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The Strategic Development of Brand Identity

An Empirical Study of Länsförsäkringar AB

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Abstract

Brands have become one of the most discussed phenomena of marketing research to recent years. An important part of a brand is its identity; the unique fingerprint that makes it one of a kind. The purpose of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the strategic development of the brand identity and the objectives related to this development. A case study was conducted, using qualitative research method, at Länsförsäkringar AB. The study shows that the congruence of the different dimensions of the brand identity is an essential issue to consider in the strategic development process. For service companies, the brand as organization perspective is also of great importance in this process. Furthermore, the study shows that there are several different objectives for developing the brand identity, but the most important objective is to establish a unique image.

Sammanfattning

Varumärken har kommit att bli en av de mest diskuterade fenomenen inom marknadsföringsforskningen de senaste åren. En speciellt viktig del av varumärket är dess identitet, vilken ger varumärket ett budskap och samtidigt skiljer ut varumärket från andra. Syftet med denna uppsats är att få en ökad förståelse för det strategiska utvecklandet av varumärkesidentiteten, samt för de mål som är relaterade till denna utveckling. En fallstudie med ett kvalitativt angreppssätt har gjorts på företaget Länsförsäkringar AB. Fallstudien visar att kongruensen mellan de olika dimensionerna av varumärkesidentiteten är av signifikant betydelse i den strategiska utvecklingen. För serviceföretag är den organisatoriska dimensionen också viktig. Vidare visar fallstudien att det finns flera olika mål med att utveckla varumärkesidentiteten, dock är det viktigaste målet att skapa en unik image.

Table of contents

1 Introduction

In this first chapter we will provide a brief background on the topic of our thesis. Secondly, we will discuss the problem area. Thirdly, we will state the purpose of this thesis and finally we will present the research questions.

1.1 Background

Brands have become one of the most discussed phenomena of marketing research in recent years. A growing body of branding strategy literature suggests that brands are the key instruments for creating superior business performance. Even today companies try to win and dominate markets by imposing brand meanings on consumers. (Bengtsson, 2002)

There are several different definitions of what a brand is. According to Davis (2002), a brand is "*a set of expectations and associations evoked from experience with a company or product. A brand is how your key constituents - customers, employees, shareholders, etc. - experience what you do*" (Davis, 2002, p. 503). Statistics show that the strongest brand in the world is Coca-cola (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000).

The world's strongest brand

When it comes to branding, Coca-Cola is a good example of how important it is to build and maintain a strong brand. Today, the company's brand is considered to be the most popular brand in the world. Also, their product line extension of Vanilla Coke and Diet Coke Lemon has further strengthened their customer relations and also attracted new customers. According to Coca-Cola, the extension of Vanilla Coke and Diet Coke lemon has attracted approximately 11 million new customers. But this extension is not to be seen as a constant serving of new and exciting flavours. More important is the maintaining and development of the brand itself.

"*Responsibility for the world's most beloved and valuable brand requires extreme care in how, when and why we extend it. We don't risk consumer loyalty to the brand or seek an artificial bump in volume by spinning out product after product to chase the latest fad*"

The brand is what Coca-Cola put first.

Source: www2.coca-cola.com

Branding, is according to Brassington and Pettitt (2000) "*the creation of a three-dimensional character for a product, defined in terms of name, packaging, colours, symbols etc., that helps to differentiate it from its competitors, and helps the customer to develop a relationship with the product*" (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000, p. 1049). The main objective of branding goes beyond a single sale to one customer. The main objective is rather to build a relationship between the brand and a particular customer group (Alreck, 1999). Through these relationships between brand and customer, brand loyalty is established. Brand loyalty is a key consideration when placing a value on a brand, because a highly loyal customer base can be expected to generate a very predictable sales and profit stream. A brand without a loyal customer base is very vulnerable or has value only in its potential to create loyal customers. (Aaker, 1996)

Brand loyalty is considered to be an asset, which is a part of the concept brand equity. The major asset categories of brand equity are brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. All these asset categories add value to the product. Brand awareness refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind and is measured according to the different ways in which consumers remember a brand. (Aaker, 1996)

The way a brand is perceived by the public is called brand image. The way strategists want the brand to be perceived is called brand identity, and this is a central concept to a brand's strategic vision (Aaker, 1996). Brand identity can, according to Aaker (1996), further be defined as "*a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members*" (Aaker, 1996, p. 68).

Another way of looking at the brand identity is by its configuration. According to Upshaw (1995), the brand identity can be described in the broadest sense as the configuration of words, images, ideas and associations that form a consumer's aggregated perception of a brand (Upshaw, 1995, p. 12). The identity is the brand's unique fingerprint that makes it one of a kind; a product's integrated composite of how it is perceived to perform. This composite includes the strategy that dictates how it will be sold, the strategic personality that humanizes it, the way in which those two elements are blended, and all those tangible and intangible executional elements that ideally flow from their joining, for example the brand name, logo and graphic system. Furthermore, important to keep in mind is that the identity only lives in the eyes of the beholder. It is not what the marketer has created; rather what the customer perceives has been created. (Upshaw, 1995)

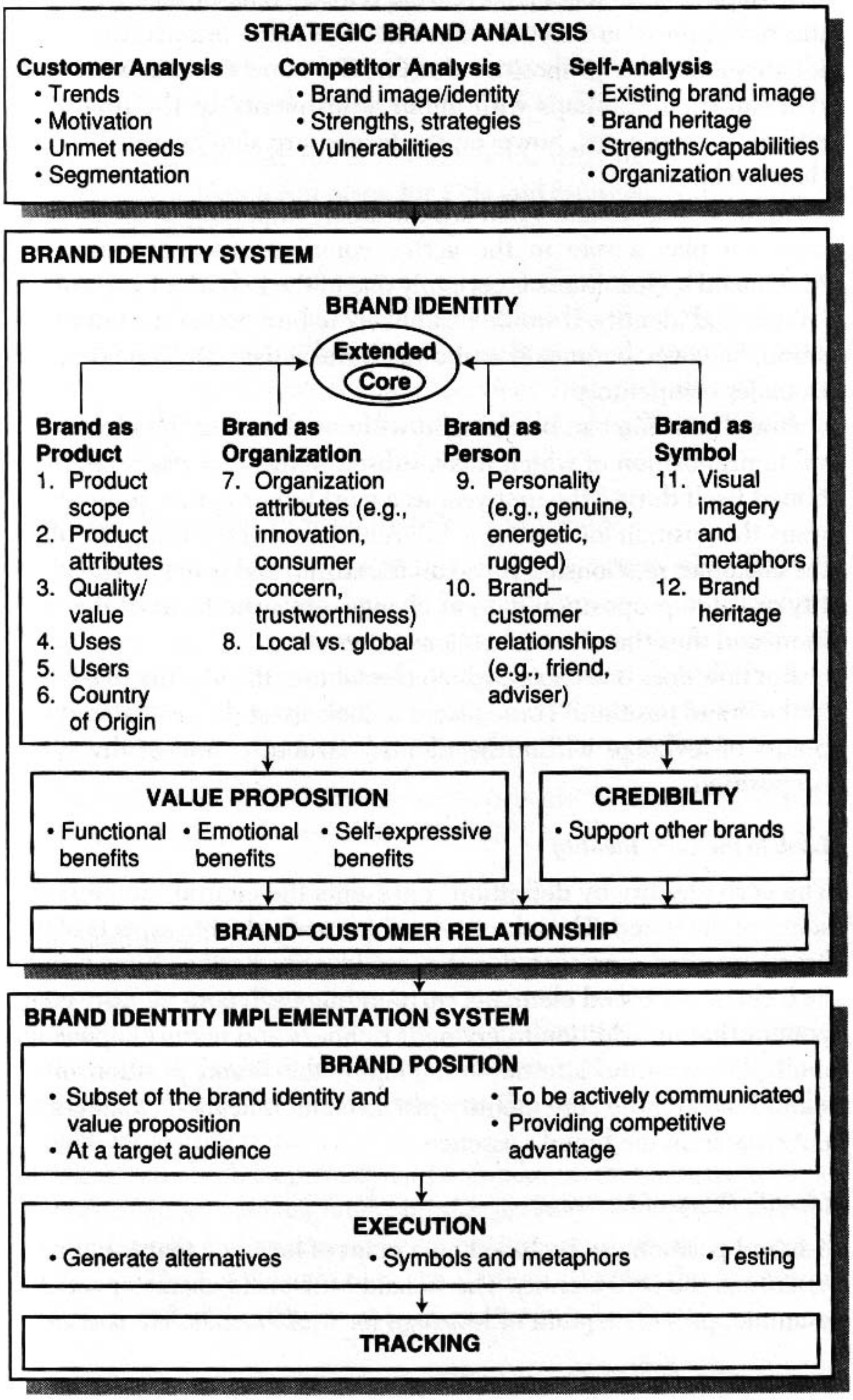
The part of the brand identity and value proposition that is actively communicated to the target audience is referred to as brand position (Aaker, 1996). The importance of having a differentiated brand, in order to succeed in business, is a well known fact today. A brand can be differentiated from other brands by implementing unique positioning strategies (Bengtsson, 2002). Brands can also be differentiated through clear and consistent image-building, which, if successful, is based on a well defined brand identity (Subodh & Reddy, 1998; Aaker, 1996).

According to Aaker (1996), there are four brand identity perspectives; the brand as a product, the brand as organization, the brand as person and the brand as symbol (Aaker, 1996, p. 78). The function of the different perspectives of brand identity is to help the strategist consider different brand elements and patterns that can help clarify, enrich, and differentiate an identity (Aaker, 1996).

A proper strategy, taking the above brand identity perspectives into account, will ensure that the brand identity has texture and depth. Furthermore, a highly detailed identity will also help to guide implementation decisions. (Aaker, 1996)

Aaker's (1996) brand identity planning model, including the brand identity system, can be described with the following model: (See figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: The brand identity planning model



Source: Aaker, 1996, p. 79

Figure 1.1 shows the extensiveness of the area of brand identity planning. Since this area is quite large this thesis will focus on what Aaker (1996) refers to as the brand identity system, described in the middle of the figure above.

