputation than average. This plays an important role when choosing brand. Furthermore we found that more students would rather study at a University since the word “university” has more status than a Högskola.

The conclusion is that a brand that is well-known seems to have a stronger personality as it is remembered by the customers. All of the factors mentioned above seem to be the strongest traits in gaining a strong brand personality.

6.3 Implications for Luleå University of Technology

The findings of this study may be of significant importance to the marketing management of Luleå University of Technology. As the University seem to have an image issue we suggest that more marketing research would be appropriate to be able to reach the right target group with the right message at the right time. To attract students outside the “technology-segment” they have to work on their positioning and personality towards the non-technological students. They have to make them selves more visible in the non-technological environment.

6. Findings and conclusions

The positioning towards the technology students seem to be quite all right except for the slogan which implicates that Luleå University of Technology is of “world-class”. This is not trustworthy and need to be considered. As the logo and the slogan should represent the whole brand it is important that both of them are reliable and honest and not to be considered to be wrong or false by the target group.

The personality seems to be a bit split as it is right now. On the one hand it should be associated with research and education of “world-class” and on the other hand it is a snowy skiing landscape which is all about having fun in the snow. Luleå University of Technology need to decide which personality they want to focus on and consistently let this personality be a read thread throughout all of their material.

6.4 Implications for theory

The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding on an organizations brand identity. The study have been *exploring*, *describing* and have begin to *explaining* by following a conceptual framework built on existing theory in order to answer the two research questions.

We explored the positioning and brand personality by conducting focus group interviews. These interviews were conducted to understand the perception of the position and the personality of a brand. After exploring the brand identity we described the data collected on the positioning of a brand and the brands personality. We begun to explain while answering the research questions stated above.

6.5 Implications for future studies

When conducting this study we came across some issues and areas that we found to be interesting but that did not fit in to this thesis. Here we have some ideas of methods and topics to be inspiration for further research;

- Multiple case studies in the same area;
- More respondents or focus groups to get a broader view in how the brand personality and positioning can be understood.
- Geographically based case studies to see similarities and differences in perception of positioning and brand personality in different parts of Sweden or the World.
- Testing other theories about the brand building process and perceptions by the target market.

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Appendix A

Interview guide

Age:

Gender:

Group: Sam/ NV

Are you going to apply for higher education, such as university/högskola after you graduate “gymnasiet”?

Research question 1.

How can the positioning of the brand be described?

Why?

What is most important when applying for the university/högskolan? (quality of education/status/geografic aspects)

For whom?

Have you ever heard about Luleå University of technology?

Who do you think LTU are targeting?

When?

When and where have you heard about LTU?

Against whom?

Which högskola/university do you have as your first choice? Second? Third?

Research question 2.

How can the personality of the brand be described?

Here you will see some advertisements and information from LTU.

Which of these traits do you feel are attached to the pictures and the ideas you have of Luleå and Luleå university of technology?

Brand Personality

Sincerity

Down to earth

Honest

Wholesome

Careful

Competence

Daring

Spirited

Imaginative

Up to date

Excitement

Reliable

Intelligent

Successful

Sofistication

Upper class

Charming

Ruggness

Outdoorsy

Tough

Appendix B

Intervju Guide

Ålder

Kön

Grupp

Har du tänkt söka till Universitetet/högskolan när du är färdig med gymnasiet?

Forskningsfråga 1

Hur kan man beskriva ett varumärkes positionering?

Varför?

Vilka är de viktigaste kriterierna när du söker till Universitet/Högskola? (ex. geografiskt läge, status på skolan, kvaliteten på utbildningen)

Vem?

Har du hört talas om Luleå Tekniska Universitet tidigare?

Vem tror du att universitetet riktar sig mot med den här kampanjen?

När?

När och var har du hört talas om LTU?

Mot vilka/konkurrens?

Vilket Universitet/Högskola skulle du idag välja i första hand? Andra? Tredje?

Forskningsfråga 2

Hur kan ett varumärkes personlighet beskrivas?

Här visas LTUs informationsmaterial och reklam.

Vilka personliga egenskaper känner du att de här bilderna och texten har? Vilken känsla får/har du av Luleå och Luleå Tekniska Universitet?

Varumärkets Personlighet

Öppenhet

Jordnära

Ärlig

Hälsosam/Sund

Omsorgsfull

Kompetens/Behörighet

Djärv

Livlig/modig

Inbillad

Up to date

Spännande/Upphetsande

Pålitlig

Intelligent

Lyckad

Sofistikerad

Överklassig

Charmig

Robust/Grovskuren

Friluftsliv, utomhus-aktiv

Tuff/Hård