

LAPPEENRANTA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

LUT School of Business and Management

Master's Degree Programme in International Marketing Management (MIMM)

Master's thesis

**THE IMPACT OF PRODUCT BRAND STORIES ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY**

Laura Kiltilä, 2018

1st examiner: Professor Asta Salmi

2nd examiner: Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen

ABSTRACT

Author:	Kiltilä, Laura Kaarina
Title:	The impact of product brand stories on customer experience in the fashion industry
School:	LUT School of Business and Management
Programme:	International Marketing Management (MIMM)
Year:	2018
Master's Thesis:	Lappeenranta University of Technology 102 pages, 10 figures, 3 tables and 5 appendices
Examiners:	Professor Asta Salmi Associate Professor Anssi Tarkiainen
Keywords:	Brand story, product brand story, customer experience, fashion industry, qualitative research, case study

Brand stories are proven to be an excellent tool to engage customers emotionally with a brand and create positive customer experiences. This thesis aims to investigate what the role of product brand stories is on the customer experience when the overall brand behind the product is well known. This study concentrates especially on the fashion industry where competition is very tough and successful branding has an extremely important role. This thesis utilizes previously written theory of brand stories, fashion branding and customer experience. In the qualitative case study two experts from the case company and 18 trendy young men who were suitable for the case company's target group were interviewed.

This thesis shows that product brand stories do have an effect on customer experience even when the overall brand behind the product is well known, if the product is good and the story manages to touch the customer personally. Many interviewees thought that the product brand story was interesting, and it was considered to be positive that a product has a deeper meaning. However, customer experience is a personal experience for every individual and, therefore, it is important that a company finds the correct target group for its products and product brand stories.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä:	Kilttilä, Laura Kaarina
Tutkielman otsikko:	Tuotebränditarinoiden vaikutus asiakaskokemukseen muotiteollisuudessa
Tiedekunta:	Kauppatieteellinen tiedekunta
Pääaine:	International Marketing Management
Vuosi:	2018
Pro-gradu - tutkielma:	Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto 102 sivua, 10 kuviota, 3 taulukkoa ja 5 liitettä.
Tarkastajat:	Professori Asta Salmi ja Tutkijaopettaja Anssi Tarkiainen
Hakusanat:	Bränditarina, tuotebränditarina, asiakaskokemus, muotiteollisuus, laadullinen tutkimus, tapaustutkimus

Bränditarinat ovat tutkitusti erinomainen työkalu asiakkaan sitouttamiseen tunnetasolla brändiin ja elämysten luomiseen. Tämä pro gradu työ tutkii erityisesti mikä merkitys itse tuotteille luoduilla bränditarinoilla on asiakaskokemukseen, kun brändi tuotteiden taustalla on jo valmiiksi tunnettu. Työ keskittyy erityisesti muotiteollisuuteen, jossa kilpailu on erittäin kovaa ja onnistuneella brändäyksellä on hyvin suuri merkitys. Tutkimus käyttää hyväkseen aiempia tutkimuksia bränditarinoin, muotibrändäykseen ja asiakaskokemukseen liittyen. Laadullinen tapaustutkimus tehtiin haastatteleamalla kahta case-yritykseen kuuluvaa asiantuntijaa sekä 18 trendikästä nuorta miestä, jotka sopivat case-yrityksen kohderyhmään.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että tuotteille luoduilla brändiarinoilla voi olla merkitystä asiakaskokemukseen. Vaikka itse brändi on jo valmiiksi tunnettu, tuovat tarinat lisäarvoa tuotteelle, mikäli itse tuote on hyvä ja tarina onnistuu koskettamaan asiakasta henkilökohtaisesti. Tutkimuksen haastateltavat kokivat positiiviseksi, että tuotteella on syvällisempi merkitys. Asiakaskokemus on kuitenkin hyvin henkilökohtainen jokaiselle yksilölle ja siten on tärkeää, että yritys löytää oikean kohderyhmän tuotteilleen ja niiden tarinoille.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, the finish line of this project is here. I started this master thesis project almost two years ago while doing an internship at adidas Originals in Germany. I did not entirely realize how much work was ahead of me – especially when I decided to have a study exchange in California and have a full-time job right after that here in Finland. However, I am so grateful of all the experiences I have gained during this journey! I learned a lot during these two years, gained new perspectives and met new people who have inspired me and supported me to finish this project. A big thank you to you all!

Firstly, I want to express my special gratitude to my super team at adidas Originals. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and your passion towards fashion. I learned a lot from you and I had the best time with you. I want to thank you especially Deni and Aeneas for the interviews and Daniel for borrowing the t-shirt collection for my research. I highly appreciate all your help!

Secondly, a big thank you to all 18 trendy young men who were willing to participate in this case study. I am grateful that you were open-minded and shared your ideas and opinions during the interviews and helped me understand your point of view. I couldn't have imagined a better interview group.

Thank you professor Anssi Tarkiainen for sharing your professional feedback. That helped me finish this thesis. Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for supporting and motivating me during this whole process. This master thesis project was not easy and it required some cutting of social life... Thank you for understanding this and cheering me up when I felt exhausted. I'm very grateful for your never-ending love and support.

Now I'm excited to graduate and keep going towards new challenges and dreams I want to achieve. But first, let's enjoy the summer!

In Helsinki, 27.5.2018

Laura Kilttilä

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the research	1
1.2 Research aims and questions.....	4
1.3 Literature review	5
1.4 Theoretical framework	7
1.5 Delimitations.....	9
1.6 Definitions of the key concepts.....	11
1.7 Research methodology	13
1.8 Structure of the research.....	15
2 THE POWER OF STORYTELLING AND BRAND STORIES	16
2.1 The value of storytelling.....	17
2.2 Brand Stories.....	19
2.3 Characteristics of brand stories.....	21
2.4 Brand personality	26
2.5 Product brand stories	27
3 BRAND STORIES IN FASHION BRANDING	30
3.1 Fashion branding	30
3.1.1 History of fashion branding	31
3.1.2 Fashion branding today.....	33
3.2 Umbrella branding	34
4 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	36
4.1 The concept of customer experience	36
4.2 Definitions of customer experience.....	37
5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	42
5.1 Qualitative research	42
5.2 Data collection method.....	43

5.3 Data analysis method.....	45
6 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: CASE ADIDAS	46
6.1 Brand story of adidas.....	46
6.1.1 Brand story of adidas Originals.....	49
6.2 Brand stories in product marketing	50
7 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS	54
7.1 The case product brand story.....	54
7.2 Introducing interviewees.....	57
7.3 Adidas brand image and touch points.....	59
7.4 Evaluating the t-shirt range.....	62
8 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS	71
8.1 Theoretical contributions	77
8.2 Managerial implications.....	78
8.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research.....	79
REFERENCES	80
APPENDICES	91

List of Figures

Figure 1 The first part of the Theoretical Framework of the research	8
Figure 2 The second part of the Theoretical Framework of the research.....	9
Figure 3 The image of "narrative capital" sectors.....	22
Figure 4 The customer journey map (Vesterinen 2014, 53).....	40
Figure 5 Adidas logos from different decades.....	47
Figure 6 Prints of the artistic t-shirt range	55
Figure 7 How to describe adidas	60
Figure 8 How tempting adidas is as a brand.....	61
Figure 9 Willingness to buy the t-shirt.....	69
Figure 10 Willingness to pay for the t-shirt.....	69

List of Tables

Table 1 Archetypes.....	25
Table 2 Interviewees in the Group 1	56
Table 3 Interviewees in the Group 2	56

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introduction to the topic of product brand stories and customer experience in the fashion industry, and its background. The chapter also presents the literature review, research problems, theoretical framework and definitions of the key concepts. In addition, the delimitations, research methodology and the structure of this thesis are presented at the end of this chapter.

1.1 Background of the research

The world is smaller than ever before. Technological development has been rapid and thereby information flow is extremely fast, communication around the world is simple, and travelling is easy and effortless. No doubt this development has had plenty of positive effects on people and their lives; however, due to this technological evolution the world is also more hectic: news and trends change faster, the field of business is very competitive, and even people need to be more efficient. Therefore, it is not a surprise that due to these changes, companies are now facing new kinds of challenges and expectations from their stakeholders.

Changes in everyday life and consumer behavior affect companies as well. Due to all the changes and development in our environment, competition is harder than before in many business sectors. Companies need to find new ways to communicate with their audience, as it can be difficult for them to make their own message stand out from the mass. Therefore, one challenge for companies is to differentiate a brand from others and make its message so interesting and visible that people pay attention to it. Furthermore, people seek for adventures and experiences (Silverstein & Fiske 2003), and thereby companies should be able to offer pleasant customer experiences, which might be challenging as well.

One answer to these problems are brand stories. Even though the world and the people have changed, storytelling is still a significant part of people's lives. There are many studies about benefits of narratives and thus more and more companies are willing to utilize brand stories. Well-made brand stories evoke feelings and

connect customers emotionally to the brand (Woodside 2010; Simmons 2006; Herskovitz & Crystal 2010). That way the brand's message becomes more interesting and easier to remember (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 16). Brand stories make a brand more unique and therefore stories are a good way to differentiate a brand from its competition (Koll, Von Wallpach & Kreuzer 2010; Entrepreneur 2009). Stories are often used for the overall brand: popular brands have a clear brand persona and a story that represents the company's mission, vision and values that people are able to relate to (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010). Brand stories are also a way to offer experiences for customers (Silverstein & Fiske 2003).

Since strong brands and brand stories are proven to be a valuable asset for companies, storytelling is a common tool in branding and marketing (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & Riel 2013, 285). Some companies use lots of stories and thus brand stories are not only used for the overall brand but sometimes also for the actual products. Narratives behind products aim to make them more interesting, attractive and unique to customers. Business sectors are so competitive that product brand stories are basically a way to differentiate a product from competitors' offerings. For example, the fashion industry is very competitive. Ultimately, all fashion companies are selling apparel, footwear and accessories – so how is it possible to make customers interested in a specific product?

In addition, most people already have lots of clothes, so why should they buy new apparel? The fashion industry is actually quite a unique market sector, because in order to make their customers buy new clothes, companies must constantly create new needs for them. By utilizing product brand stories, companies aim to create a hype and story around their products in order to make them even more interesting and different from competitors' products.

Brand stories are an especially important tool for big companies that have multiple sub-brands and sub-categories with different kinds of products. By utilizing umbrella branding, companies are able to sell different products under one overall brand (Erden 1998). When a company has different kinds of sub-brands and products, it automatically shares lots of different stories under one brand story. People hear all these stories along with the competitors' stories and thereby receive an enormous number of stories every day.

This leads to the question of whether consumers appreciate all these stories? Or have companies gotten carried away with all their stories, and would it be better to have just one well-created story? This thesis will study whether stories behind certain products actually add value to customers when they are already familiar with the brand itself. In other words, do product brand stories make products more unique and attractive? And do they have an impact on a customer's experience of the product? Do product brand stories have an important role and should companies be telling these stories to their customers?

The case company in this thesis is adidas Group. Adidas is a big multinational company that is well known for its sports and lifestyle brand worldwide. The adidas brand represents quality, style and sporty and youthful lifestyle with a hint of old heritage (adidas 2017). Adidas operates on a highly competitive market, since there are several other clothing and fashion brands – and even if competitors are narrowed down to just sports and fashion brands, the number of competitors is still high. Competition is especially hard now, when the leisure and athletic look is very fashionable and brands that do not normally offer sporty clothes have begun to do so.

Adidas Group is a great example of a company that utilizes umbrella branding. Thereby adidas is an excellent case for this thesis, and the study concentrates especially on adidas Originals brand, which offers fashion and street style apparel, footwear and accessories for its customers. The thesis aims to find out if the stories that adidas has created for its products are really necessary. Do stories behind adidas products make them more unique and valuable to customers and thereby satisfy customers' needs to be special individuals with unique customer experiences? Or would an overall adidas brand be attractive enough to make the products special for customers?

1.2 Research aims and questions

This thesis examines how valuable product brand stories are for customers, when the overall brand behind those products is popular and well known. The theoretical part of the research gives an overview of the existing theory of storytelling and brand narratives from different aspects in order to get a better understanding of the value of brand stories in general, and why and how those are currently used in product marketing. Additionally, the theory of customer experience is discussed to be able to analyze the value of product brand stories from customer perspectives. This thesis concentrates especially on the fashion industry and therefore the theoretical part of the thesis focuses on fashion branding and its history as well. The empirical part of this thesis concentrates more on the value of product brand stories from customer perspective.

The aim of this thesis is to find out if product brand stories add value to products from customers' perspective, even if the overall brand is already well known. Results from this research are useful to companies that utilize product brand stories even though they also have a strong overall brand and a brand story. This knowledge is important in order to utilize product brand stories even better in product marketing.

The research questions of the study emerge from these goals. The main research question is:

- ***How valuable are product brand stories to customers when the overall brand behind the products is well known?***

In order to answer the main research question, following sub-questions have been created:

- ***What is a brand story?***
- ***Why are stories used in product marketing and fashion branding?***
- ***How do stories behind products affect a customer's experience of the product?***

1.3 Literature review

Storytelling has been a popular subject in research for a long time. There have been many studies about stories in general, the structure of good stories, archetypes of stories, and so on. The first scholar to develop a theory for stories might have been Aristotle already more than 2000 years ago, when he defined a structure for stories (Chiu et al. 2012). Therefore, it is justified to say that storytelling has a long history and is part of human nature. Stories have been researched especially from psychological and philosophical points of view as part of life and self-interpretation. For example, it is known that humans see the world through stories and stories are easier to remember than randomly told facts (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003; Bruner 1990; Escalas 2004; Lundqvist et al. 2013). These studies are very valuable when one wants to get information about why stories should be utilized in branding and marketing.

However, brand stories are not as common of a research subject as storytelling in general. The reason for this is that brand stories are a relatively new area of study (Benjamin 2006; Woodside, Sood & Miller 2008). Studies of storytelling in the context of business increased especially after the year 2006 (Donaldson 2007; Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 327). One explanation for that might be the increased popularity of social media and blogging which both are extremely good platforms for storytelling and marketing (Donaldson 2007; Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 327). Thus, it's only recently that brand stories have been examined as a branding tool.

Studies about brand stories concentrate mainly on customer experience and how stories are used in advertising (Lundqvist et al. 2013). In addition, brand stories are more and more commonly used in branding and therefore some literature on why companies should create their own brand stories exists. It has been proved that a brand gets a meaning through brand stories and thereby the brand is more valuable and easier for customers to understand (Fournier 1998; Woodside et al. 2008; Simmons 2006).

Still, there is not much literature about using storytelling in product marketing. Chiu et al. (2012) published their research with the title "How to align your brand stories

with your products.” In their research the goal is to find out if a company’s brand story has a positive influence on its products. However, there is a lack of studies that research stories that have been created specifically for certain products. Therefore, this thesis aims to fulfill this research gap.

In addition, this study concentrates specifically on a lifestyle and fashion brand and its products. Fashion and clothing business is highly competitive, and storytelling and brand stories have a huge impact on a company’s branding and sales. At the moment, the fashion sector is quite under-represented within academic literature (Fionda & Moore 2009), making this study even more relevant. There is plenty of literature about brands, but only a few have really researched fashion brands as storytellers (Hancock 2016, 7). Scientific articles about fashion are more concentrated on exploring the characteristics of fashion (Moore et al. 1997; Phau & Lo 2004; Malen 2007; Rowley 2008; Lille 2010; Kamm et al. 2013). In his book “Brand Story – Cases and explorations in fashion branding” Hancock (2016) describes fashion brands and shows how some of them have created their brand stories for the overall brand and their products. The fashion industry greatly utilizes storytelling, and fashion branding has an impressive history when it comes to utilizing brand stories. Therefore, it is interesting to concentrate on this particular business sector in this thesis.

Both company and consumer points of view are represented in this thesis in order to understand why product brand stories are used from both perspectives. However, the main focus is to evaluate what the value of product brand stories is to customers and whether those stories affect customer experience.

1.4 Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework describes the theoretical perspectives of a study. In this research, the main concepts are storytelling and brand stories that are used in product marketing, especially in big companies that utilize umbrella branding. For example, many companies in the fashion industry utilize umbrella branding, due to their different product ranges and categories. The fact that this research is carried out in a business-to-customer environment is considered also in the theoretical framework.

Figure 1 illustrates the first part of the theoretical framework of this study. It describes the structure of a company that utilizes umbrella branding: the overall brand covers two sub-categories that have been divided into smaller sub-categories. These sub-categories have been divided into even smaller pieces that are called ranges. That way it is easier to manage all different product categories and brands inside a company. However, this is just an example of a possible structure, and the structure always depends on the company, since firms have different amounts of sub-brands and sub-categories. This framework only works as an example and illustrates the idea of umbrella branding.

Since there are so many different categories, a company's overall brand story is not the only story that the company shares to its customers. Red arrows in Figure 1 represent stories that a company shares to its audience. As one can see, each sub-category has ranges that all have their own stories – some of the ranges even have products that have their own specific stories behind them. Thereby, consumers receive multiple different brand stories from one company.

A strong brand and an interesting brand story are valuable to both customers and companies. However, it is unknown how valuable product brand stories are for customers, especially when the overall brand behind the products is well known. Do product brand stories make products more valuable to customers and therefore have an important role also in product marketing?

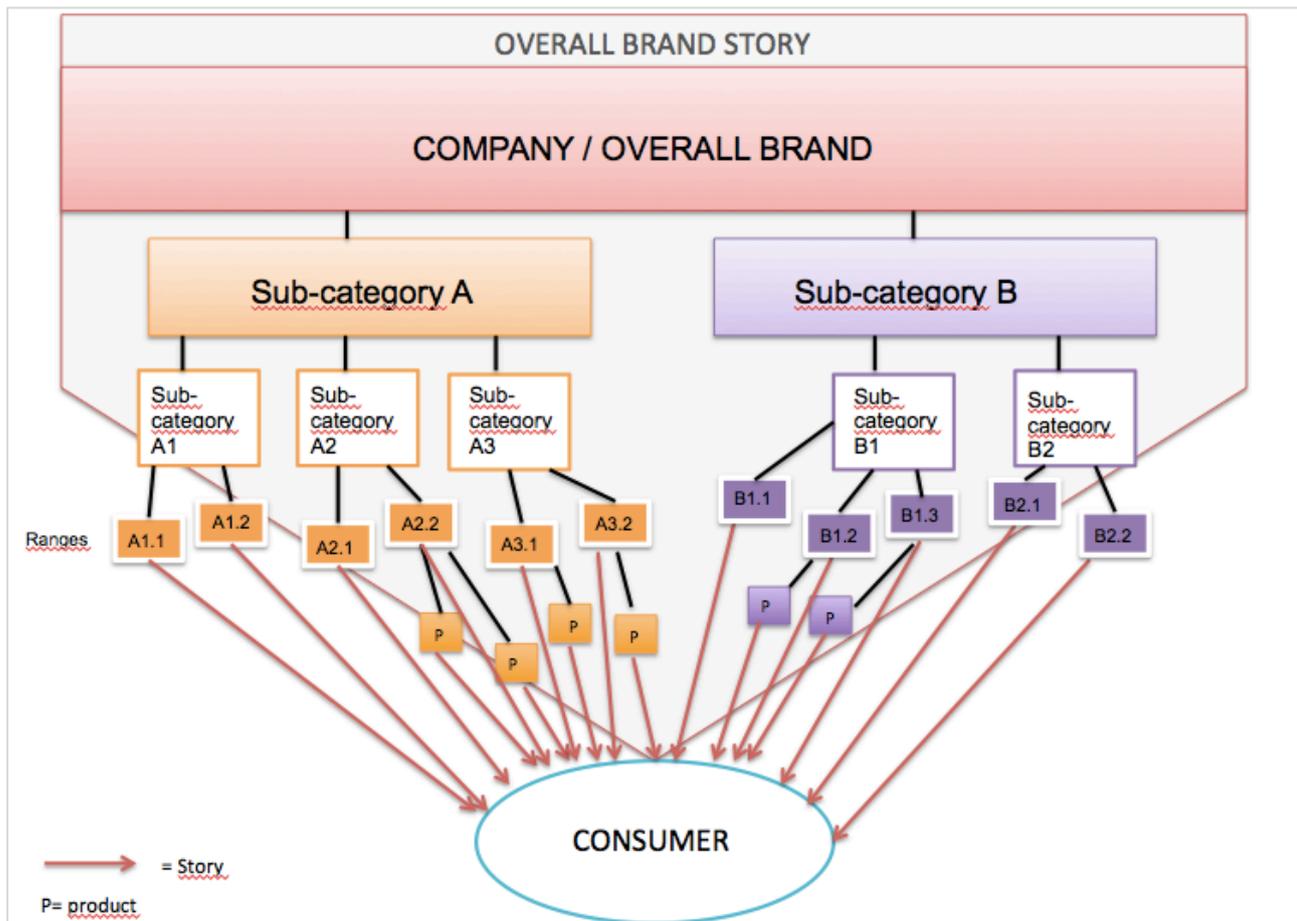


Figure 1 The first part of the Theoretical Framework of the research

Figure 2, the second part of the theoretical framework, gives a more detailed view on how a well-known company has a new product and a specific product brand story created for it. The company tells this story to its customers and hopes that the story evokes feelings and is meaningful to them. However, the company's overall brand story impacts their customers' emotions and opinions of the product as well as all previous experiences with the brand. Thereby, this thesis aims to find out whether product brand stories add additional value to customers or whether it would be enough to have a strong overall brand story.