1.2 Problem discussion

Today, the use of branding as a strategic tool is becoming a more and more important factor of success in business. Companies are, to a greater extent, realizing the benefits of building and maintaining strong brands. (Davis, 2002) To many businesses the brand is also considered to be the primary asset (Motameni & Manuchehr, 1998).

According to Rayport (1999), the supply of goods has outstripped the demand in nearly every sector of the economy in the Western world. Demand is nowadays the scarce resource, instead of supply, which was the situation a decade ago. (Rayport in Carter, 1999, p. 5) Therefore developing and maintaining strong brands in today's environment is not an easy task, and since branding activities involve large investments a sound strategy is essential. Strong brands are already central to the survival of some companies today, which further increases the importance of well developed brand strategies. (Aaker, 1996; Randall, 2000)

Brands are not static; they need to change with their environment. The values projected by the brand should be in line with the personal values of today's consumers. Therefore, brand strategists need to use brand identity as a strategic tool in an even greater extent when developing and maintaining the brand. (Rooney, 1995) Furthermore, modern companies will, according to Rooney, put more emphasis on strengthening and expanding already existing brands, rather than establishing new ones (Rooney, 1995, p. 49).

Developing a brand is a complex process which can mean a lot of different difficulties in terms of viewing the brand in different perspectives. It is important to know a brand's identity as well as understanding the context in which the brand is involved in. Furthermore, relationships between brands must be clarified both strategically and with concern to the brand image. (Aaker, 1996)

When developing a brand strategy it is not only important to look after the structure and contents of it. According to Chevron (1998), the emphasis should be on creating a brand that stands on its own rather than feeding off the character of the corporate body (Chevron, 1998, p. 264). From this, the brand gets sustainable. Chevron mentions Coca-Cola as an example; where the brand dominates the corporate strategy rather than vice versa. (Chevron, 1998) The process of developing a branding strategy also includes brand planning. It is important for management to set goals for the brand and determine the best way to achieve those goals - brands are long-lived and should be treated as such. A lot of companies today suffer from making short-sighted strategic decisions which weakens their brands. (Randall, 2000)

The objectives of any branding effort need to be clearly specified, in order to be successful. Branding objectives, concerning the development of the brand, can for example be to convey intended positioning, to establish product differentiation, to establish a distinct segment or to establish a unique image. (Kohli & Thakor, 1997) Furthermore, quantitative objectives, such as sales, share and profit, needs to be set. A problem that may arise is the conflict between the pressure for short-term profit and the long-term development of the brand. (Randall, 2000)

In theory there is little difference between international and national branding strategy. The objectives are the same; to build the strongest possible brand through enhancing key value dimensions. In reality, however, there are some differences between the two approaches. Decisions concerning issues such as adaptation versus standardization have to be taken into account in order to reach success in an international market. (Nilson, 1998)

In America branding was first broadly deployed when the U.S. economy started to industrialize with the twin innovations of mass production and mass marketing. During this time, demand far exceeded supply in the consumer market, which became even more obvious after World War II. The situation today is the total opposite. (Rayport in Carter, 1999) Furthermore, statistics show that the strongest brands in the world are of American origin. (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). (See table 1.1)

Table 1.1: World's leading brands

World's Leading Brands

Brand name	Industry	Brand value ($US M)	Brand strength score
1. Coca-Cola	Beverages	83,845	82
2. Microsoft	Software	56,654	80
3. IBM	Computers	43,781	75
4. General Electric	Diversified	33,502	71
5. Ford	Automobiles	33,197	72
6. Disney	Entertainment	32,275	79
7. Intel	Computers	30,021	74
8. McDonald's	Food	26,231	78
9. AT&T	Telecoms	24,181	70
10. Marlboro	tobacco	21,048	74

Source: Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2001, p. 528

However, there are also Swedish brands holding strong positions in the global market today. An example is IKEA, which had the 44th highest valued brand in 2002 (www.businessweek.com). An example of a powerful Swedish brand within the Swedish market is Gevalia. Gevalia is continuously working on developing and maintaining their brand; emphasising on the high quality and on the good taste of their coffee (www.gevalia.se).

Taking the above problem discussion into account, we find it interesting to look into how Swedish firms strategically are developing brand identity in the Swedish market. This leads to an overall purpose and research questions for this thesis.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

From the above background and problem discussion, the purpose of this thesis becomes to gain a better understanding of how firms are strategically developing brand identity for brands in the Swedish market. In order to reach this purpose the following research questions are stated:

RQ 1: How can the strategic development of the brand identity be described?

RQ 2: How can the objectives for developing brand identity be characterized?

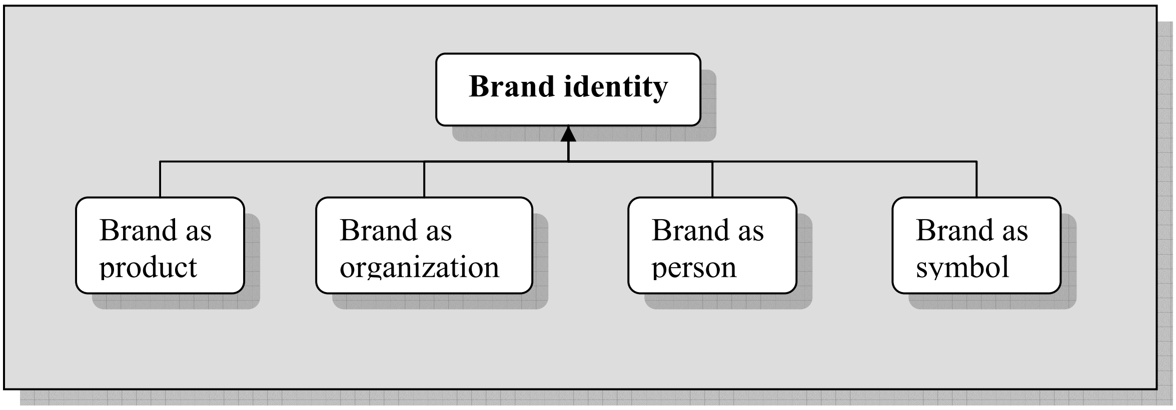
2 Literature review

In this chapter theories related to the research questions, stated in chapter one, will be presented. First of all, theories related to research question one will be presented and secondly, theories related to research question two will be presented. Finally, a conceptual framework will be provided.

2.1 Strategic development of the brand identity

Aaker's (1996) brand identity system proposes four dimensions under which an identity is typically developed for a brand. The reason these four dimensions should be considered when developing a brand identity is to insure that the brand identity has both texture and depth. The four dimensions are: (See figure 2.1)

Figure 2.1: Brand identity



Source: Adapted from Aaker, 1996

Brand as product is about the product related attributes of the brand. This dimension deals with the tangible and the intangible aspects of the product and the manner in which the customer relates to it. (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)

Brand as organization deals with the attributes of the organization, for example innovation and consumer concern (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002).

Brand as person deals with the personality aspects of the brand. This dimension tells us what happens to the brand when it is converted to a person by endowing it with social, demographic and psychographic values. (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)

Finally, brand as symbol deals with the symbolic aspects of the brand; like visual imagery, logo and brand heritage. Any given brand can be described in terms of these four elements. (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)

The brand as a product

Within the concept of brand as product there are several sub-perspectives; Associations with product class, product related attributes, quality/value, associations with use occasion and associations with user and link to a country or region. Each of these sub-perspectives will be discussed below. (Aaker, 1996)

Associations with product class. A part of the core of any brand identity is with what product or products the brand is associated with. For example, Compaq is associated with computers and Coca-Cola is associated with soft drinks. (Aaker, 1996)

The objectives of linking a brand with a product class is primarily not to make people associate to a product class when the brand is mentioned, but rather to have people respond to the brand when a product class is mentioned. (Aaker, 1996)

Product-related attributes. Attributes of products providing functional and emotional benefits can create increased value to customers by offering something extra or by offering something better than competition. These attributes can in a large extent be used when developing a brand's identity. However, a problem is that the product attributes tend to get too much attention in the brand development process, to the exclusion of other perspectives that also can add value and distinctiveness. (Aaker, 1996)

Quality/Value. The quality/value perspective is a part of the product-related attributes. This perspective deals with the perceived perspective of the brand. A lot of brands use this perspective as their core brand identity. For example, Gillette is positioned as high quality razor blades. (Aaker, 1996)

Value is closely linked to the perceived quality since it further enriches the concept by adding the price dimension. (Aaker, 1996)

Associations with use occasion. This perspective deals with efforts trying to own a particular use or application. Gatorade, for example, owns the use context of athletics looking to sustain a high level of performance. (Aaker, 1996)

Associations with user. A brand identity can be developed by defining the brand by its users. A strong user-type position can both imply a value proposition and a brand personality. (Aaker, 1996)

Link to a country or region. Another strategic option is to associate a brand with a specific country or region. Examples of brands associated with countries or regions are Champagne, Chanel and Mercedes. The reason behind associating a brand with a country or region is to imply that the brand will provide a higher quality, because of the heritage of making the best of the specific product class, in the specific country or region. (Aaker, 1996)

Studies exploring the country-of-origin effect have shown that the extent of the effect depends on the product class. For example, Japanese electronics were rated higher than Japanese food. However, the country of origin, can have effect on attributes across product categories. An example of this is a study that showed that U.S. consumers considered American automobiles and television sets to be high in serviceability and Japanese products to be moderate in prestige. (Aaker, 1996)

The brand as organization

The brand as organization perspective focuses on the attributes of the organization instead of those of the product or service. Organizational attributes are for example innovation, a drive for quality and concern for the environment. These attributes are created by the people, culture, values and programs of the company. (Aaker, 1996)

