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Master's thesis
BRAND EQUITY THROUGH CONSUMER TRIBAL BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the consumers' tribal behavior and its effects on brand equity. The study was conducted as quantitative research by examining a Battery energy drink as a selected case brand. The basis of the company and brand information comes from a semi-structured interview conducted in 2011. The data was collected with a questionnaire from selected online forums between the 21st of August and 21st of September in 2011. The research indicates that marketing managers should look more carefully at the tribal groups formed around shared passions and find new ways to support those groups and thus build a strong relationship between the group members and the brand.

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Tämä tutkimus keskittyy tutkimaan kuluttajien heimokäyttäytymisen vaikutusta yrityksen brändipääomaan. Tutkimus suoritettiin määrällisenä tutkimuksena, jossa tarkasteltiin Battery energiajuomaa valittuna case-brändinä. Taustahaastattelut case-yrityksen ja brändin osalta suoritettiin puolistrukturoituna haastatteluna 2011. Varsinainen data kerättiin kyselylomakkeella valituilta nettifoorumeilta elo-syyskuussa 2011. Tutkimus osoittaa, että markkinointi johtajien tulisi tarkastella yhteisten intohimojen ympärille kokoontuneita heimokuluttajien ryhmittymiä, sekä etsiä uusia tapoja tukea näitä ryhmiä. Täten rakentaa vahvan yhteyden brändin ja kuluttajaryhmän välille.

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Tampere, 22.6.2020

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Today's postmodern society consists of a network of tribes created by individuals based on different shared values, secure emotional connections, and subcultures (McGee-Coopers, 2005). The studies have shown that people are looking at strong brands to connect with this has been studied among sports fans. This strong tribal behavior occurs in these groups through specific terminology, symbolism, and shared cult meeting places (Dionisio et al., 2008). The members of these groups do not so much evaluate products or services based of their features and benefits, but rather will give much more weight to the symbolic attributes such as trust towards the brand and based on these symbolic attributes they will select which product or services they use (Cova and Cova, 2001).

There is a consensus among researchers and practitioners that the importance of brand reputation is becoming an increasingly important part of a company's success and profitability. Thus, brand reputation has been indexed in many manager's salaries (Herbig and Milewicz, 1995; Kapferer, 2004). Highly reputable brands are likely to gain customer trust. A high reputation can strengthen consumers' confidence and reduce perceived risk when they are evaluating brand performance and quality (Fombrum, 1996).

There has been very little research done that examines how consumers, through brand tribes, see and experience the reputation and social impact of brands when forming relationships with brands. Currently, most of the published research focuses on consumers that already belong knowingly to a particular brand community (Veloutsou and Mountinho, 2009).

1.2 The objectives and the research problems of the study

The purpose of this study is to get insight into how consumer tribalism and tribal behavior affects to brand equity and how the connection between these constructs are identified. The objective is to resolve to what extent consumer tribal groups elements effect on building substantial brand equity. The model proposes group cohesiveness, group conformity, and brand linking values as the key factors contributing to brand equity. The managerial objectives of the study are to emphasize the importance of consumer tribal behavior in brand management.

The research problem of the study is the following:

How does tribal relationship influence the brand equity?

In order to answer the research problem, the following questions need to be resolved:

What are the essential dimensions of tribal behavior?

How does tribal behavior differ from another group behavior?

How do the essential elements of tribal behavior affect brand equity?

1.3 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study's framework, which is presented in figure 1, concludes the main concepts of the study as well as their relationships. The research focuses on two main sets of variables tribal relationship and brand equity.