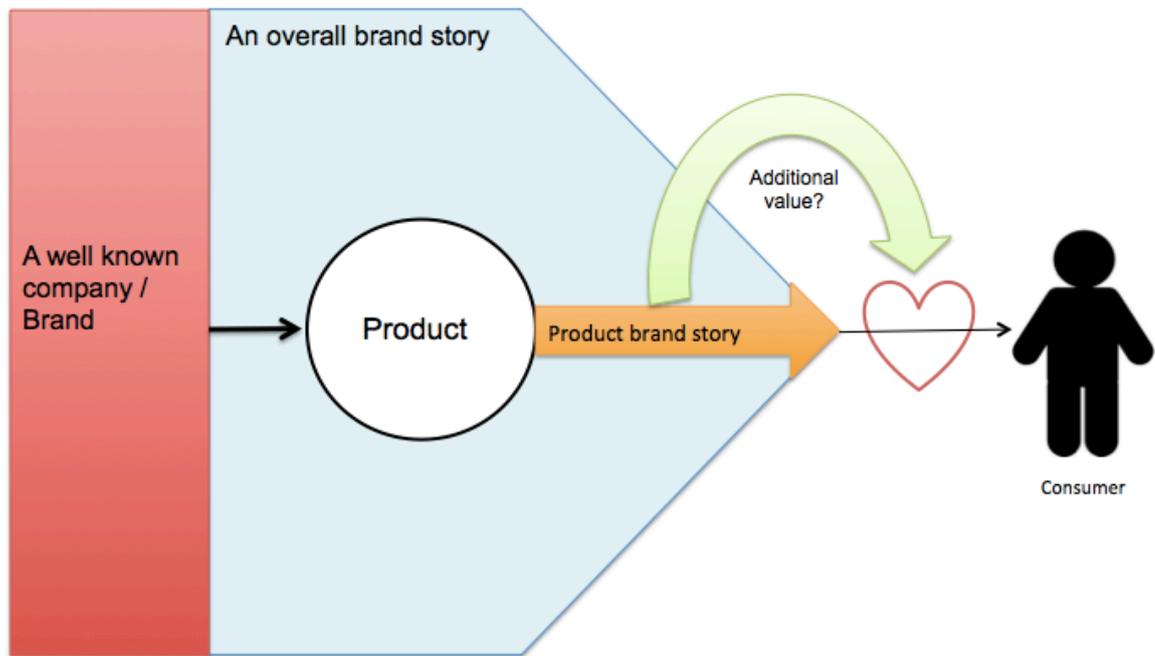


Figure 2 The second part of the Theoretical Framework of the research

1.5 Delimitations

Business storytelling is a wide topic, but this thesis focuses on storytelling as a marketing tool in business from the customer's point of view. More specifically, this thesis examines the value of product brand stories and aims to find out whether product brand stories add value to products from customers' perspective, even though the overall brand behind the product is well known.

Therefore, one delimitation is that this research concentrates specifically on product brand stories that are created by a company that is successful and has a relatively well-known overall brand story behind it. This delimitation is done because if the case company would not have a well-known overall brand story and customers would only hear its product brand stories, the outcome of the research could be different. Presumably, a famous overall brand story might impact the customer's opinion of the product – the product is not just a commodity among others since it belongs to a certain brand. Still, the case company has decided to create specified brand stories for its products and this thesis examines if these stories influence the customers' opinion of the product positively and thereby add value to it. If a product has a product brand story but not a commonly known overall brand story, that

product brand narrative most likely has a more crucial role in order to differentiate the product from competition. Thereby, this thesis concentrates on a case where an overall brand story is generally known.

The fashion industry utilizes storytelling a lot and thereby this thesis focuses on the fashion sector. This delimitation has been done since the fashion industry has an interesting and long history in branding, it is highly competitive, and brand stories have an important role in fashion branding in general. Additionally, fashion brands are a bit understudied within academic literature, so it is interesting to concentrate on the fashion and lifestyle sector.

The case company for this thesis is adidas Group. Adidas is an excellent example for this thesis, since the company is well known worldwide, and it is very popular among consumers. Adidas utilizes umbrella branding and has lots of sub-brands under the overall adidas brand. The overall brand has been divided into adidas performance (sport) and lifestyle (fashion) brands. Those two are split into even smaller sub-categories: adidas performance brand includes football, running, basketball, training, outdoor and heartbeat sports brands and adidas lifestyle brand includes adidas Originals and its collaboration collections (adidas 2017). All of these sub-categories include lots of different ranges and products and many of them have their own stories that have been utilized in product marketing and marketing in general.

Since there are so many sub-brands, this thesis concentrates on the adidas Originals brand. This delimitation is done, since adidas Originals represents a lifestyle and fashion brand, and the market for those is highly competitive. This thesis concentrates specifically on the fashion industry and therefore adidas Originals is a natural choice. Adidas Originals is well known and its products are a good representation of the overall adidas brand story, yet these products have their own specified product brand stories behind them.

1.6 Definitions of the key concepts

This chapter goes through some of the key definitions used in this thesis, in order to get a better understanding of the approach of the research. These terms have been selected so that the reader will get a right mind-set for understanding the concept of this study.

Brand: There is not just one correct definition of a brand. A very basic and commonly used definition is: “A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (Bennett 1988, 18). Therefore, brands are not just labels but rather the consumer’s personal meanings of the company and its products – one can say that a brand exists when consumers have an image of it that is different to its competitors (Laakso 2003,14). Also, a brand is the additional value that customers are willing to pay for the products compared to a substitute commodity (Laakso 2003, 22). It can also be described as a philosophy inside a company that leads its employees and the way they think (Hakala & Malmelin 2007, 32). What is common to these different definitions is that brands create additional value and help differentiate a company and its products from competitors.

Brand story: A brand story is an interesting narrative that a company has created for itself or its products in order to commit consumers emotionally to a brand (Matthew & Wacker 2008, 132). The aim is that the created brand story will unify the company’s communication, interaction and basically everything that the company does to a well-defined form, so that customers will get a clear image of it. Thereby, a brand story should summarize a company’s mission, vision and values to a clear package that also combines the company’s brand identity and its external brand. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 188) Even though there is not just one definition for a brand story, it is fair to say that brand stories help to create a clear, unified and interesting image of a company to its different stakeholders. A good brand story evokes feelings and therefore makes the brand irresistible.

Brand persona: As it often is with a story, also in the brand story it is important to describe the main persona of the narrative, namely its character and personality.

According to De Chernatory (1999) and Plummer (1985), a brand personality is one dimension of the brand identity. It can be seen as a “set of human characteristics associated with a brand”, as it is described by Aaker (1997). According to Hawkins et al. (2001, 376) brand personality describes “what type of person the brand would be if it were human and what it would do and like.” Without a strong brand persona, a brand story might just be a series of disconnected adventures without a clear message and touch point (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010).

Brand image: The image that a consumer has formed of a brand is called brand image (Lindberg-Repo 2005, 67-68). Brand image consists of all information and personal experience that consumers have of a company and its products. All stories, rumors and discussions influence customers’ brand image of a company. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 83) Thereby a company cannot create its brand image entirely by itself, since there are so many aspects that have an influence on it. That is especially hard nowadays, when the Internet is full of discussions, opinions and reviews of the brand. However, by utilizing brand stories in communication, companies can share information and stories that hopefully have an effect on the brand image.

Product marketing: Product marketing is a process inside a company that is a combination of the actual product, marketing and sales. There is not just one clear definition to explain what product marketing is. Lister (2015) describes product marketing as follows: “Product marketing is responsible for developing the unique value proposition of a company’s offer(s) and then helps to bring that value prop to life by enabling all of the company’s channels. The cornerstone of developing the value prop revolves around understanding a company’s potential buyers and the unique needs addressed by the company’s offerings.” (SlideShare 2015) Thereby, product marketing is a combination of understanding the target customers and knowing their needs, understanding markets and knowing what competitors do and based on that information create products that fulfill customers’ current and future needs. (Kolowich 2015) Product marketers even aim to create products that customers do not know that they need – thereby a task for product marketers is to convey to people what the product can do for them and to make sure that the sales team understands how to talk about the product, ensuring that customers understand how to use it (Kolowich 2015).

Umbrella branding: Umbrella branding, also known as family branding, is a strategy with the aim of selling many related products under one brand name. In other words, umbrella branding enables companies to offer different kinds of products (for example different product category, price point, quality, target group, et cetera) under a single brand. By utilizing this strategy, companies do not need to do extra brand creation for every new product, advertising can be coherent, launches for new products are easier, and often the response to new products is better compared to individual branding (Liu & Hu 2011; Balachander & Ghose 2003). Basically, a new product gains the good reputation of the older products, since customers combine it to the image that they have of the overall brand. Therefore, this strategy is suitable for many companies. However, one must bear in mind that a bad reputation of any product under the brand might have a negative influence on the other products as well. (Kapferer 2012; Petty & Krosnick 1994)

1.7 Research methodology

This thesis includes both a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical part of the thesis is based on a review of existing literature about storytelling, brand stories, fashion branding and customer experience. By utilizing existing literature, it is possible to get a better understanding of the subject. The theoretical part also helps to answer to the research question “What is a brand story”.

The empirical part of this thesis has been conducted by using a qualitative research method. It has been chosen because of the nature of the research questions and the theoretical frameworks. Qualitative research aims to understand, describe and explain (Gibbs 2007, 94) and since this thesis examines the value of stories, the chosen research methodology suits well. Additionally, in qualitative research, different kinds of research methods can be used, such as interviews, observations and usage of the literature (Metsämuuronen 2005, 198; 222). However, a qualitative study needs to have good limitations in order to give the reader a full understanding of the purpose of the research (Hirsjärvi et al. 2008, 81-82).

As mentioned, in this thesis the author utilizes existing literature, but other methods

are used as well. Research questions of this study include open questions starting with “how”, “what” and “why”, and therefore the case study approach has been chosen. The case study method helps in answering these types of questions (Robson 1993, 44) and, furthermore, a case works as a great example of the subject that is being studied. Case study research is a common empirical research method. It analyses a certain event that is currently happening, or an action in a certain limited environment, by using information that is collected in different ways. (Yin 1984, 23)

Interviews are the most traditional way of gathering information in qualitative research. It is characteristic for an interview that the questions are planned beforehand, and the interviewer opens the conversation and motivates the interviewee. The empirical data for this thesis has been collected via interviews, which can be shared into four groups: structured, semi-structured, theme and open interviews. (Eskola & Suoranen 1998, 85-87) In this study, the author has utilized semi-structured interviews.

The author interviewed both adidas employees and consumers in order to capture both company and customer points of view. The company point of view was gained by interviewing the senior product manager from the adidas Originals men’s apparel department and the senior social media manager, also from the adidas Originals department. These interviewees were chosen for the interviews because of the extent of their experience and insights of the adidas brand stories and how those are utilized in product marketing and marketing in general. These interviews helped in understanding the topic of the thesis and answer to the research question “Why stories are used in product marketing”. One interview was implemented in person while the other was done via email. Both interviews were semi-structured interviews and they were conducted in September and October 2016.

In order to get a customer point of view on product brand stories, the author also interviewed 18 trendy young men that are suitable for adidas Originals men’s target group. These interviews took place in Helsinki in December 2016. Interviews were semi-structured. More information and results of these interviews are analyzed in the empirical part of the research.

1.8 Structure of the research

This thesis begins with a theoretical part that displays a literature review of the important topics of the study. After the first chapter, the reader has gained an overall picture of the thesis and is ready to get more familiar with the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis.

The second, third and fourth chapters of this thesis formulate the theoretical part of the study. The second chapter concentrates especially on the theory of storytelling and brand stories that are the base of this research. The beginning of this chapter introduces benefits of storytelling from different perspectives. After that the theory concentrates more on actual brand stories and thereby leads the reader closer to the key of the study. The third chapter combines theory introduced in chapter two to a theory of fashion and umbrella branding. Thereby, in chapter three these separate concepts are tied together. The fourth chapter concentrates on the theory of customer experience in order to be able to analyze product brand stories from customer perspective and later find out whether product brand stories affect customer experience.

The fifth chapter dives more into the chosen research methodology before entering into the actual empirical part of the thesis. The sixth chapter contains the empirical research – it provides a detailed description of the background of adidas and its brand story. This chapter also shares insights of the company and introduces benefits of utilizing product brand stories from the company point of view. The actual empirical research is introduced in the chapter seven.

The last chapter focuses on the empirical findings and discusses their theoretical and managerial implications. In addition, recommendations and suggestions for future research are introduced and discussed. In the end, the final chapter of the thesis summarizes all major findings and analyzes the theoretical contribution of the thesis. In addition, the limitations of the study will be analyzed in this last chapter.

2 THE POWER OF STORYTELLING AND BRAND STORIES

People are often described as rationally behaving, and the importance of quantitative skills is highlighted. People are measured and rewarded numerically, for example in school by grades and in working life by euros. However, the importance of qualitative abilities, such as creativity and storytelling skills have been more and more valued in the past decades, also in the business sector. Both quantitative and qualitative skills are needed in business life – “Everybody has a brain with two sides, and they both need to be engaged and involved and connected.” (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010)

Brand stories are created in order to build strong, attractive and memorable brands. Brands help companies to differentiate their products, services and the company itself from competitors (Hakala & Malmelin 2007, 27; Pappu et al. 2005, 1; Ponsonby-McCabe & Boyle 2006). Attractiveness of a brand is based on customers’ personal images of the brand, and due to these personal meanings, the brand is different compared to others. Firms advertise their products and services in order to increase brand visibility and their overall reputation, and thereby increase customers’ willingness to buy their products. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 85) A strong brand is a positive asset for a company in many ways: it helps to get loyal customers and better financing opportunities and increases a company’s popularity as an employer and business partner. In addition, a successful brand enables higher product and service prices and smaller marketing costs. Therefore, building a strong brand is an investment in the company’s future. (Hakala & Malmelin 2007, 27-28; Pappu et al. 2005, 1)

In order to have an interesting and strong brand, a company must be able to build a brand that evokes feelings. Successful brand building commits customers to the brand through their own experiences. Therefore, customers do not buy mere commodities, but brands. It is especially important to create an emotional tie between a brand and consumers since strong customer relationships are based on emotional affiliations. These emotional affiliations can be created by utilizing stories

that enable a company to share its deeper meaning to consumers. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 85; Banyte, Joksaite & Virvalaite 2007; Bresciani & Ewing 2014; De Chernatony 2001) In addition, customers often attach their personal meanings to the brand (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 255). A good example is that some consumers want to make a statement about themselves to others and therefore use certain brands with a visible logo. This is especially common in the fashion industry. (Jackson & Shaw 2009, 326) By building a memorable brand a company has the possibility to create long-lasting relationships with its customers which influence the overall economical results on a long term (De Chernatony 2001).

One could say that the main function of branding is to form a bond between consumers and the brand, which is important in order to build trust (Rosenbaum-Elliot et al. 2007, 32-33). There are many definitions for trust, but from a branding perspective, trust is a feeling in a consumer's mind that the brand will realize one's expectations (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2000). Especially in the business-to-consumer markets, the aspect of trust in a purchasing decision is related to familiarity, as the risk of disappointment depends on the level of brand knowledge (Reichheld & Scheffer 2000, 107).

All in all, it is justified to say that a brand is an important asset for a company. In order to build memorable brands, a company must be a good storyteller. The next chapter will go through in more detail the benefits of storytelling in general, after which the following chapter will concentrate more on actual brand stories and characters.

2.1 The value of storytelling

Stories have always fascinated people and been a natural way of understanding and explaining things that happen in life (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003; Bruner 1990; Lundqvist et al. 2013). It is natural for people to try having a meaning for life, thereby trying to make life easier to understand. In order to do that, people often expound their new experiences to a part of a larger entity – to a part of an existing story. (Escalas 2004; Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003) Stories simplify complex experiences by

answering “why” questions and therefore giving answers to one’s questions. Thus, things will be clearer and easier to understand. Stories make abstract things more concrete and therefore a story is an important tool to build reality. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 30; Delgadillo & Escalas 2004) According to Adaval and Wyer (1998, 207), most of the everyday social information one acquires is transmitted into a form of a story. Thereby, sharing information to consumers in the form of a story is more effective and easier to understand compared to sharing that same information in a list of facts.

Stories are an excellent tool to make people understand facts, events and their relations. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 13-14) One could say that stories have a crucial role of clarifying received information, especially in today’s world. There is so much information available that people cannot register everything. Nowadays people are very busy and the lack of time prevents them from concentrating and entering into things on a detailed level. French philosopher Paul Virilion says that the phenomenon of immediacy well describes the world that we know today. That makes branding more challenging. Because of this phenomenon, individuals act fast and events might disappear from their minds quickly. One could say that people of today are “bulletproof” against all the pieces of advertisement and the bits of information that they receive every day. News and trends change all the time and thereby information flow is extremely fast. Because of the enormous number of the little pieces of information received every day, people have adapted to filter it well or to completely ignore it. However, stories are more permanent and that is the reason why stories should be used in branding. Stories evoke feelings and that is the most efficient way to make people pay attention to a message. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 13-15; Bresciani & Ewing 2014; Wortmann 2006, 22)

Many researchers believe that a person’s memory is based on narratives and, therefore, utilizing storytelling in branding is justified (Adaval & Wyer 1998; Bruner 1986; Escalas 2004; Herskovitz & Crystal 2010; Shank 1999; Shank & Abelson 1995). Based on this fact, it makes sense to create a story that includes the essential information. That is easier for people to receive and might bring realizations and even change people’s actions (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 16). Stories influence people’s lives in many ways: they see the world and their self-portrait via stories

(Delgado & Escalas 2004). A common way to understand life is to form a coherent story of it, which in the end shapes a person's own life story. People utilize stories in everyday life, since they often like to share information through stories. (Delgado & Escalas 2004) Narratives control people's lives even when sleeping, since both dreams and nightmares are often some kinds of stories (Brown & Patterson 2010). Generally speaking, people create stories in order to organize their experiences, create order around themselves, explain things that have happened, add new perspectives in order to understand the world and make different kinds of evaluations (Bruner 1986; Bruner 1990). Stories connect pieces of a person's life together by causation, which clarifies goals, helps to understand what needs to be done in order to achieve these goals and helps to expound results that have already been achieved (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010).

All in all, stories define people's lives surprisingly much and often unconsciously. In the end, stories have a lot of power and thereby it is justified to utilize them as brand stories in branding. A storytelling process might create a link between a brand and a consumer when a customer connects the brand narrative to other stories that he or she already knows (Escalas 2004). Narratives include lots of things that can work as a confluence between the actual story and its listener. Therefore, it is possible to form an emotional tie between those two. (Woodside 2010; Simmons 2006) Another benefit of storytelling is that it enables information sharing in different cultural environments without changing the meaning of the story. According to Danish futurologist Rolf Jensen, emotional stories have a decisive role in everything. Successful companies create visions and tell stories that evoke strong feelings. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 17-18)

2.2 Brand Stories

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), brand stories have an important role in successful branding. They highlight the importance of using brand stories as a strengthening and emotional confluence between the brand and consumers. Brand stories are an easy way to get to know a company in-depth, since a story is an interesting combination of a firm's values and their mission (Herskovitz & Crystal

2010). In other words, brand stories are a way to communicate a company's mission and values in an interesting form to people. (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010). Stories create a meaning for brands and therefore brands have important roles for consumers (Fournier 1998; Simmons 2006; Woodside et al. 2008). Consumers often utilize brands as part of their self-expression, and a brand might have an important role in creating one's own identity. It is easy to combine a brand story to a consumer's personal story, and in that way make it easy for a consumer to justify the usage of a certain brand as part of building his or her own identity. (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 139-140) As an example, people who highly value a sporty lifestyle will most likely want to use brands that support and represent the same healthy and sporty lifestyle and values. Similarly, a person who values environmentally friendly products will want to support brands that share these same values and provide products that match this story.

Nowadays one highlights the importance of experiences. Consumers look for experiences that evoke their feelings and dreams. Especially stories create these experiences for them. (Silverstein and Fiske 2003) Specifically, emotional and powerful stories tend to raise consumers' interest (Entrepreneur 2009). In addition, stories help consumers understand the benefits that a brand can offer them (Koll, Von Wallpach & Kreuzer 2010). Often consumers are less critical towards brand stories compared to traditional advertising or randomly told facts (Escalas 2004). Storytelling evokes more positive feelings and thereby increases trust towards the brand, knowledge of the brand, and makes the brand unique (Koll, Von Wallpach & Kreuzer 2010). This increases the possibility that one shares positive stories and feedback about the brand to others (Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen 2010). Companies should aim for this since recommendations from friends are proven to be more powerful than any other ways in marketing (Hakala & Malmelin 2007, 104).

Brand stories help in justifying a purchase to oneself and to others and explain why a certain product was bought, since brand narratives make it easier to answer to the question "Why did you buy that product?". The importance of a brand to a consumer is partly based on stories, since storytelling enables the creation of a deeper meaning of a product (Escalas 2004). For example, brand narratives make it easier for one to justify the buying of an expensive luxury handbag. The bag might be as

good as any other cheaper bag, but its brand might represent a certain lifestyle and status that the person is looking for. Thereby, other similar bags from other brands are not able to fulfill that same need. Also, it is important to bear in mind that consumers are not always acting rationally. Consumers often buy products based on emotions instead of rational reasoning (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan 2011).

A successful brand story is a realistic and authentic description of a company. Thereby, a brand story entwines a company's identity and the external brand together. If the brand story is authentic, the company's employees and other stakeholders are able to support it. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 25; Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 186-187)

The most successful brand stories are interesting and evoke feelings and thoughts for listeners. Brand narratives that are surprising, direct and share a lively story are the easiest to remember. In addition, well-made brand stories inspire their audience. (Entrepreneur 2009)

As a summary, benefits of brand stories can be divided into four parts (Entrepreneur 2009):

1. A brand story that is real and authentic is easy to remember.
2. A brand story makes the brand alive.
3. A well-formed brand story is an important competitive advantage for a company since it is hard to be copied.
4. A successful brand story makes the brand a visionary.