Some brand aspects can be described as product attributes in some contexts and as organizational attributes in others. Innovation, for example, 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 and values it would be an organizational-related attribute. (Aaker, 1996)

Organizational attributes are more resistant to competition than are product attributes. This is because product attributes, such as being innovative, are hard to evaluate and to communicate, and therefore are hard to copy. Furthermore, organizational attributes are often applied on a set of product classes, which makes it even harder for competition, operating in only one or a few product classes, to copy. (Aaker, 1996)

Organizational attributes can contribute to a value proposition by associating the brand with different values. These associations could for example be customer focus or environmental concern. (Aaker, 1996)

The brand as person

The brand as person perspective refers to a perspective of the brand that is richer and more interesting than the one only based on the product (Aaker, 1996). The brand as person perspective reveals what happens to the brand when it is given human qualities and made a person. This perspective is also called brand personality. (Moorthi, 2002)

Brand personality includes characteristics such as gender, age and socio-economic class. More classic human personality traits, such as warmth, concern and sentimentality are also included. (Moorthi, 2002)

The objective of developing this perspective of a brand is to make the brand stronger by creating a self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality. Furthermore, the brand can be strengthened even more by using brand personality as the basis of the relationship between the customer and the brand. Brand personality can also help to communicate a product attribute and therefore contribute to a functional benefit. (Aaker, 1996)

The brand as symbol

Decisions about what to buy are rarely based on the grounds of a product's use or function alone. These decisions are also influenced by less rational, more emotional needs which relate to the symbolic use of brands and their social significance. (Eadie & MacKintosh, 1998)

The function of a symbol is to provide cohesion and structure to an identity. A symbol also makes it easier to gain recognition and recall. (Aaker, 1996)

A symbol is anything that can represent the brand. Aaker (1996) has described three types of symbols; visual imagery, metaphors and the brand heritage. (Aaker, 1996)

Symbols involving visual imagery can be memorable and powerful. They are effective because they connect the brand identity, built up over time, with a symbol. Therefore, it only takes a glance to be reminded of the brand. An example of a successful brand symbol is Nike's "swoosh". (Aaker, 1996)

Metaphors can provide increased meaning to a brand symbol by representing a functional or emotional benefit. An example of this is Michael Jordan's ability to jump associated with the performance of Nike. (Aaker, 1996)

The brand heritage can, in some cases, represent the essence of a brand. An example of this is the U.S Marines with the tag line "The few, the proud, the Marines". (Aaker, 1996)

Congruent brand identity

According to Chernatony, 1999, more emphasis should be put on maintaining the brand identity within the company rather than working on the company's image:

> *"A model is proposed, suggesting that stronger brands result from a homogeneous brand identity, with congruent identity components. It argues that reputation is a more appropriate external assessment of a brand than image. By auditing the gaps between brand identity and brand reputation, managers can identify strategies to minimize incongruence and develop more powerful brands."*
>
> Source: Chernatony 1999, p. 157

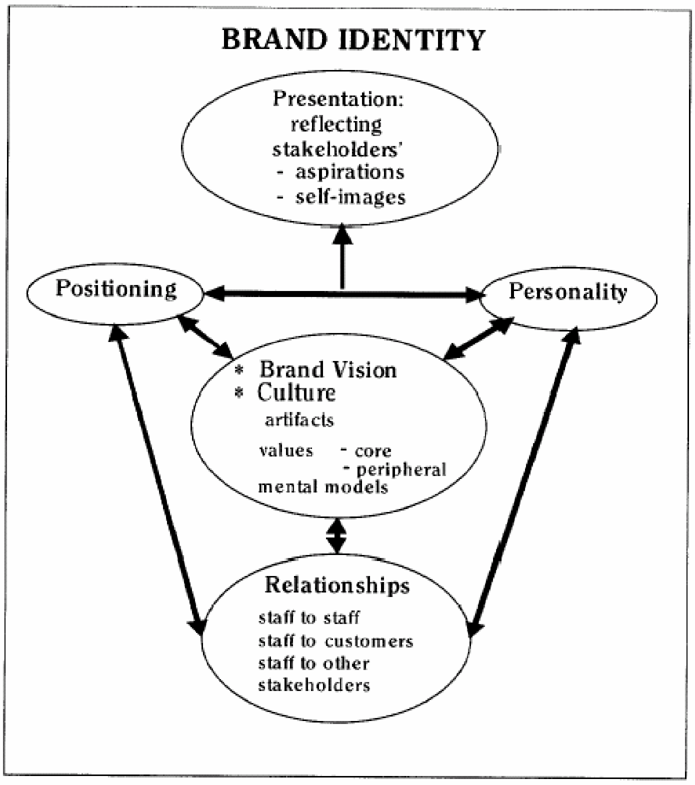
Chernatony further argues for a maintaining of the brand identity within the organization and that this has received more attention these days. He also states that the different ingredients of the brand identity have become more important to consider:

> *"Another reason for looking inside the organization is the shift in the branding literature from the importance of image (Boulding 1956), focusing on consumers' perceptions of brand differentiation, to identity (Kapferer 1997) which is more concerned with how managers and staff make brands unique. An important component of a brand's identity is the organization's culture, which influences the corporate brand's values. This is perceived through the metaphor of the corporate personality (Abratt 1989, Olins 1995). There is growing literature on corporate identity (eg Marwick and Fill 1997; Hatch and Schultz 1997; Balmer and Stotvig 1997; Morison 1997; Wilson 1997; Balmer 1995). This is moving away from just stressing graphic design and is focusing on integrating the values of an organization with its unique logo, signaling desired behavior to staff, and helping to align their values with the desired brand values.*
>
> Source: Chernatony 1999, p. 158

Another author who argues for a greater emphasis on the identity, rather than the image, is Upshaw (1995). Upshaw states that the image is a more shallow reflection of a brand, rather than including its essential qualities (Upshaw, 1995, p. 18). He also states that there is an uncertainty about what image really means when it comes to marketing spending. There is also a greater understanding in the importance of investing in the brand, if the discussion instead is about the identity. (Upshaw, 1995, p. 19)

Good planning is also, according to Chernatony (1999), an important factor of success. According to Chernatony (1999), the brand identity is something that needs to be planned and well defined years in advance. He emphasizes that a brand's vision needs to be considered when working with the brand identity. In the brand identity model that he is using (see fig 2.2), a brand's vision and culture can be seen to have a central part of the identity of the brand. (Chernatony, 1999, p. 166)

Figure 2.2: The components of Brand identity



Source: Chernatony, 1999, p. 166

Brand vision. A brand needs a clear vision giving a well-defined sense of direction, in order to be successful. Brand's environments should be envisaged at least five years ahead and considerations should be made about how the brand is going to be developed. (Chernatony, 1999)

The brand's culture. To develop and refine strategies for the brand vision, the next step is to investigate the brand's culture. The brand's culture can, according to Chernatony (1999), be appreciated in terms of visible artefacts, employees' and managers' values and the mental models of those involved in brand building activities (Chernatony, 1999, p. 167). Considerations concerning values that have remained within the organization for a longer time period, i.e. the core values, and values that have changed, i.e. the peripheral, almost fashion like values, has to be made. (Chernatony, 1999)

The brand's positioning. The next step is to determine the brand's positioning suitability against the vision and the core values. (Chernatony, 1999)

The brand personality. The core values of the organization affects the personality of the brand. Personality helps reducing information search and processing by quickly recognizing the brand's values through the personality metaphor. (Chernatony, 1999)

The brand's relationship. When the brand personality has been defined a relationship takes form This relationship between the brand and the customers is, as recent studies have shown, not passive. The relationship between customer and the brand helps the two to understand each other better. (Chernatony, 1999)

The brand's presentation. The final step of this process is to develop a unified identity and presentation styles. The first aspect deals with how the brand's identity can be presented to appeal to stakeholders' aspired characteristics. A problem here might be that different stakeholder groups have different points of contacts with the organization and therefore there is potential for conflicting messages. (Chernatony, 1999)

Brand names

The creation of an image, or development of a brand identity, is an expensive and time consuming process. The development of a brand name is an essential part of this process since the name is the basis of a brand's image. (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)

Upshaw (1995) is similarly arguing for the importance of naming. He means that the name is the foundation of the brand's equity and the most enduring aspect of the brand identity. (Upshaw, 1995, p. 19) With a powerful brand, such as Coca-Cola or McDonald's, the name can also help to push the brand through the market place. How well a brand is accepted, is depending on how descriptive the name is. (Upshaw, 1995)

According to Kohli and Thakor (1997), there are five different categories of names to choose from when selecting a name for a brand (Kohli & Thakor, 1997, p. 208). The five categories of names are; generic (soap for soap), descriptive (Laser Jet for printers), suggestive (Eveready for batteries), arbitrary (Camel for cigarettes) and coined (Exxon for gas). (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)

The different categories offer different levels of trademark protection and marketing appeal. Descriptive and suggestive names are inherently strong, and do not need advertising to the same extent as arbitrary and coined names do, because they create an immediate image. However, arbitrary or suggestive name have advantages because they do not tie the company down to a specific product. These names are easier to transfer to other products, which is important today. (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)