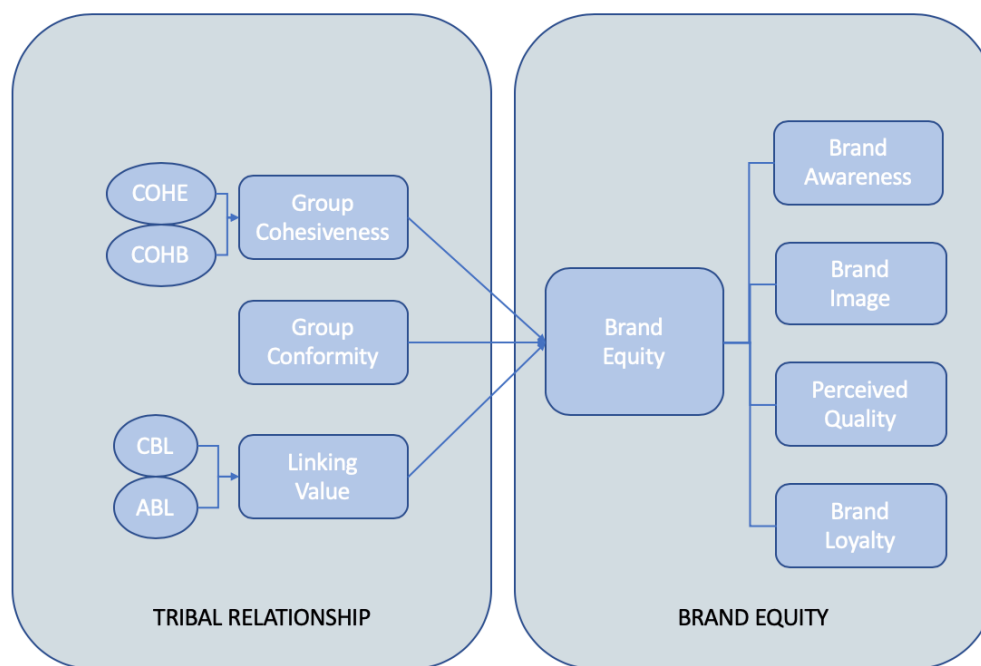


Figure 1: Framework of the study (Aaker, 1995, 1996; Kohli and Leuthesser 2001; Yoo et al., 2000; Veloutsou and Mountinho, 2008)

1.4 Definitions

This study contains three main constructs, which are already presented in the conceptual framework of the study. These are tribal behavior, brand reputation, and brand equity. In this section, definitions are given to these concepts.

Brand Equity

Brand Equity constructs from two sides of the same coin, tangible and intangible half. The other half is the brands value for consumers and the other is the tangible monetary value for the company. For the consumer part brand equity constructs from 4 dimensions and is the sum of all these value adding dimensions; brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality and Brand loyalty. (Aaker 1991).

Brand Awareness

Brand awareness at its most basic can be defined as a very basic level brand knowledge which means that individual is able to recognise and recall the brand in certain product category (Hoyer and Brown, 1990, Aaker, 1991). Thus, it is clear that brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node in individual's memory. Meaning how easily individual remember the brand (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, Keller (1993) argues that brand awareness is mandatory condition for creation of any brand image.

Brand Image

Brand image is one the most important brand aspects. It can be a mental picture of the company's or brands offering (Dobni ja Zinkhan, 1990), Brand image is under a constant change and it is important that the image are aloud to change with the times. Brand image holds also lot of emotions and carry symbolic meanings that consumers can associate (Padgett ja Allen, 1997). Furthermore, Strong brand image is needed in order to build sustainable brand equity (Keller,1993).

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty has been defined as a repeat purchase (Ehrenberg, 1988), preference (Guest, 1994), and commitment (Hawkes, 1994), and as retention and allegiance (Thiele and Mackay, 2001). Various definitions of brand loyalty are explained partly because the actual construct of loyalty is highly complex itself (Javalgi and Moberg, 1997). This paper defines Brand loyalty as an intended behavior related to the product or brand. Furthermore, brand loyalty includes the likelihood of intended support of the product or brand expressed in communicating.

Perceived Quality

Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived quality as "the consumer's" judgement about a products overall excellence or superiority" Zeithaml (1988) indentified perceived quality as a component of brand value and stated that it is not the actual quality of the products, but consumers subjective evaluation based on their perception of the brand.

Consumer Tribes and Tribal Behavior

Consumer tribes are a group of people emotionally connected by similar consumption values and usage of products and services to create a community and express identity. Furthermore, the group is based around various activities, consumption behaviour, and other social interactions on shared values. (Cova, 1997; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) Subcultures have normally much narrower connections with shared beliefs, values or customs compared to consumer tribes, setting them apart from the dominant societal culture (Schiffman et al., 2008; Mitchell & Imrie 2011).