2.3 Characteristics of brand stories

Brand stories can be formed in multiple ways. On one hand, a brand story can be built around a company's vision, business idea, mission and strategy – or, alternatively, based on a company's strategy, identity and reputation. Credibility and attachment of a brand story are formed of multiple different factors, such as a company's history, vision and the ability to stand out from other similar companies. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 76-77)

A brand story can be seen as a company's "narrative capital" that is built of three sections: goals and the audience, channels and the form, and raw materials of stories. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

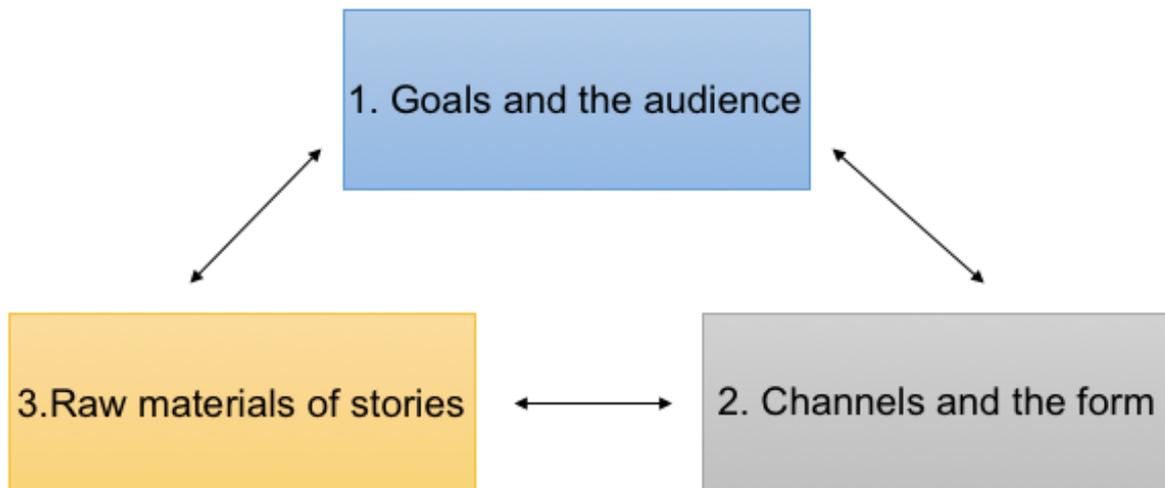


Figure 3 The image of "narrative capital" sectors.

For the first section, goals and the audience, it is essential to be aware of the goals and know the target audience. It is crucial for a company to think about what it wants to achieve and therefore setting the goals right from the beginning is extremely important. Additionally, defining the target audience has a great significance in order to be able to get to know the target group better. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 37; Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 75)

Secondly, choosing the correct channels to share the story and forming the narrative in a proper way are extremely valuable for successful storytelling. When one has put a lot of thought into the brand story while forming it, it is more likely interesting and evokes feelings. Properly selected channels enable reaching the target audience. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 37; Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 75)

Finally, raw materials of stories mean the story itself – why the company exists, how it has been founded, what turnaround occurred during the company's existence and for example how the company's name is formed. The story can be based on the company's customers or the solutions that the company offers. As mentioned, there

are countless possibilities. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 37; Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 75)

Founders of a Finnish company called Kubo highlight the importance of considering the value that their consumer gets by using their product or service. Thereby, the core issue is to find an answer to the question "What is the most important value for a customer?". They add that the opposite of a good narrative is not a bad narrative, but an indifferent story. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 221)

There are lots of different opinions when it comes to the structure of a brand story. What makes the story a story? According to Bruner (1986;1990) narratives have two important elements: that they are in a chronological order and that the goal follows the cause-effect structure of the story. Many other scholars support this theory, since despite other elements of the story, these two features prevail in almost every narrative (Delgiallo & Escalas 2004).

It is also possible to recognize and identify common features in different storylines. Stories have a beginning, a middle and an end, while in reality, such a structure is not existing due to the continuum of time (Papadatos 2006; Bruner 1990). According to journalist and historian Christopher Booker, all stories can be categorized according to seven different plot types (Brown & Patterson 2010; Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 145-147). These are:

1. **Overcoming the monster**

The main character fights against the evil.

2. **Rags to riches.**

The main character rises from poor conditions to wealth: Cinderella story.

3. **The quest.**

The main character is looking for something precious and purposeful and faces temptations and difficulties during the journey.

4. **Voyage and return.**

The main character goes to another strange land and after overcoming all the threats it poses, returns with experience.

5. **Comedy.**

Light and humorous main character that mostly has a happy ending. The main character achieves triumph over unpleasant circumstances by creating comic effects, resulting a cheerful ending.

6. Tragedy.

The main character is a hero with one major character flaw or great mistake which is ultimately their undoing. Their unfortunate end evokes pity at their folly and the fall of a fundamentally 'good' character.

7. Rebirth.

During the course of the story, an important event forces the main character to change their ways, often making them a better person.

According to Booker, the most relevant stories include several different basic plots at the same time. These basic plots can be utilized when creating a brand story. (Rauhala & Vikström 2014, 147) Often the plot is not very clear in a brand story. However, these plots may be used as an idea and inspiration. Many companies have an interesting history and one can find similarities compared to basic plots. As an example, a company can grow quickly from a startup to a global successful company or the company's situation can be bad, but another company or person saves it by offering funding.

In addition to basic plots, good stories have been built around archetypes. Archetypes are certain themes or symbols which are unconsciously repeated in stories. By utilizing archetypes, there is something old and identifiable in a story and that way it is easier for people to identify with the story. However, there must be something new and innovative in the story as well, so that it raises interest. Even Shakespeare recognized six different archetypes that have been used in stories. (Papadatos 2006)

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) it is important that there is at least one archetype in a story so that it is easier for consumers to create an emotional tie to the brand. They agree with Shakespeare that there are six different archetypes. However, there are different opinions on this and for instance Woodside, Sood and Miller (2008) have divided archetypes into 12 different personality types. Both the

six and 12 archetypes are introduced in the table 1. Additionally, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) emphasize the importance of a brand personality in storytelling. According to them, the creation of a brand narrative should start from creating the brand persona and when it is ready one can concentrate on other elements. They highlight that a strong brand persona is easy to recognize and thereby works as a link between a company’s messages and actions.

Table 1 Archetypes

ARCHETYPES			
Herskovitz and Crystal (2010)		Woodside, Sood and Miller (2008)	
Archetype	Description	Archetype	Description
The Mentor	Guiding and exemplary role.	The Ultimate strenght	When an obstacle is there, it must be overcome; strength must be proven in use.
The Rebel	Who stands up to authority.	The Siren	Power of attraction, linked with the possibility of destruction.
The Mom	Who provides nurturing and safety.	The Hero	Fortitude, courage, and victory; a journey and transformation.
The Rugged Individualist	Who listens to the beat of his own drummer.	The Antihero	Universal message of destruction and attraction of evil; the bad dude.
The Champion	Who battles against opposing forces on a regular or predictable basis.	The Creator	Creative inspiration and the potency of imagination; originality; authentic.
The Underdog	The tireless and scrappy fighter who takes advantage of the fact that he or she is consistently underestimated.	The Change Master	Transformation, self-improvement, and self-mastery.
		The Powerbroker	Authority, influence and domination—the world’s leading...; the best...; number one.
		The Wise Old Man	Experience, advice and heritage; staying the test of time.
		The Loyalist	Trust, loyalty, and reassurance.
		The Mother of Goodness	Purity, nourishment, and motherly warmth.
		The Little Trickster	Humor, nonconformity, and the element of surprise.
		The Enigma	Mystery, suspense, and uncertainty.

All in all, when creating a brand story, one is able to use several different elements, such as speech, written text and visuals (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 154). A good picture brings the brand alive and summarizes its core messages. One must bear in mind that a company’s logo also aims to create a certain image of it. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 156) It is most effective for a company to utilize different elements,

as that makes the story more interesting and impressive. However, in the end a brand narrative is successful if it brings good results – no matter what kind of structure it has. Knowing basic story characters helps to create a successful story, but there are many ways to achieve desired results.

2.4 Brand personality

As Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) emphasizes, a brand personality has a significant role in storytelling. Like often in a story, also in a brand story, it is important to describe the main person of the narrative, by its character and personality. The effectiveness of a brand personality is based on an animism, which means that people tend to associate human personality traits to brands. (Aaker 1997) Other studies also show that consumers often associate human characters to brands, since it is "a natural human tendency to anthropomorphize nonhuman objects" (Freling and Forbes 2005). According to Aaker (1997) this makes symbolic use of products and brands possible.

It is vital that the brand persona is recognizable, strong and well-drawn and that it connects the company's messages and actions. If the brand persona is well created, people can relate to it, thereby making it memorable. The meaning of the brand persona is to drive the overall brand message. A brand persona also personalizes the brand story and makes it unique, since other companies might utilize similar plots in their brand stories. Besides, without a strong brand persona, the brand story might be just a series of disconnected adventures without a clear message and touchpoint. (Herskovitz & Crystal 2010) Studies have shown that a brand personality influences consumers' attachment, commitment and loyalty towards a brand (Louis & Lombart 2010; Mengxia 2007) Therefore a brand personality is seen as the basis of long-term customer-brand relationship (Hawkins et al. 2001, 376). Additionally, other consequences of brand personality have been recognized in academia: brand preference, perceived brand quality, attitude and trust towards the brand and intentions of future purchase. (Louis & Lombart 2010; Mengxia 2007) Benefits of a well-formed brand personality are so significant that it makes sense to pay attention to it when creating a brand story.

Recently, scholars have researched the concept of brand love (Ahuvia 2005; Fournier 1998). Fournier (1998) found out that it is possible for consumers to experience a feeling of love toward a brand and therefore consumers can develop strong relationships with brands. According to Albert et al. (2008, 1064) a consumer's love includes following five characteristics:

1. Passion for the brand
2. Brand attachment
3. Positive evaluation of the brand
4. Positive emotions in response to the brand
5. Declarations of love toward the brand

Brand personalities enable this sort of brand love between a consumer and a brand. Additionally, it has been argued that a brand personality contributes to brand equity and therefore leads to a more positive evaluation of the brand by the consumer (Aaker 1991, Ismail & Spinelli 2012).

2.5 Product brand stories

Brand stories are used even on the product level. Product brand stories aim to humanize products and according to Aaker (1997) that makes symbolic use of brands possible. Product brand stories have similar benefits as a company's brand stories: a story makes the product more unique, differentiates it from competitors and is a good way to create emotional feelings in a consumer.

A product brand story is not always in a traditional form of a narrative. Sometimes product brand stories can be seen in general as product-related drivers. Those include product category, packaging, price and product attributes. Non-product-related characteristics exist as well: these are user imagery, sponsorships, symbol, age, advertising style, country of origin, company image, CEO identification, and celebrity endorsers. (Aaker 1996, 145-149) All these before-mentioned

characteristics can be part of a product brand narrative or supporting elements for an actual story that has been formed for a product.

It is possible that a company has a brand story for the overall brand and, in addition, different stories for its products. A good example is a brand called Atelier Cologne that sells cologne absolute fragrances. It has a unique brand story, which tells the history of the brand and how the founders created a new fragrance category called cologne absolute. The brand story behind the company is also a love story, which makes it very authentic and interesting. In addition to this company brand story, all their fragrances have specific stories behind them. Every fragrance tells a beautiful story, which enables consumers to create an emotional tie to a certain fragrance. In order to support these stories on many levels the brand uses physical elements in its stores to visualize the brand story, for example citrus trees and pictures. This carefully built entirety offers customers a special and unforgettable customer experience.

Therefore, a product is not necessarily just its physical elements, but more. In addition to the actual product, for instance the packaging should be seen from the perspective of brand personality and the overall story (Aaker 1996, 145). In fact, according to Gonzalez (2007) the role of the packaging in marketing communications has become even more relevant, since its purpose is to catch consumers' attention and reflect the value of the product within a few minutes (Thomas & Pickering 2003). It seems like most of the consumers consider the packaging to be a part of the product (Nawaz, Mohib & Lakhan 2012). In addition, the product appearance has been proven to be one of the central channels for the relationship between the consumer and the product (Bloch et al. 2003, 55). For example, Atelier Cologne has classic glass perfume bottles and always wraps their products into blue gift boxes and uses premium bags, which reinforces the brand's sophisticated brand character. Additionally, the atmosphere and the way products are featured in the store are part of the brand story. Another example is price: Cologne absolute fragrances have high price points. According to Aaker (1996, 146) high-priced products are easily associated with upper class personality. Thereby, even pricing can be seen as a part of brand personality.

The example of Atelier Cologne shows how there is a link between the product features and the brand. In other words, a brand story can represent certain product attributes and vice versa (Aaker 1996, 146). All in all, there are different ways to tell a product brand story. Sometimes it is about the chosen material and functionality that tells the story and sometimes it is about an actual traditional narrative that is created for a product. Sometimes a product brand story is a combination of all the before-mentioned elements and even more. A successful product brand story evokes feelings and makes the product more unique to its buyer. In this thesis, a product brand story is seen as a narrative that is specifically created for a product.

3 BRAND STORIES IN FASHION BRANDING

Fashion is a highly competitive business market. The boundaries of fashion business have blurred and thereby the competition is becoming harder as new entrepreneurs are entering the fashion markets (Phau & Lo 2004, 408). In addition to the competition, the fashion market is challenging due to fast-changing trends. Most people have lots of clothes that are not going to fall apart anytime soon, and yet many people buy new outfits continuously. According to fashion scholar Bruno Reaury, traditional marketing is based on a need while fashion is built on a need that is not real – it is actually a desire. (Tungate 2012, 6) In other words, fashion is an industry that is highly dependent on marketing and branding. "When clothes leave the factories where they are made, they are merely 'garments' or 'apparel.' Only when the marketers get hold of them do they magically become 'fashion'" (Tungate 2012, 1). According to Lille (2010, 9) the most important resource for a fashion company is a strong brand and an innovative and dynamic way of doing business.

Fashion brands have utilized storytelling for a long time. This chapter concentrates on fashion industry and why brand stories are so useful in fashion branding. Additionally, this chapter introduces the idea of umbrella branding and ties the introduced theories together.

3.1 Fashion branding

Traditionally the term 'fashion' includes apparel, footwear, accessories, cosmetics and furnishing (Bohdanowicz & Clamp 1994, 4; Moore et al. 1997, 151). But fashion is everywhere. Therefore, one could say it includes even more: electronics, decoration, places where people meet, travelling destinations, hobbies and so on. In other words, fashion is not just about clothing, but more about a lifestyle. (Tungate 2012, 2) In this thesis the research concentrates mainly on fashion apparel.

Fashion has been defined as a current style of dressing or appearance that the majority of people implement at a certain time (Jackson et al. 2009, 335). One main characteristic of fashion is mass adaptation. Another is its constantly changing character, that survives through time. (Jackson et al. 2009, 335) Jackson et al. (2009) highlight that a design is fashionable only if it has been adopted by the majority of people. Additionally, the fashion industry is well known of short product lifecycles and seasonal changes with collections (Malen 2007, 400). The actual meaning of fashion depends on the concept and thereby people can have different meanings for it (Jackson & Shaw 2009, 87).

As already mentioned, fashion industry is highly competitive (Lea-Greenwood 2013, 92). In order to stand out from competitors, companies that work on this industry must have strong brands. In the previous chapter, benefits that come with strong brands were introduced and those benefits apply to fashion branding. In order to understand fashion branding today, it is important to understand the history of fashion branding.

3.1.1 History of fashion branding

Fashion was born in Paris in the 1800s. During that time, the first designer label was created by Mr. Worth. Before that, clothes were custom made based on customer wishes and the label did not matter, since labels did not really exist. Fashion originally emphasized the value of functionality and use, instead of the look. Advertising also concentrated on basic facts of the products: fabric, color and style. Mr. Worth was the one who implemented runway shows, celebrity models, elitism and a concept of a charismatic brand spokesperson, which are a big part of fashion today. However, Chanel was the one who modernized the clothing from costumes to more modern outfits. Due to World War II, the concentration of fashion focused on the United States and "ready-to-wear" was invented in New York in the 1940s. Therefore, for the first time, fashion was not only for the elite anymore. (Tungate 2012, 7-12; Hancock 2016, 16-17)

Famous Cristian Dior was one of the first who realized that being profitable was key to the survival of the brand. The brand understood that luxury can be repacked as a mass product. It was important to find the balance between a mass product and the sense of exclusivity that is one core value of a luxury brand. Fashion continued its democratization throughout the 1970s and multiple new designers and brands were born; such as Armani, Kenzo and Ralph Lauren. (Tungate 2012, 16-19)

Ralph Lauren was the first brand that started to use lifestyle merchandizing. While other brands were focusing on their history in branding, Ralph Lauren realized the importance of creating fantasies, dreams and narratives. Ralph Lauren created Hollywood-inspired "movie set ups" to department stores and to the brand's own stores and thereby offered a new kind of customer experience for consumers. People started to spend more money on clothing in order to connect to this American dream. It has been said that lifestyle became more important than fashion in the 1980s. (Tungate 2012, 12-20; Hancock 2016, 19-56)

In addition, fashion started to be more and more influenced by the streets. Sport brands became trendy and people started to wear tracksuits on the streets. The whole industry was changing due to cheaper fabrics and manufacturing in Asia and clothing became more and more affordable and acceptable. Many fashion houses started to grow into vast corporations that sell apparel, footwear, accessories, cosmetics and furniture. Marketing and branding became more important than ever. (Tungate 2012, 12-20)

One who really understood the importance of marketing is the famous American designer Tom Ford who worked for Gucci. Like Ralph Lauren, he understood the importance of creating the "universe" around the brand, instead of concentrating only on garments. He realized how important it was that the whole brand told a coherent story: the brand name, advertising, stores, garments and the overall experience of the brand. By creating this "dream world" Ford was able to make the brand flourish after a difficult period. Many other designers and fashion brands realized this power of branding and storytelling as well and therefore the fashion industry is now full of iconic brands and brand stories that we know today. (Tungate 2012, 16-20) "In a lot of ways, branding is simply telling a story" (Tungate 2012, 21).

One could say that these designers injected new life into fashion and therefore people are still interested in fashion (Tungate 2012, 16-20).

3.1.2 Fashion branding today

A trend tracker and co-founder of Style-Vision, Genevieve Flaven, summarizes the importance of the combination of a good product and an interesting brand quite well: "Every consumer can now decrypt advertising messages, so traditional marketing has become less and less significant. Consumers want to know what's behind the brand – what it can give back to them. Sometimes it's just a question of value: the best quality for the price. When people buy a very high-priced garment, they want to see the patience and the craftsmanship that has gone into it. They are paying to possess a beautiful object. And sometimes, when it's a famous brand, they are paying to be part of the story." (Tungate 2012, 22) As learned from brand history, the "universe" around a brand is extremely important for fashion brands. Brands should emphasize the importance of deeper meaning, associations, emotions and storytelling in successful fashion branding (Hancock 2016, 38).

There are two ways that fashion brands convey their brand personalities to consumers: directly through the clothing items themselves or indirectly through advertising, buying experience, store design and atmosphere, and so on. (Ismail & Spinelli 2012). Brand stores are an excellent way to share a brand story by stimulating customers' senses when they are entering to the store: they can hear music, smell fragrance, touch garments, and see other customers and brand associates (Hancock 2016, 34-35). According to Ismail & Spinelli (2012), the fit between a fashion brand's personality and the consumer's personality might have significant implications. It has been known for a long time that by buying a fashion brand similar to a consumer's personality, he or she communicates something about him or herself (Aaker 1999; Keller 1993). Clothes are an expression of how consumers feel, how they see themselves and how they wish to be treated by others (Tungate 2012, 2). Fashion photographer Vincent Peters emphasizes that everyone is influenced by fashion – whether they want it or not – and buying clothes is actually about buying an identity (Tungate 2012, 2).

In general, fashion has become more democratic. Often fashion has been constructed as a pyramid where haute couture is on the top, designer ready-to-wear just below, challenger brands in the middle and huge mass retail at the base. (Bandinelli et al. 2013, 1-2; Tungate 2012, 31-33) However, this type of structure is lacking street-wear, sportswear, semi-couture et cetera. Tungate (2012) argues that this type of fashion construction is no longer current – if it ever was. Nowadays consumers combine several different styles and buy garments from multiple different brands from different categories mixing them to represent their personal style. It is totally acceptable to buy a jacket and a bag from a high fashion brand, then buy a dress from a mass brand and combine them to sneakers from a sports brand. (Tungate 2012, 31-33) The idea is to combine small pieces from different brands – pieces of different stories – and build one's own unique story based on them.

This kind of trend has actually been visible for a long time with sports brands. As an example, adidas started to co-operate with the famous designer, Stella McCartney, who designed her sport collection for adidas for the first time in 2004. Since then, they have continued this partnership. Another example are rappers who have combined sports style to high fashion brands for decades. (Tungate 2012, 31-33) Boundaries between fashion and sports have blurred and multiple high fashion brands have sport lines as well (Tungate 2012, 130). On the other hand, sports brands do not offer only sport apparel anymore – they have their own fashion lines as well. Overall, sports have an important role in fashion today.

3.2 Umbrella branding

As previously mentioned, fashion brands often have different product categories, such as apparel, footwear, accessories, cosmetics and decoration product categories. These categories can also be divided into smaller categories, for instance apparel category could be divided into haute couture, ready-to-wear and sports categories. In order to manage several different sub-brands, categories and ranges, companies can use umbrella branding. The case company in this thesis is adidas, which has several sub-brands. Adidas is a big multinational company that

has a well-known brand story, but also utilizes product brand stories. Therefore, understanding a principle of umbrella branding is useful.

