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**CONSUMERS' BRAND EXPERIENCES OF
MAGAZINE BRANDS**

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Tässä kvalitatiivisessa pro gradu -työssä tutkittiin kuluttajien brändikokemuksia aikakauslehtien brändeistä. Pääutkimusongelmana oli kuinka kuluttaja kokee aikakauslehden brändin. Alaongelmia olivat seuraavat: mitä ovat brändikokemukset, mitkä ovat brändikokemuksen ulottuvuudet, mitkä konseptit liittyvät brändikokemukseen, kuka on vastuussa brändikokemusten luomisesta ja miten brändikokemuksia luodaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa on analysoitu yhtä avointa kysymystä: kerro meille kokemuksiasi X lehden brändistä. Vastausten perusteella vastaajista muodostettiin kahdeksan ryhmää: Uloskasvaneet, Internet-sivujen käyttäjät, Toistoon kyllästyneet, Vertaistukijat, Nostalgiset, Uskolliset, Tyytyväiset ja Luottavaiset.

Abstract

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This qualitative Master's Thesis studied consumers' brand experiences of magazine brands. The main research problem was how does a consumer experience a magazine's brand. The sub problems were: what are brand experiences and what are the dimensions of brand experience, what concepts are related to brand experience, who is in charge of creating brand experiences, and how experiences are created. One open-ended question was analyzed in this study: tell us your experiences of brand X. On the basis of the answers, eight different groups were formed of the respondents: Outgrows, Website Users, Bored with repetition, Peer Supporters, Nostalgics, Loyals, Satisfieds and Trustings.

Preface

Most of all I would like to thank Professor Olli Kuivalainen for trusting me with this subject to begin with. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to work with this issue. Even though it sounds like a cliché and I might be a bit biased, I really cannot think of a more interesting topic. Professor Sanna-Katriina Asikainen and Professor Sami Saarenketo helped me especially in the beginning of this process by assuring me that I was on the right track. I am grateful for their help. I also need to thank post-doctoral researcher Anssi Tarkiainen.

I would like to thank my parents Inkeri and Hannu for the continuous support they have given me during my academic studies. Their example made me pursue university studies in the first place.

This master's thesis is dedicated to Henry. Everything I do, I do it for you.
RT.

Inka Hyvönen

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1 Introduction

First of all, product or service always comes with an experience (Carbone and Haeckel 1994). In addition, consumers want to have unique and memorable experiences (Carù and Cova 2003; Carù and Cova 2006; Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010). Consumption experience lies between the purchase and its evaluation (Benavent and Evrard 2002). An experience can have important and lasting effect on an individual (Carbone and Haeckel 1994). It has even been said that experience is the brand (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

This master's thesis studies consumers' brand experiences. The context of the study is the magazine publishing industry. The magazine publishing industry has attracted less research attention regardless of the fact that many publishers have extended their brands online (Horppu et al. 2008). The industry at issue has been the center of attention, for example, in the following studies; Auger et al. (2003), BarNir et al. (2003) and Gallagher et al. (2001). It seems that brand experiences have never been studied with magazine publishing industry as a context. Magazine brands are consumed experientially and website extensions of magazine brands are experiential in nature (Tarkiainen et al. 2009). This is why it is very intriguing to study consumers' brand experiences while the context is the magazine publishing industry.

1.1 The objectives and research problems of the study

The purpose of this study is to describe how does a consumer experience a magazine's brand, what exactly are brand experiences and their

dimensions, what brand concepts are closely related to brand experience, who creates brand experiences and how brand experiences are created.

The main research problem is as follows: how does a consumer experience a magazine's brand? The sub problems are:

- What are brand experiences and what are the dimensions of brand experience?
- What concepts are related to brand experience?
- Who is in charge of creating brand experiences?
- How experiences are created?

Next a brief literature review is presented.

1.2 Literature review

Holbrook and Hirschman's 1982 article "The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun" was, without a doubt, the pioneer in the field (Benavent and Evrard 2002; Carù and Cova 2003; Dupuis and Le Jean Savreux 2004; Filser 2002; Frow and Payne 2007; Gentile et al. 2007; Schmitt 2009).

An important stream of research analyses the consumption as a process of producing an experience (Filser 2002). Experiential marketing is a large and fruitful research field (Addis and Holbrook 2001; Dupuis and Le Jean Savreux 2004). Nonetheless, customer experience as a research field is still far from maturity, however, the literature on customer experience is growing fast (Gentile et al. 2007).

Research has mainly ignored the nature and dimensional structure of brand experiences (Brakus et al. 2009). Research into the relationship between brand experience, brand familiarity, brand trust and satisfaction has remained scarce (Ha and Perks 2005). Also, not many studies exist which focus on the success factors of experiential goods (Tarkiainen et al. 2009). Empirical evidence on the impact of the parent brand on online extensions is very limited, too (Horppu et al. 2008).

In the marketing literature the concept of experience has been studied in different contexts, such as consumption experiences, product experiences, aesthetic experiences, service experiences, shopping experiences, and customer experiences. Only recently a concept has been presented that covers all these contexts; the concept of brand experience. (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010).

1.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is presented in figure 1. It shows the layers of the study. The first layer, experiential marketing, is in the background of the whole study. The second layer is the magazine publishing industry, the context of the study. The third layer is consumer as this study is interested in consumers. In the fourth layer brand experience is mentioned first as it is the most important concept in this study. It is followed by the members of its nuclear family; brand experience online and experience creation. After that, concepts relating to brand experience follow; satisfaction, brand trust, loyalty, and website satisfaction, trust and loyalty.

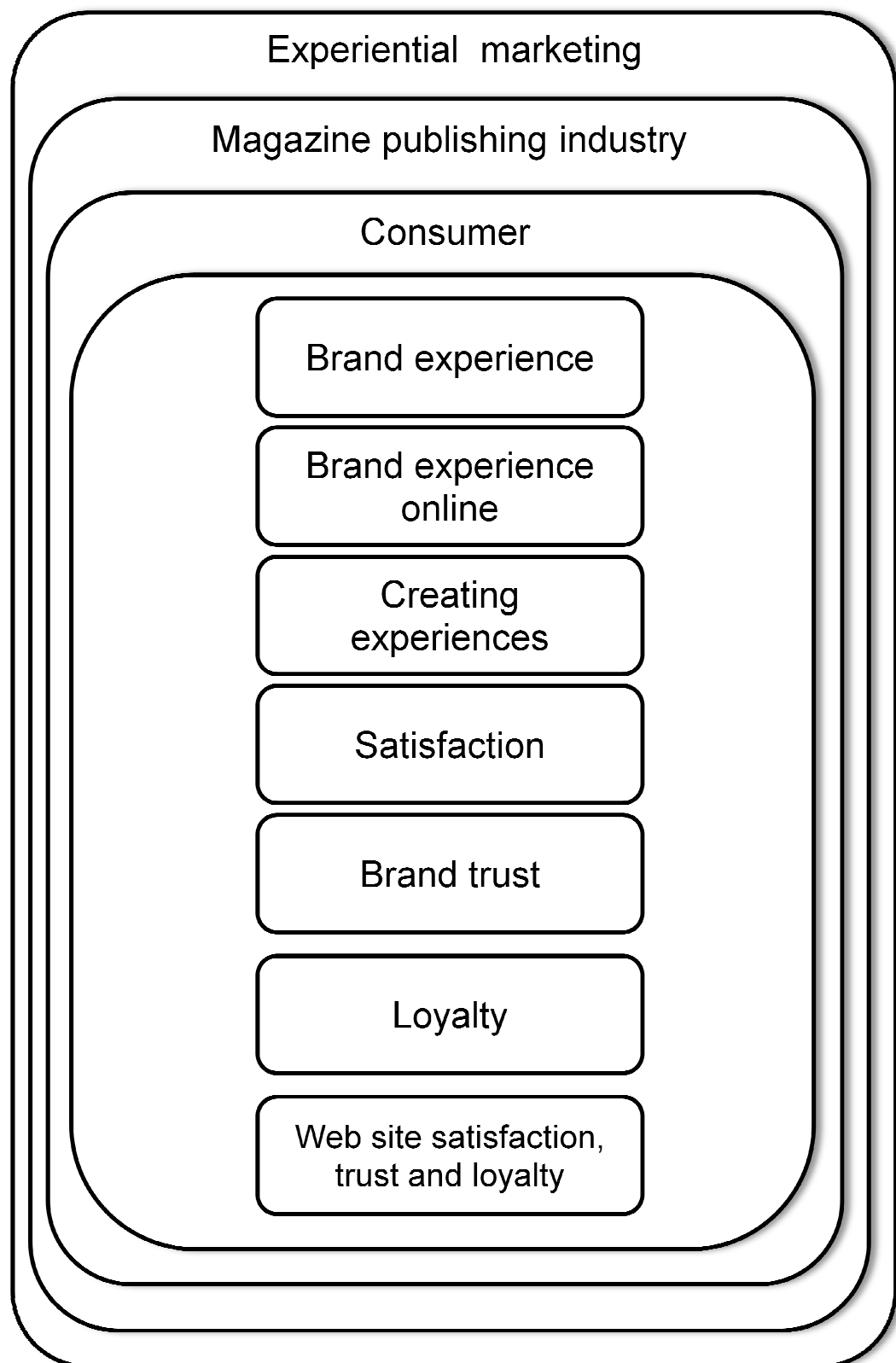


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

1.4 Definitions

Offline brand experience is “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus et al. 2009, 53).

Online brand experience is consumer’s positive navigations and perceptions with a specific website (Ha and Perks 2005).

Brand trust is the willingness of the typical consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function (Ha and Perks 2005).

Brand familiarity is “a store of favorable knowledge about a particular website, accumulated by the consumer’s experience” (Ha and Perks 2005, 442).

Magazine brand is the respondent’s image and expectations of those products’ and services’ quality, values and desirability which carry the magazine’s name (Ellonen et al. 2008).