Linking Value

Consumer tribes value the social aspects of life at the cost of consumption and the use of goods and services (Cova, 1997). Consumers value mainly goods and services that have linking value. This includes anything that strengthens a sense of community or promotes a sense of belonging and membership in tribes. A key concept here is the linking value of the product or service (Cova, 1997). Thus, to satisfy their desire for communities, consumer tribes seek products and services less for their use value than for their linking value (Godbout and Caille, 1992; ref. Cova, 1997).

Group Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness can be defined as degree to which each members of a group are attracted to another member and the how they value the group membership (Solomon et al., 2002), “the overall level of attraction towards the group” (Evans et al., 2006) which can be equated with loyalty (Argyle, 1969). It is this factor of cohesiveness, which makes a group something more than a mere collection of individuals; it evolves feelings of belongingness and integrity and develops as the group fulfils the interpersonal needs of its members. (Evans et al., 2006) Since it’s more difficult for individuals to relate to larger groups of people, smaller groups normally have higher cohesiveness. As the value of being a group member rises so in individuals’ personal preferences. So does the likelihood of the groups having higher influence over devoted members consumption decisions. (Solomon et al., 2002)

Group Conformity

Many purchases are subject to group pressure as consumers try to buy products that others want them to have, that they think will make others accept, approve or envy them, or because they have learned something important about the product from others. Therefore, also group membership involves the individual in the acceptance of a degree of conformity and that the group itself evolves norms of behavior which specify the ideal patterns of behavior to which members should conform. (Evans et al., 2006; Foxall et al., 1998; ref. Shukor, 2011) Therefore, the study of group effects is a study of human conformity (Foxall et al., 1998). Conformity may be defined as a “*change in behavior or belief towards a group as a result of real or imagined group pressure*” (Kiesler and Kiesler, 1969).

1.5 Preliminary literature review

The most recent literature considers brand equity as a relational market-based asset because it exists outside the firm and resides in the relationships of final users with brands (Falkenberg, 1996; Hooley et al., 2005; Srivastava et al., 1998, 2001; ref. Delgado-Ballester & Hernandez-Espallardo, 2008). In literature many authors have developed various brand equity models having different constructs and dimensions. Keller (1993) introduced a brand equity model in which the focus is to provide a unique point of view as to what brand equity is and how it should best be built, measured and managed. Keller's (1993) model approaches brand equity from the consumers perspective arguing that understanding the needs and wants of consumers and devising products and programs to satisfy them are at the heart of successful marketing. Aaker (1995, 1996) suggests that brand equity is a set of assets that are brand awareness, brand identity, perceived quality and brand loyalty, which forms from the associations attached to the brand. Furthermore Aaker (1996) propose that management of brand equity involves investment to create and enhance these assets. Furthermore, Yoo et al. (2000) extend Aaker's (1996) model by proposing that the brand equity construct shows how individual dimensions are related to and how they contribute to brand equity. Model suggests that brand equity can be created, maintained and expanded by strengthening the dimensions of brand equity. Kohli and Leuthesser (2001) develop their own model in purpose to highlight the essential elements of brand equity. They argued that brand equity rest on a solid foundation of brand vision and brand

identity. Thus, from this solid foundation brand knowledge can be built, which includes brand awareness and brand image. This ultimately leads to superior performance in the form of brand equity. Keller's (2003) model composes of brand building tools and objectives such as greater loyalty. Model emphasizes about choosing the right brand elements like brand name, logo, symbols and slogans.

Cova (1995) argued that postmodern consumers values more the social link to one or several communities of reference, giving meaning to their lives at the cost of consumption and the use of goods and services. Since that many researchers have studied this type of extended view beyond the traditional marketing and found that consumers form variously labeled as sub-cultures of consumption (Kates, 2002; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011), tribes (Cova, 1997), cultures of consumption (Kozinets, 2001), brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001), and consumption microcultures (Thompson and Troester, 2002; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) these micro-social consumer groups comprise a heterogenous network of people united by shared emotions and experience around a brand (Cova and Cova, 2002; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011).

Already in 1973, Boorstin argued that shared consumption symbols were one of the main ways helping to defined and identify an individual's group membership. Maffesoli (1996; ref. Mitchell and Imrie, 2011) established that consumer social identities and consumption choices shift according to situational and lifestyle factors. Further emphasizing Cova's (1995; ref. Mitchell and Imrie, 2011) findings that an individual may belong to multiple tribes at the same time to express different aspects of their identity.