Umbrella branding, also known as family branding, is the strategy of selling many related products under one brand name. Umbrella branding enables a company to offer different kinds of products (different product categories, price points, quality and target groups) under a single brand. By utilizing this strategy, a company does not need to do extra brand creation for every new product, advertising can be coherent, launches for new products are easier, and often the response to new products is better compared to individual branding (Balachander & Ghose 2003; Braun & Zenker 2010; Liu & Hu 2011). Basically, any new product gains the good reputation of the older products, since customers link it to the image that they have of the overall brand (Aaker 2004; Kapferer 1997; Kapferer 2012). Therefore, this strategy is suitable for many companies. However, one must bear in mind that the bad reputation of any product under the brand might have a negative influence on the other products too.

In this chapter, the author has brought together the theories of brand stories and fashion branding. In the next chapter, the theory of customer experience is introduced in order to analyze the effect that product brand stories have on customer experience later in the empirical part.

4 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

In previous chapters, the concepts of brand stories and fashion branding were introduced, and the importance of storytelling in successful fashion branding was discussed. In this chapter, the focus is more on the customer point of view. It is important to understand the concept of customer experience in order to analyze the importance of product brand stories from customer perspective, and to answer to the research question "How do stories behind products affect a customer's experience of the product?"

4.1 The concept of customer experience

As discussed in the previous chapters, consumers are not only rationally behaving decision makers, since emotions are a big part of people's nature. Consumers are looking for experiences – something that evokes their interest, feelings and surprises them. Scholars have been more and more interested in the concept of customer experience during the last few decades, especially after Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) introduced their theory about consumption having experiential aspects (Gentile et al. 2007, 396; Petermans et al. 2009, 2259; Slovic 1972). According to them, it was important to gain more knowledge of aesthetics, variety-seeking and customers' emotions in order to understand customers' purchasing process better. As said, companies should not only provide possibilities for consumption – they should provide experiences, since irrational and emotional factors affect consumers' purchase decisions (Pine & Gilmore 1998; Addis & Holbrook 2001; Gentile et al. 2007, 396).

Nowadays consumers are aware of the power they have and how valuable their loyalty is for a brand. Thereby they know that they have the right to demand experiences and evaluate different options for their needs. (Webster 1997) Next, definitions of customer experiences and how customer experiences are formed are introduced.

4.2 Definitions of customer experience

Customer experience has gained multiple different definitions. One reason is the difficulty to indicate what the exact elements are for a vague and all-encompassing concept. Many definitions concentrate on explaining the reasoning and experimental aspects of consumption. Since the mid-2000s, definitions of customer experience have included almost everything that happens between customers and companies (Gentile et al. 2007). It is common to see consumption as a holistic experience which involves a person rather than a customer, at different levels and in all interactions between the person and the company or its offerings (Gentile et al. 2007). Petre et al. (2006) define customer experience as all interactions between brands and consumers that influence a customer's perceptions of value, service quality and thus loyalty towards a brand. They also added the effects of cultural context as a variable to the definition, since it might affect a customer's expectations and judgement. In addition, a popular view to customer experience is the idea of co-creation, where the company is seen as the creator of context and artifacts that are employed by customers in creating an unique experience themselves (Gentile et al. 2007).

What many definitions have in common is that customer experience consists of many different components. According to Berry et al. (2002), customer experience consists of "experience clues" that can be anything that a customer can perceive, sense or recognize being absent. The contact between a brand and a consumer can be both direct and indirect. Meyer and Schwager (2007) emphasize that a company is not able to control all of the information about itself, and thereby indirect contact of a company, such as word of mouth or rankings in social media, can influence one's personal experience of a brand. According to this definition, direct contact includes interactions during the purchase and use of a product as well as service situations, while indirect contact includes unplanned encounters with products, services or brands in forms such as word of mouth, advertisements, news reports and reviews (Meyer & Schwager 2007). In addition, customer experience is not only created by elements that can be controlled, such as retail atmosphere, assortment and price, but also by elements which cannot be controlled. These kinds

of elements are for instance other people who are present or motivation to purchase. (Verhoef et al. 2009)

A definition by Addis and Holbrook (2001) is often used in articles about customer experience. This definition highlights that each individual can have a different personal experience of a product or service (Addis & Holbrook 2001). In other words, the experience is in a person's mind. Some people might have a positive experience of a product or service, while others feel the same experience negatively.

A definition that combines the before-mentioned aspects of customer experience is formed by Gentile et al. (2007): "The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer's involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer's expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touch points." (Gentile et al. 2007, 397)

4.3 The formulation of customer experience

The concept of customer experience includes the terms "touch point" and "customer journey". The literature of customer experience explains that the whole customer experience is a combination of all touch points and customer journey (Meyer & Schwager 2007; Stein & Ramaseshan 2016). Thereby, every consumer can have a different customer experience for the same product, service or brand even though they would all participate in one same event. Their previous experiences could be very different, they could appreciate different characteristics of a product or service, or they could for example interpret the situation differently. Therefore, the overall outcome of the experience can vary between individuals.

Touch points are described as instances of direct contact either with a product or service itself or representations of it (Meyer & Schwager 2007; Stein & Ramaseshan 2016). Those occur whenever a customer gets in touch with a company across multiple channels and at various points in time (Zomerdiijk & Voss 2010). In the touch points a customer is thinking, feeling and doing something that is related to a product or service of a company – either positively or negatively (Payne et al. 2008, 87; Fisher & Vainio 2014, 167). As every touch point has its own characteristics, customer experience can develop positively or negatively throughout the journey (Lemke et al. 2001, 846; Grewal et al. 2009, 1). A company should aim to offer positive customer experience, since it most likely leads to positive value creation and customer engagement (LaSelle & Britton 2003, 30; Johnston & Kong 2011, 6). Touch points represent a customer's perspective, and thereby are recommended as points of inspection to understand customer perspective better (Stein & Ramaseshan 2016). For example, touch points can be related to marketing (such as events, social media, traditional marketing channels) customer service, sales (such as stores or web stores) human recourses (such as a recruitment process), finance, legal issues, management, production, product development or IT (such as web services) (Löytänä & Korteso 2011, 75). Obviously touch points can be different depending on the company.

Individual touch points form one's personal customer journey. In other words, a customer journey is a process of consuming a service during which an individual customer encounters a set of touch points. It has also been defined as a sequence of touch points and actions involved for a customer to achieve a specific goal. (Meyer & Schwager 2007; Stein & Ramaseshan 2016) During a customer journey, a consumer goes through multiple touch points and finally comes up with a need, that is later satisfied with a purchase. It starts from expectations that a customer has before the actual experience and continues until the assessment that the customer conducts when the experience is over (Berry et al. 2002). A customer journey map demonstrates the customer's interactions with a company during the customer's lifecycle (Vesterinen 2014, 53). The model (Figure 4) is built on the basis of interactions. There are several different touch points before the actual purchase or contract, during the usage of a product or service, and finally when reviewing the contract or purchasing more.

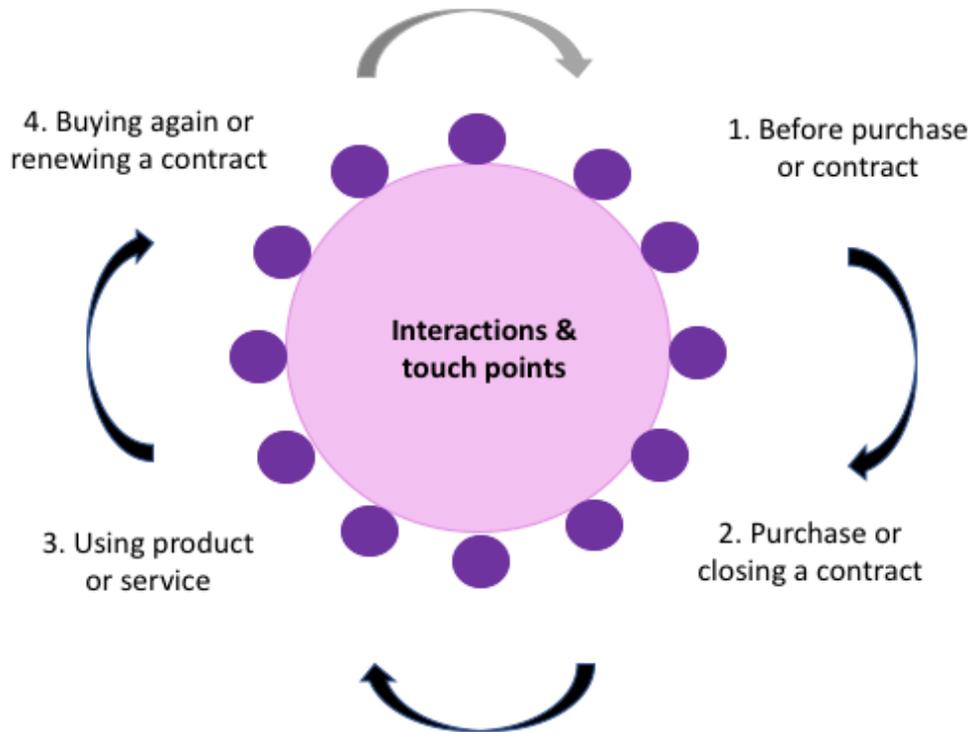


Figure 4 The customer journey map (Vesterinen 2014, 53)

Customer experience can be seen to consist of different drivers, which are the social environment, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price, customer experiences in alternative channels, and retail brand. There are also situations and consumer moderators that affect the overall customer experience. Situational moderators are for instance type of store, culture, location, economic climate, season and competitive intensity. Consumer moderators include things like goals and socio-demographic factors – in other words consumer attitudes, such as price sensitivity. (Verhoef et al. 2009, 32-33) This model emphasizes that a customer experience is not only the combination of elements that a company can provide. A customer's personal attitude and goals also affect the experience as much as other drivers, and thereby forming a customer experience is a complex process.

This thesis concentrates specifically on product brand stories as a driver when creating personal customer experiences of a product. Consumers look for experiences that evoke their feelings and dreams and especially stories create these experiences for them (Silverstein and Fiske 2003). As discussed, the product brand story is still not the only driver that affects customers' evaluation of the

product, since all previous touch points with the case brand (in this case adidas) affect one's experience of a certain product that is used in the empirical research. Thereby, interviewees' personal brand image of the case company is first identified before introducing the actual product brand story to them. That way it is possible to evaluate when the product brand story affects their experience of the product positively or negatively. Before diving into the empirical findings, the chosen research methodology and the case company are introduced.

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of this study is qualitative since qualitative data is best-suited for describing brand stories and the value that narratives create to products from a customer's point of view. The qualitative method suits well to the nature of the research questions and both theoretical frameworks in this thesis. This chapter concentrates on the chosen research methodology and reviews the data collection and analyzing processes.

5.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research aims to understand, describe and explain (Gibbs 2007, 94) and since this thesis examines the value of stories, the chosen research methodology is most suitable considering the goals of the study. Additionally, in qualitative research, different kinds of research methods can be used, such as interviews, observations and usage of literature (Metsämuuronen 2005, 198; 222). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, 3), qualitative research can include multiple empirical materials such as a case study, personal experiences, interviews and cultural texts in order to describe routines, problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Thus, a qualitative study must have good limitations in order to give the reader a full understanding of the purpose of the research. (Hirsjärvi, et al. 2008, 81-82)

In this thesis existing literature is used, along with other methods. Research questions of this study include "how", "what" and "why" questions and thereby the case study approach has been chosen. The case study method helps answer to these types of questions (Robson 1993, 44) and, furthermore, a case works as a great example of the subject that one studies. Case study research is often used as an empirical research method, since it analyses a certain event that is currently happening, or an action in a certain limited environment, by using information that is collected in multiple different ways. (Yin 1984, 23) Actually, it has been said, that a case study is the most common method of qualitative research (Metsämuuronen 20013, 171). It focuses on observing and explaining a limited entity (Yin 2003), making it the most suitable research method for this thesis.

Often the data has been collected by interviews in qualitative researches. It is characteristic for an interview that the questions are planned beforehand, and the interviewer opens the conversation and motivates the interviewee. The empirical data for this thesis was collected via this type of research interviews. As said, interviews can be divided into four groups that are structured, semi-structured, theme and open interviews. (Eskola & Suoranen 1998, 85-87) In this study, data is gathered using semi-structured interviews.

When doing qualitative research, one must bear in mind that validity and reliability are factors that should be considered during the whole process. It is important to be objective, and remember the importance of consistency, correspondence of findings to reality and generalizability in every qualitative study. (Patton 2002, 544-545) Additionally, it is important to keep answers in the right context (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002). This thesis sheds light into customers' opinions of product brand stories. However, since the sampling is still quite narrow, altogether 20 interviewees, the results can only be considered as directive.

5.2 Data collection method

The interviewees were chosen with the aim of achieving a broad view of the subject. Both adidas employees and consumers were interviewed in order to understand both company and customer points of view. Company point of view was gained by interviewing Denitza Koleva, the senior product manager from adidas Originals men's apparel department and Aeneas Panayiotou, the senior social media manager, also from adidas Originals department. These two were chosen for the interviews since both of them have a lot of experience and insights of adidas brand stories and how those are utilized in product marketing and marketing in general. These interviews helped increase understanding of the topic of the thesis and answer to the research question "Why are stories used in product marketing". The other interview was implemented in person while the other was done via email. Both interviews were semi-structured and done in September and October 2016.

To get the customer point of view, 18 trendy young men that are suitable for adidas Originals men's target group were also interviewed. In order to get a wide range of

opinions, the author interviewed men from different age groups and with different backgrounds. These interviews took place in Helsinki in December 2016 and interviews were semi-structured. Each of the interviews were one-on-one interviews.

All the semi-structured interviews in this study met three demands: first, the interviewer was able to prepare the interview, being aware of the topic and the quality of questions beforehand. Secondly, there were differences between the content and the flow of the interviews since each interviewee had their own experiences and points of view. Finally, the interviewer could ask extra questions that were necessary in order to gain all the required data. (Saunders et al. 2009, 320) The interview questions were formed based on the theoretical part of the study and the research questions.

In order to find out the value of product brand stories from a customer point of view, adidas Originals men's team borrowed its new men's artistic print t-shirt range to the interviewer. The range was not launched yet so the interviewees did not have any previous opinions or knowledge about it. Thereby, the interviewer was able to observe real first reactions that the interviewees had when they saw the products for the first time. The t-shirt range has an interesting brand story behind it. In order to find out what the value of this product brand story is, the author divided interviewees into two groups. Interviewees in the first group heard the product brand story before the author asked questions about the range. In contrast, interviewees in the second group did not hear the product brand story before answering questions and evaluating the range. This way the author was able to compare the answers and reactions and see if there were differences in opinion between these two groups.

In order to make sure that these two groups were comparable, the author divided interviewees into two similar groups which both included men from different age groups and had different personalities and backgrounds. Since the customer interviews have been conducted and the transcript compiled in Finnish (excluding one interview made in English), only the direct quotes from customers used in this research have been translated into English.

5.3 Data analysis method

After collecting all the data, it was analyzed. First, the construction of the case study started by assembling the raw data. Since the interviews were done verbally face to face (excluding one email interview), the first task was to transfer the spoken answers on paper through transcriptions (altogether 50 pages of written text). In order to analyze all the answers, all the data was re-organized into a form that was manageable. That means dividing the data into different topics and combining similar answers together, making comparisons, analysis and then drawing conclusions based on them. Finally, the case narrative was written.

6 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: CASE ADIDAS

The empirical part of the thesis first introduces the case company, adidas Group. It goes through the main points of its brand story and then concentrates more on the adidas Originals brand. After that the findings of the interviews are presented and finally connected to the theories discussed in this thesis.

6.1 Brand story of adidas

”Adidas is a truly global sports brand. Therefore, everything we do is rooted in sports. Everything that happens in sports happens in moments. Every moment is a chance for the athlete to start over and take today.” adidas 2017

The story of adidas began in 1924 when Adolf ”Adi” Dassler and his brother Rudolf Dassler started a shoe company called Dassler Brother Shoe Company in Herzogenaurach, Germany. The idea of the company was to offer the best possible equipment for athletes in order to support them in achieving their peak performance. They started to produce spikes that featured two stripes across the lateral and medial sides as a way of binding the shoe together and providing structure to the shoe. Thereby, one could say that the branding of adidas was born from practicality instead of esthetics. (adidas 2017; Foley 2017; Smit 2008)

Everything worked well for the company, but in 1939 World War II started and most of the German manufacturers had to participate in the war. During the war the relationship between the two brothers cooled down and a fight escalated so badly that Rudolf Dassler decided to go a separate way and started his own company called RuDa. Adi also had to start his own company and he renamed it after the modifications of his name – adidas. Both of the companies were located in the same town and the whole village was divided into two: others supported the younger brother Adi and adidas, while others stuck with Rudolf and RuDa. Later RuDa was rebranded as Puma. (adidas 2017; Foley 2017; Smit 2008)

Due to starting a new company, Adi had to rebrand his two stripes shoes and he started to use three stripes instead. However, the three stripes mark was already

registered as a trademark by a Finnish sportswear brand called Karhu. Adidas bought the trademark from Karhu at the price of approximately 1600 euros (in today's money) and two bottles of good whiskey. That was fortunate for adidas, since the brand is famous for this trademark and commonly known as "the brand with the three stripes". (adidas 2017; Foley 2017; Smit 2008)

During the following decades adidas performed well. It concentrated on producing great sports shoes and some apparel for athletes. However, the game changer was when Blue Ribbon Sports (nowadays known as Nike) started to increase its popularity, along with Puma. Adidas decided to rebrand the company and it created the Trefoil logo in 1971 (Figure 5). That was the main logo for the company until it was replaced by the new logo, a three stripes triangle, which became the corporate logo in 1997 (Figure 5). The triangular shape can be seen symbolizing a mountain which stands for the challenges to be overcome. Athletes have to work hard in order to achieve their goals and therefore this logo can be considered to work well for a sport brand.



Figure 5 Adidas logos from different decades

As said, Nike became a threat to adidas and finally the company realized the game had changed. It was not enough to concentrate on just athletes anymore. The term "celebrity endorsement" was yet to be coined, but adidas started to contact American celebrities and persuaded them to wear the three stripes. Thereby, adidas was able to expand its territory to the streets. In 1985 adidas spotted three young men breakdancing on the street wearing adidas. Adidas started to send their clothes to these young men who were later known as Run DMC. The rappers used Superstar sneakers all the time and finally they even made a song called "My

adidas". The song became a huge hit and when Run DMC began to perform it on the stage, thousands of fans started to wave their three striped shoes and shirts in the air. At the time, street fashion started to be highly influenced by music and the media. (Smit 2008, 193-198)

During that same time, adidas started to understand the importance of international advertising. The marketing budget was mostly spent on deals with athletes and federations but that was going to change. In addition, the current leader Horst Dassler wanted to rebrand adidas as a leisure brand. He had created an image of a pyramid, where the peak represented the sports market, while the bottom part represented the mass leisure market. The change worked well for the apparel while footwear struggled. The misguided change caused huge confusion, while many still saw adidas just as a sports brand. (Smit 2008, 207-209) After a few challenging years adidas launched a new collection called "Equipment". It was a range with only simple but high-quality products with the colors of green, black and white. One could say this collection was a game changer. Adidas realized what its strength was and how it could compete against Nike. The company understood it had something that made it unique: "the story and genius of Adi Dassler". (Smit 2008, 262-265) Adidas figured out its best competitive advantage was its unique history and heritage, in other words its brand story.

Nowadays adidas has several different types of sub-brands under the main adidas brand. In order to manage all these brands successfully, adidas utilizes umbrella branding. The overall brand has been divided into two categories. The first half, adidas Performance, concentrates on sports, newest technology and functionality. The triangle logo symbolizes adidas Performance brands and one can find the logo from sport apparel, footwear and equipment. The other half concentrates more on lifestyle, fashion and streetwear apparel, footwear and accessories. Adidas has chosen to use its Trefoil logo for this adidas Originals brand.

6.1.1 Brand story of adidas Originals

This thesis concentrates especially on Adidas Originals brand and its men's apparel. Adidas Originals is more concentrated on fashion, lifestyle and leisure style than just sports clothing. While adidas Performance concentrates more on actual functions, Originals concentrates more on style.

"Our vision is to be the most influential and connected sportswear brand in street culture" Koleva 2016.

The story of Originals concentrates on the rich heritage and collective memory which builds the foundation of all concepts. The senior product manager in adidas Originals men's apparel team, Koleva, highlights their ambition to get inspired by adidas archive and create products that combine the past and the future. The social media senior manager Panayiotou (2016) summarizes the brand well:

"Originals is the unique one since it's about the style and street. The heritage we have is like hip hop and now we have Kanye. Originals is brand of heritage but there's also a lot of new stuff happening, and it's not stuck in the past. We are definitely looking at the past but 100% also looking at the future."

The latest adidas Originals campaign emphasizes that Originals story develops all the time and has multiple levels. The campaign video (adidas Originals 2018) highlights a certain lifestyle: fashion, hip hop and modern rap culture, street culture, skating and sports and youth culture in general. It has a revolutionary spirit and it is a mixture of the old heritage and modern new technology as well as fashion, style and sport. Originals aims to get higher and grow and as the slogan on the video says "Originals is never finished."

One thing to note is that as well as adidas, adidas Originals is also a combination of multiple stories. Under the main Originals brand there are several sub-brands, for example Adicolor, EQT, NMD, XbyO, Tubular and all the collaboration brands like Yeezy, Y-3 and Spezial. Additionally, certain products might have interesting stories behind them. Adidas Originals is well known for its iconic products such as

Superstar and Stan Smith shoes as well as the 3-stripes tracksuits. Lately the brand has developed the highly successful NMD brand. Additionally, an important part of Originals is its collaboration collections with famous fashion brands, designers and celebrities. Thereby, it is justified to say that Originals combines the past and the future together as well as fashion, sports and street style.