1.5 Delimitations

This master thesis is done from the view point of the consumer. It does not take into account the magazine publisher's i.e. the company's side. The thesis covers consumer magazines, not trade journals, newspapers or other media. This research does not study concepts such as brand attitudes, brand image, brand involvement, brand attachment, customer delight, and brand personality. It does not strive to explain the antecedents or consequences of brand experience. The results of this study are not meant to be generalized. The following chapter explains the research methodology used in this thesis.

1.6 Research methodology

The data used in this study was collected via an online survey during spring 2007. The announcement of the survey was posted on the magazines' websites and it included a link to an electronic questionnaire. Altogether over 30 magazines were involved in the study. (Ellonen et al. 2008; Tarkiainen et al. 2009). While studying brand experiences, Ha and Perks (2005) have used survey as a method of collecting data. Of the over thirty magazines four magazines were chosen for the purpose of this study. The survey included an open-ended question: tell us your experiences of brand X. That question was analyzed in this study.

Material's analysis starts with finding similarities and differences by sorting and classifying the material (Koskinen et al. 2005, 39). Mere reading of the material alone can produce interesting and reasonable interpretations if it is done analytically and systematically (Koskinen et al. 2005, 241).

Qualitative analysis consists of two phases, simplifying observations and solving the mystery. In simplifying observations there are two parts. Firstly, the material is studied only from a certain perspective. Secondly, observations are combined because it is believed that in the material there are examples or samples of the same phenomenon. (Alasuutari 2007, 39–40). Second phase in qualitative analysis is solving the mystery (Alasuutari 2007, 44). Clues to solving the mystery are also the ways different people have expressed something (Alasuutari 2007, 47). The more clues that fit into the same solution are found, the more likely the solution is right (Alasuutari 2007, 48). How observations are combined in qualitative research can be called qualitative analysis (Alasuutari 2007, 52).

From the material it is possible to raise themes that clarify the research problem. This way one can compare occurring of certain themes in the material. First one has to find and separate the relevant subjects from the material considering the research problem. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 174). With the help of thematizing it is possible to find out from the material a collection of different answers or results (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 179). Categorization refers to grouping the material into types by searching similarities and presenting the material with the help of combined types. Types can describe the material widely, interestingly and economically. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 181).

Brakus et al. (2009) have formed an opinion on what is and what is not a brand experience. Their guidelines have been followed in the analysis. The first chapter ends with a description of the structure of the thesis.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is organized as follows. Firstly, experiential marketing and its counterpart traditional marketing are described. Secondly, brand experience and its related concepts are explained. After that experience creation, senses and their relevance in experiences and costs related to experiences are mentioned in passing. The theoretical part ends with summarizing experiences. Internet is discussed as is magazine publishing industry and magazine websites before moving on to the actual empirical part. The empirical part tells about the four magazines alone before revealing their differences and similarities. Finally, the thesis presents the conclusions, theoretical contribution, managerial implications, as well as limitations and suggestions for further research.

2 Traditional marketing vs. experiential marketing

“To get a better grasp of experiential marketing, let us first take a look at some of the assumptions and practices of traditional marketing” (Schmitt 1999, 55). In addition to Schmitt (1999), for example, Addis and Holbrook (2001), Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) have found it important to first explain traditional marketing before moving on to describe experiential marketing.

Traditional marketing has been developed in response to the industrial age (Schmitt 1999), whereas experiential marketing has been created to meet the needs of the information age. It seems that brand experience seeking customer is the opposite explanation to rational, information

seeking customer (e.g. Addis and Holbrook 2001; Frow and Payne 2007; Gentile et al. 2007). Nonetheless, by comparing the two consumer decision processes, similarities arise. Traditional marketing has presented the famous steps of the process which include need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and consumption (Schmitt 1999). Experiential marketing, on the other hand, lists information search, configuration of products/services, fulfillment and consumption as the phases in the process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Traditional marketing is briefly summarized next.

2.1 Traditional marketing

Different writers use different names when they are talking about the same thing: traditional marketing (Schmitt 1999), traditional system (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), traditional approach (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982), utilitarian consumption (Addis and Holbrook 2001), the information processing view (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) and the classical economic theory (Gentile et al. 2007).

Traditional marketing has four characteristics:

- focus on functional features and benefits
- product category and competition are narrowly defined
- customers are considered as rational decision makers
- methods and tools are analytical, quantitative, and verbal. (Schmitt 1999).

Traditional marketing sees the consumer as a logical thinker whose purchasing decisions are based on rational problem solving (e.g. Gentile et al. 2007; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). The consumer is a computer-like information processing decision maker (Addis and Holbrook 2001). The consumers are rational decision makers who are interested about functional features and benefits (Schmitt 1999). In traditional marketing, consumers have little or no role in value creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Traditional marketing presents an engineering driven, rational, analytical approach of customers, products and competition. Traditional marketing sees products as objects for which the consumer wants to maximize utility. (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). For some consumption experiences the objective features of the product weigh more heavily. This type of customer value is called utilitarian in nature. (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

The information processing view regards the consumer as a problem solver who is searching for information, retrieving memory cues, weighing evidence, and arriving at carefully considered evaluations. It emphasizes only one aspect of hedonic response: like or dislike of a particular brand (attitude) or its rank relative to other brands (preference). (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

The information processing view to consumer research addresses only a small fraction of the data that compose the entire experience of consumption. Even though traditional marketing is valid and useful for goods whose tangible qualities and utilitarian performance serve as the most important determinants of their value to the consumer, it is unsuitable for products whose selection and use is based upon satisfying emotional wants. By focusing determinedly on the consumer as information processor, consumer research has neglected the equally important experiential aspects of consumption, which has limited our understanding

of consumer behavior. Much buyer behavior can be explained usefully by the information processing view. The information processing view should not be abandoned. Instead enriching it with the experiential view could be extremely fruitful. (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Traditional marketing has offered an invaluable set of strategies, implementation tools and methodologies for the industrial age. Now it is essential to shift attention to customer experiences. (Schmitt 1999).

2.2 Experiential marketing

While Schmitt (1999) and Gentile et al. (2007) use the expression experiential marketing, its synonyms include co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), hedonic approach (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982), hedonic consumption (Addis and Holbrook 2001) and experiential view (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

Experiential marketing has four characteristics:

- focus on customer experiences
- focus on consumption as a holistic experience
- customers are rational and emotional human beings
- methods and tools are eclectic. (Schmitt 1999).

Experiential marketing is everywhere. Experiential marketing considers customers as rational and emotional human beings who want to have pleasurable experiences. Consumers want products, communications, and marketing campaigns to deliver an experience. They want products, communications and campaigns that they can relate to and incorporate into their lifestyles. Companies spare no efforts to provide fun and

entertainment for their customers. In a variety of industries, companies have moved towards creating experiences for their customers. (Schmitt 1999).

Products are means to provide and enhance customer experiences. New product and brand extension decisions using experiential marketing are done by looking at three factors: the degree to which the new product and brand extension improves the experiential image of the company or brand, the degree to which new product and brand extensions add new experiences that can be utilized in new product and brand extensions and the degree to which they help in the creation of holistic experiences. (Schmitt 1999).

There are five different types of experiences that companies can create for their customers: sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviors and lifestyles (ACT) and social identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE). SENSE marketing appeals to the senses and has the goal of creating sensory experiences through sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. FEEL marketing appeals to consumers' inner feelings and emotions with the aim of creating affective experiences that vary from mildly positive moods linked to a brand to strong emotions of joy and pride. THINK marketing appeals to the intellect with the goal of creating cognitive, problem solving experiences that engage consumers creatively. ACT marketing appeals to customers by targeting their physical experiences by showing them alternative ways of doing things, alternative lifestyles and interactions. RELATE marketing appeals to consumers by relating the individual to a broader social system. Companies should try to create holistically integrated experiences that possess simultaneously SENSE, FEEL, THINK, ACT and RELATE qualities. (Schmitt 1999).

The experiential view acknowledges the role of emotions in behavior; that consumers are feelers (in addition to thinkers and doers); the importance of symbolism in consumption; and the consumer's need for fun and pleasure. An explosion of subjectivity implies the emerging phenomenon of a more widespread role that individual subjectivity plays in consumption. There is a need to apply the concepts concerning experiential consumption in a wider range of situations. (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

Hirschman and Holbrook (1982, 92) define hedonic consumption as "those facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of one's experience with products". According to them, multisensory means the reception of experience in multiple sensory modalities including tastes, sounds, scents, tactile impressions and visual images. There are two types of internal multisensory images. First, historic imagery involves remembering an event that actually did occur. Second, fantasy imagery happens when the consumer responds by producing a multisensory image not drawn directly from prior experience. Hedonic consumption refers to consumers' multisensory images, fantasies and emotional arousal while using products. (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

Experiential approach focuses on the symbolic, hedonic, and esthetic nature of consumption. Experiential approach views consumption as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a range of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and esthetic criteria. Consumption experience is a phenomenon directed towards the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun. Much relevant fantasy life and many symbolic meanings lie just below the threshold of consciousness i.e. they are subconscious or preconscious. The stream of associations that occur during consumption, like imagery, daydreams and emotions, are important experiential aspects

of consumer behavior. Emotions form an important basis of consumption, and their systematic investigation is vital for the successful application of the experiential approach. (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

One important motive for consumption is the desire to enter or create an altered state of reality. A novel or a play is selected mainly because of its ability to transfer the consumer to a more desirable reality. In hedonic consumption, products are viewed as subjective symbols. All products can be hedonically experienced by consumers. The hedonic approach includes the psychological experiences that accompany product usage. Hedonic responses can be viewed as the essence of the usage experience. Hedonic approach offers a complementary perspective for conceptualizing many neglected consumption phenomena. Hedonic approach might take us farther in understanding the multiple facets of the consumption experience. The hedonic approach does not try to replace traditional theories of consumption but to extend and enhance their applicability. (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982).

It has been suggested that the information processing perspective is dominant in B2B context while B2C markets prefer the experiential perspective. Adopting a suitable combination of these perspectives is important to many organizations. (Frow and Payne 2007).