Whereas Cova (1997) called it as "unifying value" when branded consumer products made individuals coexisting easier through the shared lifestyle values it provided. Cova and Cova (2002) Argued that there is growing movement of moder day consumer collectives that could be described as individuals finally freeing themselves from all the social norms and restrictions by starting a counter movement to recalibrate their social universe. In todays consumer-oriented society, these types of structural changes formulate around tribal brands which delivers endless stream for image reconstruction. One can argue that tis kind of product and brand symbolism creates a totally new universe for the tribes to roam on. (Ostergaard and Jantzen, 2000)

Cova (1997) suggested tribes as a more temporary form of social grouping based around shared identification with the brand. Like communities, these neo-tribes prospered on shared passions and experience towards the brand but differing in the absence of formal rules or homogeneity of behavior. There have been multiple researchers studying different types of informal and temporary time and place related communities such as weekend rave cultures (Goulding, Shankar and Elliot 2000). Periodic farmers market communities (Mcgrath, et al., 1993) and jeep brandfest. (McAlexander et al., 2002; ref. Haugtvedt et al., 2018)

Kozinets (2002) studied the hypercommunity as a temporary but well-organised and caring community form when studying the Burning Man project that well known anti-market festival in California. In their article Veloutsou and Mountinho (2009) argued that too much of the previous studies have been focused only on the luxury brands where consumers are more likely to be highly involved with brands since the high amount of monetary investment. These brands can be anything from sailing yachts to jewelry. They argued that there should be more attempts to analyze brands and products aimed for mass consumer markets.

1.7 Delimitations, research method, and Structure of the study

The research is limited only to an online-based survey by email and through selected online forums. Also, it does not cover all the elements of the brand relationships. Concentrating only to brand reputation and tribal behavior. Study's framework will be empirically tested by means of a survey. The subjects will be partly conducted by email with a technique of snowball sample. This sampling technique relies on the researcher's ability to locate an initial set of respondents with desired characteristics. This method has its limitations, but since the lack of suitable email registers and financial support, it is an appropriate way to conduct the survey. The questionnaire is also going to be published in several discussion forums in Internet.

The organisation of the research falls into the theoretical and empirical parts. The theory part is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter is concerned with the constructs and dimensions of brand equity. The second chapter discusses the determinants of brand relationships. Within this broad theme, the study considers the components of consumer tribal behaviour and brand reputation. Third chapter gives an overview of the case brand and the current market environment. The empirical part presents the questionnaire. The results of the

questionnaire are analyzed using several statistical methods. Finally, the main findings of the study will be reported, and avenues for further research suggested.

2. CONSTRUCT AND DIMENSIONS OF BRAND EQUITY

Brand is the most important asset for many businesses (Kim and Kim, 2004). Therefore, it is evident that building a strong brand becomes the main objective for companies (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005). Furthermore, Keller (1998) stated that brand equity is an essential part of building a strong brand. Thus, brand equity has been one of the key topics in marketing in recent years, and it has become essential for brand managers to understand how to measure brand equity (Buil et al., 2008; Ambler, 2003).

2.1 Conceptualizing Brand Equity

Despite the availability of numerous definitions, there is little consensus on what exactly brand equity stands for (Park and Srinivasan, 1994; ref. Pappu et al., 2005). Nor there is a general agreement among researchers at the conceptual level about what brand equity comprises. Although brand equity can be defined from a variety of perspectives, generally the definition can be broadly classified into two categories. First perspective views brand equity from a financial perspective (Brasco, 1988; Mahajan et al., 1990; Shocker and Weitz, 1988; Simon and Sullivan, 1993, 1). Second perspective views brand equity from marketing decision-making context (Aaker, 1991; Kamakura and Russell, 1993; Keller, 1993; Rangaswamy et al., 1993). Thus, the former stress the value of a brand to the firm and is based on the incremental discounted future cash flows. Latter define brand equity as the value of a brand to the consumer. Furthermore, within the marketing literature the consumer-based brand equity can be divided into two dimensions: consumer perception and consumer behavior. Former comprises brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand image. Latter consists such dimensions as brand loyalty and willingness to pay price premium (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Kim and Kim, 2004; Yoo et al. 2000). Mackay et al. (1997) stated that when reflecting marketing perspective, brand equity is referred to as consumer-based brand equity. Marketing approach refers to the added value of the brand to the consumer. (Pappu et al., 2005)