6.2 Brand stories in product marketing

Adidas Originals concentrates on apparel, footwear and accessories. According to Koleva (2016) the official target consumers are "streetwear Hounds" and "sporty teens".

"With the streetwear Hound we aim to reach out to a more sophisticated consumer who is seeking for a product telling a story they can identify with. The sporty teen is more being influenced by the streetwear Hound and looking for similar products but more cost sensitive" Koleva 2016.

In order to reach these target groups, adidas Originals has to create products that are tempting enough in order to stand out in a crowd. The competition is especially hard now, when the leisure and athletic look is extremely popular and fashionable. Multiple companies including high fashion brands, mass chain companies and obviously sport brands sell apparel that are targeted to this very same consumer group. Since the competition is so tough, companies must work hard in order to be successful on this market. Obviously, products have to be good and tempting but is that enough?

The interviewer asked adidas Originals managers whether they think stories add value for products.

"Yes I do ...stories are very important as they make the difference and ensure to differentiate to competitor and also help to connect to the consumer in a more impactful way as they can trigger emotions, challenge and inform." Koleva 2016.

"I think the stories are really important. – Something like XbyO. It's such a unique thing. If you take that as an example. Miss Yamamoto, factory, the Japanese cotton... I think it shows that lot of thought goes into that product. It's not just some cheap labor, someone just made it up and it's just a shirt. The concept, the artist, the narrative are the selling points and differentiate points. From the marketing perspective that really allows us to go further." Panayiotou 2016.

In other words, a story creates extra value for the product from a marketing perspective. With a story it is not just an item, but it has a deeper meaning behind it. Koleva emphasizes that a story is good when it stays authentic to its roots and when it is credible. There must also be a strong combination of heritage and innovation. (Koleva 2016) Panayiotou (2016) reminds how important it is that someone actually remembers the story and that it is easy to share to a friend.

"A good story resonates somehow with you. Think about the best movies or books that you read, and you haven't thought about them in days, weeks or months or sometimes years after. And you still remember them. A good story makes you feel a certain way, good or bad. That, to me, is a good story." Panayiotou 2016.

Adidas Originals utilizes stories a lot. The brand creates stories for each collection and obviously the most relevant story is the brand's rich heritage and collective memory which builds the foundation of all concepts.

"Our ambition is to get inspired by our archive and create a product that combine the past and the future. We build franchises that are exactly built on this recipe with individual focus and approaches within each concept and new implementation, stories over product, material, silhouette or innovation or even assets to support the story from top." Koleva 2016.

Even a single product can have a specific story behind it. Koleva (2016) explains that a product can tell an individual story in multiple different ways. For instance, there could be a special fabric, special pattern or a special treatment but the overall

story is the key and a story on product level is always linked to the overall approach and supports it. One important reason to have multiple stories is to be able to highlight different aspects in the story. Some people appreciate the functionality and technical aspects while others are more interested in being inspired. (Panayiotou 2016)

Since adidas Originals uses stories a lot in product marketing, the interviewer asked how they make sure that all the stories are aligned with the Originals brand story and even with the global adidas brand story. Koleva (2016) explains that everything they do is linked to sports and they believe that sports can change consumers' life. While adidas Performance is more concentrated on sport, Originals creates the lifestyle. Koleva continues that the ambition for the future is to get even closer to the Performance department and merge performance and lifestyle to be more impactful and share stories with a different take and from a different angle. One example is the boost: one story but different needs – consumer will be captured. (Koleva 2016)

Panayiotou (2016) also points out that one important reason to create new stories is to leave heritage for the future colleagues. Colleagues from 10 to 20 years from now will be able to utilize stories that the marketing team creates now:

"I guess we are creating narratives that help people in the future to go back. Like if we look at Superstars. We are still kind of telling the same story but refreshing it. -- Or if you look at the Stan Smith, which was just a tennis shoe, but now I say it's way more a fashion shoe." Panayiotou 2016.

As a summary, from the company and marketing point of view product brand stories do have a purpose and important role and thereby it is justified to create and utilize them. However, do product brand stories add value for customers? When asked this from Panayiotou (2016) the answer is clear: yes they do. If the product makes a person feel a certain way and gives confidence, that is already an important value:

"For example a pair of running shoes that are very comfortable. Yes, technically they're better than the next, but it's your ultimate drive. And I think it positions in your head that you run a bit further, you run a bit faster... Because you are like 'ooo I got these shoes now with a boost

in it.' It might be a placebo effect or it might be the actual functionality. But I think that's the value good stories bring and it is aspirational. That gives someone the confidence when they go out and they feel a certain way."

In the next chapter the customer interviews are introduced, along with the empirical findings. If the brand is iconic and popular, is it enough for consumers or do they appreciate that the brand has specific stories for products as well? Do product brand stories add value for the product from their perspective?

7 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In previous chapters the chosen research method, validity and reliability as well as the case company, brand stories and company point of view were presented. In this chapter the actual research is done. First, the case product brand story is introduced, after which the interview results are presented and analyzed. Finally, the development ideas will be presented and the main research question will be answered: *"How valuable are product brand stories for customers, when the overall brand behind products is well known?"*

7.1 The case product brand story

The qualitative survey in this thesis is based on the artistic t-shirt range by adidas Originals. It consists of six graphic t-shirts, artworks of which are presented in Figure 6. Altogether six freelance artists were asked to create a print to describe their home city. Chosen freelancers live around the world and thereby the t-shirts describe their points of view of the following cities: Paris, London, Tokyo, Berlin, New York and Los Angeles. In other words, each artist was able to share his personal point of view of the city he lives in.

As can be seen, most of the artworks are very colorful and abstract. Therefore, it is hard to guess what each print represents at first sight. Common for each print is the adidas logo. The artwork is located in front of the t-shirt and the signature of the artist is located in the back side of the t-shirt. The name of the city is also mentioned on the back side of the t-shirt with the signature. That way, the t-shirts are more unique and tell a story.

A power point presentation of the range based on the material received from adidas Originals product marketing team was created by the interviewer and presented to the interviewees. The presentation can be found in the end of the thesis, appendix 2. The presentation includes the stories behind each t-shirt and tells a bit more about each artist.



Figure 6 Prints of the artistic t-shirt range

Each print represents a different city (from top left): Paris, London, Tokyo, (from bottom left) Berlin, New York and Los Angeles.

This city artist graphic t-shirt range is a good example of a product brand story. The t-shirt range is part of adidas Originals collections, yet it has a specific story behind it. In order to find out whether this product brand story is appreciated by consumers, the author interviewed 18 young men and introduced the t-shirt range to them. The interviewees were divided into two groups: the author shared the story with the interviewees in Group 1 before asking more questions about the range. Interviewees in Group 2 answered the same questions before knowing the product brand story behind the range. That way the interviewer was able to compare answers and see if there were any differences. The interview questions can be found in Appendix 2.

The artistic t-shirt range was part of adidas Originals men's spring/summer 2017 collection and it was launched in January 2017. Interviews were done in December 2016 and therefore none of the interviewees had seen the range before the interview. That was important in order to observe authentic first impressions. The interviews were one-on-one interviews, not group interviews. Since the case t-shirt range was designed for men, interviewees were young trendy men that were suitable for adidas Originals target group. The interviewees are named from A to R (see Table 2 and Table 3) and these names are used in tables and quotes instead of the interviewees' real names.

Table 2 Interviewees in the Group 1

Group 1

Interviewee	Age	Occupation
A	24	Student
B	26	Student and part time consultant
C	27	Student and part time consultant
D	27	Student
E	30	Trader in a sport gambling company
F	25	Marketing designer and student
G	16	Student
H	26	Student
I	20	Student

Table 3 Interviewees in the Group 2

Group 2

Interviewee	Age	Occupation
J	27	Student
K	25	Student and insurance adviser
L	24	Controller
M	27	Student
N	16	Student
O	16	Student
P	16	Student
Q	23	Student
R	26	Student

7.2 Introducing interviewees

First, the interviewer wanted to know general information about the interviewees, such as age, occupation, special interests and how they describe their personal style. It was important to understand what kind of consumers they are and how important personal style and clothes are for them. That way the interviewer was able to understand their perspectives and make better analysis of their answers concerning the case product brand story.

The average age of the first group was 24 while in the second group it was 22. Both groups consisted of nine interviewees, and almost all of them were students. Only exceptions were two interviewees (one in each group) who had already graduated. Common for all the interviewees was an interest in sports. Most of the interviewees described their personal style as simple, Nordic and minimalist. They liked plain and natural colors and many of them wanted to invest in good quality. Also, many interviewees highlighted that they dress differently to formal events and work compared to their free time. On their free time most preferred sporty and easygoing outfits.

Almost all the interviewees said that clothes are important or very important for them. They believe clothes are a good way to express oneself and one's lifestyle. Clothes are part of the person's identity and when you have clothes that you personally like, you are more confident, and you feel good. Many interviewees said that when they meet new people, they first pay attention to their outfits. Clothes tell a lot about one's personality and are an important part of the first impression. A few interviewees said that clothes have a major part in their lives since their personal style and look matters a lot to them. In contrast, a few interviewees said that clothes were not that important to them. They valued functionality rather than style. Clothes were just clothes to them and as far as they had enough clothes to wear they were pleased.

When the author asked how interviewees choose the clothes they buy, following criteria were mentioned: brand, price, material, quality, country of manufacture, fit, functionality and look. Some interviewees had a habit of going to certain stores and checking out what they offer, and then make the buying decision based on that

selection. Based on the answers, the author was able to identify different consumer profiles. While a brand was the most important factor for some interviewees and the price didn't matter when the quality was good, for others the price was the most important criteria. On one hand, interviewees who said clothes were not that important to them, were also price sensitive. On the other hand, interviewees who said clothes are part of their identity often did not mention price as a buying criteria, but they highlighted the look and the brand instead. Common for the interviewees were that it is somehow important that the garment fits their personal style and looks good. Additionally, good quality was a common criterion.

Most of the interviewees said that they find inspiration to their personal style from the Internet, social media and friends. Many followed certain web pages and online stores regularly in order to be inspired and aware of current trends. For example, Zalando, Highsnobiety and Hypebeast were mentioned. Instagram was the only social media channel mentioned specifically. Two younger interviewees mentioned they follow their idols, rappers and football players, and get inspiration from them. Many interviewees also said they do not follow any specific channels but rather pay attention what other people wear on the streets. Media was also mentioned as a common channel to find inspiration. However, most of the interviewees said they do not follow any influencers or bloggers. A couple of the interviewees said they do not look for inspiration anywhere.

When asked what makes a garment important to the interviewee, the most common answer was being able to use the garment in multiple situations and combine it easily to their other clothes. Another common answer was that the interviewee did not have any emotional ties to their clothes. However, a few interviewees mentioned that a garment was more important to them if it was a gift, bought abroad or used in a specific situation. In other words, the garment reminded them of a specific person, place or moment, meaning that there was an emotional tie to the garment.

"Of course if I have had some clothes for a long time. And it depends where I have bought it. If I have bought it abroad when travelling, it has a special meaning to me. For example, I bought this shirt from a flea market in Taipei when I was an exchange student there. Always if there's a story behind the garment, it's nice." Interviewee M, Group 2.

"This might sound weird, but if I have used a garment in a certain meaningful situation, I use that garment more often after that. For example, if I have used a shirt on Christmas that I spent with my family, I have saved that shirt for a longer period in my closet before throwing it away. Especially if I have been thinking of buying a certain garment for a long time, it's more important for me and I keep it for a longer period." Interviewee N, Group 2.

Some interviewees mentioned again that a garment is more important if it makes them feel and look good. The background information of interviewees is presented in Appedix 4 (Group 1) and 5 (Group 2).

7.3 Adidas brand image and touch points

When the interviewer showed the t-shirt range for each interviewee, all of them recognized the brand right away. The interviewer wanted to know what kind of brand image the interviewees have of adidas in general, which is important to know in order to analyze the influence that product brand stories behind the t-shirt range have.

When asked what comes first in mind for the interviewees when thinking about adidas, most of the interviewees said sport. Some of them specified that adidas reminds them of football, since many football teams use adidas clothes and the brand has very good football shoes. Six interviewees out of 18 mentioned fashion and clothes and five interviewees mentioned adidas shoes. Superstar shoes and Ultra Boost were mentioned specifically. A few interviewees also mentioned street style, three stripes and adidas Originals. A couple of the interviewees said that they think adidas is a good brand in general, and some said directly that adidas is too

much of a mass brand for their personal taste. Two interviewees said that when they think about adidas, they think about Nike as well. All in all, it is clear that adidas is strongly associated with sports.

The interviewer asked the interviewees to describe adidas, and the interviewees seemed to have a positive image of the brand. Figure 7 shows how interviewees described the brand. Six interviewees mentioned that adidas is a successful and globally well-known brand. Many interviewees believed adidas offers good quality products and thereby they can trust the brand. Again, adidas was described as a sporty brand, but also trendy, youthful and cool. Even though the brand is classic, many said adidas follows current trends well and has been able to fresh up its brand image in the past few years.

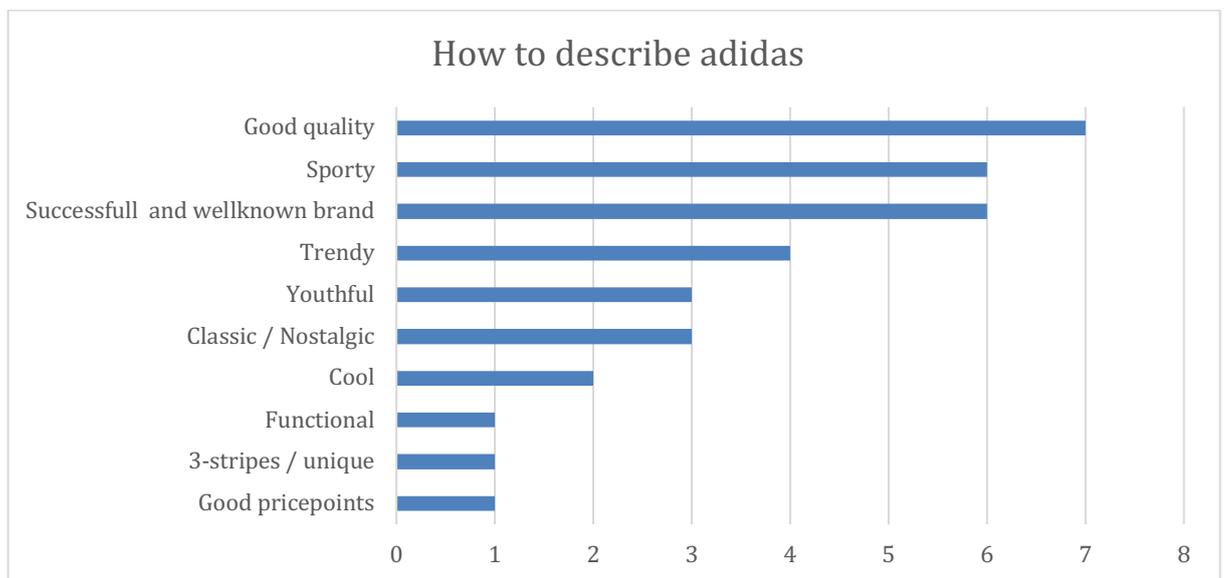


Figure 7 How to describe adidas

In general, interviewees think adidas is a tempting brand. As seen in Figure 8, majority of the interviewees saw adidas as a tempting or very tempting brand. Also, many of the interviewees had quite a neutral attitude towards the brand. They think the brand is good, yet there are other brands that are even more tempting to them. One interviewee mentioned that he personally does not buy adidas products and thereby thinks adidas is just a slightly tempting brand. All in all, these answers show that even if the interviewee did not consider adidas apparel suited for their personal style, they still had a positive image of the brand. One reason for this might be the

general interest in sports that all interviewees had.

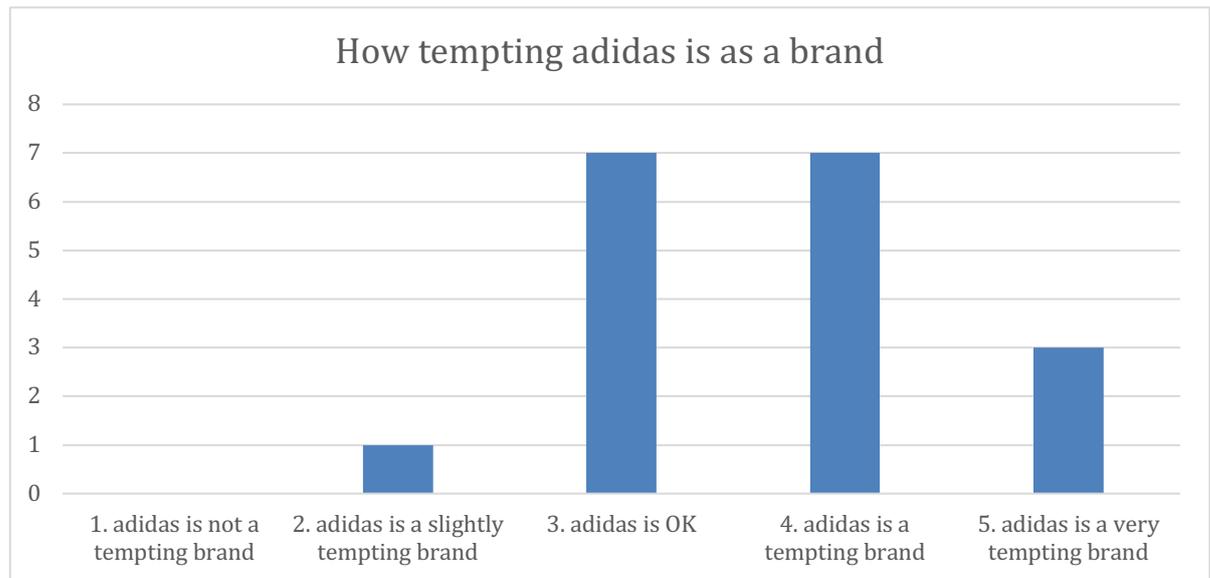


Figure 8 How tempting adidas is as a brand

Almost all the interviewees said they own adidas products themselves. Most of the interviewees said they have adidas shoes, t-shirts, hoodies, track suits, sports clothes, running and football shoes and so on. Thereby, all of the interviewees had a history with adidas and their own unique touch points and customer journey with the brand.

"In addition to shoes, I have adidas t-shirts, hoodies and lots of sport apparel. My family has used lots of adidas products and thereby I have used adidas since I was a kid. I think adidas is kind of part of my identity. I could not even imagine using Nike." Interviewee A, Group 1.

"Well, I have quite many adidas products. Mainly because I practice football. I own mostly sport equipment and I guess I have bought them because I can trust the quality. I know I can wear those for a long time, they are functional and the quality is good." Interviewee N, Group 2.

Overall, these results show convincingly that the interviewees knew the brand, they had a positive brand image of adidas, and most of them think the brand is tempting. It is interesting that even though the interviewer was able to recognize different types of consumer profiles earlier, all of them seem to appreciate adidas as a brand. In

other words, adidas is able to offer something for different consumer types. One reason for this is that adidas combines both functionality and style. Thereby consumers find different reasons to like adidas and buy its products. Since sport is the red thread to combine all the sub-brands together, the brand image is quite coherent for all different consumer types. Consumers just have different perspectives to approach the brand and they use adidas products for different purposes.

7.4 Evaluating the t-shirt range

At this point the interviewer told the story behind the t-shirt range for the interviewees in Group 1, before asking questions about it. For Group 2 the interviewer did not share the story but asked the same questions. Answers from Group 1 are discussed first, and then compared to the answers from Group 2.

When asked what the interviewee thinks about the t-shirt range, most of the interviewees said they do not wear print t-shirts anymore. Many of them also pointed out that these t-shirts are maybe too colorful for their personal taste. Still, many interviewees in Group 1 found the range interesting and they valued the story and idea behind the range.

"Well, all of the t-shirts have a very nice idea behind them and I understand them clearly after I heard all the stories. For example, after hearing the story one realizes that this artwork represents a wall full of posters and one can see these kinds of walls a lot in New York. But without knowing the story I wouldn't have understood it. But I don't know if understanding the print is even the point. It's kind of a cool artwork even if you don't know the story behind it. But... It is always cool to have a meaningful idea or story behind a product so that it has a bigger meaning." Interviewee F, Group 1.

When asking for pros and cons for the t-shirt range, six out of nine interviewees in Group 1 said they appreciated the story and idea behind the range. They liked the

fact that the t-shirts have a deeper meaning behind them and they appreciated the creative freedom given to the artists behind the prints to create the artwork that was truly their own view of the city they live in. One interviewee said he thinks these t-shirts were cooler than print t-shirts normally are. Also colors, prints themselves and quality of t-shirts got positive feedback. Group 1 did not give many negative comments for the range. Actually, two interviewees said they do not really have any negative comments. Few interviewees said they do not like all the artworks and the edges of the artworks were too strict. One interviewee mentioned that the adidas logo was too big. All in all, there were more pros than cons from Group 1.

When the interviewer asked specifically what the interviewee thinks about the story, six out of nine said they liked the story and it was interesting. For them the stories behind artworks made the range more interesting and special.

"Interesting. It is always tempting for me if an apparel has something special in it. Something different. So that it is not just a normal mass t-shirt, but it has a story behind it. And if someone asks about the artwork, you can tell the story behind it." Interviewee H, Group 1.