2.3 Customer value

Distinction can be made between two types of consumer value, namely, utilitarian (functional) value and hedonic (experiential) value. It is crucial to deliver an adequate balance between functional value and experiential value. (Gentile et al. 2007). As is illustrated in figure 2, on the basis of the relative weight of the hedonic value versus the utilitarian value, products can be classified into three groups: hedonic, balanced and utilitarian products (Addis and Holbrook 2001; Gentile et al. 2007). For some consumption experiences the weight of the consumer's subjective response is greater. This kind of customer value is referred to as hedonic in nature. Moreover, some products can have the same (or similar) weightings of both objective features and subjective responses. These experiences and relevant product categories are described balanced in nature. (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

Utilitarian consumption means the consumption of utilitarian products such as a flashlight or a pen. Examples of more hedonic product-related experiences would be responses to plays, movies, books and television shows. The decision making orientation refers to utilitarian consumption while the experiential view refers to hedonic consumption. (Addis and Holbrook 2001). Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010) state that there are holistic consumers who are interested in all aspects of experience and then there are utilitarian consumers who do not attach much importance to brand experience.

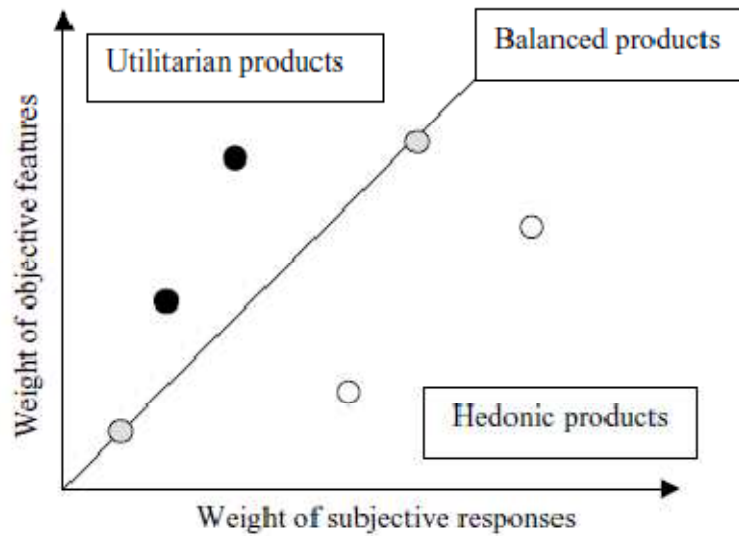


Figure 2. The weights in consumption of products. (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

Products and services can be placed in a continuum. On one end of the continuum are the pure experience products, such as artistic and cultural activities. The other end of the continuum are located the products in which experiential content is minimal, like vacuum cleaner. Right in the middle of the continuum those products are situated which have been created by producing a consumption experience. (Filser 2002).

Next we move on to describe brand experience and its neighboring concepts.

3 Brand experience and related concepts

Brand experience has been studied in relation to other brand concepts. Brand experience is related but also conceptually different from other brand concepts. (Brakus et al. 2009; Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010).

3.1 Brand experience

Brand experiences are actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses. Brand experiences occur in a variety of settings when consumers search for, shop for, and consume brands. Experiences can also happen indirectly, for example, when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communications including websites. Consumers are exposed to brand-related stimuli, like brand-identifying colors, shapes, typefaces, background design elements, slogans, mascots, and brand characters. These brand-related stimuli appear as part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, marketing communications and in environments in which the brand is marketed or sold. Brand experience has four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. The dimensions are evoked by brand-related stimuli. (Brakus et al. 2009).

The level of brand experience can differ (Ha and Perks 2005). Some brand experiences are stronger or more intense than others. Some are more positive than others, and some experiences can even be negative. Some brand experiences happen spontaneously and are short-lived; others happen more deliberately and last longer. Some brand experiences are expected and some unexpected. Brands that consumers are highly involved with are not necessarily brands that evoke the strongest experiences. It is important to apprehend that brand experience does not necessarily require consumption. Brand experiences happen whenever there is a direct or indirect interaction with the brand. (Brakus et al. 2009).

3.2 Brand trust

Brand experience plays a key role in improving brand trust. A consumer who has had inspiring brand experiences trusts the brand. Notable brand experiences considerably influence the brand trust of customers i.e. brand experience significantly affects brand trust. Brand trust is based on a positive consumer experience, for example, with a certain website. Brand trust is achieved with the following dimensions operating and interrelating as antecedent constructs: various brand experiences and the search for information, a high level of brand familiarity and customer satisfaction based on cognitive and emotional factors. (Ha and Perks 2005).

3.3 Brand familiarity

Brand experience plays a key role in improving brand familiarity. An array of brand experiences increase familiarity with the brand. Positive brand experiences affect brand familiarity. Improving a customer's brand experience leads to greater familiarity towards the website. (Ha and Perks 2005).

3.4 Satisfaction

Brand experience affects consumer satisfaction (Brakus et al. 2009; Ha and Perks 2005) and consumer loyalty directly and indirectly (Brakus et al. 2009). If a brand evokes an experience, this alone might lead to satisfaction and loyalty. (Brakus et al. 2009).

Consumer's positive experiences from the magazine's website increase his satisfaction and trust to the magazine brand. After a consumer is satisfied with a brand, he will eventually start trusting the brand which can lead to loyalty towards the brand. Brand satisfaction and brand trust have a positive influence on brand loyalty among the readers of magazines. Satisfaction with the magazine brand, trust towards the magazine brand and brand loyalty all increase the time spent on the magazine's websites. (Ellonen et al. 2008).

3.5 Loyalty

Customers want to live positive consumption experiences. Living a positive customer experience can create an emotional tie between a firm's brand and its customers which then enhance customer loyalty. (Gentile et al. 2007). Naturally, the final aim in brand relationship development is a customer who is loyal to the brand (Horppu et al. 2008).

Some magazine brands' Internet extensions are more successful than others. Just as likely, the effect of these extensions on parent brand loyalty is likely to be stronger than with less successful extensions. The positive influence of loyalty towards website extension on parent magazine brand loyalty is higher when the website content is frequently updated. Loyalty to the website extension positively affects loyalty to the parent magazine brand and this relationship is stronger with magazines that offer news for their readers on their websites. Spending time on the magazine website will reinforce attachment and loyalty to the brand. The more loyal consumers are towards the magazine website, the more behavioral brand loyalty they will show towards the parent brand. (Tarkiainen et al. 2009).

3.6 Brand experience online

A strong offline brand supports online experiences. Companies with well known offline brands might find some help from the halo effect when trying to set up a new presence on the web. This is because customers are more open to online offerings from familiar and trustworthy brands. (Horppu et al. 2008).

Delivering a compelling customer experience is even more important online than offline. In order to achieve competitive advantage on the Internet, it is vital to create a compelling online experience for cyber customers. A consumer's skill at using the web and his perceived control over his online actions are a function of his online experience. The Internet is an alternative real, computer-mediated environment in which the online customer experience becomes paramount. The web combines experiential and goal-directed behaviors. A compelling online customer experience is positively correlated with fun, recreational and experiential uses of the web, expected use of the web in the future and the amount of time consumers spend online. (Novak et al. 2000).

Brand experience is the preliminary state to consumers' shopping online. Shopping online is leading to a mounting variety of consumer experiences. Online stores are just as likely to try to influence consumers' shopping behavior through atmosphere and service as offline stores. Consumers' experiences play a vital role in building a long-term and successful business on the Internet. Online customers expect websites to offer them a positive experience. (Ha and Perks 2005).

3.7 Website satisfaction, trust and loyalty

Brand level experiences influence online satisfaction, trust and loyalty differently, depending on the customer's relationship with the brand. Parent brand satisfaction has a positive influence on website satisfaction and loyalty. Trust in the parent brand leads to trust in the website. Brand level experiences have a positive influence on website brand loyalty, and the importance of building that kind of loyalty cannot be overestimated. Website satisfaction has a positive influence on website trust. Website trust has a positive influence on website loyalty. (Horppu et al. 2008).

Considerable amounts of money are invested to develop additional services in order to deliver superior website experiences. Subscription to newsletter or consumer magazine reflects the interest of the customer in the brand. Newsletter and consumer magazine improve website loyalty and brand image and purchase intent. Consumer magazine and newsletter subscribers are more likely website loyal and show more favorable attitude towards the brand and purchase the brand. Consumers who are satisfied with their overall website experience are more likely to revisit and recommend the website and develop more positive attitudes towards the brand. (Müller et al. 2008).

After explaining brand experience and its neighboring concepts we will move on to discuss how experiences are created.

4 Creating experiences

When it comes to experiences, there are three different ways they can be created: experiences are created by customers, experiences are co-created by companies and customers, experiences are created by companies (Gentile et al. 2007). However, of these possible options co-creation has gotten by far the most support as e.g. Benavent and Evrard (2002), Carù and Cova (2006), Frow and Payne (2007) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) have spoken on its behalf.

At the moment, companies are not creating superior customer experiences, even though they think they are (Frow and Payne 2007). Companies do not offer experiences, but have to manage and create experiential contexts in which consumers themselves can create their own pleasant and even unforgettable brand experiences (Carù and Cova 2006). Companies should identify opportunities for co-creation: the customer can actively participate in achieving the perfect customer experience (Frow and Payne 2007). Experiential contexts have always existed. What is new is that companies have started organizing these contexts. Experience is a subjective episode lived by the customer in interaction with the company's offer. (Carù and Cova 2006).

A company goes through different stages: first, it is a company pursuing traditional product and service marketing approach. After that it changes into a company adopting experiential marketing approach, and finally the company enters the co-creation stage. In the co-creation stage the company provides the consumer with the basic platform and raw materials that the consumer uses to mold and obtain his own experience. (Gentile et al. 2007). The consumer becomes a player in his own experience in the midst of everything the company has created. If the experience has been

strong and pleasant, the consumer will want to repeat it. (Dupuis and Le Jean Savreux 2004). The control of the consumption experience becomes an essential goal for the company (Benavent and Evrard 2002).