Cobb-Walgren et al. (1995) were the pioneering researchers to measure consumer-based brand equity based on the conceptualization of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). These researchers' frameworks conceptualized consumer-based brand equity as a set of four dimensions. (Haugtvedt et al., 2018) Keller's (1993) model focuses on brand knowledge and involves two components: brand awareness and brand image. Keller (1993 p.8) defined brand equity as:

“The differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand.”

“The set of associations and behaviors on the part of the brand's customers, channel members and parent corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could without the brand name and that gives the brand a strong, sustainable and differentiated advantage over competitors” (Keller, 1998 P. 43).

By contrast, Aaker (1991, P.15) provides one of the most generally accepted and comprehensive definitions of brand equity:

“A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers”

Blackston (1995) referred brand equity as brand value and brand meaning, where brand meaning implies brand saliency, brand associations, and brand personality, and where brand value is the outcome of managing the brand meaning. (Blackston, 1995; ref. Haugtvedt et al., 2018) All these definitions imply that brand equity is the incremental value of a product due to the brand name. Furthermore, although Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) conceptualized brand equity differently, both authors defined brand equity from a consumer-based and memory-based associations.

Brand equity has received a great deal of attention from scholars in the past two decades, the main effort being conceptualizing brand equity. Understandably, the added value the brand brings is hardly a simple issue. Hence despite the numerous definitions there is little consensus about the concept itself. But this also means that companies have potential of getting competitive advantage by offering something unique to the customer. Furthermore, review of the existing marketing literature reveals that researchers have found positive correlations

between brand equity and company's performance (Aaker, 1996; Park and Srinivasan, 1994) and that building a strong brand and brand equity provides a number of possible benefits to companies. For example, high brand equity levels are known to lead to higher consumer preferences and purchase intentions (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995), determines the extendability of a brand name, cheaper product line extension, brand licensing opportunities (Keller and Aaker, 1992; Rangaswamy et al., 1993), earlier market penetration (Robertson, 1993). It also increases the effectiveness of marketing communication, decrease vulnerability to competitive marketing action, and willingness to pay price premium (Barwise, 1993; Farquhar et al., 1991; Keller, 1993; Simon and Sullivan, 1993; Smith and Park, 1992). Leading to greater sales and market shares (Hooley et al., 2005; Park and Srinivasan, 1994; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) and thus also to larger profit margins (Kim and Kim, 2004). Furthermore, companies with high brand equity are also known to have high stock returns (Aaker and Jakobson, 1994). Therefore, its value as an asset is reflected in superior financial performance (Farquhar, 1989; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) and provides sustainable competitive advantages to companies (Bharadwaj et al., 1993; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Hence, in light of the existing literature it is safe to assume that strong brand equity creates value for the company, as well as for the customer.

2.2 Effects of Brand Equity

Scholars also suggest that managers should already consider the possible affect on brand equity when planning their marketing measures. Thus, research have shown that marketing decisions and conditions have impact on brand equity. For example, Aaker (1991) list slogans, symbols, packages, and public relations; company image, country of origin, and promotional events (Keller, 1993); and brand-naming strategy (Keller et al., 1998). According to Yoo et al. (2000) brand-name investments should be directed to build brand equity dimensions such as brand image, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. Managers Should build strong brands in an effort to form an emotional bond with consumers by creating a distinctive and personal way to interact and communicate with consumers. Furthermore, managers should encourage their employees to incorporate the core message of the brand so that they can communicate it clearly to customers (Berry, 2000).

The brand building process can be examined from the brand management side and from the consumer side. Brand managers control the processes of developing a vision, identity, and brand

values, where consumer controls the forming of associations, images and perceiving usage situations. (McEnally and de Chernatony, 1999) Therefore, understanding the concept and underlying dimensions of brand equity is important, but without proper brand management the success of the company cannot be affected. Muller and Woods (1994), for example, stressed brand management rather than product management in building a strong brand. They emphasized the clear concept, dependability of brand name, and development of brand image. Therefore, measuring brand equity is utmost importance in marketing management, and it should not be overlooked as it builds the base for effective brand management. However, there is no consensus in the literature how to manage brand equity and discussion around it is often broad. According to Keller (2003), effective brand equity management requires proactive strategies designed to maintain and improve brand equity. Thus, managers should take a long-term perspective in their decision making.