2.2 Objectives for developing brand identity

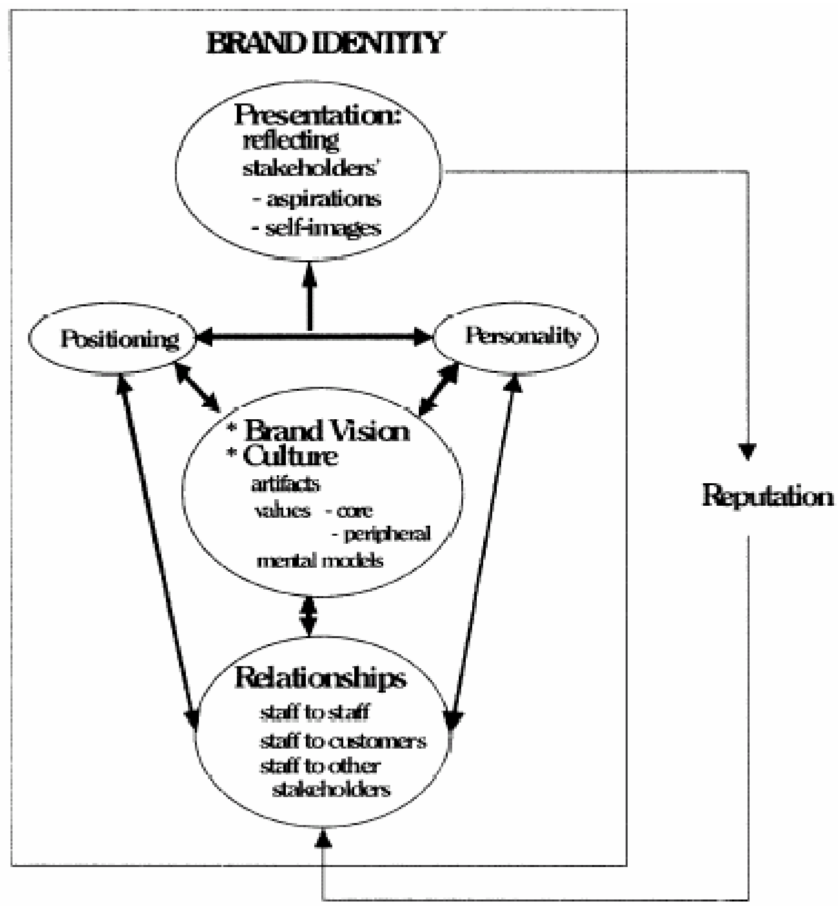
Products fulfil a function, while a brand symbolizes value and meaning in a social context. These symbolic and emotional values, the brand identity, are experienced and analyzed by the customers. (Kohli & Thakor, 1997) According to Alreck and Settle (1999), the objective of branding is not just dealing with short term issues (Alreck & Settle, 1999, p. 130). The ultimate objective is said to be to build a durable relationship between the brand and a certain customer group and that this bonding is a long term process (Alreck & Settle, 1999).

Branding objectives can, according to Kohli and Thakor (1997), include objectives such as; to convey an intended positioning, to establish product differentiation, to establish a distinct segment, to establish a unique image, to establish identification and to ease trademark registration (Kohli & Thakor, 1997, p. 209). Objectives concerning brand identity for brands in the introduction stage of the brand life cycle can be to create stature (Johansson, 1999).

The brand needs a clear vision that is well defined and whose direction is well known; as seen in the centre of Chernatony's (1999) model (See figure 2.3). This vision is then maintained, and is supposed to reflect the position, personality and the relationships, which the brand is considered to offer its stakeholders' image of the brand. (Chernatony, 1999)

Chernatony's (1999) opinion of rather looking at a brand's reputation than its image when evaluating a brand's performance, can be further explained if looking at the process and maintaining of the brand within the organization. He uses the following figure to do this: (See figure 2.3)

Figure 2.3: A process for managing brands



Source: Chernatony, 1999, p. 171

"The concept of brand image has not been negated; rather it has been argued that brad reputation is a more powerful concept. It assesses perceptions across many stakeholder groups, does not just focus on the most recent impression and is a predictor for stakeholders of future outcomes."

(Chernatony, 1999, p. 173)

Reputation

When it comes to the objectives of the brand identity, Chernatony (1999), states that reputation is an important issue to consider. The reputation or the consumers' overall opinion about the brand is what one should be focusing on. And having the brand's identity in mind, an important objective for brand management should therefore be to decrease the gap that is created between the brand's identity and the reputation of the brand. This will better serve the long term relationship that is one important task of the brand identity. This will also provide insights about the change of direction. And the gap may also look different and being implemented different by the various stakeholders. An insight in the gap may therefore lead to a better maintaining of these relations and crucial changes in the brand identity may be executed when needed. (Chernatony, 1999)

When taking these gap reductions in consideration, Chernatony (1999) suggests a couple of questions that the manager should address:

- *Is the desired identity recognized by all stakeholder groups and appreciated as being distinctively superior to competition?*
- *Of the few critical aspects of brand identity, how consistent are the matches between identity and reputation for each stakeholder group?*
- *For each stakeholder group, what actions do people in all departments need to take to strengthen the identity-reputation congruity?*
- *Are there particular reputation problems with some stakeholder groups resulting from a lack of awareness, or evaluation skills, that need a closer relationship?*
- *Are staff and managers aware of the way some stakeholder groups interact with others to refract the signals staff emit? What actions are needed to minimize this refraction effect, if detrimental?*
- *Which aspects of the brand identity need changing and will this have an adverse impact on other identity components?*
- *What systems are needed to measure the impact of brand identity changes on both brand reputation and performance?*

(Chernatony 1999)

Objectives for brand names

By choosing a specific name for a brand the brand can be differentiated. This is because the pace of today's technology has made it hard to differentiate products purely on technical attributes. Objectives, related to developing a brand identity by naming, are to convey an intended positioning, to establish product differentiation, to establish a distinct segment, to establish a unique image, to establish identification and to ease trademark registration. (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)

According to Urde (1999), the development brand identity is a process that revolves around interacting with the target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands (Urde, 1999, p. 117). This can be done by developing a personality for the brand that will provide a basis for a unique relationship. Further objectives identified as related to the development of brand identity are; to establish brand loyalty, to generate value and meaning and to satisfy customer needs and wants. This can be achieved when the customers experience the brand as valuable and unique, and therefore becomes hard for competitors to copy. (Urde, 1999)

Herbig and Milewicz (1995) suggest that the primary purpose of brands and brand names is to provide a symbolic meaning for the user, which can assist the user in the recognition and decision-making process (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995, p. 8). The development of an identity and personality of the brand can further assist the user when making these kinds of decisions. The objective here is to create an identity that is consistent with the user's needs. (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995)

2.3 Conceptual framework

To be able to focus on and answer the research questions stated in chapter one, we have conducted this conceptual framework. This will serve to explain the main dimensions and variables of our research questions that will be studied, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

2.3.1 Strategic development of brand identity

When looking at the strategic development of brand identity we have chosen to mainly rely on Aaker's (1996) model because Aaker is often cited in other scientific studies and his model is quite recent. Furthermore, Aaker's model is used in recent scientific article written by Moorthi (2002). To be able to gain an even deeper understanding of the phenomena we have also chosen to look at the development of brand identity from another perspective, using Chernatony's (1999) model. Finally, since a large body of brand identity literature suggests that the brand name is an essential part of the brand identity, we have chosen to include a theory concerning brand naming by (Kohli & Thakor (1997).

- The brand as product (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)
    - Associations with product class (Aaker, 1996)
    - Product-related attributes (Aaker, 1996)
    - Quality/Value (Aaker, 1996)
    - Associations with use occasion (Aaker, 1996)
    - Associations with user (Aaker, 1996)
    - Link to a country or origin (Aaker, 1996)
- The brand as organization (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)
- The brand as person (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)
- The brand as symbol (Aaker, 1996; Moorthi, 2002)

- Congruent brand identity (Chernatony, 1999)
- Brand planning (Chernatony, 1999)
    - The brand's vision
    - The brand's culture (Chernatony, 1999)
    - The brand's positioning (Chernatony, 1999)
- Brand names (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)

2.3.2 Objectives for developing brand identity

When it comes to the objectives of brand identity, we have chosen rely on four different writers to assemble an eclectic list of possible objectives. This will help us to look at the objectives for brand identity development in different perspectives. The following areas will be further examined and the data that will be collected will then be compared to the following theories.

- To build durable relationships Alreck & Settle (1999)
- To convey an intended positioning (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)
- To establish product differentiation (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)
- To establish a distinct segment (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)
- To establish a unique image (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)
- Decrease the gap between identity and reputation (Chernatony, 1999)
- To establish identification (Kohli & Thakor, 1997)
- To make the brand appeal to stakeholders (Chernatony, 1999)
- To establish brand loyalty (Urde, 1999)
- To generate value of the brand (Urde, 1999)
- To generate meaning of the brand (Urde, 1999)
- To satisfy customers (Urde, 1999)

3 Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of our research will be presented and described. The different methodological perspectives will be explained, as well as the justifications for the choices made.

3.1 Purpose of research

Almost all research can be classified as one of the following research types; exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research (Reynolds, 1971).

Exploratory research is, just as the word implies, designed to let the researcher explore a phenomena (Reynolds, 1971; Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997). This type of research is implemented when the area of research is too large or when the research problem is hard to limit (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997). In order to be able to reach the objective of developing suggestive ideas, the research should be as flexible as possible and aim to be able to provide guidance for procedures to be used during the next stage – descriptive research. (Reynolds, 1971)

The aim of *descriptive* research is to develop careful descriptions of patterns that were hinted during the exploratory research (Reynolds, 1971). The purpose of this kind of research is to describe a phenomena and ultimately to be able to make empirical generalizations (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997). Once empirical generalizations can be done, effort should be put in trying to explain them; which leads to the final stage of research – explanatory research (Reynolds, 1971).

Explanatory research means that the researcher is analyzing causes and relationships (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997). This type of research is designed to develop explicit theory that can be used to explain empirical generalizations developed during the descriptive research stage. This is the final stage of the research cycle. (Reynolds, 1971)

As stated in chapter one, the research problem and purpose of this thesis is; *to gain a deeper understanding of how firms are strategically developing brand identity for brands in the in the Swedish market* We will gain this better understanding through answering specific research questions.

Taking the research problem and the purpose of this thesis into account, we define our study as mainly descriptive. The reason is because we will try to describe how firms are strategically developing brand identity for brands in the Swedish consumer market. However, by conducting this study of how Länsförsäkringar strategically develops their brand identity, at this specific point in time, the research can be classified as exploratory. In the first phase of writing this thesis we were also pretty much exploring the area, since we did not know a lot about it. By answering the research questions in the end we will also start to explain the phenomena.