In the future value has to be jointly created by both the company and the consumer. In all variations of consumer involvement, from self-checkout to participation in staged experiences, the company is still in charge of the overall organization of the experience. Opportunities for value creation are enhanced considerably for companies that accept the concepts of personalized co-creation experience as the source of unique value. Co-creation focuses on consumer-company interaction as the locus of value creation. In the co-creation approach, all points of interaction between the company and the consumer are opportunities for value creation and extraction. The company and the consumer are both collaborators and competitors. They are collaborators in co-creating value and competitors for the extraction of economic value. When the experience is co-created the company might still produce a physical product. However, the focus shifts to the characteristics of the total experience environment. The market is a space of potential co-creation experiences in which individual constraints define their willingness to pay for experiences. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

The meaning of value and the process of value creation are quickly moving from a product and firm centric approach to personalized consumer experiences. As value shifts to experiences, the market will become a forum for conversation and interactions between consumers, consumer communities, and companies. In the future, new approaches and tools consistent with a new experience-based view of economic theory will emerge. Unless we make a shift from a firm centric approach to a co-creation approach on value creation, co-extraction of economic value by communities of consumers will only make it more difficult for companies

to develop sustainable competitive advantage. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

Next a very brief overview on senses and their meaning for experiences is presented.

4.1 Senses and experiences

The more senses an experience engages the more effective and memorable it can be (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Several products project important nonverbal cues that must be seen, heard, tasted, felt or smelled in order to be appreciated appropriately (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Customers are driven by what they see, hear, feel, taste and smell (Addis and Holbrook 2001), although nothing is more evocative of certain experiences than sounds and smells (Carbone and Haeckel 1994). Whenever a clear link between the core functionality of a product and a sense could be established (for example, Gatorade/taste) then that specific sensorial component was perceived as being the most relevant for the user (Gentile et al. 2007).

Before summarizing everything we know about experiences, their financial side is discussed.

4.2 Revenues and costs

Companies who offer digital information goods do not know how to price, package, and market their products. They also have difficulties with determining the appropriate revenue model mix. Many publishers have tried to change their online content from free to fee but have not succeeded. Online offerings often rely on a variety of revenue streams, including banner ads, subscriptions, and affiliate programs. (Gallaughier et al. 2001).

There are two types of incurred expenses from experience production, namely investment costs like interior and exterior architecture and management costs such as communication costs (Dupuis and Le Jean Savreux 2004). Information goods have high fixed costs and low marginal costs. After the first copy of information good has been generated, most costs are sunk and cannot be recovered. But, there is an unlimited capacity for the reproduction of identical copies. (Gallaughier et al. 2001). The production of media content can be characterized by high fixed costs during the production of the original copy and low reproduction costs. Another trait of media products is non-rivalry in consumption which means that the number sold does not decrease the value to other customers. (Benlian and Hess 2007).

There is a positive relationship between the performance of an online effort and

- the company's sale of online advertising space
- the offering of fee-based subscriptions to the company's online services
- the offering of online subscriptions to the company's print version
- the company's selling of content to other online companies and services. (Gallaughier et al. 2001).

One can measure the performance of experience production with, for example, how many percent describe the company as unique, how many visitors does the store have and the more traditional turnover and ROI (Dupuis and Le Jean Savreux 2004). Consumers' migration to new media and their sifting expectations, the possibility to market to an increasingly diverse customer base, and the differences of digital versus physical products create numerous options for revenue generation (Gallaughier et al. 2001).

This chapter ends with presenting a summary of experiences.

4.3 Summary of experiences

The dimensions of the customer experience are:

- sensorial component which can address all five senses
- emotional component which involves one's affective system through the generation of moods, feelings and emotions
- cognitive component which is connected with thinking or conscious mental processes
- pragmatic component which is coming from the practical act of doing something
- lifestyle component comes from the affirmation of the system of values and the beliefs of the person often through the adoption of a lifestyle and behaviors
- relational component involves the person and his social context, his relationship with other people or also with his ideal self. (Gentile et al. 2007).

Experiences have to meet a customer need; they have to work and be deliverable. Experiences can be divided into four categories: entertainment, educational, escapist and esthetic. Experiences are personal and they exist solely in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual level. It is impossible for two consumers to have the same experience. (Pine and Gilmore 1998).

Successful products involve customers' senses, emotions, thoughts, acts, values and relations in different ways. These products leverage more than one experiential component while the particular combination depends on

the characteristics of the product itself. Customer experience notices the emotional and irrational side of customer behavior which accounts for the whole experience between a company and its customers. Such experience is crucial in determining the customer's preferences which then effect purchase decision. (Gentile et al. 2007).

There are five principles in designing memorable experiences:

- theme the experience
- harmonize impressions with positive cues
- eliminate negative cues
- mix in memorabilia
- engage all five senses. (Pine and Gilmore 1998).

There are basically five contexts to have brand experiences: brand stores, brand plants, brand fests, brand websites and brand tales. In those contexts, the consumer can have shopping experience, factory experience, festival experience, virtual experience and fictional experience, respectively. (Carù and Cova 2006).

The experience factor plays a major role in determining the success of a company's offering (Gentile et al. 2007). Consumers desire experiences while more and more companies are responding by designing and promoting experiences. An experience happens when a firm intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage customers and creates an unforgettable event. Companies stage an experience whenever they engage consumers in a personal, memorable way. The customer experiences companies create will matter the most. (Pine and Gilmore 1998).

5 The Internet and its possibilities

Internet is playing an increasingly important role in everyday operations of many businesses. Internet can disrupt industries and assist a company in creating competitive advantages. Companies use the Internet to support their strategy so that it will help them compete in their environment. (Auger et al. 2003).

Digitizing business processes means using the Internet to conduct business. Internet-enabled digitization of business processes is related to both strategies of innovation and strategies of low cost. Established companies digitize their processes to a greater degree than newer companies. Larger companies make more use of the Internet for marketing purposes than smaller companies. In other words, being established and large accelerates the digitization of business processes. This is because established and large companies possess resources that support the digitization of business processes. Having experience in managing roles and processes helps introducing technologies needed for digitization. Shortly, large and established companies might be more inclined to digitize their business processes because of their resources and standing in the marketplace. (BarNir et al. 2003).

5.1 Discussion forums

Especially new technologies encourage whole new genres of experience, such as interactive games, discussion forums, and multiplayer games (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Website marketers should foster communities where customers can share their experiences. Investing in so-called community building infrastructure, such as discussion forums, is likely to

support the range and diversity of brand experiences. (Ha and Perks 2005). Discussion forums are very helpful to find out customer attitudes and experiences. (Horppu et al. 2008).

If a consumer has positive experiences with a magazine brand, this will help success online as well. This manifests as larger number of times the websites are visited, the time spent there, and more active participating in discussion forums. Reading the discussion forums increased the intention to read and subscribe the print magazine in the future. Interestingly, in order to spend time in the discussion forums, brand trust is not necessary. (Ellonen et al. 2008).

5.2 Flow on the web

Flow on the web is a cognitive state experienced during surfing that is determined by high levels of skill and control, high levels of challenge and arousal, focused attention and is enhanced by interactivity. Consumers who achieve flow on the web are so intensely involved in the act of online navigation that thoughts and perceptions not relevant to navigation are left out and the person focuses entirely on the interaction. Concentration on the navigation experience is so intense that there is little attention left to think about anything else. Other events happening in the consumer's surrounding physical environment lose significance. Self-consciousness disappears, sense of time becomes distorted and the state of mind arising as a result of achieving flow on the web is extremely satisfying. Greater skill at using the web and greater perceived control during the web interaction leads to greater flow while using the web. (Novak et al. 2000).

Next the characteristics and nature of the magazine publishing industry, which is the focus of this study, is explained.

5.3 Magazine publishing industry

Characteristics of the magazine publishing industry:

- products have the potential to be fully digitized (BarNir et al. 2003; Gallagher et al. 2001)
- Internet presence could potentially benefit both the expansion of markets and internal efficiencies (Gallagher et al. 2001)
- significant numbers of companies have adopted online activity (BarNir et al. 2003; Gallagher et al. 2001).

The magazine industry is experiencing rapid growth which has resulted in tough competition situation. The magazine industry is competitive in nature. For example, in 2004 in the USA alone 480 new consumer magazines were launched. (Davidson et al. 2007).

Magazine publishers who have offered their products in physical form are now pursuing digital versions (Auger et al. 2003; Gallagher et al. 2001). Products that were distributed as physical goods can now be delivered in entirely digital form (Gallagher et al. 2001). Products that can be represented digitally are called information goods (Auger et al. 2003). The information product of publishing companies is called experience good (Gallagher et al. 2001).

In the magazine industry websites can be taken as substitutes for the print magazine especially if the content overlaps. In the media industry the Internet has been one of the most widely used ways of extending the established brand. Even though the printed magazine is a tangible product, its consumption lies in experiencing something new by reading its intangible content. When it comes to consumer magazines, readers expect every issue of the magazine to provide new experiences even though the brand choice does not change. If the consumption offers desired experiences, it is more likely that the reader will search for similar experiences with the same brand, which leads to repeat consumption behavior. Put simply, positive experiences will result in behavioral loyalty towards the magazine brand. (Tarkiainen et al. 2009).

Magazines are by nature a solitary consumer product. Yet, magazines can act as a catalyst for discussion among consumers. A consumer will likely read a magazine alone, but he might share the content with other people. Word-of-mouth communication is common when it comes to magazine brands. Interaction with other readers strengthens the shared identity of the group and reinforces the feeling of attachment. There are three different perceptions of magazine loyalty: those who believe that loyalty means reading the magazine, those who think that it refers to purchasing regularly and those who reckon that it means uninterrupted purchasing or subscribing. (Davidson et al. 2007).

Magazine publishers can use the Internet to carry out the components of their value chain. At best, this could lead to cost savings, better efficiency and improved customer relations. At worst, it can lead to violations of intellectual property rights, the alienation of the traditional middlemen and loss of advertising income due to lower circulation of the print magazine. Naturally, companies operating in a highly competitive business

environment, like magazine publishers, behave differently than companies who operate in a less competitive environment. (Auger et al. 2003).