"It was great. It's nice that chosen artists were not that famous, so that adidas doesn't utilize only big names, like Pharrell and Kanye West. It's good to dare to use some unknown names." Interviewee A, Group 1

However, three interviewees said that the stories did not matter to them. One of them said the look of the artwork and t-shirts were more important to him than stories. Also, he mentioned that he would not know the stories in stores anyway. Another interviewee said that clothes are just clothes for him, and stories do not affect that.

"None. The story didn't add any value for me. Because I don't know much about the clothes I wear. I like to give those almost no thought. It's just a t-shirt to me. If it looks alright and serves its function I don't really care about the artist and stuff like that." Interviewee E, Group 1.

When the interviewer asked if the story had affected their opinion of the product, again six out of nine answered yes. They said that without the story those t-shirts would be quite similar to normal mass t-shirts. Many also pointed out that most likely if they would have seen the t-shirts in a store, they would not know the story and thereby they would not be interested in the range. However, now when they do know the story, they are more interested since they know those t-shirts are special. Again, three interviewees said that stories did not affect their opinions. One of them said that the story did not affect him since he didn't know the artists. He pointed out that if the artist would be someone he knows, for instance a famous music artist, then he would be more interested.

When the interviewer asked if the interviewee found his favorite t-shirt from the range, all of them had a favorite, but for different reasons. A few of them picked "Paris" since it was a neutral black and white t-shirt. It best suited the Nordic and minimalist style. However, a few interviewees chose their favorite t-shirt based on the story.

"Now when I heard all the stories, it actually changed my favorite. First I liked this t-shirt (Tokyo), but when I read all the stories, I thought "Paris" was also cool. Okay, the reason might be that I have very positive personal experiences from Paris." Interviewee D, Group 1.

"Los Angeles is my favorite. I think it's the clearest. Even though it's also quite psychedelic, it is easiest to understand. And since I have been in LA, I recognize some of the venues that are in the artwork. It was a great trip so that might have a positive association to the print." Interviewee H, Group 1.

"My favorite is "New York". First of all, it's very different compared to these other t-shirts. And I like that even though it's a city, it also represents the wild side of the city. So even if there's only tourists during the days, there's a wild night life as well. So people are not just working ants but people have personalities and attitude. And I like that there's a lot of colors. That tells it's a multi-colored city and it doesn't have just

one certain image. Every person can evaluate it from different perspectives.” Interviewee G, Group 1.

This showed that if the story touched the person and reminded him of a personal experience, the product had a deeper meaning to him. Or even if the person did not have a personal experience but the story inspired and resonated with him anyway, the t-shirt became more meaningful to him. For example, interviewee G did not have a personal experience from New York, but after hearing the story behind the artwork, he just loved it.

The interviewer also wanted to know if the adidas brand had any relevance to the interviewees when they evaluated the t-shirt range. Only one interviewee said the brand did not have any effect on his opinion of the product. Others said the brand somehow influenced their opinion. A few interviewees said that the brand had a positive effect, since they could trust the quality. However, they pointed out that the logo could be smaller and it would be enough to know that the brand is adidas. Now the logo was quite big in front of the shirt, which actually resulted in a negative effect for few interviewees.

”Adidas has a very strong effect in my opinion on this range. For me it’s important that it says ”adidas” with big letters. It is important to me in a positive way.” Interviewee B, Group 1.

”It has a strong effect both positively and negatively. I think adidas is a nice classic brand and it offers good quality products. But on the other hand, it’s a sports brand. It represents a style that is different compared to the style that I want to wear on my free time.” Interviewee C, Group 1.

”If these wouldn’t be adidas t-shirts, it would probably change my opinion of the t-shirt. I think I would be tempted by these t-shirts if it would be just the ‘adidas’ or just the image – not the combination. Because there’s something about the t-shirt with the ‘adidas’ plus the pattern... Like adidas is trying to be cool by adding a drawing to it. But

really it's just their brand. They're a sports brand that is just trying to be funky. I would be more tempted by plain 'adidas' with no drawing or the picture. Because people don't know where the picture comes from and it might be a bit funky you know. You know what I mean? Adding the 'adidas' makes it a bit square? It's like an adidas shirt trying to be more than just a sports brand by adding a pattern. But when I think about adidas, I see a sports brand. So I would probably buy a patterned t-shirt that is not sporty – that doesn't have a sports brand attached to it.”
Interviewee E, Group 1.

When the brand had a negative effect, the product brand story did not match to the brand image that these interviewees had of adidas. They liked adidas as a brand but they saw adidas just as a sports brand. Therefore, it was confusing to them that this t-shirt range was more about art than sports. For them the t-shirt range would make more sense if it belonged to a different kind of brand, for example a niche brand that would sell only these types of artistic t-shirts. In fact, one interviewee who thought adidas was too much of a mass brand liked this t-shirt range and the idea behind it but he thought this idea would work better if another company would have done it. For him, this t-shirt range would be more authentic if it did not come from adidas. However, interviewees who did not see adidas just as a sports brand were able to connect this product brand story to the adidas Originals brand story, and for them the brand had a neutral or positive effect. They saw adidas as playful, young and fresh and in their opinion this t-shirt range matched this brand image well.

When comparing answers from Group 1 to Group 2, some differences can be identified. First when the interviewer asked what the interviewee thinks about the t-shirt range, most of them answered that they do not wear print t-shirts; same initial reaction that many interviewees had in Group 1. Many also commented that the t-shirts are too colorful for their personal taste, but the range represents adidas well. Only one interviewee said that he liked the prints.

”Well, at least I don't understand these prints right away. Some of these are quite colorful. And clearly these prints have a deeper meaning, but I don't understand what it is. I don't personally like print shirts anymore.

Usually simple and minimalist works better for me. Few of these prints are quite cool. These all are square prints, but the theme is different. I don't know... I don't think I would buy these. These artworks are quite big and I don't understand them." Interviewee M, Group 2.

When asking about pros and cons, there were more cons than pros. Positive things were material, fit and that the color of the fabric is black or white depending on the shirt. Few interviewees also liked some individual artworks. One interviewee commented the range in general as a "brave try" and one interviewee could not find anything positive to say. When asking for cons, almost all interviewees in this group repeated that they do not wear print t-shirts. Altogether, the overall opinions of the range were quite negative.

"These prints are so weird! These could be in Kiasma (museum of contemporary art in Helsinki)!" Interviewee R, Group 2.

"I just don't really like print t-shirts. I don't think those match to my other clothes. It came to my mind that maybe I have used that kind of t-shirts when I was in high school." Interviewee L, Group 2.

When the interviewer asked if the interviewee has a favorite t-shirt of the range, all of the interviewees were able to choose one. Many of the interviewees chose "Paris" since it was black and minimalist. One interviewee chose "Berlin" since the logo is the most imperceptible and one is able to concentrate more on the artwork than to the brand. A few interviewees also chose "London" but since they did not know the story behind it they could not say any rational reasons behind their choice.

When asked if the brand has any effect on the interviewees' opinion of the product, four out of nine said the brand did not have any effect on their opinion. One interviewee said he would like the range even if the brand would be different. Four interviewees said the brand had a positive effect since they could trust the quality. When asked if the t-shirt range represents adidas well, five interviewees said yes while four answered no. Interviewees in Group 2 clearly had more difficulties to

justify their answers compared to Group 1, since many of them just answered yes or no without any explanations.

"Well for me these t-shirts don't match adidas at all. There's nothing sporty in these t-shirts. There's even some planets! So, no. But I must say that it was brave to try something different. This just doesn't match my personal style." Interviewee Q, Group 2.

"Maybe these somehow represent adidas. All these people in this print wear adidas shoes! Maybe these t-shirts are something between sports and street fashion." Interviewee M, Group 2.

When comparing these answers to the first group, it is clear that Group 1 had much more positive comments on the range. But their positive comments were mostly combined to the stories and idea behind the range. Since Group 2 did not know the stories they did not understand the range and the idea behind it.

In the interviews the author asked from each interviewee whether they would buy these t-shirts or not and how much they would pay for the t-shirt. Surprisingly, there were no differences between the two groups, even though interviewees in Group 1 knew the stories and interviewees in Group 2 did not. As one can see in Figure 9, interviewees in Group 2 were in fact more willing to buy the t-shirts than interviewees in Group 1.

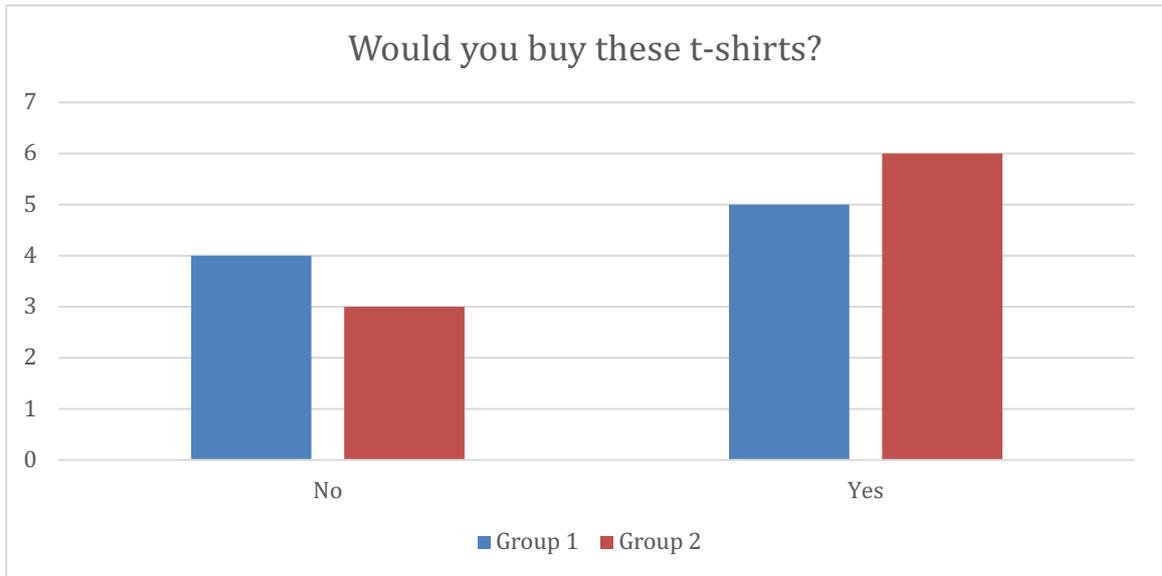


Figure 9 Willingness to buy the t-shirt

The price that the interviewees were willing to pay are also quite the same between the two groups. As one can see from Figure 10, most of the interviewees were willing to pay about 20 euros for the t-shirt. A few interviewees said they would not buy these t-shirts, no matter the price.

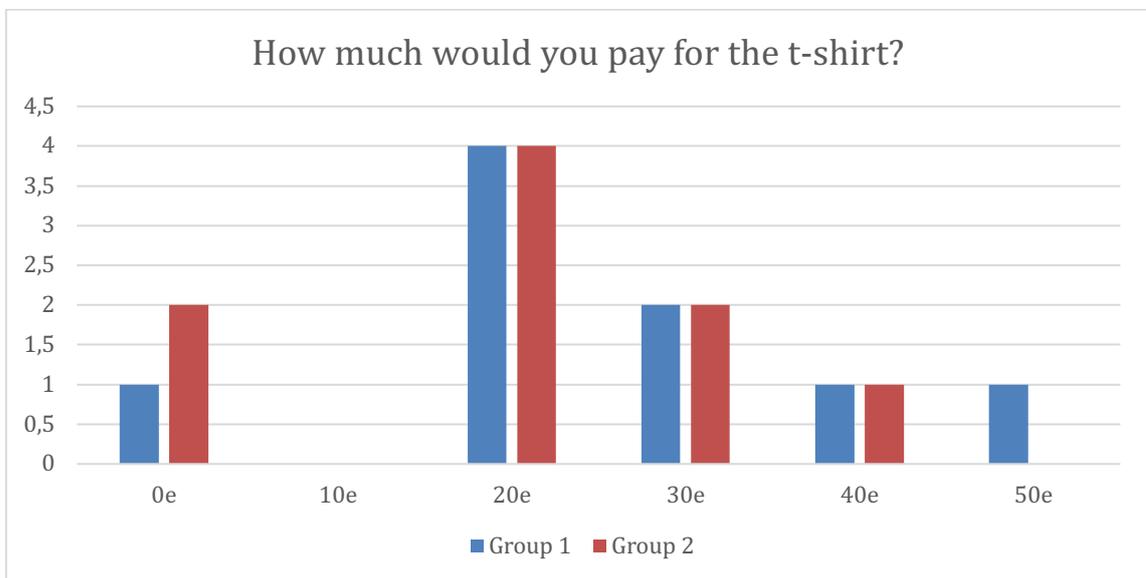


Figure 10 Willingness to pay for the t-shirt

One interviewee said that it depends on the t-shirt how much he would pay.

"For the black t-shirts I would pay maybe 10 euros, but for the others 20 to 30 euros if I would need a t-shirt. But for "New York" I could pay 50 to 60 euros even if I wouldn't really need it." Interviewee G, Group

This shows that the combination of a good story and artwork made that one t-shirt more valuable for interviewee G compared to others and he was willing to pay more for it. Other interviewees liked the stories and the idea, but many said they did not wear print t-shirts anymore and thereby they were not ready to pay extra for those even though the t-shirts were special. Some of the interviewees said they could wear these t-shirts if they would get them as a gift, but otherwise they would not pay a lot for them. Quite many of the interviewees said that they could buy one or a few t-shirts of the range but not all of them. Even though it was surprising that there were no differences in terms of willingness to buy and the price point between the two groups, it must be kept in mind that initially most of the interviewees said that they do not wear adidas apparel, except when doing sports. From that perspective, it was logical and even predictable to get similar answers for the questions related to interviewees' willingness to buy.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter aims to conclude all the theories and results of this study into one coherent entity. Research questions introduced in the first chapter of this thesis will be answered based on the findings of the study. At first, the sub research questions are answered to be able to give a thorough answer to the main research question.

This chapter also sheds light on the different theoretical contributions that the study has revealed and gives some managerial implications and recommendations for the case company. Finally, suggestions for future research to be conducted of the topic are offered.

What is a brand story?

As learned from the literature, a brand story is an interesting narrative that a company has created for itself or its products in order to commit consumers emotionally to the brand. In other words, a brand story works as a strengthening and emotional confluence between the brand and consumers. Nowadays customers look for experiences that evoke their feelings and dreams and brand narratives are a good tool to create these experiences for them. A successful brand story evokes feelings and therefore makes the brand unique, memorable and irresistible.

One important meaning of a brand story is to unify a company's communication, interaction and basically everything that the company does to a well-defined form so that customers get a clear image of it. Brand stories are a good way to communicate a company's mission and values in an interesting form to people. Therefore, a brand story should summarize the company's mission, vision and values to a clear and interesting package that also combines the company's brand identity and its external brand together. When the brand is coherent for all stakeholders, it is easier for them to support the brand and commit to it.

Brand stories can be formed in multiple different ways. In the end, the structure of the brand story does not matter if it helps the company achieve desired results.

However, it is crucial that the brand story is authentic. All in all, a brand story creates a meaning for a brand and therefore has an important role for consumers.

Why are stories used in product marketing and fashion branding?

Both the interviews and the literature review show that brand stories help companies differentiate the brand and its products from competitors' offerings. Competition is especially hard in the fashion industry and, therefore, brand stories have an essential role in branding and marketing in order to reach the chosen target group and get their attention. In addition to competition, the fashion industry is challenging due to continuously changing trends and many consumers not really needing new clothes. It has been said that the fashion industry is not based on a traditional need, but more on desires. Fashion brands have to be able to create these desires in order to be profitable, and brand stories are an excellent way to do that. Narratives enable fashion brands to create fantasies and dreams around products and therefore offer experiences to consumers.

Koleva (2016) and Panayiotou (2016) from adidas emphasize the importance of brand stories in product marketing and fashion branding. They highlight that brand stories ensure differentiation of products from competitors and help connect to the consumer in a more impactful way, as stories can trigger emotions, challenge, and inform. Product brand stories show that a lot of thought goes into a product, making it not just a product, but something more special. The narrative and the concept built around a product are selling points and differentiation points. In other words, a story creates a deeper meaning for a product and, thereby, creates extra value from a marketing perspective.

Panayiotou (2016) also points out that stories are easier to remember and share to a friend. Positive word of mouth from a friend is especially valuable for a brand and thereby extremely desirable from a marketing perspective. Stories are a good way to combine a company's heritage and new innovations together in a surprising and evocative way. Creating brand stories is also valuable in order to leave heritage for the future colleagues.

One reason to use multiple stories in product marketing and fashion branding is to be able to highlight different aspects in a story – some people appreciate the functionality and technical aspects while others are interested in being inspired. Panayiotou (2016) believes that stories are also valuable to consumers and thereby it is justified to use them in product marketing and fashion branding. If the product makes a person feel a certain way and gives them confidence, that is already an important value.

How do stories behind products affect a customer's experience of the product?

The research as well as the previous literature show that product brand stories have a personal effect on different customers. The concept of customer experience is complex, and researchers have not been able to be unanimous with the definition of customer experience. Common for many definitions is that customer experience consists of multiple different components, all interactions between a company and consumers – both direct and indirect – influence the customer experience, and each individual can have a different personal experience of a product since, essentially, the experience is in people's minds. The experience consists of different levels – rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and spiritual – and therefore the customer experience implies the different moments of the contact and touch points that a person has with the brand. Based on the above, it can be concluded that customers can have both positive and negative experiences of the same product due to their previous experiences of the brand.

In this empirical research, the product brand story had a positive effect to most of the interviewees who heard the story behind the new artistic t-shirt range by adidas Originals. Interviewees appreciated that the t-shirt range had a deeper meaning behind it and that it supported selected artists by giving them the possibility and freedom to create the artwork that was truly their own view of the city they live in. Most of the interviewees thought the story was interesting and that it made these t-shirts more special. They said it was nice to share these kinds of stories to friends if they asked anything about the clothes they were wearing. In addition, most of the interviewees pointed out that without the product brand story, these t-shirts would

be just normal mass t-shirts. The stories behind the range were connected to certain cities and if an interviewee had positive personal experiences of these cities, or even just one of them, the interviewee was able to connect the story and the t-shirt to his personal memories and experiences of that city. If stories are able to evoke feelings and somehow touch the person, as in this case, the story has a positive influence on the overall customer experience of the product, since the product will have a deeper meaning to him or her. Thereby, it is clear that for these interviewees the product brand story had a positive effect on their customer experience.

However, this empirical research also proves that customer experience is highly personal, and it can vary between individuals. Some interviewees said that this product brand story did not add any value for them since clothes are just clothes to them. They did not really like the t-shirt range since it did not fit their personal style, or they thought it was weird that a sports brand creates an artistic t-shirt range. One of the interviewees said that he appreciated functionality more than stories, and a few others said that they did not find the story tempting. This shows that a story can also have a neutral or even negative effect on customer experience. In this case, the product brand story did not match the brand image that these interviewees had of adidas, or it highlighted aspects that were not interesting to them.

When comparing these answers to answers from the interviewees who evaluated the t-shirt range without knowing the brand story behind it, some differences surface. Answers from interviewees who heard the story were in general more positive compared to answers from interviewees who did not know the product brand story. They did not seem to understand the point of the t-shirts, and most of them just thought they were weird. Thereby, based on the interviews, it can be concluded that product brand stories do affect the customer experience – either positively or negatively.

However, what was surprising was that there was no difference in willingness to buy these t-shirts, or in how much the interviewees were willing to pay, when comparing answers from two different interviewee groups (interviewees in Group 1 heard the product brand story before evaluating the range and interviewees in Group 2 did not know the story). Based on this, a conclusion can be made that even if the story has

a positive effect on the interviewee's opinion of the product, if it does not truly touch him, it does not noticeably increase the willingness to buy the product. Neither does it increase the amount that the person is willing to pay for the product.

One reason for this can be that most of the interviewees said they do not wear print t-shirts anymore, and even though the idea behind the range was good and they appreciated the t-shirt range more after hearing the story, it still did not match their personal style. There was only one interviewee who got a stronger connection to one t-shirt and he said he was willing to pay more for it compared to other t-shirts in the range even if he did not really need it. In fact, the difference between the lowest price and the highest price he mentioned was 50 euros, which can be considered a lot for a t-shirt. This shows that if a customer likes the product and there is a product brand story behind it that truly touches him or her personally, the story can have an exponential effect on willingness to buy that can even be seen on the amount that the customer is willing to pay for the product.

Finally, it is possible to answer the main research question:

How valuable are product brand stories for customers, when the overall brand behind the products is well known?

It can be drawn from the answers to the sub questions that product brand stories can have a notable effect on customer experience, even though the company's overall brand story is already well known. However, customer experience is always personal and depending on the individual, and thereby it is not possible to give just one strict answer to this question. The empirical research made in this thesis shows that a product brand story can have a positive, neutral or even negative effect on the customer experience. This finding applies to the research question – product brand stories can be very valuable for customers when the overall brand behind products is well known, or not valuable at all.

Some observations can be made based on the research. In this thesis the case company is adidas. All the interviewees recognized the brand and all of them had previous touch points with it. Some of the interviewees valued the brand highly and

even said that adidas was part of their identity, while others did not really think the brand suited their personal style. Therefore, the starting point was different between each interviewee. However, most of the interviewees had a positive brand image of adidas in general. Since all the interviewees knew the brand beforehand, they already had opinions of the products even before knowing the product brand story behind them. For instance, they already had a certain image of the quality and brand persona of the t-shirt when noticing the brand logo on the t-shirt. If the brand was unknown, the meaning of product brand stories would most likely be different. In this case, the product brand story was able to surprise most of the interviewees since they had formed a certain image of adidas beforehand. Many of the interviewees saw adidas just as a sports brand, and now connecting an artistic story to it was unexpected and even confusing. Some interviewees described adidas as a street fashion brand, and for them the product brand story was not that surprising – after all, art and fashion are often combined.