The research presented in this thesis is therefore not only descriptive, but also exploratory and, to some extent, explanatory.

3.2 Research approach

Generally, there are two methods to choose from when conducting research; *qualitative and quantitative* method (Yin, 1994).

Quantitative method is, to a large extent, formal and structured and aims to make generalizations based on studies of few variables done on a large quantity of entities. Quantitative research often uses surveys, with a set number of answer alternatives for data collection, and is preferably used when the research problem is rather wide. (Holme & Solvang, 1997)

Qualitative method is mainly used when the researcher needs to gather and analyze detailed data of abstract information, like ideas, attitudes or feelings. Furthermore, the qualitative method is preferable used when the number of entities to study is few. The aim of this kind of research is generally to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and describe it in words rather than transforming the results into quantitative numbers. (Gummesson, 1988; Yin 1994)

For this thesis, a qualitative method was chosen. This decision was based on the fact that the information needed to answer the research questions are of a qualitative nature, since they require a deeper understanding in order to be answered. A qualitative method is, as mentioned earlier, better suited when the objective is to gain a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon, which in this case would be the strategic development of brand identity.

3.3 Research strategy

There are, according to Yin (1994), five primary research strategies for collecting data. These five research strategies are; experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories and case studies. These five different strategies all have advantages and disadvantages and are appropriate for different situations. The situations the different strategies are appropriate for can be determined by setting three conditions (See table 3.1): (Yin, 1994)

- The type of research question
- The required control over behavioural events
- The focus on contemporary events

Table 3.1: Relevant situations for different research strategies

Research strategy	**Form of research research question question**	**Requires control over behavioural events**	**Focuses on contemporary events**
Experiment	how, why	yes	yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes
Archival analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much	no	yes/no
History	how, why	no	no
Case study	how, why	no	yes

Source: Yin, 1994, p. 6

Taking the research questions and the purpose, stated in chapter one, into account, we find it that, since we do not need control over behavioural events and we will focus on contemporary events; experiment, archival analysis and history are not appropriate research strategies for our study.

Surveys are, according to Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1997), appropriate when the researcher wants to collect standardized information and is often used when conducting quantitative research. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997) Therefore, a survey is not an appropriate research strategy for this study.

According to Yin (1994), case studies allow an investigation to retain a holistic and meaningful image of organizational and managerial processes (Yin, 1994). When conducting a case study the researcher investigates few objects in a wide range of perspectives, with the aim of gaining thorough and in-depth understanding, rather than to be able to draw statistic generalizations. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

For this thesis we consider case studies to the best research strategy to use in order to be able to answer our research questions. This is because we will focus on contemporary events and we do not require control over behavioural events. As mentioned earlier, case studies are appropriate to use when answering how- and why-questions, which are the type of questions this thesis will try to answer. Furthermore, we will focus on a single research object, in order to gain a thorough and in-depth understanding of the research problem discussed in chapter one.

3.4 Sample selection

The next step, after we had determined research strategy, was to choose what industry and what company to study. We chose Länsförsäkringar, within the insurance and finance industry. The reason was because Länsförsäkringar are in the process of extending their brand to make it include the two products bank services and life insurances as well as property insurances, and therefore actively working with the development of the brand identity. This fact makes it interesting to perform a case study on Länsförsäkringar.

When we got in touch with Länsförsäkringar we asked for someone responsible for the brand - someone who would be able to intelligently discuss issues concerning the brand identity. This person turned out to be Christer Baldhagen who is working as Director of Information at Länsförsäkringar's headquarters in Stockholm, Sweden.

3.5 Data collection

When it comes to data collection, Eriksson & Wiedersheim (1997) state that there are two ways of doing this: through primary data and through secondary data. According to the authors, primary data is information that you collect by yourself and that is meant for a specific purpose. Secondary data on the other hand, is data that have already been collected. And this information was collected for a different purpose. The authors also state the pros and cons with both alternatives. Because of the availability and the low costs of retrieving it, secondary data is used first. But if this data is not satisfactory, primary data needs to be collected. It is important that this data is collected in a proper way. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 1997)

When collecting the primary data and developing a case study, Yin (1994) states that it is possible to do this in six different ways: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participation-observations and physical artifacts. (Yin, 1994)

Documentation: written reports of events, administrative documents such as proposals and internal documents, and articles appearing in the mass media. (Yin, 1994)

Interviews: either open-ended interviews, focused interviews or structured interviews. Open-ended interviews are free and open discussions. A focused interview, on the other hand, is a semi-structured research that allows for informal conversation in a pre-determined subject manner. Finally, structured interviews are interviews with pre-designed questions. (Yin, 1994)

The data in this thesis is both secondary and primary. When we collected the data for our case study, we did this by a semi-structured research method; a focused interview. This data was meant for the specific purpose of this thesis and therefore, it can be considered as primary data. The interview was made by telephone due to the cost that a personal interview would involve. The whole interview was recorded so that we would be able to make sure that we did not misinterpret any data. We have also collected data using documentation, which have been collected earlier and for another purpose. It can therefore be considered as secondary. This data include the background information about Länsförsäkringar AB; which is the company that we used for our case study. This information was retrieved from both their web site and from brochures which were sent to us.

3.6 Data analysis

Every case should begin with a general analytical strategy that will provide the basis for what to analyze and why. The type of data received very much affects the quality of the findings. Furthermore, the strength of the data is very much dependent on how the data is analyzed. The ability to draw any conclusions from the collected data is very much depending on how the data is analyzed. (Yin, 1994)

This study will include both an analysis of an interview with a company that reflects our area and it will also analyze documentation used from the area, such as further information about the company that not result from the interview. The analysis will be done with a within-case analysis, which means that we will compare the retrieved data from the case study with our conceptual framework and the current theories within the area. After having analyzed both similarities and differences between theory and collected data, we present the findings and conclusions that we have encountered with this case study.

3.7 Validity & Reliability

Validity

To be sure of the quality of the data that we have gathered, there are two important factors that need to be taken into count. First, validity can be explained as the ability of measuring what is intended to be measured. Eriksson & Wiedersheim (1997) further divides this factor into internal and external validity. Internal validity deals with the coherence between the factors and the definitions of the factors. It is very important that only the desired data is retrieved and therefore it is crucial that the demarcations of what is to be measured are very clear. External validity on the other hand, deals with the coherence between received data and the reality; if the collection of data has been unstructured and it does not really reflect the reality, then the study has a low rate of the external validity. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 1997)

We have taken the validity problem in consideration when conducting our interview. To be sure that we measure exactly what we intend to do, we have constructed our interview guide so that it copes with the research questions and the purpose of this thesis. To be sure of the quality of the answers at the interview, we have made sure that the right person has been interviewed. We did not just want a person who was familiar with the company's brand and what it stands for, but tried to find a person, whose position in the company was upper management or higher and also had knowledge about the structure of the brand and the strategies behind it. Furthermore, we have made sure to strengthen our reasoning with relevant theories within the area and we have also made priorities and primarily used theories where several researchers have used similar models or where they have come to conclusions that match each other. Accordingly, several different views and opinions about the area has been investigated to be sure that not just one side of the area is looked at.

Reliability

Reliability answers the question if a measuring tool is generating reliable answers. And if another researcher would get the same result if conduct a similar study. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 1997)

To strengthen the reliability of this work, we have throughout the case study tried to be as objective as possible. To further strengthen the reliability, we took measures during the interview that would help to prevent a non-objective data collection. For example, the interviewee was not exposed to the questions before the interview took place; this to prevent the outcome of the answers. Furthermore, to be able to concentrate on recording the data while discussing the problem area with the interviewee, the interview was conducted so that one of us was taking notes while the other one was leading the interview.

A problem concerning the reliability, that we have tried to take into account while conducting this study by being as objective as possible, was our educational and personal background. If the study has been biased by our personal backgrounds, even though our attempts to avoid it, we have not been able to either identify or prevent it.

Now that the method of collecting our data has presented and all the different aspects to consider when working with the data, we will now in the following chapter present the data.

4 Data presentation

In this chapter we will present the empirical data collected during our case study of Länsförsäkringar AB. The case study is based on an interview with the Director of Information, Christer Baldhagen at Länsförsäkringar AB. The interview and case presentation is based on our research questions and the conceptual framework, provided in chapter two.

4.1 Case study: Länsförsäkringar AB

The company we have chosen to do a case study on is Länsförsäkringar AB. This is a Swedish insurance company that includes twenty four independent and customer owned companies throughout Sweden. Today the total number of owning customers is approximately 2.9 million. The main company - Länsförsäkringar AB - is dealing with issues such as corporate development and services and its headquarters is situated in Stockholm.

The company is more than 200 years old; it was established in 1801. In 1917 the different companies all over Sweden formed a voluntary alliance throughout Sweden. This alliance then served as a base for the decision of letting all of the different companies start using the same brand in 1969. This is when today's logotype was born.

Länsförsäkringar has historically been the biggest supplier of property insurances in Sweden; and they still are today. The market share was 29.2% in 2002. However, today their product range has expanded to also include banking services and life insurance, which was introduced in 1986.

4.1.1 Strategic development of the brand identity

The trend lately has been that the concept of brand and brand identity has been poorly defined and often used in a wrong way. Often a brand or a brand identity has been exclusively connected with a logo, commercials or products. These are, however, only a part of the concept of brand identity. In Länsförsäkringar's case the concept of brand identity is more concerned with the attitude towards the customer and the way the customer is perceived. These values are the core of the brand identity that is communicated to the customer.

The brand as product

Associations with product class. The fact that Länsförsäkringar has broadened their product line, they are therefore in the process of extending their brand. Currently Länsföräkringar is more associated with the property insurance product class. The aim is to extend the brand identity to also include bank services and life insurances, since the associations with product class is a such essential part of the brand identity.