It is highly possible for magazine brands to support brand communities and very likely that brand communities form around magazine brands. There is a strong connection between brand community formation and loyalty. Attachment to a magazine brand can lead to imagined communities which mean that readers see themselves as belonging to a collective group of readers who all share a passion and interest for the magazine. There are five factors that predispose a brand to community formation and magazines often possess all of these factors: a defined brand image, aspects of hedonism, rich and lengthy history, public consumption and threatening competition. (Davidson et al. 2007).

5.4 Magazine websites

Consumers want to keep in touch with the magazine brands which are important to them also between dates of publication. This can be achieved with the magazine's websites. (Ellonen et al. 2008; Tarkiainen et al. 2009). A website can complement a print magazine in different ways. Firstly, it enables more frequent communication with the magazine's readers. Secondly, the readers themselves can communicate with each other. Both ways offer something that cannot be obtained from the print magazine but will complement it. (Tarkiainen et al. 2009).

Magazine's websites support the magazine brand and the print magazine. Positive experiences in the magazine's websites reinforce consumer's commitment to the magazine brand. Using the magazine's websites strengthens the consumer's intentions to read and subscribe the print

magazine. Creating and sustaining strong brands is more and more important to magazines. (Ellonen et al. 2008).

The reputation of a company that generates information, such as a magazine, may be inherited by the online services. Some consumers see substantial value to the online offering that exceed those of the print version alone. Rather than cannibalizing a magazine's physical sales the companies are actually finding that their online presence has increased the sales of print publications. (Gallaughier et al. 2001).

A magazine's website is linked to all of its functions and to the business model elements that are very important to its success. The website complements the print magazine. The website enhances the customer experience and adds new dimensions to the magazine's business model. (Kuivalainen et al. 2007).

Now that the magazine publishing industry has been presented, we move on to the actual empirical part of this thesis.

6 Data

The empirical part aims to provide an answer to the main research problem: how does a consumer experience a magazine's brand? The data was collected via an online survey during spring 2007 in cooperation with the magazines. The announcement of the survey was posted on the magazines' websites and it included a link to an electronic questionnaire. Altogether over 30 magazines were involved in the study. (Ellonen et al. 2008; Tarkiainen et al. 2009). Of those, four non-competing magazines

were chosen for the purpose of this study. They were named Baby and pregnancy magazine, Tech magazine, Teen magazine and Computer magazine. The names describe rather well the content of each magazine. The actual brand names of the magazines will not be disclosed. In this thesis one open-ended question from the survey is analyzed: tell us your experiences of brand X. The length of the answers varied considerably.

Especially in mature markets brand experience represents an important means to attract the consumers towards the brand and make them loyal to the brand (Carù and Cova 2006). Magazine publishing industry which is the context of this study is an example of mature markets. All the four magazines use the same brand in the print version and in their websites. Using the same brand name in different channels is an attempt to leverage the brand's equity (Tarkiainen et al. 2009). One can expect that the brand experiences described in this data have at least generally speaking happened at the consumers' homes. Consumer can have a brand experience outside of experiential contexts, for example, in his home with the brand's products (Carù and Cova 2006).

A brand experience is an individual's experience as he interacts with a brand, every time he interacts with that brand. Every interaction an individual has with a brand contributes to his overall perception of the brand. Brand experience is either positive, negative, or neutral. Each experience an individual has with a brand effects how the individual perceives the brand and its parent company. (Landa 2006).

Brand experiences are not general evaluative judgments about the brand such as I like the brand. They include specific sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses caused by brand-related stimuli. Experiences might include specific feelings. Experiences might result in

general evaluations and attitudes, particularly evaluations of the experience itself, such as I like the experience. (Brakus et al. 2009).

Brakus et al.'s (2009) above guidelines have been followed while analyzing the data. The aim has been to form groups from the respondents that would describe them in the best possible ways.

6.1 Baby and pregnancy magazine

Baby and pregnancy magazine had 875 respondents. Of these respondents, 205 i.e. 23 % responded to the open-ended question studied in this thesis. There were a couple of men who had answered the Baby and pregnancy magazine's survey. However, none of them had answered the research question studied here and they were hence excluded. Baby and pregnancy magazine's circulation has fluctuated in this millennium (Baby and pregnancy magazine has one main competitor, and also its circulation has fluctuated.) (Levikintarkastus 2009). Possible explanation could be that there are fluctuations in how many babies are born each year, too. Another, though less likely, option is that there have been differences in the amounts that have been spent on advertising by Baby and pregnancy magazine in different years.

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents. When it comes to Baby and pregnancy magazine, almost all respondents are 16 to 39 years old.

Table 1. The ages of Baby and pregnancy magazine's respondents.

1,4 %	49,4 %	44 %	4,6 %	0,7 %	0 %
less than 16 years	16-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-60 years	over 60 years

Table 2 answers to the question how many years have you read the Baby and pregnancy magazine. The answers ranged from not at all to over eight years, though the majority has read it less than four years. Table 3 provides the answer to how many years have you used the Baby and pregnancy website. Those answers varied from less than a year to ten years, the most popular answer being one year. Generally speaking, Baby and pregnancy magazine's website and its discussion forums are very active and popular and the website has almost 30 000 visitors every week (Horppu et al. 2008).

Table 2. Years read Baby and Pregnancy magazine.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
not at all	33	3,8 %
less than 1	170	19,4 %
1	117	13,4 %
2	148	16,9 %
3	114	13 %
4	81	9,3 %
5	63	7,2 %
6	43	4,9 %
7	30	3,4 %
8	21	2,4 %
over 8	55	6,3 %
total	875	100 %

Table 3. Years used Baby and Pregnancy website.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
less than 1	16	1,8 %
1	207	23,7 %
2	128	14,6 %
3	164	18,7 %
4	123	14,1 %
5	97	11,1 %
6	68	7,8 %
7	28	3,2 %
8	17	1,9 %
9	7	0,8 %
10	20	2,3 %
total	875	100 %

Table 4 presents how many percent of Baby and pregnancy magazine's answers were positive (71 %), negative (9 %) and neutral (20 %). The great majority of the respondents had positive brand experiences from Baby and pregnancy brand.

Table 4. Positive, negative and neutral brand experiences in Baby and pregnancy magazine.

positive	negative	neutral
71 %	9 %	20 %

There were a few readers who mentioned that they felt that the content of the Baby and pregnancy magazine is too superficial; however, the most common answer in the Baby and pregnancy data was satisfaction. In other words, when asked about experiences many stated that they were satisfied. It seems that they think that satisfaction *is* their experience of the Baby and pregnancy brand.

One would expect that women who read the Baby and pregnancy magazine are either pregnant or already have babies. Somewhat surprisingly, it seems that reading of the magazine can start before that.

"It was the first product of this industry that I've become acquainted with already when I was a girl and only dreaming of a family."

"Even before I was pregnant with my first child I read the Baby and pregnancy magazine actively, mainly in the library."

So when do women stop reading the Baby and pregnancy magazine? The answer to this question is more obvious. Women give up on the Baby and pregnancy magazine when their children have grown and are toddlers.

"I consider the Baby and pregnancy magazine to be reliable and professionally edited but I feel it's not necessary in my life situation any more (my children are between 3 and 6 years old)."

"I've been a subscriber when my kids were babies, now that they are toddlers, I feel that the Y magazine is more useful to me."

As with any so-called stage of life magazine, every year for some people the Baby and pregnancy magazine is not current anymore, while it becomes current for others.

Some respondents did not read Baby and pregnancy magazine at all anymore. Instead they used the Baby and pregnancy websites. They were especially fond of the discussion forum. This group of women is called The Website Users.

The Website Users:

"Since the baby came I haven't read the magazine but I visit the discussion forum often."

Like the name of the magazine already states, there are no articles of toddlers or older children in the Baby and pregnancy magazine. However, Baby and pregnancy websites and especially the discussion forum offer a place where parents of toddlers (or older children) can continue with the Baby and pregnancy brand which they hesitate to leave.

Some of Baby and pregnancy magazine readers expressed their thoughts about how the magazine is self-repeating. They were bored with the repetition. Hence, this group of women is named the BWRs, the bored with repetition.

The BWRs (=bored with repetition):

“It’s ok but it repeats itself too much after one year of reading.”

“Sometimes I feel like the magazine is repeating itself.”

It seems that boredom (with repetition) can be some women’s brand experience from the Baby and pregnancy brand. Unfortunately for them, consumer magazines are repetitive by nature.

Some respondents of Baby and pregnancy talked about their feelings towards peer support. They felt that peer support available in the discussion forum was very important to them. These women are called the Peer Supporters.

The Peer Supporters:

“Peer support in the discussion forum has been really important! I’m glad these people exist!”

Only Baby and pregnancy magazine had Peer Supporters. It seems logical that in a time when one is (for the first time) responsible for another human being peer support is welcomed.

Of the groups found from Baby and pregnancy brand it is possible to conclude that the BWRs are talking about experiences they have had with the Baby and pregnancy magazine, while the Website Users and the Peer Supporters are referring to their experiences from the Baby and pregnancy websites.

6.2 Teen magazine

Teen magazine had 305 people who answered to the survey while 146 i.e. 48 % of them responded to the open-ended question. When it comes to Teen magazine, there were a handful of boys who had responded to the survey. However, none of the boys had answered the studied question so the sample comprises of only female participants. In this millennium, Teen magazine’s circulation grew until 2005, when it reached its highest point. The next three years it steadily declined. (Levikintarkastus 2009).