When the interviewees were asked if the brand affected their opinion of the t-shirt range, almost all the interviewees answered yes. For some, the brand had a highly positive effect since they could trust to the quality and they got a positive status from it. However, for some the brand had a negative effect since they did not think that adidas was the correct brand to utilize this type of product brand stories. They thought adidas tried to be something that it really was not. In other words, they liked the product brand story, but they did not think that adidas was the right brand to present it. They said that some kind of niche brand would be better for this type of artistic product brand story.

To draw a conclusion, the product brand stories do affect positively, neutrally or negatively to customer experience, even if the overall brand story behind the company is well known. However, since the brand is already well known, it affects the customer's opinion of the product and its product brand story. Thereby, it is important that the product brand story matches the overall brand story so that the message that the company tells and the overall image of it is coherent. That way a product brand story can support the overall brand story and show new aspects of it. If the product brand story does not match the overall brand, it causes confusion even if the actual story is good and interesting. That way it is possible that the

product brand story has a negative effect since consumers who love the brand do not understand it, and people who like the product brand story do not appreciate the brand behind it.

8.1 Theoretical contributions

According to the research and based on the literature review, brand stories are proven to be a valuable branding and marketing tool. Research shows that consumers today look for experiences and brands that are able to provide these experiences to them are doing well. Studies also show that storytelling is a good tool when creating experiences for customers. But what this research has discovered that is not included in previous studies related to brand stories or customer experience is that brand stories created specifically to products that belong to a famous brand can affect the customer experience very positively, and even increase willingness to pay more for a product. However, at the same time, the effect of product brand stories can also be neutral or even negative – depending on the individual's own personal experience.

As said in the beginning of the thesis, academic literature of brand stories concentrates mainly on companies' brand stories instead of product brand stories. This thesis concentrates especially on product brand stories and their effect on customer experience, and therefore this research is able to partially close this research gap. This thesis shows the potential that product brand stories have both from a company and customer points of view. When the product brand story manages to touch a consumer, it adds extra value for him or her, since the product then has a deeper meaning to him or her. It is possible that the story increases a customer's willingness to buy the product and that he or she might be ready to even pay a higher price for it – after all, consumers are not always acting rationally, but emotions have a huge impact on the choices they make. Thereby, product brand stories can add value for companies as well.

Additionally, this thesis has concentrated specifically on the fashion industry that has been under-represented in academic literature. Thereby, this thesis highlights the point of view of fashion brands as storytellers.

8.2 Managerial implications

The research resulted in a few main recommendations for the case company and for other companies who utilize product brand stories. One of the most important findings is that even when using product brand stories, the actual product must be good. Thereby, a company cannot think that a good story compensates possible deficiencies that a product has. As seen from the empirical research of this thesis, even if consumers think the product brand story is interesting, it does not increase their willingness to buy a product if it is not good – or, in this case, does not match their personal style. However, if the product itself is good and additionally has a well-formed and fascinating product brand story, it may exponentially affect the willingness to buy that product and even increase the price that the customer is willing to pay for it.

Secondly, each consumer has a personal customer experience and thereby it is not possible to please everyone. As learned in this thesis, people can interpret the same story differently. Customers value different aspects and thereby a company must decide what kinds of consumers it wants to please. After all, a good recipe to a successful product launch is to have the combination of a good product, interesting and memorable story, and finding the right consumers that appreciate the product and the story.

Thirdly, it is essential that the product brand story matches the company's brand story. This does not mean that a product cannot have its unique story. However, the base of the product brand story must match the overall brand story. For instance, the brand persona must be similar. The product brand story can highlight different aspects of the story or bring new characteristics into it. When all the stories are aligned, it is easy for customers to understand what the brand is like and what the value is that it can offer.

When all these three points are considered, a product brand story has good chances to bring positive value for both the company and customers. Product brand stories have a huge potential, and hence the author would like to encourage companies to evaluate whether they can utilize storytelling behind their products – keeping in mind that brand stories must be authentic in order to achieve good results.

8.3 Limitations and recommendations for future research

This research was conducted by focusing on the fashion industry and made as a case study for adidas. Even though the framework and the previous studies about brand stories and customer experience are universal and can be utilized for other companies and other industries, the outcomes of this research cannot be generalized to all industries, since there might be differences for instance in B2B markets. In addition, all the interviewees who represented the customer point of view in this thesis were men, which causes some limitations. Additionally, almost all the interviewees were Finns (except for one Australian) of a relatively similar age, so it may be important for future research to study whether consumers from other countries and age groups have different ways of evaluating these types of products. It could also be interesting to make a similar study in a real store atmosphere in order to see if the impact of the product brand story is different in the atmosphere where they actually buy these kinds of products.

It would be fascinating to evaluate product brand stories even more. As said, it would be interesting to use this same perspective in a different atmosphere and interview customers from different nationalities and age groups in order to see if the results are still the same. It would also be fascinating to know if product brand stories have the same impact in e-commerce or if the value of stories could be even bigger. Also, is there a point when a company tells too many stories for consumers and other stakeholders? Is there a certain limit after which the value of stories starts to actually decrease – both for the company and consumers or one of them? If there is a limit, it would be interesting to know how a company's "story portfolio" could be managed in order to find the best balance of stories used.

REFERENCES

- Aaker D. A. 1996. *Building Strong Brands*. New York NY: The Free Press.
- Aaker J. L. 1997. Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (3): 347–356.
- Aaker J. 1999. The malleable self: the role of self-expression in persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 36 No. 1, 45-57.
- Aaker D. A. 2004. *Brand Portfolio Strategy - Creating Relevance, Differentiation, Energy, Leverage, and Clarity*. New York: Free Press.
- Aaltonen M. & Heikkilä T. 2003. *Tarinoiden voima – Miten yritykset hyödyntävät tarinoita?* Helsinki: Talentum 2003.
- Adaval R. – Wyer R. S. 1998. The Role of Narratives in Consumer Information Processing. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7 (3), 207-245.
- Adias 2017. ADIDAS [online document]. [Accessed 8th of December 2017]. Available at: <https://www.adidas-group.com/en/brands/adidas/>
- Adidas Originals 2018. [online video]. [Accessed 27th of January 2018]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdRN9gWyJd8>
- Addis M. & Holbrook M. B. 2001. On the Conceptual Link Between Mass Customisation and experiential consumption: An explosion of subjectivity. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 50-66.
- Ahuvia A.C. 2005. Beyond the extended self: love objects and consumer's identity narratives. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 32 No. 1, 171-84.
- Albert N., Merunka D. and Vallette-Florence P. 2008. When consumers love their brands: exploring the concept and its dimensions. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 61 No. 10, 1062-75.

- Balachander S. & Ghose S. 2003. Reciprocal spillover effects: A strategic benefit of brand extensions. *Journal of Marketing*, 67(1), 4–13.
- Bandinelli R., Rinaldi R., Rossi M. & Terzi S. 2013. New product development in the Fashion Industry: An Empirical investigation of Italian Firms. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management, Special Issue on Innovations in Fashion Industry*, 1- 9.
- Banyte J., Joksaite E. & Virvilaite R. 2007. Relationship of consumer attitude and brand: emotional aspect. *Engineering Economics*, Vol 2 (52), 65-76.
- Benjamin B. 2006. The case study: Storytelling in industrial age and beyond. *On the Horizon* 14 (4), 159-164.
- Bennett P.D. 1988. *Dictionary of Marketing Terms*. The American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL.
- Berry L., Carbone L., Haeckel S. 2002. Managing the total customer experience. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. [online document] [Accesses 19th of May 2018] Available at: <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/managing-the-total-customer-experience/>
- Bloch P. H., Brunel F. F. & Todd J. A. 2003. Individual Differences in the Centrality of Visual Product Aesthetics: Concept and Measurement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 (3), 551–565.
- Bohdanowicz, J. & Clamp, L., 1994. *Fashion Marketing*. London: Routledge.
- Braun E., & Zenker S. 2010. Towards an integrated approach for place brand management. In 50th European Regional Science Association Congress, Jönköping, Sweden, 19th – 23rd August, 2010, 19–23.
- Bresciani L. & Ewing M. 2014. Brand Building in the digital age: The ongoing battle for customer influence. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, Vol 3 (4), 322-331.

- Brown S. & Patterson A. 2010. Selling Stories: Harry Potter and the marketing plot. *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 27 (6), 541-556.
- Bruner J. 1990. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bruner J. 1986. *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chiu H.-C., Hsieh Y.-C. & Kuo Y.-C. 2012. How to Align Your Brand Stories with Your Products. *Journal of Retailing*, 88 (2, 2012) 262-275.
- De Chernatony, L. 1999. Brand Management through Narrowing the Gap between Brand Identity and Brand Reputation. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15: 157–179.
- De Chernatony L. 2001. A model for strategically building brands. *Brand Management*, Vol 9 (1), 32-44.
- Delgadillo Y. & Escalas J. E. 2004. Narrative world-of-mouth communication: Exploring memory and attitude effects of consumer storytelling. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 31 (1), 186-192.
- Delgado-Ballester E. & Munuera-Alemán L. 2000. Brand trust in the context of consumer loyalty. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35 (11/12), 1238-1258.
- Denzin N.K. & Lincoln Y.S. 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications Inc.
- Donaldson R. H. 2007. BRANDS: COVER STORY: Brand Challenge; The phenomenon of social media is having a massive impact on the ways brands are perceived, and the way consumers interact with them. Brands that are based within the traditional forms of channel media will require a fundamental shift in thinking to adapt to the new social media environment. *Marketing Magazine*, Jun 2007, 14.

Entrepreneur 2009. Does your brand tell a powerful story? [online document].
[Accessed 1st of November 2016]: Available at:
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/203748>

Erden T. 1998. An Empirical Analysis of Umbrella Branding. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 339-351.

Escalas J. E. 2004. Narrative Processing: Building Consumer Connections to Brand. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14 (1&2), 168-180.

Eskola J. & Suoranen, J. 1998. *Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy.

Eskola J. & Suoranta J. 2003. *Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen*. 6. painos. Jyväskylä. Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy

Fionda A. & Moore C. 2009. The Anatomy of the luxury fashion brand. *Brand Management* vol 16. (5/6), 347-363.

Fisher M. and Vainio S. 2014. *Potkua palvelubisnekseen. Asiakaskokemus luodaan yhdessä*. Helsinki, Talentum.

Foley G. 2017. Here's how adidas's three stripes became world famous. [online document]. [Accessed 8th of December 2017]: Available at:
<https://www.highsnobiety.com/2017/07/12/adidas-three-stripes-history/>

Fournier S. 1998. Consumers and their brands: Developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol 24, 343–373.

Freling T. H. & Forbes L. P. 2005. An Examination of Brand Personality through Methodological Triangulation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13 (2), 148-162.

Gentile C., Spiller N. & Noci G. 2007. How to Sustain the Customer Experience: An Overview of Experience Components that Co-create Value With the Customer. *European Management Journal*. Vol. 25, No. 5, 395-410.

- Gibbs G. R. 2007. Analyzing qualitative data. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Grewal D., Puccinelli N. M., Goodstein R. C., Price R., Raghubir P. and Stewart D. 2009. Customer experience management in retailing: Understanding the buying process. *Journal of Retailing*. Vol. 85, No.1, 15–30.
- Hakala J. & Malmelin M. 2007. Radikaali brändi. Helsinki: Talentum 2007.
- Hancock J. H. (2016). *Brand Story; Cases and Explorations in Fashion Branding*. 2nd edition, New York: Bloomsbury.
- Hawkins D.I., Best R.J. & Coney K.A. 2001. *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy*. 8th edition. New York NY: McGraw Hill.
- Herskovitz S. & Crystal M. 2010. The essential brand persona: storytelling and branding. *Journal of business strategy*, 31 (3), 21-28.
- Hirsjärvi S., Remes P. & Sajavaara P. 2008. *Tutki ja kirjoita*. Keuruu: Otavan kirjapaino Oy.
- Holbrook M. B. & Hirschman E. C. 1982. The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*. Vol. 9, 132-140.
- Ismail A. R. & Spinelli G. 2012. "Effects of brand love, personality and image on word of mouth. The case of fashion brands among young consumers", *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, Vol. 16 No. 4, 386- 398.
- Jackson T. & Shaw D. 2009. *Mastering fashion marketing*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnston R and Kong X. 2011. The customer experience: a roadmap for improvement. *Managing Service Quality*. Vol. 21, No. 1, 5-24.
- Kamm C., Karpova E. & Marcketti S. 2013. Fashion industry professionals' viewpoints on creative traits. s.l.s.n.

Kapferer J.-N. 1997. Strategic Brand Management - Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity Long Term. London: Kogan Page.

Kapferer J. N. 2012. The new strategic brand management: Advanced insights and strategic thinking. London: Kogan Page Publishers.

Keller K.L. 1993. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 No. 1, 1-22.

Koll O., Von Wallpach S. & Kreuzer M. 2010. Multi-method research on consumer-brand associations: Comparing free associations, storytelling and collages. *Psychology & Marketing*, 27(6), 584-602

Kolowish L. (2015). What is product marketing? The Simple Explanation We've All Been Looking For (Slide Share). [online document]. [Accessed 7th of November 2016]: Available at: <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-product-marketing#sm.0000kdtjmcihwf1uupn28y63mggy7>.

Kotler P. & Armstrong G. 2012. Principles Of Marketing. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Kotler P., Kartajaya H. & Setiawan I. 2011. Markkinointi 3.0, Tuotteista asiakkaisiin ja ihmiskeskeisyyteen. Helsinki: Talentum 2011.

Laakso H. 2003. Brandit kilpailuetuna. Helsinki: Talentum 2003.

Lea-Greenwood G. 2013. Fashion Marketing Communications. Singapore: Markono Print Media Pte Ltd.

Lemke F., Clark M. and Wilson H. 2011. Customer experience quality: an exploration in business and customer context using repertory grid technique. *Academy of marketing science*. No. 39, 846-869.

- LaSelle D. and Britton, T. A. 2003. Priceless: Turning ordinary products into extraordinary experience. Harvard Business School Press, Boston. [e-book] [Accessed 19th of May 2018] Available at:
https://www.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=8LN6fx6b0M4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=priceless:+turning+ordinary+products+into+extraordinary+experiences&ots=2S2bP7k56_&sig=h-7oWuIbS0a76Xm66HqScBqRin8&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Lille K. 2010. Tevallako tulevaisuuteen: Selvitys muoti- ja designalan hyödyntämättömistä voimavaroista ja potentiaalista. s.l. Diges Ry.
- Lindberg-Repo K. 2001. Asiakkaan ja brändin vuorovaikutus – Miten johtaa brändin arvoprosesseja? Helsinki: WSOY 2001.
- Liu X. & Hu M. Y. 2011. Umbrella brand price premiums: Effects of compatibility, similarity, and portfolio size. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 20(1), 58–64
- Louis D. & Lombart C. 2010. Impact of Brand Personality on Three Major Relational Consequences (Trust, Attachment, and Commitment to the Brand). *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 19 (2), 114-130.
- Lundqvist A., Liljander V., Gummerus J. & Van Riel A. 2013. The impact of storytelling on the consumer brand experience: The case of a firm-originated story. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20 (4), 283-297
- Löytänä J. and Kortesoja K. 2011. Asiakaskokemus Palvelubisneksestä Kokemusbisnekseen. Talentum.
- Malen W. 2007. Fashion designers as business: London. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 12(3), 398-414.
- Mathews R. & Wacker W. 2008. *Storytelling to Move Markets, Audience, People, and Brands*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Mengxia Z. 2007. Impact of Brand Personality on PALI: A Comparative Research between Two Different Brands. *International Management Review*, 3 (3), 36.

- Metsämuuronen J. 2005. Tutkimuksen tekemisen perusteet ihmistieteissä. Jyväskylä: Gummerus Kirjapaino Oy
- Meyer C. & Schwager A. 2007. Understanding Customer Experience. Harvard Business Review. Vol. 85, No. 2, 117-126.
- Moore C., Lawrie A., Fernie J. & Hallsworth A. 1997. The internationalization of the high fashion brand, the case of Central London. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 3, 6(3), 151-162.
- Nawaz A., Billoo M. & Lakhan A. 2012. Effect of product packaging in consumer buying decision. Journal of Business Strategies, Vol. 6 (2), 1–10.
- Papadatos C. 2006. The art of storytelling: how loyalty marketers can build emotional connections to their brands. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 23 (7), 382-384.
- Pappu R., Quester P.G & Cooksey R. W. 2005. Consumer-based brand equity: improving the measurement – empirical evidence. The Journal of Product and Brand Management 14, 2/3, 143-154.
- Patton M.Q. 2002. Qualitative Research Evaluation Methods. 3 rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, California. Sage Publications Inc.
- Payne A. F., Storbacka K. and Frow P. 2008. Managing the co-creation of value. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. Vol. 36, No. 1, 83-96.
- Petermans A., Van Cleempoel K., Nuyts E. and Vanrie J. 2009. Measuring emotions in customer experiences in retail store environment. Testing the applicability of three emotion measurement instruments. 3rd World Conference on Design Research, 2257–2266.
- Petre M., Minocha S. & Roberts D. 2006. Usability Beyond the Website: An Empirically Grounded E-commerce Evaluation Instrument for the Total Customer Experience. Behavior & Information Technology. Vol. 25, No. 2, 189-203.

- Petty R. C. & Krosnick J. A. 1994. *Attitude strength: Antecedents and consequences*. Hillsdale (NJ): Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates.
- Phau I. & Lo C.-C. 2004. Profiling fashion innovators, A study of self-concept, impulse buying and Internet purchase intent. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and*, 8(4), 399-411.
- Pine B. J. & Gilmore J. H. 1998. *Welcome to the Experience Economy*. [online document]. [Accessed 19th of May 2018]: Available at: <https://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy>.
- Plummer J. T. 1985. *Brand Personality: A Strategic Concept for Multinational Advertising*. Marketing Educator's Conference New York: Young & Rubicam 1-31.
- Ponsonby-McCabe S. & Boyle E. 2006. Understanding brands as experiential spaces: axiological implications for marketing strategists. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 14, 175-89.
- Rauhala M. & Vikström T. 2014. *Storytelling työkaluna – Vaikuta tarinoilla bisneksessä*. Helsinki: Talentum 2014.
- Rautio S. 2015. *Raaka totuus*. Sales and Marketing Super Seminar in 27th of March in 2015 in Lappeenranta University of Technology, Lappeenranta.
- Reichheld F. & Scheffer P. 2000. E-loyalty. *Harvard business review*, 78(4), 105-113
- Robson C. 1993. *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rosenbaum-Elliot R., Percy L. & Pervan S. 2007. *Strategic Brands Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rowley J. 2008. Online branding strategies of UK fashion retailers. *Internet research Review*, 15 9, 19(3), 348-369.
- Sarajärvi A. & Tuomi J. 2002. *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. 1. – 2. painos. Helsinki: Tammi.

Saunders M., Lewis P. & Thornhill A. 2009. Research Methods for Business Students, 5th edition. Prentice Hall.

Schank R. C. 1999. Dynamic memory revisited. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University 49 Press.

Schank R. C. & Abelson R. P. 1995. Knowledge and memory: The real story. Psychology Press 2014, 1-25.

Schembri S., Merrilees B. & Kristiansen S. 2010. Brand consumption and narrative of the self. Psychology & Marketing, Vol 27 (6), 623-638.

Silverstein M. J. and Fiske N. 2003. Trading Up: The New American Luxury. New York: Portfolio Penguin Group.

Simmons J. 2006. Guinness and the role of strategic storytelling. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 14 (1), 11-18.

SlideShare 2015. What is product marketing [online document]. [Accessed 8th of July 2018]: Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/DrifttHQ/what-is-product-marketing-54542255>

Slovic P. 1972. Psychological Study of Human Judgement: Implications for Investment Decision-making. The Journal of Finance. Volume 27, No. 4, 779-799.

Smit B. 2008. Sneaker Wars 1st edition. Harper Collins Publishers, New York.

Stafford T. F., Stafford M. R. & Schkade L. L. 2004. Determining uses and gratifications for the Internet. Decision Sciences, Vol 35 (2), 259-288.

Stein A. & Ramaseshan B. 2016. Towards the Identification of Customer Experience Touch Point Elements. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services. Vol. 30, 8-19.

Thomas A. & Pickering G. 2003. The Importance of Wine Label Information. International Journal of Wine Marketing, Vol. 15, 58–75.

Tungate M. 2012. Fashion Brands. 3rd edition. London: Kogan Page.

- Verhoef P., Lemon K., Parasuraman A., Roggeveen A., Tsiros M., Schlesinger L. 2009. Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies. *Journal of Retailing*, 85 (1), 31-41.
- Vesterinen J. 2014. Committed to customers. A 5-Step model for delivering a great customer experience. *Suomen Liikekirjat*.
- Webster F. E. 1997. The Future Role of Marketing in the Organization. *Reflections on the Futures of Marketing: Practice and Education*, 39-66.
- Woodside A. G. 2010. Brand-Consumer Storytelling Theory and Research: Introduction to a Psychology & Marketing Special Issue. *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 27 (6), 531-540.
- Woodside A. G., Sood S. & Miller K. E. 2008. When Consumers and Brands Talk: Storytelling Theory and Research in Psychology and Marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol 25 (2), 97- 145.
- Wortmann, C. 2006. *What's Your Story? Using stories to ignite performance and be more successful*. Dearborn Trade, Chicago, IL, USA.
- Yin 1984. *Case study research: Design and methods*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Zomerdijk L. G. & Voss C. A. 2010. Service design for experience-centric services. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(1), 67-82.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The interview questions for adidas personnel (in English)

1. How would you describe Originals brand / brand story?
2. What kind of consumers you're hoping to reach out with that story (target group)?
3. You have also stories for each collection. How would you describe stories behind collections?
4. Why do you have stories for each collection?
5. How do you make sure that those stories are aligned with Originals brand story and even with global adidas brand story? Or do those even need to be aligned?
6. Do you have special stories also for certain products inside the range? If yes, why?
7. How valuable stories are in product marketing? Do you think stories actually add value for products?
8. Do you think there's a point when there are too many stories that company tells for people? (Too confusing for customers? People are not interested in stories if there're too many? Value of stories decrease?)
9. How would you describe a good story from product marketing point of view?