Product-related attributes. Länsförsäkringar has been known as the most price-worth insurance alternative in Sweden. They have also had the most satisfied customers for several years. These product-related attributes are actively communicated through internal and external communication.

Quality/Value. Länsförsäkringar stands for the highest quality in property insurances. The delivery of a property insurance occurs when the customer has had an accident with his or her property. The delivery is the main part of the quality concept. To sustain a high quality in the delivery to satisfy the customer is considered important in the process of developing the brand identity.

Associations with use occasion. The top of mind concept; thinking of Länsförsäkringar when the need for an insurance or bank service occurs, is considered to have a high priority. Länsförsäkringar should be a natural choice, and this is what the communication has been focused on communicating for the past years.

Association with user. The development of the brand identity of Länsförsäkringar does not actively include the effort of defining the brand identity by its users. The efforts are rather put on expressing the brand identity by the core values of the organization.

Link to a country or region. The will to act local is a main strategic idea of Länsförsäkringar. This is because the customer is able to get service wherever he or she lives and because the company gets to know the customers. In property insurance these relationships have been invaluable for the company because they get to know the local market and they are able to interpret the risks concerned with property insurances. Furthermore, with local operations comes the ability to take faster action, without having to deal with headquarters in Stockholm

The brand as organization

Organizational culture. Länsförsäkringar's organizational culture and the organizational attributes associated with the company are taken seriously into account in the development process of the brand and the brand identity. The development process of the brand identity always starts at the staff level. The core values of the organization are the most important attributes, since they are a source of differentiation..

Organizational core values. The core organizational values of Länsförsäkringar are to act local, availability, endurance and good price. These values are very old and are a part of the brand identity differentiating the brand from other brands.

The brand as person

Brand personality and human qualities of the brand. Länsförsäkringar can be described as a secure tennis player hitting from the base line. In other words; a rather defensive and reliable player. However, the process of developing the brand identity does not actively include the dimension of the brand as a person.

Personality characteristics. The personality characteristics of Länsförsäkringar can be described as the average Swede, since the company is considering everyone a potential customer. The process of developing the brand identity does not actively include this dimension either.

Classic personal characteristics. Länsförsäkringar can be described with classic personal characteristics having morals, ethics and humanism. The process of developing the brand identity does not actively include this dimension either.

Brand as a symbol

The function. The logotype of Länsförsäkringar is used to gain recognition.

Visual imagery, metaphors and the brand heritage. The symbol is rather old and it consists of an L and an F and something in the middle, meant to symbolize the customer. The logotype is not a modern one, and does not express warmth, since the shape is quite hard. Länsförsäkringar have considered changing the logotype, but when looking into the recognition and recall variables, the result showed that over 69% recognized the company when just seeing the logotype. The brand of Länsförsäkringar is over 200 years old. The company was founded in 1801. This heritage is one of the core parts of the brand identity and is often used when promoting the company.

The congruence of the brand identity. Today Länsförsäkringar offers property insurances, bank services and life insurances. However, the brand identity is not completely congruent. Länsförsäkringar is more known for their property insurances. Therefore, efforts are put on trying to translate the brand identity of the property insurances to the other two areas of operation. A congruent brand identity is an essential issue when developing the brand identity.

The importance of brand planning

Vision. Länsförsäkringar does not plan the brand according to a specific time plan. This is because identity changes are rare in the insurance industry and they believe that the core of the brand identity should be quite consistent over time. Länsförsäkringar is currently working on locking the way communication is done and expressed to customers for the next twenty years.

Brand positioning. A clear differentiation is considered important when it comes to brand positioning. Länsförsäkringar wants to be perceived as different by projecting their core values through their brand identity. The development of how to more effectively communicating this differentiated position is currently improving.

Brand names

Name category. The current name was established in 1969 and could at the time it was created be classified as a generic name. However, nowadays Länsförsäkringar provides bank services and life insurances as well as property insurances. The fact that the number of Swedish "län" have decreased and are less important than they used to be, have created a will in the organization to make the name "Länsförsäkringar" to become a more of a coined name. The aim is to make the name Länsförsäkringar to be a company name representing property insurances, bank services and life insurances.

4.1.2 Objectives for developing brand identity

Staff to staff, staff to customers and staff to other stakeholders. Since the staff are the carriers of the organizational culture and it is from the staff that a part of the brand identity is expressed, durable relationships within the organization is essential to Länsförsäkringar. Länsförsäkringar look upon themselves as a political phenomenon since they talk a lot about their values and their heritage, which they have a very strong belief in. This is communicated both internally and externally. The reason these relationships are so important to the company is because this is a important way of expressing the brand identity.
Furthermore, the brand identity is developed from the inside and out of organization, which further increases the importance of staff relationships. A brand extension starts at the staff level and not with the communication with the customers. However, since the customers also are the owners of company, the relationship between the staff and the customers is the most important relationship.

To convey an intended positioning. In order to make the brand represent something, a well developed brand identity and a well defined positioning strategy is essential. It is also extremely important to Länsförsäkringar that people know about them and their intended position.

To establish product differentiation. The objective of establishing product differentiation is of course an important objective. A part of Länsförsäkringar's brand identity is the good price and the perceived high quality of their services.

To establish a distinct segment. To establish a distinct segment is also one of the objectives of developing the brand identity. The segment that Länsförsäkringar is trying to reach is private house owners. The reason they are focusing on this segment is because this is where they have the strongest position today and the best opportunities to further strengthen their position. This segment is also demanding all of the three categories of services that Länsförsäkringar is offering.

To establish a unique image. To establish a unique image is of course important. To be able to reach the above mentioned objectives, a unique image is crucial.

Image versus reputation. When developing the brand identity Länsförsäkringar does not think in the terms of making a difference between image and reputation. They believe that these kinds of statements are of less importance in real life business than in theory.

Decrease the gap between identity and image/reputation. To decrease the gap between the brand identity and the image, perceived by the customers, is the overall most important objective when developing the brand identity. Länsförsäkringar want the customers to perceive the brand in the same way as they intend to express it.

To establish identification. The objective of reaching the top of the mind of the customer is considered to have a very high priority. The aim is that Länsförsäkringar should be the natural choice when the need for an insurance or bank service occurs.

To make the brand appeal to stakeholders. Since Länsförsäkringar is owned by their customers this objective is an important one when developing the brand identity.

To establish brand loyalty. This objective is of very high priority when working with the brand identity, since this objective is kind of a mean of reaching other objectives, such as maintaining or strengthening their position.

To generate value to the brand. Of course it is possible to set a value on a brand the day the company is being sold. However, Länsförsäkringar does not intend to change owners, so this objectives is something that the company does not take into account at all. Länsförsäkringar is owned by their customers and will remain that way.

To generate meaning of the brand. It is incredible important right now to generate meaning to the brand; especially since they are extending their brand to also include bank services and life insurances. Therefore, this objective is considered to be very important.

To satisfy customers. This is of course an important objective. If you do not have satisfies customers you will not have loyal customers and you will fail in business.

Anything to add. The most important objective when developing the brand identity is profitable expansion; to be able to develop and extend the brand and the brand identity in a cost effective way.

5 Analysis

In this chapter the analysis of the empirical data collected during the case study of Länsförsäkringar AB will be presented. The analysis conducted, as stated in chapter three, will be a within-case analysis.

5.1 Strategic development of the brand identity

The following analysis has been done by comparing the results from the interview with the conceptualisation, provided in chapter two.

The brand as product

Associations with product class. Aaker (1996) suggests that the core of any brand identity is what products the brand is associated with. Since Länsförsäkringar has broadened their product line, they are therefore in the process of extending their brand. Currently Länsföräkringar is more associated with the property insurance product class. The aim is to extend the brand identity to also include bank services and life insurances, since the associations with product class is a such essential part of the brand identity.

Product-related attributes. Aaker (1996) further states that attributes of a product offering something extra can, in a large extent, be used when developing a brand's identity. The empiric study shows that Länsförsäkringar has been known as the most price-worth insurance alternative in Sweden. This product-related attribute is actively used in the development of the brand identity through internal and external communication.

Quality/Value. The delivery of property insurances is the main part of the quality concept to Länsförsäkringar. To sustain a high quality in the delivery and to satisfy the customers is considered important in the process of developing the brand identity. This is what Aaker (1996) also suggests can be the core part of the brand identity to a lot of companies.

Associations with use occasion. The top of mind concept, of thinking of Länsförsäkringar when the need for an insurance or bank service occurs, is considered to have a high priority. Aaker (1996) similarly states that this type of efforts of trying to own a particular use or application is an important part of the development of the brand identity.

Association with user. Aaker (1996) suggests that brand identity can be developed by defining the brand by its users. However, the development of the brand identity of Länsförsäkringar does not actively include this kind of effort.

Organizational culture. According to Aaker (1996), organizational attributes can contribute to a value proposition by associating the brand with different values. Similarly, Länsförsäkringar's organizational culture and the organizational attributes associated with the company are taken seriously into account in the development process of the brand identity. The core values of the organization are the most important attributes, since they are a source of differentiation.

Link to a country or region. The will to act local, and in that sense to be linked to a specific region, is a main strategic idea of Länsförsäkringar. Aaker (1996) similarly suggests that these kinds of strategic measures can strengthen the perceived quality. At Länsförsäkringar the customers are able to get service wherever he or she lives, which increases the perceived quality.

Organizational core values. Aaker (1996) states that organizational core values for example are innovation, a drive for quality or concern for the environment. At Länsförsäkringar the core organizational values are to act local, availability, endurance and good price. Furthermore, Aaker (1996) suggests that these kinds of core values can be used to further enrich the brand identity, which also is the case at Länsförsäkringar. The core values and the organizational culture of Länsförsäkringar are used throughout the organization to differentiate the brand from other brands.

The brand as person

Brand personality and human qualities of the brand. According Moorthi (2002), the brand as a person perspective reveals what happens to the brand when it is given human qualities. Länsförsäkringar can be described a rather defensive and reliable player. However, the process of developing the brand identity does not actively include the dimension of the brand as a person.