2.3 Models and the underlying dimensions of brand equity

Depending on the chosen perspective many authors have very different views on the dimensions of what constitute brand equity and thus there are various of models of explaining these. In this part the most relevant models for this research are introduced in order to get comprehensive understanding of the constructs of brand equity and build foundation for the framework of this particular research.

Brand equity has been the focus of number of studies, aiming to get better understanding of the underlying attitudes and components behind brand equity. As great number of conducted studies have focused either on the consumer perceptions of the brand, such as perceived quality, associations or awareness or consumer behavior, such as brand loyalty and paying price premiums. According to Mackay et al. (1997) this approach is referred to as customer-based brand equity. Both Aaker (1996) and Keller (1993) used the term customer-based equity to refer to brand equity.

Keller (1993) defined brand equity as *“the effects of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand”*. According to Keller brand knowledge consisted of two dimensions- brand awareness and brand image. as show in the figure 2 below. Furthermore, various customer-based brand equity models will be discussed, taking into account the effects

of the dimensions of these brand knowledge, brand loyalty and consumer reaction in product price promotion and various distribution strategies.

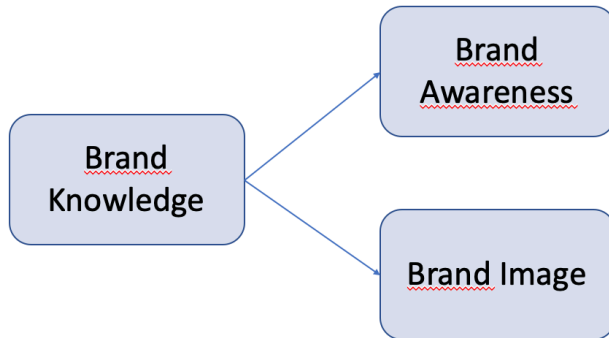


Figure 2. Brand Equity Model by Keller (1993)

According to Aaker (1991) brand equity is a set of assets that are brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand identity and other proprietary brand assets such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationship. These dimensions form the associations attached to the brand as shown in the figure 3.

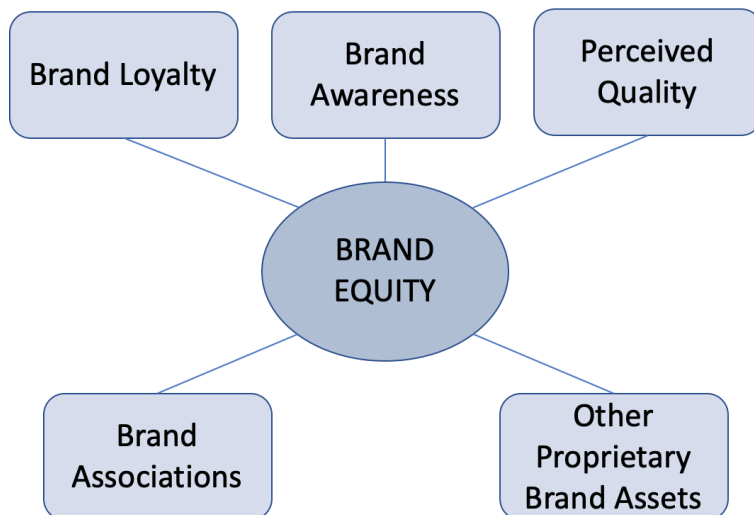


Figure 3. Brand Equity Assets by Aaker (1991)

These same dimensions are the foundation also for Aaker's later model where he describes how in brand equity each dimension creates value to the customer and to the firm in variety of different ways. Figure 4 show how dimensions create value according to Aaker (1996a).