There is not an obvious reason to be found for the decline. (Unfortunately it cannot be speculated whether, for example, Teen magazine had cut its

promotion budget since this information is not available.) If there would have been some drastic changes in the content or subject area of the articles it is likely that at least some of the respondents would have mentioned it. It is reasonable to expect that the magazine has not changed since no answers depicting this are to be found. How about have the readers themselves changed? Of course every year there are girls who become too old for a teen magazine but at the same time there are girls who become teenagers. As with any magazine so strongly tied to a certain stage of life, as some stop reading the magazine, some are only starting. Is it possible that Teen websites would have lured the readers away from the magazine? Time is limited, even when it comes to teenagers' free time. It is possible that today social media takes up so much of the teens' free time that they have less and less time for other hobbies, for example reading a magazine.

Basically all respondents of Teen magazine were from less than 16 to 24 years old with few exceptions as can be seen from Table 5.

Table 5. The ages of Teen magazine's respondents.

41,4 %	57,2 %	0,7 %	0,7 %	0 %	0 %
less than 16 years	16-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-60 years	over 60 years

Table 6 depicts how many years the respondents have read Teen magazine. The answers varied from not at all to five years, though there were a few respondents who had read it longer. The respondents who had been reading two, three or four years comprised 67,5 % of the respondents. Quite a large figure, over 10 %, stated that they had not read Teen magazine at all. Table 7 depicts how long the respondents had used

Teen magazine website. The answers varied from less than a year to five years (few had used longer).

Table 6. Years read Teen magazine.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
not at all	34	11,1 %
less than 1	13	4,3 %
1	16	5,2 %
2	69	22,6 %
3	77	25,2 %
4	60	19,7 %
5	24	7,9 %
6	6	2 %
7	3	1 %
8	1	0,3 %
over 8	2	0,7 %
total	305	100 %

Table 7. Years used Teen website.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
less than 1	38	12,5 %
1	49	16,1 %
2	73	23,9 %
3	83	27,2 %
4	33	10,8 %
5	13	4,3 %
6	6	2 %
7	5	1,6 %
8	1	0,3 %
9	4	1,3 %
10	0	0 %
total	305	100 %

Table 8 shows that 64 % of Teen magazine readers had positive brand experiences, while 14 % of them had negative experiences and 22 % neutral. Teen magazine's neutral answers include almost exclusively respondents that had both positive and negative experiences.

Table 8. Positive, negative and neutral brand experiences in Teen magazine.

positive	negative	neutral
64 %	14 %	22 %

Teen magazine had some readers who were bored. More specifically, they were tired with the magazine's content repeating itself.

The BWRs (=bored with repetition):

"Magazine's articles repeat the same old. I subscribed Teen magazine for five years and the same things started to repeat."

"Teen magazine repeats itself too much sometimes."

"The articles repeat themselves according to seasons."

Someone had paid attention to the fact that seasons are an important factor that dictate the content (and repetition) of the magazine. Could the repetition and that some were bored with it explain the circulation's decline?

Some respondents of Teen magazine describe their behavior. They explain how they do not read the Teen magazine at all but they visit the Teen magazine's websites. Well-deserved they are named the Website Users.

The Website Users:

"When I was a teenager I had to have Teen magazine every month, nowadays I might glance Teen magazine if I have nothing else to do. I visit Teen magazine's websites often."

"I never read the magazine; I only use the websites discussion forum. I especially like the forum because it's so active."

"I don't like the magazine but I go to the discussion forum almost every day."

"Teen magazine website has my favorite discussion forum in the Internet, I like that different kind of people come here, even those who don't belong to the Teen magazine's target group."

"As a magazine Teen magazine is really boring and repeating itself and the target group is more six to eight grader girls than thirteen to nineteen year old girls. Teen magazine's discussion forum is the best discussion forum directed to young people."

Like with Baby and pregnancy magazine, it is safe to say that Teen magazine's websites are a continuum to Teen magazine. It is acceptable to visit the websites of Teen even if one is a bit older.

Some participants describe their thoughts of growing up or more specifically growing out of Teen as a brand. They are called the Outgrows.

The Outgrows:

“It was a nice magazine when I was way younger.”

“The magazine is suitable for 12 to 15 years; I find the articles are somewhat childish. I’ve outgrown from the magazine’s target group.”

“I’m a bit outgrown, but I liked it when I was a teenager.”

“I don’t think I’ll be reading the magazine in the future, because I might be a bit too old”.

“The magazine was good then, now I’m so past target audience that there hasn’t been anything interesting in the magazine for years.”

Only Teen magazine had people belonging to the group Outgrows. The Outgrows feel that they have simply grown out of the whole Teen brand. It could be questioned though do people who have really grown out of something visit the websites, which they have had to do in order to participate in the survey?

The survey prompted to talk about feelings. One group of respondents is named the Nostalgics. The Nostalgics long for the good old days.

The Nostalgics:

“Good magazine even though it has become more boring lately.”

“Teen magazine has gotten worse.”

It is very likely that the nostalgia related to Teen magazine is due to the fact that the readers themselves have grown up. The magazine itself probably has not changed that much, but as the readers have become (almost) adults, of course the content directed to teens seems childish.

The groups formed from the Teen magazine’s answers are the BWRs, the Website Users, the Outgrows and the Nostalgics.

6.3 Computer magazine

From the 325 people who responded to the Computer magazine’s survey, 162 i.e. 50 % answered to the open-ended question studied here. Computer magazine’s circulation peaked in 2006. Two years later it had plummeted a staggering ten percent. (Levikintarkastus 2009). During the time of the survey (spring 2007), Computer magazine had recently merged with another magazine and this was generally seen as a negative thing. It

is obvious that the decrease in Computer magazine's circulation coincides with the merger.

Computer magazine had respondents from less than 16 to over 60 years old. However, the majority (62 %) were 16 to 29 years old. (see Table 9).

Table 9. The ages of Computer magazine's respondents.

7,4 %	62,2 %	16,6 %	9,2 %	3,4 %	1,2 %
less than 16 years	16-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-60 years	over 60 years

Over 40 % of Computer magazine respondents had been reading the magazine over eight years, and naturally almost 60 % had read it a shorter period of time. How the 60 % is divided shows more precisely in Table 10. Table 11 shows that the respondents had been using the Computer magazine website from less than a year to nine years. No length was clearly more popular than the others.

Table 10. Years read Computer magazine.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
not at all	17	5,2 %
less than 1	13	4 %
1	7	2,2 %
2	19	5,8 %
3	33	10,2 %
4	28	8,6 %
5	32	9,8 %
6	21	6,5 %
7	13	4 %
8	9	2,8 %
over 8	133	40,9 %
total	325	100 %

Table 11. Years used Computer website.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
less than 1	14	4,3 %
1	8	2,5 %
2	22	6,8 %
3	42	12,9 %
4	50	15,4 %
5	51	15,7 %
6	37	11,4 %
7	20	6,2 %
8	23	7,1 %
9	58	17,8 %
10	0	0 %
total	325	100 %

Computer magazine's answers showed some very alarming results since only 41 % told that they had had positive brand experiences, a whopping 39 % of them negative and 20 % neutral (see Table 12). Negative answers in Computer magazine were notably longer than the positive ones (which were at their simplest "ok"). The neutral answers included criticism towards the survey in general.

Table 12. Positive, negative and neutral brand experiences in Computer magazine.

positive	negative	neutral
41 %	39 %	20 %

The merger or rather the complaints of it are the prevailing theme in the answers of the Computer magazine. It seems very clear that Computer magazine's readers have not only explained about their feelings of disappointment in this survey, according to circulation they have also changed their behavior. However, data proves that there were also satisfied readers. In addition to that, there were even loyal readers. Some readers explained how they have been loyal to the Computer magazine for years. That group of people was hence named the Loyals.

The Loyals:

"I've been a subscriber since the beginning."

Like Baby and pregnancy magazine and Teen magazine, Computer magazine had readers who were tired with the repetition in the magazine.

The BWRs (=bored with repetition):

"Too bad the articles are really really simple and repetitive."

The Nostalgics want to bring back the old Computer magazine. They describe their (even bitter) feelings related to the changes in the content of Computer magazine.

The Nostalgics:

"Computer magazine was my favorite magazine for years and I felt it was very useful and entertaining. During this year the magazine has changed a lot and it includes only few articles that I'm interested in."

"The magazine has gotten worse lately, I don't read it anymore."

"Computer magazine I subscribed years ago doesn't exist anymore. It's a completely different magazine today."

"Has been slowly ruined over the last five years."

"I subscribed it back in 1997 when I got my first computer but the magazine's standard has gotten worse constantly. I'll probably stop subscribing it because the magazine doesn't teach me anything new anymore."

"It used to be better when it was more of a computer magazine."

"I hope I could find a magazine that would be like Computer magazine five years ago."

Computer magazine's readers' nostalgia is probably due to the fact that the magazine actually has changed. It has gone through a merger with

another magazine. That changed the content of the magazine permanently. The merged magazine was technology related, but still it has brought along the change that the new Computer magazine includes articles that are not related to the computing world.

The groups that emerged from the Computer magazine's survey were the Loyals, the BWRs and the Nostalgics.

6.4 Tech magazine

Tech magazine had altogether 332 respondents, and 129 i.e. 39 % of them answered to the question studied here. Tech magazine's circulation grew until it reached a certain level in 2007, after which it stayed in the same level the year after that (Levikintarkastus 2009). The fact that the magazine's circulation did not grow in 2008 might reflect the worldwide recession which started that fall. The recession effected many areas, including car sales figures. Cars are one of the subject areas Tech magazine writes about.

Tech magazine respondents' age varied from less than 16 to over 60 years old. The group from 30 to 49 years old represented 57 % of the respondents. This shows in Table 13.

Table 13. The ages of Tech magazine's respondents.

3,6 %	14,2 %	26,8 %	29,8 %	18,7 %	6,9 %
less than 16 years	16-29 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50-60 years	over 60 years

The majority (68 %) had read Tech magazine over eight years, the minority less than that. The precise division can be seen in Table 14. The respondents had used Tech website from less than one year to nine years but the most popular answer (38 %) was less than one year (see Table 15).

Table 14. Years read Tech magazine.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
not at all	29	8,7 %
less than 1	18	5,4 %
1	4	1,2 %
2	9	2,7 %
3	7	2,1 %
4	12	3,6 %
5	18	5,4 %
6	5	1,5 %
7	0	0 %
8	5	1,5 %
over 8	225	67,8 %
total	332	100 %

Table 15. Years used Tech website.