Personality characteristics. Moorthi (2002), also suggests that the brand personality can include characteristics such as gender, age and socio-economic class. The personality characteristics of Länsförsäkringar was described as the average Swede, but the target group could be anyone. However, this was not either actively part of the process of developing the brand identity.

Classic personal characteristics. Classic human personality traits such as warmth, concern and sentimentality can, according to Moorthi (2002), also be included in the brand personality perspective. Länsförsäkringar was described with the classic personal characteristics of having morals, ethics and humanism. However, the process of developing the brand identity does not actively include this dimension.

Brand as a symbol

The function, visual imagery and metaphors. Aaker (1996), states that the function of a symbol is to provide cohesion and structure to an identity. Similarly, the logotype of Länsförsäkringar is used to gain recognition. Furthermore, according to Aaker (1996), a symbol can be classified as one of the following types; visual imagery, metaphors and brand heritage. The symbol of Länsförsäkringar is rather old and consist of an L and an F and something in the middle, meant to symbolize the customer. The logotype is not a modern one but when looking into the recognition and recall variables, the result showed that over 69% recognized the company when just seeing the logotype. Länsförsäkringar's logotype can therefore be described as a mix of the three types mentioned above.

The congruence of the brand identity. According to Chernatony (1999), it is important to maintain a congruent brand identity within the whole organization. Länsförsäkringar is today, putting down a lot of efforts on trying to translate the brand identity of the property insurances to the other two areas of operation. Länsförsäkringar considers a congruent brand identity to be an essential issue when further developing the brand identity.

The importance of brand planning

Vision. Furthermore, Chernatony (1999), argues that the planning of the brand identity is an important part of the development process. The brand's environment should be envisaged at least five years ahead and considerations should be made about how the brand is going to be developed.
However, Länsförsäkringar does not plan the brand according to a specific time plan. This is because identity changes are rare in the insurance industry and they believe that the core of the brand identity should be quite consistent over time.

Brand positioning. Chernatony (1999), states that the brand's positioning should be consistent with the brand's vision and core values. Similarly, Länsförsäkringar wants to be perceived as different by projecting their core values through their brand identity.

Brand names

Name category. Kohli and Thakor (1997), states that the brand name is the basis of a brand's image. Furthermore, they suggest that there are five categories of names; generic, descriptive, suggestive, arbitrary and coined. Länsföräkringar's current name was established in 1969 and could at the time it was created be classified as a generic name. However, nowadays Länsförsäkringar provides bank services and life insurances as well as property insurances. Therefore, Länsförsäkringar is working on making the brand name a more of a coined name representing all the services.

5.2 Objectives for developing brand identity

Staff to staff, staff to customers and staff to other stakeholders. According to Chernatony (1999), an important objective of developing a brand identity is to create durable relationships. In Länsförsäkringar's case the staff is the carrier of the organizational culture and it is from the staff that a part of the brand identity is expressed. Therefore, durable relationships within the organization are essential to Länsförsäkringar.
The building of relationships, through internal and external communication of Länsförsäkringar's values and heritage, is also a very important way for the company to express their brand identity.´

To convey an intended positioning. Branding objectives can, according to Kohli and Thakor (1997), be to convey an intended positioning. Similarly, the empiric study has shown that this is one of the objectives for Länsförsäkringar. In order to make their brand represent something, a well developed brand identity and a well defined positioning strategy is essential.

To establish product differentiation. Kohli and Thakor (1997) further states that objectives, concerned with the development of the brand identity can be to establish product differentiation. To Länsförsäkringar the establishment of product differentiation is an important objective. A part of Länsförsäkringar's brand identity is the good price and the perceived high quality of their services.

To establish a distinct segment. To establish a distinct segment is also, according to Kohli and Thakor (1997), can also be an important objective. Similarly, this is an important objective for Länsförsäkringar when developing the brand identity. The segment that Länsförsäkringar is trying to reach is private house owners. The reason they are focusing on this segment is because this is where they have the strongest position today and the best opportunities to further strengthening their position.

To establish a unique image. To establish a unique image is important to Länsförsäkringar, because it is a way of reaching other objectives. Kohli and Thakor (1997), similarly suggests that a unique image is crucial branding objective to achieve.

Image versus reputation. Chernatony's (1999) opinion of rather looking at a brand's reputation than its image does not apply on Länsförsäkringar. When Länsförsäkringar is developing the brand identity they do not think in the terms of making a difference between image and reputation.

Decrease the gap between identity and image/reputation. To decrease the gap between the brand identity and the image, perceived by the customers, is the overall most important objective when developing the brand identity to Länsförsäkringar. Chernatony (1999), is in the same way arguing for the importance of achieving the decreased gap reduction objective. The reason why Länsförsäkringar want to decrease the gap between identity and image is because they want the customers to perceive the brand in the same way as they intend to express it.

To make the brand appeal to stakeholders. Another objective that Chernatony (1999) argues for is to make the brand appeal to stakeholders. Since Länsförsäkringar is owned by their customers this objective is also important when developing the brand identity.

To establish brand loyalty. According to Urde (1999), an objective related to the development of brand identity is to establish brand loyalty. To Länsförsäkringar, this objective is of very high priority when working with the brand identity. The reason is because this objective is a mean of reaching other objectives, such as maintaining or strengthening their position.

To generate value to the brand. Furthermore, Urde (1999), states that another objective related to the development of brand identity can be to generate value to the brand. However, this objective is not one of Länsförsäkringar's because Länsförsäkringar is owned by their customers and will remain that way. This objective is therefore something that the company does not strive for at all.

To generate meaning to the brand. An important objective to Länsförsäkringar in the present is to generate meaning to the brand. This is because they are extending their brand to also include bank services and life insurances. Urde (1999), similarly argues that to generate meaning to the brand is an objective related to the development of brand identity.

To satisfy customers. To satisfy customer needs and wants is also, according to Urde (1999), an important objective. Similarly, this is true for Länsförsäkringar. Because they believe that without satisfied customers you will not have any business at all.

After having discussed the above list of objectives we asked which objective Länsförsäkringar considered to be the most important objective to achieve when developing the brand identity. The answer was that the most important objective is profitable expansion. In other words, to be able to develop and extend the brand and the brand identity in a cost effective way. After presenting the analysis, the conclusions and implications will now be presented in the next chapter.

6 Findings and conclusions

In this chapter the main findings and conclusions, based on our study, will be presented. The main purpose of the conclusions is to answer the research questions. The final section of this chapter will provide implications for management, implications for theory and implications for further research.

6.1 How can the strategic development of the brand identity be described?

To describe the strategic development of the brand identity we have found that there are many different dimensions to consider. In Länsförsäkringar's case the brand extension, which they are currently working with, has forced the company to consider changes in the brand and the brand identity.

The new services, bank services and life insurances, are currently not fully represented in the old brand identity. However, this is slowly changing, due to a translation of the brand identity of the old service category, insurances, to the two new categories. This means that they are actively working on changing the product class that the brand is associated with. Similarly, the top of mind concept is considered to have high priority to Länsförsäkringar when developing the brand identity. The aim is to make it to the top of the consumer's mind, so that when the customer thinks of insurances, bank services of life insurances, Länsförsäkringar should be the natural choice, for all three categories.

We can conclude that the organizational culture and the core values of the organization are very important in the process of developing the brand identity. Just like the theory suggests, Länsförsäkringar uses their core values and their organizational culture to strategically enrich the brand identity. The link to a specific region is also, like the theory states, an important part of Länsförsäkringar's brand identity. This link to specific regions in the country is also congruent with the core values of the organization.

The fact the core of the brand identity is based on the attributes of the organizational dimension might be because the company is in the service industry. Therefore the customer's perception of the company, the employees and the delivery of the services are the most important aspects to consider when strategically developing the brand identity.

When it comes to the product related attributes and the quality and value dimensions, Länsförsäkringar does include these in the development process of the brand identity. The customer's perceived value and quality of the services provided occurs when the service is delivered. According to Länsförsäkringar this is, for example, what happens after the customer has been exposed to an accident or something else covered by an insurance. The perceived quality and value of the services is seriously taken into account in the development process of the brand identity. This is because Länsförsäkringar wants to position themselves as a high quality supplier. Furthermore, Länsförsäkringar uses product-related attributes, to some extent, to even further enrich the brand identity. This product-related attribute is for example their relatively low priced insurances.

The power of symbols used to strategically strengthen the brand identity is something that Länsförsäkringar is very conscious of. The logotype of Länsförsäkringar is very old and a well established and recognized symbol. The fact that Länsförsäkringar has considered changing the logotype to a more modern one, but decided not to, because the recognition rate was rather high, shows that a symbol can be an extremely powerful tool to use when working with the brand identity. Furthermore, the symbol is not a very modern one, but the shape and the symbolism is congruent with the rest of the brand identity, in terms of the core values, the organizational culture and the importance of their heritage. This congruence of the brand identity is probably one of the major strengths of Länsförsäkringar's brand identity.

The Länsförsäkringar, which also is a part of the brand identity, is somewhat connected to the company's heritage. Even though the number of Swedish "län" is decreasing and the brand name is being transformed from a generic name, describing exactly the area of operations that the company used to cover, to a more sort of coined name, standing for insurances, bank services and life insurances. Similarly to the brand as a symbol perspective, mentioned above, a decision to keep the brand name, would also be contribute to the congruence of the brand identity.

When it comes to the brand as a person perspective, including personality characteristics and classic personal characteristics, Länsförsäkringar claims that they do not think in these terms when developing the brand identity. However, when we asked for a description of the brand's human qualities, the interviewee was able to give a good answer. This implies that even though Länsförsäkringar does not use this perspective actively in the development process of the brand identity, they still have a picture of the personal characteristics of the brand. A development of this perspective might help the customers to create relationships with the brand.