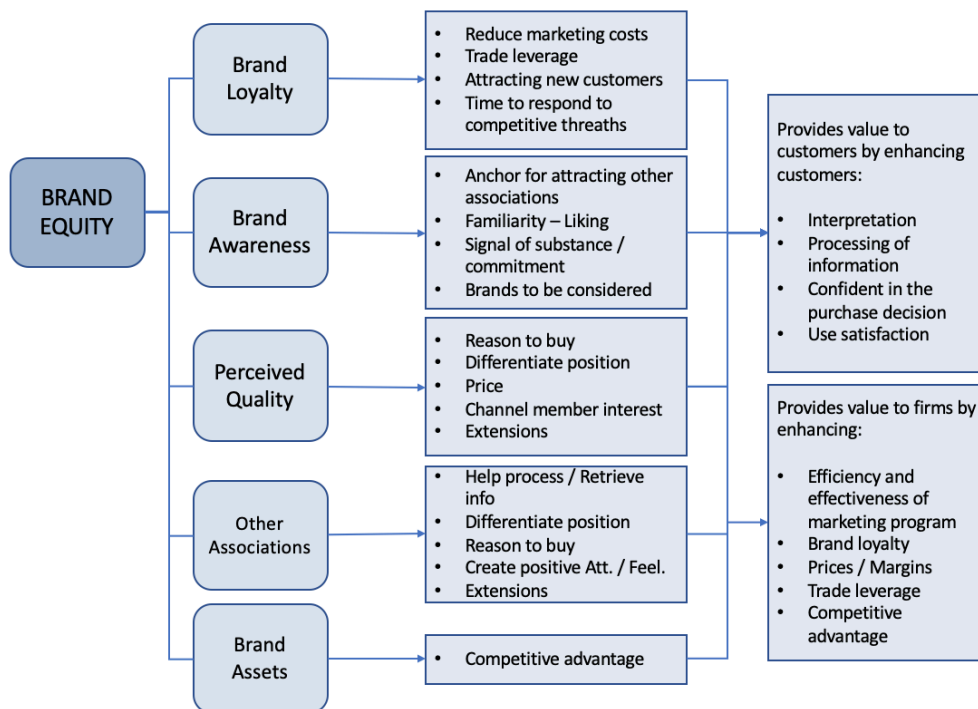


Figure 4. Brand Equity Model by Aaker (1996)

According to Kotler and Keller (2006), the most important factors in brand equity are customer brand awareness, customer attitude, towards the brand, and customer perception of brand ethics. However, Faircloth et al. (2001) argued that customer attitude does not directly affect brand equity rather the effect is shown to be indirect through brand image. When evaluating brand equity from a consumer perspective, the four most important dimensions are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty (Pappu et al. 2005). The same dimensions were suggested by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) and these assets have been additionally tested and verified by scholars such as Yoo et al. (2000); Atilgan et al. (2005); Pappu et al. (2005). Next these fundamental dimensions of brand equity will be examined and explained in more detail.

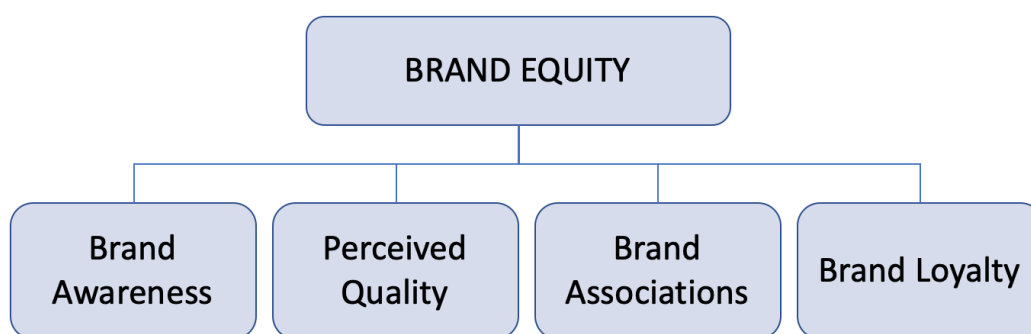


Figure 5. Brand Equity Dimensions by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000)