Year(s)	Number of respondents	%
less than 1	125	37,7 %
1	25	7,5 %
2	57	17,2 %
3	56	16,9 %
4	24	7,2 %
5	20	6 %
6	8	2,4 %
7	2	0,6 %
8	1	0,3 %
9	14	4,2 %
10	0	0 %
total	332	100 %

From Table 16 it is possible to see that 58 % of Tech magazine respondents had had positive brand experiences, 17 % negative and 25 % neutral.

Table 16. Positive, negative and neutral brand experiences in Tech magazine.

positive	negative	neutral
58 %	17 %	25 %

Two groups emerged from the Tech magazine's answers. Tech magazine has readers who had been reading the magazine for decades. It seems justified to call these people the Loyals. There were also respondents who believed that the magazine used to be better and has gotten worse. They are identified as the Nostalgics.

The Loyals:

"Since I was a little boy I've read the Tech magazine and I'm going to read it in the future, too."

"I've read the magazine over 20 years."

"I've been a subscriber of Tech magazine since 1982."

"I've read Tech magazine for 35 years."

"I started reading Tech magazine in the beginning of the 1970s."

On the basis of the above answers it would be tempting to say that Tech magazine should not change a thing, instead it should keep up the good work. Tech magazine does have a reputation of “passing down from father to son”. That might advance loyalty.

The Nostalgics:

“I don’t think the Tech brand is as convincing as fifteen years ago.”

“Tech magazine has gotten worse since the golden days of the 1970s.”

“Since the 70s or 80s the direction has been downhill.”

When the Tech magazine readers are longing for the Tech magazine of the 70s, it might be that they are actually longing for their youth. These respondents were likely young in the 70s. They do not offer an explanation to why, if the magazine’s direction has been downhill since the 70s, have they kept reading the magazine? Or how else would they be able to make this kind of judgment? Nostalgia in this magazine’s answers could be interpreted as some sort of general nostalgia: I miss the days of my childhood when the summers were hot and the winters were cold and the sun shone every day.

6.5 Differences and similarities in the magazines

After reviewing each magazine separately we will now turn to compare them. First of all, how many percent of the survey's respondents had answered the open-ended question? The answer is 23 % in Baby and pregnancy magazine, 39 % in Tech magazine, 48 % in Teen magazine and 50 % in Computer magazine.

Teen magazine had the most respondents (11 %) who had not read the magazine at all. For the other three magazines, fewer than tenth had not read the magazine. The majority, 68 %, of Tech magazine's respondents had read Tech magazine over eight years and the same figure was 41 % for Computer magazine. Very, very few had read Baby and pregnancy magazine or Teen magazine over eight years.

There was consistency in the answers of all magazines when it comes to websites; some had used the websites only for a few months while others had visited them for nearly a decade. In other words, all magazines had both website novices and heavy users. Tech magazine had very few heavy users and a lot of novices. Computer magazine had somewhat evenly both of them. Over 90 % of Teen magazine respondents had used Teen website for four years or less while over 90 % Baby and pregnancy magazine respondents had used the Baby and pregnancy website six years or less.

For all magazines, the neutral answers varied from 20 to 25 percent. For Baby and pregnancy magazine, Teen magazine and Tech magazine the majority of respondents had had positive brand experiences. The worst situation was for Computer magazine: there were very narrowly (2 %)

more positive than negative answers. The amount of negative brand experiences was 39 % in Computer magazine, while in the other magazines it was less than 20 %.

Table 17 presents a summary telling which groups were found from each magazine. It was possible to form four, five or six groups for each magazine.

Table 17. Summary of the groups found from each magazine.

	Baby mag.	Teen mag.	Tech mag.	Comp. mag.
Peer Supp.	X			
Outgrows		X		
BWRs ¹	X	X		X
WSUs ²	X	X		
Loyals			X	X
Nostalgics		X	X	X
Satisfieds	X	X	X	X
Trustings	X	X	X	X

¹ Bored with repetition, ² Website Users

There were no complaints about repetition in Tech magazine's answers despite the fact that the magazine is, unlike the others, existed for decades. Apparently longer life cycle of a magazine does not lead to repetition. The nature of the magazine's content probably offers the best explanation. Tech magazine has e.g. car tests and has had them for years. Of course, it does not have articles of the exact same car being tested again; instead there is always a new car. In addition, there is demand for this sort of repetition as there are always people who are looking to buy a new car.

On the other hand, Baby and pregnancy magazine might have an article where snowsuits are compared every fall or a pram comparison every spring. Those articles might seem useless to women who already have children (and hence snowsuits and prams for their children). When it comes to Teen magazine it is very likely that it will have articles marking the beginning of yet another school year since its target group is in school. This will lead to repetition since obviously the school starts every fall.

There were no nostalgic answers in Baby and pregnancy magazine stating that the magazine would have somehow gotten worse. This could be due to the fact that few women in developed countries are pregnant or have babies for years and years. As they do not keep reading the magazine for many years, there is no possibility for the so-called things used to be better –attitude. Another explanation is that there apparently have not been radical (negative) changes in the content of Baby and pregnancy magazine. When there is no change, there is no resistance towards change.

There were no Loyals in Teen magazine or Baby and pregnancy magazine. As they are magazines that are related to a certain stage of life it is possible that loyalty does not have time to form. The content of the two magazines is very tied to a limited phase in a girl's or a woman's life so it is not possible that decades long relationship between the magazine and the reader could form. Then again, it is possible that while girls are teenagers they are actually very loyal to the Teen brand. And similarly, women might be very loyal to the Baby and pregnancy brand while they are pregnant or have babies.

“When I was pregnant it was obvious to me that I would subscribe Baby and pregnancy magazine instead of another magazine that is related to the same subject.”

Also, even though no loyalty towards the whole Teen brand or the entire Baby and pregnancy brand was found it seems possible that some of the respondents are actually loyal to Baby and pregnancy websites or Teen websites.

”I don’t belong to the magazine’s target group anymore but I’ve been an active user in Teen magazine’s website for years and I’ll be for a long time.”

Only Baby and pregnancy magazine and Teen magazine had Website Users. These are people who use the brand’s websites but do not read the actual magazine at all. Most certainly today and apparently at the time of the survey both brands had extremely active discussion forums in their websites. Dozens if not hundreds of people write every day, not to mention the unknown, but definitely large number of people who read the discussion forums daily. Tech magazine and Computer magazine websites were far less active, and no respondents in these two reported that they would have only used the websites.

Peer Supporters were found only from the Baby and pregnancy answers. One could have expected that Peer Supporters would have been found in Teen magazine, too. Teenage can be a very challenging and awkward time but in this case most likely the peer support is found in real life friends of the same age. Computer magazine and Tech magazine are not magazines related to a certain stage of life so no peer support is needed.

All the four magazines had at least some satisfied readers and readers who trusted the brand. This is not surprising, as it is explained in the theoretical part that the concepts satisfaction, trust and brand experience are intertwined. It was hence expected that these concepts would appear in the survey's answers. The two groups are named The Satisfieds and The Trustings. Below are some example responses from the people belonging to either group.

The Satisfieds:

"I'm satisfied, after a long boring day Teen brand makes me happy."

"I've been quite satisfied with Teen brand."

"I have been really satisfied with the Baby and pregnancy magazine!"

"Since the beginning I have been really satisfied with the Baby and pregnancy magazine and websites."

"My own needs are satisfied with the Baby and pregnancy magazine."

The Trustings:

"I trust it and use it as a reference."

“Reliable and good and interesting.”

“Interesting, reliable, and funny.”

“Excellent, reliable, entertaining.”

The last chapter of this thesis follows. It starts with a discussion before presenting the conclusions, theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and finally limitations and suggestions for further research.

7 Discussion

According to Brakus et al. (2009) brand experience has four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. In Brakus et al.'s (2009) study, the participants provided descriptions of sensations, feelings, thoughts and behaviors. In this study, the respondents provided descriptions of feelings (e.g. satisfaction, trust, nostalgia), thoughts (e.g. they were bored with repetition) and behaviors (e.g. peer support, loyalty). Descriptions of sensations were not provided. The nature of magazines and their extension websites is such that they can basically only appeal to one sense, namely eyesight. The fact that they can only appeal to one single sense explains why the participants did not provide descriptions of sensations. Pine and Gilmore (1998) have stated that the more senses an experience engages the more effective and memorable it can be. Brakus et al.'s (2009) study had a variety of brands ranging from Apple to BMW.

Their brands were able to engage multiple senses, the opposite of magazine brands.

The groups formed in this thesis are original and do not as such a combination exist in any other study. However, there is no reason that these eight groups could not be found again in future studies regarding magazine brands or amongst a completely different consumer product brands. Naturally this is not the first study that has found loyal, satisfied or trusting consumers. For example, Doherty and Nelson (2008) have studied the depth of consumers' loyalty and they named one group of customers as "devoted loyals". The groups found here, Outgrows, Website Users, the ones who are bored with repetition, Peer Supporters, Nostalgics, Loyals, Satisfieds and Trustings are not unique to magazine brands. Outgrows could be found, for example, among the users of toy brands, Website Users from book store brands, Bored with repetition from mobile phone brands, Peer Supporters from any discussion forum whether it is focused on a certain diet or a specific football team etc.

7.1 Conclusions

The study's main research problem is how does a consumer experience a magazine's brand. The aim has been to find an answer to this question by explaining the world of experiences as exhaustive as possible considering the format in the theoretical part and by summarizing consumers' answers in the empirical part. This conclusion is written to serve those who do not have the time to read the whole thesis.

Experiential marketing is everywhere. Experiential marketing considers customers as rational and emotional human beings who want to have

pleasurable experiences. In a variety of industries, companies have moved towards creating experiences for their customers. (Schmitt 1999).