Furthermore, Länsförsäkringar's planning of the brand identity is not coherent with the literature. Länsförsäkringar does not plan the brand identity after a specific time plan. This might be because the core of the brand identity is based on their heritage and core values, which are more or less static. A change of the core identity would, in our opinion, give more damage to the brand than further strengthen it.

To summarize the conclusions of this case study, a list of the most important issues to consider, when strategically developing the brand identity, has been assembled; starting with the most important.

1. Congruence of the brand identity
2. The brand as organization
3. Associations with product class
4. The brand as symbol and the brand name

This means that the most important factor to consider when developing the brand identity is the congruence of it. It is important to make sure that the brand identity is congruent in all of its dimensions.

The second most important factor to consider is the organizational dimension of the identity. In this dimension the core values, the organizational culture and the heritage of the brand are used to communicate the brand identity.

Associations with product class is also to be considered an significant issue to consider in the development of the brand identity. It is of great importance to have a brand identity that reflects the whole span of product classes supplied.

The brand as symbol and the name of the brand is the fourth most important issue. This dimension of the identity can be used to express the brand identity through symbols and though the name. An old, well known symbol and brand name should not be changed, since it expresses a strong heritage, which could be used in the further development of the brand identity.

6.2 How can the objectives for developing brand identity be characterized?

There are many different objectives for developing the brand identity. A lot of these objectives are in some ways connected to each other; in order to be able to reach a specific objective the company might have to reach some other objectives. However, not all objectives suggested by the literature match the objectives set by Länsförsäkringar. There are also objectives set by Länsförsäkringar that the literature does not mention. Furthermore, the importance of the different objectives does also differ; some objectives are more important than others.

The most important objective for developing the brand identity was to do it in a cost effective way; to be able to develop the brand identity and still generate revenue. This objective was however not in the list of objectives provided by the literature.

The objective of establishing a unique image is more of a mean of reaching other objectives, such as to convey an intended positioning, establishing product differentiation and establishing a distinct segment. It is important that the brand represents and expresses something. The brand identity aspects of the product differentiation were, in this study, the good price and the high quality of the services provided. Furthermore, these objectives, concerned with the development of the brand identity, aims to establish a distinct segment; private house owners. The objective of generating meaning, or broadening the meaning, so that the identity also includes bank services and life insurances, is a very important objective at the present. This objective is of course very important to reach, in order to successfully extend the brand, so that the brand stands for all the services supplied.

Länsförsäkringar does not make a difference between image and reputation, like the literature suggests. However, they appreciate the way customers perceive their brand identity and an important objective is to reduce the gap between the identity and this perceived image. This is in line with theory; a main objective when developing a brand identity is to be able to reach other objectives concerned with the brand identity, and thus the identity must be congruent with the image.

Since the core of Länsförsäkringar's brand identity is based on the strong organizational culture and the organizational values, another important objective is to establish durable relationships between staff and staff, customers and staff and staff to other stakeholders. These relationships are looked upon as a way of expressing their brand identity. The owners of the company are the customers, therefore this relationship must be considered very important. The customers are also the reason why a company is in business at all.

In Länsförsäkringar’s case another crucial objective of developing the brand identity is to establish loyal and satisfied customers. The reason is that these objectives are means of reaching other objectives, without satisfied customers they will not be in business at all. Also, since the customers are the owners, these objectives are very important to reach.

An objective that Länsförsäkringar does not take into account at all, when developing the brand identity, is to generate value to the brand. The reason is because they would consider this important if they were to sell the brand. The reason this is not important to the company is because the way they are owned. However, the fact that Länsförsäkringar acquisitioned Wasa some years ago, makes this objective interesting to consider for the future.

To summarize, we have listed the most important objectives, concerned with the development of the brand identity; starting with the most important:

1. To establish a unique image

2. Decrease the gap between identity and image

3. Establishing durable relationships

The objective of establishing a unique image is one of the most important means of reaching other objectives, such as to convey intended positioning, to establish product differentiation and establishing a distinct segment. If a unique image is established, these other objectives will be a whole lot easier to reach.

The reduction of the gap between identity and image is closely connected to the objective mentioned above. After having developed a unique identity, the aim is to make the identity and the image perceived by the customers match each other.

The establishment of durable relationships is an excellent way of expressing the core values of the brand. Furthermore, by maintaining these relationships the brand loyalty will be affected positively.

The most important objective, according to company in the case study, was to be able to develop the brand identity in a cost effective way. However, we do not consider this to be a reason why the brand identity should be developed, but more of how the company wish to do it.

6.3 Implications

In this section implications for management, implications for theory and implications for further research are presented.

6.3.1 Implications for management

In the case of strategically developing the brand identity, we have found that there are a lot of important perspectives to consider. When developing the brand identity of a service company the organizational perspective might be the most obvious dimension to develop, and also a very important one. However, other perspectives such as the brand as person, the brand as product and the brand as symbol should also be considered. This is to further create texture and depth to the brand identity. A well developed brand identity, within several dimensions, should be easier for the customer to create a relationship with. Durable relationships between the brand and the customers will ease the establishment of brand loyalty. The relationship between staff and staff is however, in a service company, where the development process of the brand identity starts. These relationships should therefore be of high priority when determining the objectives.

Furthermore, in order to develop a successful brand identity the identity should be congruent in all dimensions. This is also very important to be able to reduce the gap between identity and the perceived image. If the different dimensions of the identity are expressing different messages, there is a possibility that the gap between the customers perceived image and the identity increases.

When setting the objectives for developing the brand identity, companies should not focus on objectives related to *how* the identity will be developed. Instead, the objectives should be focused on *why* the brand identity should be developed and the benefits a well developed brand identity can generate.

To conclude this discussion; several perspectives should be considered when developing the brand identity. Furthermore, the congruence of the identity, within all dimensions, is very important, as well as an image that reflects the identity.

6.3.2 Implications for theory

The purpose of this thesis, as stated in chapter one, was to gain a better understanding the strategic development of the brand identity by answering specific research questions. In the process of performing this study we have started to explore the area, since we have gained a deeper understanding about an area that we knew little about in the beginning. Furthermore, the study has also been descriptive since we have been able to describe the strategic development of the brand identity and the objectives associated with this development. To some extent our research has also been explanatory, in the sense of that we have been able to draw conclusions, in other words, answering the research questions.

6.3.3 Implications for further research

Further research, concerned with the strategic development of the brand identity, would be to compare service companies with manufacturing companies, to see if there are any differences or similarities between the dimensions of the brand identity primarily developed.

The fact that the brand Länsförsäkringar is such an old brand, would make it interesting to investigate the strategies concerned with the development of the brand identity of a brand in the introduction stage.

An interesting quantitative research problem would be to make a study of the list of the most important dimensions and objectives of the brand identity development, to see if this list can be generalized.

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Appendix A: Interview guide in English

I. Organizational factors

1. Appointment/Title
2. Established
3. Size of company
4. Area of operations (including target group)
5. Type of products sold

II. Strategic development of brand identity

1. The brand as product
   - Associations with product class
   - Product-related attributes
   - Quality/Value
   - Associations with use occasion
   - Assocations with user
   - Link to a country or region

2. The brand as organization
   - Organizational culture
   - Organizational core values

3. The brand as person
   - Brand personality and human qualities of the brand
   - Personality characteristics (Gender, age, socio-economic)
   - Classic personality characteristics (Warmth, sentimentality)

4. The brand as symbol
   - The function
   - Visual imagery, metaphors and the brand heritage

5. The congruence of brand identity

6. The importance of brand planning
   - Vision
   - Brand positioning

7. Brand names
   - Name category (generic, descriptive, suggestive, arbitrary and coined)

III. Objectives for developing brand identity

8. To establish durable relationships
    - Staff to staff
    - Staff to customers
    - Staff to other stakeholders

9. To convey an intended positioning

10. To establish product differentiation

11. To establish a distinct segment

12. To establish a unique image
    - Image versus reputation

13. Decrease the gap between identity and reputation/image

14. To establish identification

15. To make the brand appeal to stakeholders

16. To establish brand loyalty

17. To generate value of the brand

18. To generate meaning of the brand

19. To satisfy customers

20. Anything to add

Appendix B: Interview guide in Swedish

I. Organisatoriska faktorer

1. Befattning/Titel
2. Grundat
3. Företagets storlek
4. Verksamhetsområde (målgrupp inkluderat)
5. Typ av produkter sålda

II. Strategisk utveckling av varumärkesidentiteten

1. Varumärket som produkt
    - Association med produktklass
    - Produktrelaterade attribut
    - Kvalitet/Värde
    - Association med användningstillfälle
    - Association med användare
    - Koppling till ett land eller region

2. Varumärket som organisation
    - Organisationskultur
    - Organisationens kärnvärderingar

3. Varumärket som person
    - Varumärkespersonlighet och mänskliga egenskaper
    - Personliga drag (Kön, alder, social-ekonomisk ställning)
    - Klassiska personlighetsdrag (Värme, sentimentalitet)

4. Varumärket som symbol
    - Funktion
    - Bildspråk, metaforer, varumärkets ursprung

5. Varumärkesidentitetens kongruens

6. Vikten av varumärkesplanering
    a. Vision
    b. Positionering av varumärket

7. Märkesnamn
    c. Namnkategori (generellt, beskrivande, tankeväckande, godtyckligt och myntat)

III. Mål för att utveckla varumärkesidentiten

8. För att skapa långvariga förhållanden
   - Mellan personal
   - Mellan personal och kunder
   d. Mellan personal och stakeholders

9. Att nå ut med en viss positionering

10. Att skapa produktdifferentiering

11. Att nå ett specifikt segment

12. Att etablera en unik image
    - Image mot rykte

13. Minska skillnaden mellan identitet och rykte/image

14. Att etablera identifikation

15. Att få varumärket att framstå på ett bra sätt för intressenter

16. Att etablera varumärkeslojalitet

17. Att generera värde till varumärket

18. Att skapa innebörd för märket

19. Att tillfredställa kunder

20. Någonting att tillägga?