Appendix 2: The slide presentation for interviewees in the Group 1

Slides 1 & 2

BERLIN



Berlin: DAAVID MÖRTL

Daavid Mörtl is an illustrator, designer and artist based in Berlin, Germany.



Artwork:
The illustration shows a “Retro-3D 90’s raver”, inspired by Daavid Mörtl’s unique style.

The character is playing a racing game on his portable video game device. A graffiti style wording on the side reads “Autobuzz” and shows the roughness and street culture in the city of Berlin.

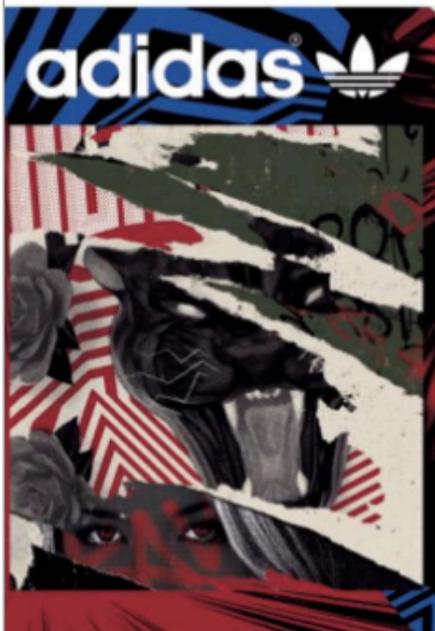
The artwork is all about the myth of the 90s Berlin.

NEW YORK



New York: LUKE CHOICE

Velvet Spectrum is the creative home for Australian designer Luke Choice, now residing in New York City. Equally as comfortable with illustration as he is with a 3D environment, allows for a unique, playful aesthetic, that covers multiple facets of design, illustration and typography.



Artwork:

Luke Choice's concept is based around the flyposting around NYC. This typical New York aesthetic speaks to the lively culture of the city.

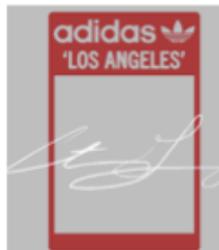
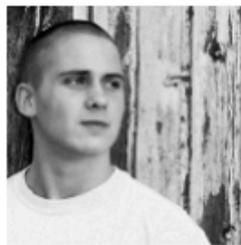
Merging this idea with a selection of his own personal artistic experiments creates a true New York artsy feel.

LOS ANGELES



Los Angeles: ANTHONY GARGASZ

Digital artist & designer from Los Angeles.



Artwork:

Anthony Gargasz' Artwork illustrates his Los Angeles state of mind by showcasing iconic scenery in a colorful, abstract approach.

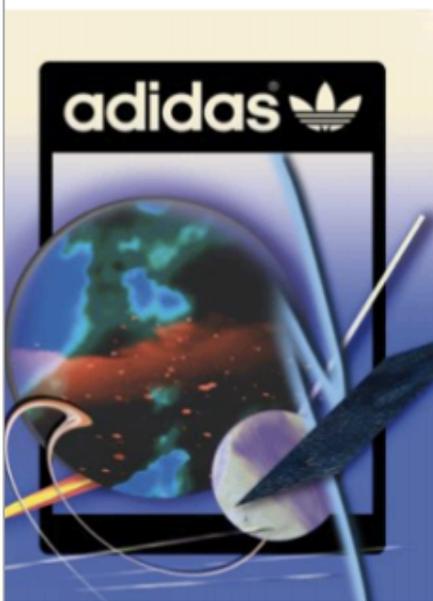
Displaying his city in a 3-dimensional mind, is very much in line with Anthony's style and rendering techniques.

TOKYO



Tokyo: YOSHI ROTTEN

Yoshirotten is a Tokyo based graphic artist and an art director who works across wide range of fields, with a specific focus on art, fashion and music. He has gained international recognition – commercially and artistically – with work for vast client list ranging from multinational companies or luxury brands to emerging artists.



Artwork:

Yoshi Rotten is also constantly working on artworks that are original yet fantastic.

When asked to depict his own take on the city of Tokyo, he challenged himself to create his own universe of aesthetics, surprise and uniqueness.

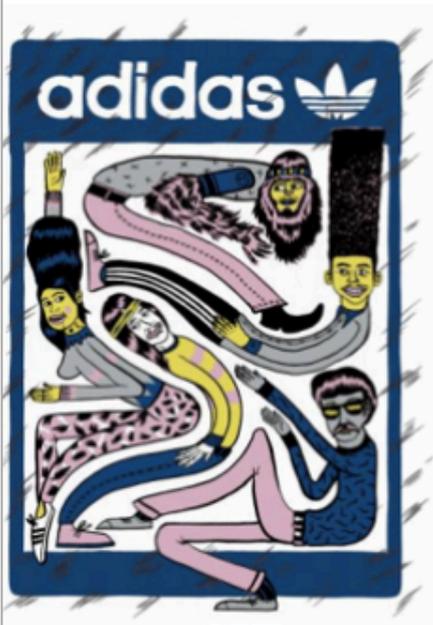
Nicely blending in the Originals tongue label, this T-Shirt perfectly fits into our SS17 artist series.

LONDON



London: STEVIE GEE

Stevie Gee is a London-based illustrator, designer and artist. Born to a jazz-guitarist father and a fortune-teller mother, Stevie has spent most of his life on the road, collecting stories with which to populate his world of voluptuous women, 1950s cats, crazed clowns and wild manbeasts.



Artwork:

Being challenged to find a synergy between the vibes of London and his own style Stevie Gee's creative process led to the outcome at hand.

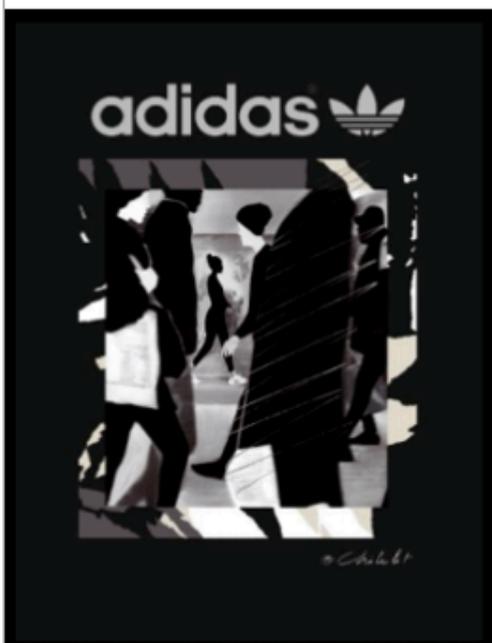
Creating an image with different characters in various dance poses in a very tight space. "London is super diverse, its fun, but also super cramped with every one on top of eachother but somehow it works."

PARIS



Paris: JEAN PHILIPPE LAGUARDE

Parisian artist.



Artwork:

This piece is inspired by the metropolitan city of Paris.

Inspired by the legendary collage artworks of Jacques Villeglé, Jean Phillippe Laguarde depicts the anonymity which he experiences in the big city of Paris.

This artwork is called M Chatelet.

Appendix 3: The interview questions for customers (in Finnish and in English)

Taustatiedot // *Background information:*

1. Kuinka vanha olet? // *How old are you?*
2. Mitä teet tällä hetkellä elääksesi? Töissä vai opiskelija vai mahdollisesti sekä että? // *What do you do for your living? Are you in a working life or are you a student or possible both?*
3. Kerro harrastuksistasi ja kiinnostuksen kohteistasi. // *Tell me about your hobbies and interests.*
4. Miten kuvailisit omaa tyyliäsi? // *How would you describe your personal style?*
5. Kuinka valitset vaatteet mitä ostat? (brändi, laatu, hinta...) // *How do you choose clothes that you buy? (brand, quality, price...)*
6. Miten tärkeitä vaatteet ovat itsellesi? Miksi? // *How important clothes are for you? Why?*
7. Mikä tekee jostain vaatteesta tärkeän itsellesi? // *What makes a certain garment meaningful for you?*
8. Mitä kautta saat inspiraatiota pukeutumiseesi? (kaverit, blogit, lehdet, some, idolit...) // *How do you get an inspiration to your style? (Friends, blogs, magazines, social media, idols...)*
9. Paljonko käytät rahaa vaatteisiin keskimäärin kuukaudessa tai vuodessa? // *How much do you spend money to clothing in a month or in a year?*

Näytän t-paidat. Brändi // *The author shows t-shirts. Brand:*

10. Tunnistatko brändin? // *Do you recognize the brand?*
11. Mikäli tunnistit, mitä mieleesi tulee kyseisestä brändistä? // *If yes, what comes to your mind about this brand?*
12. Miten kuvailisit kyseistä brändiä? // *How would you describe this brand?*
13. Mitä itse olet mieltä kyseisestä brändistä? // *What is your opinion of this brand?*
14. Kuinka houkuttelevana pidät brändiä? // *How tempting is this brand for you?*

15. Omistatko itse kyseisen brändin vaatteita tai muita tuotteita? Jos omistat niin miksi omistat kyseisen brändin tuotteita? // *Do you have any apparel or products from this brand? If yes, why do you have them?*

Kerron tarinan t-paitojen taustalla haastateltaville, jotka kuuluvat ryhmään 1. Annan kaikkien haastateltavien tutkia t-paitoja. Kysymyksiä itse tuotteesta //

The author tells the story behind the t-shirt range to interviewees in the Group 1. However, all the interviewees can evaluate t-shirts. Questions about the actual products:

16. Mitä mieltä olet kyseisistä t-paidoista? // *What is your opinion of the t-shirt range?*
17. Millä kolmella sanalla kuvailisit t-paitoja? (Mitä tulee ensimmäisenä mieleen?) // *Describe the t-shirt range with three words. (What comes up to your mind first?)*
18. Mihin erityisesti kiinnität t-paidoissa huomiota? // *Where do you particularly pay attention when looking at these t-shirts?*
19. Mitä plussia annat t-paidoille? // *What pros do you give for these t-shirts?*
20. Entä onko jotain miinuksia? // *What cons do you give for these t-shirts?*
21. Mikä on oma suosikkisi t-paidoista? Miksi? // *What is your favourite of these t-shirts? Why?*
22. Kuinka houkuttelevina pidät t-paitoja? Miksi? // *How tempting these t-shirts are for you?*
23. Voisitko itse kuvitella pitäväsi kyseisiä t-paitoja? Perustele vastauksesi. // *Could you wear these t-shirts? Why?*
24. Ostaisitko kyseisiä t-paitoja kaupasta? Miksi? // *Would you buy these t-shirts? Why?*
25. Paljonko olisit tuotteesta valmis maksamaan? Miksi? // *How much would you pay for these t-shirts? Why?*
26. Millainen merkitys tuotteen brändillä on mielipiteeseesi t-paidoista? Vai onko brändillä merkitystä? // *Does the brand affect to your opinion of these t-shirts?*
27. Kuvastavatko t-paidat mielestäsi hyvin adidas brändiä? // *Do these t-shirts represent adidas as a brand well in your opinion?*

Nämä kysymykset vain ryhmälle 1 // *These questions only for interviewees in the Group 1:*

28. Millaiseksi koit tarinan t-paitojen taustalla? // *What do you think about the story behind the t-shirt range?*

29. Koetko tarinalla tuotteiden taustalla olevan merkitystä mielipiteeseesi tuotteesta? Miksi? // *Do you think the story behind the t-shirt range affected to your opinion of the products? Why?*

30. Millaiset tarinat vetoavat sinuun ylipäätään? // *What kind of stories evoke feelings for you?*

Kaikille // *For everyone:*

31. Tuleeko mieleesi jotain, minkä avulla olisit kiinnostuneempi t-paidoista kuin tiedolla mitä nyt sait? (Esimerkiksi millainen markkinointi, esillepano yms. tekisi tuotteesta sinulle uniikimman ja kiinnostavamman?) // *Is there something that would make this t-shirt range more interesting for you? (For example, what kind of marketing would make this range more unique for you?)*

32. Muita kommentteja mitä haluaisit sanoa? Vapaata keskustelua, jos vielä jotain sanottavaa, mikä ei ole tullut ilmi haastattelukysymysten kautta. // *Is there anything else you would like to say? Discussion, if there is still something that the interviewee wants to point out.*

Appendix 4. Background information of interviewees in the Group 1.

Group 1 interviewee	Age	Occupation	Hobbies / interests	Personal style	How do you choose the clothes that you buy?	How important clothes are for you?	What makes a garment important for you?	How do you get inspiration to your outfits?	Money to clothes yearly / €	What comes to mind about adidas brand	Do one own any adidas products
A	24	student	Sports, lifestyle, clothing, travelling	Scandinavian minimalist. Lot of grey, blue and brown shades.	Based on the brand, material, country of manufacture, fit	Important since that's a way to express yourself and your lifestyle.	Suitable for multipurpose use and good fit	Magazines, Instagram and webpages, like Highsnobiety, hypebeast and Finnish Tyylilborum. And obviously from friends.	2000	sports, fashion, collections	yes
B	26	student and part time consult	Sports (gym), movies	Combination of smart casual and easy going outfits, depends on the occasion. Brands are important.	I go to certain stores and check out what they offer (often Carlings and Zalando). Also lot of inspiration comes from social media (subconsciously).	Very important. It's nice to look good and it makes you self-confidence when you know your clothes are good quality and you look nice.	At one point you notice that you wear a certain garment a lot and that way it becomes your favourite. Normally pair of pants or shoes.	From social media and from Zalando that offers actual outfits. I have noticed that Zalando knows my style and it is able to target certain outfits and newsletters for me. Also my friends can inspire me.	1800	sports, fashion	yes
C	27	student and part time consult	Sports, especially American football	Depends on the occasion. Quite normal.	I just go to stores and buy clothes that look good and suits me. If the quality is good the price doesn't matter.	Actual clothes are not important for me, but it's important to feel good and of course clothes give you that feeling easily. I buy clothes that makes me feel confidence and good.	Shirts that look good and make me feel good are my favourites.	I don't look for inspiration consciously. Sometimes I see cool outfits in movies, TV programs or on the streets. Most often I just go to stores and check out what they offer.	700	sports	No
D	27	Student	Sports, football, basketball, surfing, travelling, reading	Quite simple. More colorful during summer. Otherwise natural colors.	If the item is super cool, I have to buy it.	Yes I think clothes are important. I like to wear nice clothes.	My favourite clothes depend on the mood. At the moment I like my black jeans since these are easy to combine to my other clothes.	Instagram and people on the streets. Pr sometimes people in TV have cool style and then I might pay attention what they wear.	400	sports, street style	yes
E	30	Trader in a sport gambling company	Sports (gym and golf)	Classic, simple. What girlfriend asks me to wear.	Price is number one. Then the pattern and brand. I have a habit to go to Zara, since they have simple and cheap stuff and I don't have to look at many stores.	The functionality is important. As long as it serves functions and it's not too expensive, then I look at how it looks. I don't want to buy clothes that are too cheap, because then I probably have to buy more and more.	Clothes that are just plain and I can wear them all the time and in lots of situations. I guess I wear same clothes too much.	I don't have any...	300	sports, nike	yes
F	25	marketing designer and student	Sports (football and crossfit) and photographing	Simple and good quality is important. Natural colors, black white etc. Scandinavian style.	I always check out two online stores and buy from them, because I like their style and brands. Very scandic.	Yes clothes are very important. At one point I noticed clothes are part of my identity. I think about clothes a lot.	Clothes that are good quality and I can wear in multiple situations: everyday life but also in celebration.	Webpages. I go to check out what new they have about every second week.	1200	sports, football, shoes, mass	yes
G	16	Student	Sports, movies	Combination of personal style and massmarket. My style is thereby unique.	I buy clothes that catch the attention. Price is the second important.	Very important. Clothes tell a lot about ones personality.	I love my jeans! I like to wear those every day. I can wear those in multiple situations. If someone would take all my clothes away from me, I wish I could keep my jeans.	A lot from artists. I love rappers and I get inspiration from them. I want that one is able to see what kind of music I listen to. Also social media, especially Instagram and music videos.	600	mass	yes
H	26	Student	Sports, football, crossfit	Simple and Scandinavian. I like Nordic brands. Good quality clothes and materials are important.	I buy based on the need. If I need something I want something special and I check out certain brands.	Yes clothes have a certain meaning for me. When you meet a person at the first time you pay attention to the clothing. It tells you about the person. Clothes are a certain status symbol and clothing is a way to differentiate oneself from others.	I don't really have an emotional tie to my clothes. Maybe if I have got something as a gift, then it's more important. I can easily throw clothes away and then buy new favourite clothes instead.	From internet and Instagram. And also marketing has a huge impact. For example a brand Billieboho had a cool marketing campaign where they used celebrities. It gave credibility for the brand.	500	JVC, sport, shoes (Supernstars)	yes
I	20	Student	Sports	Typical style for young people. Easygoing.	Based on what the trend is. I buy trendy clothes. I prefer brand clothes but I don't want to pay more than 40€ extra for those (compared to similar clothes without a fancy brand).	Not that important. I just need to look fairly good and have enough clothes to wear.	I don't have emotional tie to my clothes, ever. Those are just clothes.	Very basic, internet and friends.	1000	sports, clothing, nike	yes

Appendix 5. Background information of interviewees in Group 2.

Group 2	Name	Age	Occupation	Hobbies / interests	Personal style	How do you choose the clothes that you buy?	How important clothes are for you?	What makes a garment important for you?	How do you get inspiration to your outfits?	Money to clothes yearly / €	What comes to mind about adidas brand	Do you own any adidas products
	J	27	student	Sports like surfing, swimming, extreme sports	Nordic style: simple and not colorful. Depends on the occasion. Smart casual.	Based on material and quality. Also fit is important.	With a scale 1-10, number 7. I don't have lot of clothes but I like those that I have. Clothes make you feel good and give you confidence and that way clothes are important.	That it fits for me. And also that other people say it suits me. It has to be good quality so that I can wear it years instead of just few months.	What I see around me at the university or what my friends wear.	600	sports	yes
	K	25	Student and insurance adviser	Sports, football, skiing, cars	Family and girlfriend have influenced to my personal style. Brand is important, price is not.	Family and girlfriend have influenced to my personal style. Brand is important, price is not.	Clothes give the first impression of the person so yes those are important. But it depends on the occasion. For example when I'm at a gym, I don't mind what I'm wearing.	The garment feels and looks good on me.	From TV and friends. Also my girlfriend follows blogs and she gives me some tips.	1500	football, sports, free time	yes
	L	24	Controller	Sports, tennis, reading	The look is important as well as quality.	The look is important as well as quality.	Of course clothes are important. Nice clothes makes you feel good and selfconfidence.	I don't really have favourite clothes and emotional tie to any of my clothes.	Friends, internet, ads, media. I follow two Instagram profiles that concentrates on outfits, style etc. for men.	2400	sport, football	yes
	M	27	Student	Sports, ice hockey	The look is important as well as the material. Also the country of the manufacture is important. (sustainability) Brand is not that important but I have lot of clothes that are related to surfing and Asia.	Yes quite important. Clothes don't define me, but of course I think about how I look like.	Of course if I have had some clothes for a long time. And it depends where I have bought it. If I have bought it abroad when travelling, it's more important. For example I bought this shirt from a flea market in Taipei. Always if there's a story behind the garment, it's more unique.	I don't really follow any blogs. I get inspiration from streets when I see what people wear. And of course it's especially interesting when you are abroad.	1000	shoes (superstars), sport, street style, fashion, 3 stripes	yes	
	N	16	Student	Sports, football, cars	I have certain stores that I check out. Then I start to look for my favourite colors. Then brands are important and as a student price too.	Very important. I think clothes tell a lot about the person. Based on the clothing one may know what the person thinks about oneself and if the selfconfidence is good or bad.	if I have used a certain garment in a certain situation that was important for me, talker that the garment is more meaningful for me. Also have been thinking of buying a certain garment for a long time, it's more important compared to impulse buy.	From friends. And also I get inspiration from stores when I go there and check out what new they offer.	1000	sport clothing, nike	yes	
	O	16	Student	Sports, football	I personally like it and the price is not too high.	Very important. Clothes have important part of my life. The big reason is that I matters for me how I look like.	if it looks nice and feels good and comfortable.	I don't really follow what others wear. I just have my own personal style.	600	apparel and shoes	yes	
	P	16	Student	Sports, football	First I think about the usability and practicality. Then how it looks.	Yes it matters a bit what kind of clothes I have.	if I like a certain garment a lot, it's important for me.	From social media. In Instagram I follow football players.	720	sports, football, shoes	yes	
	Q	23	Student	Sports, basketball, movies	Based on the look. Brand doesn't matter except in the sport clothing.	Important. Clothes are part of your identity. Clothes are the first thing you notice in another person.	It I can wear the garment in different situations, it's more important for me.	From friends but mostly from stores.	1000	3 stripes, sports, football, Originals, Ultra boost	yes	
	R	26	Student	Sports, basketball	Based on the look and price. I have certain stores that I check out.	Very difficult question. Yes those are important.	if the fit is good and I can wear the garment in multiple different situations.	I don't follow any blogs. I just go shopping when I need something and then I'll be inspired in the store.	1700	Sport, athletes	yes	