Brand experience is related but also conceptually different from other brand constructs. Brand experiences are actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses. Brand experiences occur in a variety of settings when consumers search for, shop for, and consume brands. Experiences can also happen indirectly, for example, when consumers are exposed to advertising and marketing communications including websites. Consumers are exposed to brand-related stimuli, like brand-identifying colors, shapes, typefaces, background design elements, slogans, mascots, and brand characters. These brand-related stimuli appear as part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, marketing communications and in environments in which the brand is marketed or sold. Brand experience has four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. The dimensions are evoked by brand-related stimuli. (Brakus et al. 2009).

Some brand experiences are stronger or more intense than others. Some are more positive than others, and some experiences can even be negative. Some brand experiences happen spontaneously and are short-lived; others happen more deliberately and last longer. Some brand experiences are expected and some unexpected. It is important to apprehend that brand experience does not necessarily require consumption. Brand experiences happen whenever there is a direct or indirect interaction with the brand. (Brakus et al. 2009).

Website marketers should foster communities where customers can share their experiences. Investing in so-called community building infrastructure,

such as discussion forums, is likely to support the range and diversity of brand experiences. (Ha and Perks 2005).

Brand experience plays a key role in improving brand trust. A consumer who has had inspiring brand experiences trusts the brand. Notable brand experiences considerably influence the brand trust of customers i.e. brand experience significantly affects brand trust. Brand trust is based on a positive consumer experience, for example, with a certain website. Brand trust is achieved with the following dimensions operating and interrelating as antecedent constructs: various brand experiences and the search for information, a high level of brand familiarity and customer satisfaction based on cognitive and emotional factors. (Ha and Perks 2005).

Brand experience affects consumer satisfaction (Brakus et al. 2009; Ha and Perks 2005) and consumer loyalty directly and indirectly (Brakus et al. 2009). It seems very clear that the concepts brand experience, brand trust, satisfaction and loyalty are intertwined.

The empirical part consisted of the answers to the question tell us your experiences of brand X. This was one of the questions in a survey that was posted on over 30 different consumer magazine's websites. For the purpose of this study four non-competing magazines were chosen: Baby and pregnancy magazine, Teen magazine, Tech magazine and Computer magazine. It was possible to form groups of the people who had similar things to say in their answers.

The most common answer in the Baby and pregnancy data was satisfaction. In other words, when asked about experiences many stated that they were satisfied. It seems that those respondents believed that

satisfaction *is* their experience of the Baby and pregnancy brand. Of the groups found from Baby and pregnancy brand it is possible to conclude that the BWRs (bored with repetition) are talking about experiences they have had with the Baby and pregnancy magazine, while the Website Users and the Peer Supporters are referring to their experiences from the Baby and pregnancy website.

The groups formed from the Teen magazine's answers were the BWRs, the Website Users, the Outgrowns and the Nostalgics.

Computer magazine had many dissatisfied respondents. Computer magazine had just merged with another magazine and this was generally seen as a negative thing. The merger or rather the complaints of it are the prevailing theme in the answers of the Computer magazine. However, data proves that there were also satisfied readers. In addition to that, there were even loyal readers. The groups that were formed from the Computer magazine's respondents were the Loyals, the BWRs and the Nostalgics.

Two groups emerged from the Tech magazine's answers. Tech magazine has readers who have been reading the magazine for decades. It seems justified to call these people the Loyals. There were also respondents who believed that the magazine used to be better and has gotten worse. They are identified as the Nostalgics.

The majority of the consumers had positive brand experiences except for Computer magazine's respondents. Almost forty percent of them had had positive brand experiences and almost forty percent negative brand experiences. All the four magazines had at least some satisfied readers (The Satisfieds) and readers who trusted the brand (The Trustings). This is

not surprising, as it has been explained that brand experience affects satisfaction and brand trust. It was hence expected that these concepts would appear in the survey's answers.

The relevance of experiences for almost all products is yet to be widely recognized (Addis and Holbrook 2001) even though a memorable experience is considered a key factor of success (Benavent and Evrard 2002). The ultimate goal of the brand experience is to gain an individual's trust in and loyalty to the brand (Landa 2006). Brand experience affects the present and the future of the company (Schultz 2007). The degree to which a company is able to deliver a desirable customer experience will largely determine its success in the global marketplace (Schmitt 1999). The customer experiences companies create will matter the most (Pine and Gilmore 1998). The future belongs to those that can successfully co-create unique experiences with consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

7.2 Theoretical contribution

This chapter discusses the theoretical contribution of this thesis. The current study supports many of the findings of Brakus et al. (2009) and Ha and Perks (2005).

The level of brand experience can differ (Ha and Perks 2005). Some brand experiences are stronger or more intense than others. Some are more positive than others, and some experiences can even be negative. It is important to apprehend that brand experience does not necessarily

require consumption. (Brakus et al. 2009). This study supports these claims. Some of the respondents had simply answered “ok” while others provided relatively long answers. All the brands had created positive and negative brand experiences for consumers. For example, Website Users had brand experiences even though no consumption (when it refers to using money) had taken place.

A consumer who has had inspiring brand experiences trusts the brand. Brand experience significantly affects brand trust. Brand experience plays a key role in improving brand trust. (Ha and Perks 2005). The thesis supports the above results. All four brands had respondents who trusted the brand (The Trustings).

Website marketers should foster communities where customers can share their experiences. Investing in so-called community building infrastructure, such as discussion forums, is likely to support the range and diversity of brand experiences. (Ha and Perks 2005). This study supports these conclusions as the respondents have had the possibility to have online brand experiences with the same brand in addition to having offline brand experiences.

Brand experiences are actual sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses. Brand experience has four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioral. (Brakus et al. 2009). In this study respondents provided descriptions of feelings, cognitions and behavioral responses. The likely explanation why sensations did not appear in this study is the nature of magazines and their brand extension websites; they are only able to appeal to one sense, which is eyesight.

Brand experience affects consumer satisfaction (Brakus et al. 2009; Ha and Perks 2005). The empirical part of this study supports this claim partially. In this study it seemed that consumer satisfaction *is* the brand experience.

Marketers must improve the quality of brand experiences (Ha and Perks 2005). As 39 % of Computer magazine respondents had had negative brand experiences, the above seems obvious.

So far this work has concentrated on the needs of the academics. Next, practical advice to serve the purpose of the business life, the life outside universities' doors, is provided. Ergo, managerial implications are presented.

7.3 Managerial implications

The most important question managers can ask themselves is: What specific experience will my company offer? (Pine and Gilmore 1998). In the new value co-creation space, managers have at least some control over the experience environment. But managers cannot control how consumers co-create their experiences. Managers should focus on the experiences that customers will seek to co-create. High quality interactions that enable customers to co-create unique experiences with the company are the answer to finding new sources of competitive advantage. (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

Managers should acknowledge the emotions and feelings customers bring to their interactions with products (Addis and Holbrook 2001). Managers should try to build a strong brand on the basis of positive customer experiences (Ha and Perks 2005).

Magazines using their website brand extensions as a means of complementing their magazines with more up-to-date content can gain competitive advantage as brand loyalty increases. Media websites might have useful business implications; by fostering consumer loyalty to the parent brand they might contribute to keeping up existing circulation levels. (Tarkiainen et al. 2009).

Managers should try to recognize the changing environment more proactively. They should approach the conceptions of the consumption experience more enthusiastically. They need experiential marketing as an ally if they wish to understand consumer behavior. They should create interrelations and relationships between experiences because when something is consumed the experience depends on its holistic interaction with various other products as part of a consumption system. (Addis and Holbrook 2001).

A company that is serious about experiential marketing emphasizes creativity and innovation. An experience-oriented company treats the creativity and innovativeness of its employees as its most vital intellectual capital. (Schmitt 1999).

Four guidelines for managers: develop experience-driven innovations, consider the functional features of the commercial offer, provide a venue for an integrated customer experience and remember that the different

components of the customer experience depend on the characteristics of a given product (Gentile et al. 2007).

7.4 Limitations of the study

Certain types of experiences are particularly challenging to be investigated by means of a questionnaire. Those are especially experiences which are felt by the customer but often at a sub-conscious level. That is why a fast and superficial analysis, like the one performed while filling out a survey, is likely to miss or underestimate their real impact. (Gentile et al. 2007). Much relevant fantasy life and many symbolic meanings lie just below the threshold of consciousness i.e. they are subconscious or preconscious (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). This is why this thesis strongly advises anyone who is interested in studying brand experiences to seriously consider another method besides survey as the primary method of collecting data. In one study about experiences, analysis of introspective narratives was chosen as a method. The participants wrote an introspective narrative of their experience. (Carù and Cova 2003).

In this particular survey, only one question dealt with experiences. One question gives a very limited amount of information about consumers' brand experiences. It really does become of uttermost importance to do research that focuses to study brand experiences alone.

The answers of all magazines do indicate that at least to some consumers the question tell us your experiences of brand X was not clear at all. If a consumer has answered "ok", that could just indicate that he did not have the time to answer all the questions. But, when a respondent clearly writes that he did not really understand the question, it becomes crystal clear that

the concept needs to be explained at least to some people. The survey also had respondents who had a negative attitude towards brand as a concept and the survey in general.

When this master's thesis was written, the material was already a couple of years old. Although it is not a long time in the academic world, in real life significant changes have happened. For example, when the survey was executed, social media was only beginning to appear in Finland. Without studying, it is impossible to evaluate whether the social media has had an effect on consumers' brand experiences.

7.5 Suggestions for further research

Further research should study whether retrospective experiences are different from dynamic experiences. There should be further research on the experience concept and the antecedents and consequences of brand experiences. (Brakus et al. 2009). It would be interesting to know whether brand experiences can build brand equity (Zarantonello and Schmitt 2010).

Priority should be given to solving the antecedents and consequences of brand experience. After that, the nature of brand experience should be studied more carefully. It would be useful to find out just how strong influence brand experiences can have on a consumer and how much brand experiences can explain consumer's behavior. After enough is known of brand experience in B2C markets it would be interesting to know whether brand experience has any relevance in B2B markets.

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