2.3.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness can be viewed as basic level of brand knowledge that involves the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of certain product category (Hoyer and Brown 1990, Aaker, 1991). Percy and Rossiter (1992) emphasize that brand recognition and brand recall should be considered as two separate types of brand awareness (Figure 6). Keller (1993) discriminates recognition and recall by saying that brand recognition requires that consumers correctly distinguish the brand as having been seen or heard previously, and brand recall requires that consumer correctly generates the brand from memory. Accordingly, whether to use recognition or recall measurement depends on the situation. In the situations where the brands are not present, an appropriate measure is recall, and in contrast, recognition is useful measurement of brand awareness at the point of purchase (Holden, 1993; Percy and Rossiter, 1992). For this study's purposes, the latter measure is more important as energy drink shopping takes place in supermarkets or other point of purchase places, where

shoppers are able to view the products and to recognize the brands. Percy and Rossiter (1992) note that an identification of the brand name is not always required because a visual image often stimulates a respond to the brand. In this study Battery energy drink was chosen as the case brand. Accordingly, recall of the “plus or +B symbol” is not necessarily required because brand awareness may proceed through brand recognition.

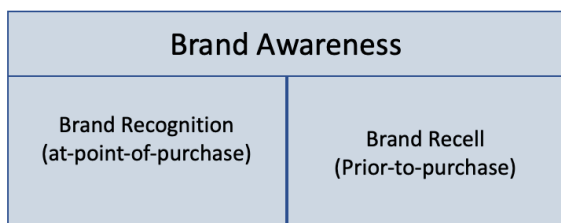


Figure 6. Brand awareness by Percy and Rossiter (1992)

Preceding studies have indicated that consumers are aware of endorsement symbols and have acknowledge the importance of brand awareness for the use of endorsement symbols (Noakes and Crawford, 1991; Rayner et al., 2001; Reid et al., 2001). Their studies indicated a strong association between logo awareness and its use. However, it should not be directly assumed that brand awareness would have direct impact on use of brand logo or symbol. Instead, awareness should be considered to have impact on consumers’ attitudes since without knowing the brand one cannot form any image about it. Furthermore, it should be noted that the awareness of the brand logo or symbol does not automatically mean that consumer would use the symbol when shopping. (Rayner et al., 2001)

2.3.2 Brand Image

Brand image is described as the consumer’s mental picture of offering (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990), or as the overall impression made on the minds of the public about the firm (Barich and Kotler, 1991; Dichter, 1985). Brand image is related to various physical and behavioral attributes, and also includes symbolic meanings which consumers associate with the specific attributes of the products or service, such as brand name, tradition, ideology and the impression of quality (Padgett and Allen, 1997). Furthermore, image refers to strong favorable and unique brand associations in memory, which result in perceived quality, a positive attitude and overall positive affect (Keller, 2003). According to Kennedy (1977) image has two principal components: The functional and the emotional. Thus, image can be seen as the representation of brand in the consumer’s mind that is linked to an offering (Dobni and Zinkham, 1990), or a

set of perceptions about the brand the consumer forms as reflected by brand associations (Keller, 1993). The brand associations may be described in terms of attributes, benefits and attitudes, which are based on consumers experiences with the brand (Keller, 2003). Hence, it can be defined as “the reasoned or emotional perceptions consumers attach to specific brands” (Low and Lamb, 2000).

Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) summarize the different perspectives of the brand image as follows:

“Brand image is the concept of a brand that is held by the users of the brand.”

“Brand image is largely a subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through the interpretation of users, whether reasoned or emotional.”

“Brand image is not inherent in the technical, functional or physical concerns of the product or brand. Rather, it is affected and molded by marketing activities, by context variables, and by characteristics of the perceiver. “

The functional component is related to concrete characteristics that can be easily measured, while the emotional component is related to the psychological dimensions that are manifested in the feelings and attitudes towards a company. Therefore, image is the result of a comprehensive process by which the consumers compares and contrasts the various attributes of firms. This is confirmed by Kotler (2003), who states, that developing a set of brand belief by consumers about where each brand stands accordingly to various attributes is important. The set of beliefs about a brand eventually comprises the brand image. (Kotler, 2003; ref. Han, 2007)

An image is a synthesis presented to the consumers of all the various brand messages, for example brand name, visual symbols, attributes, products, events and advertising. Thus, brand image is established via media signals such as printed marketing communication material and the image results from decoding a message, extracting meaning, and interpreting signs. (Nandan, 2005; ref. Han, 2007)

As indicated previously, brand image can be defined as a reflection of brand associations and perceptions (Keller, 2006). Furthermore, the research indicates that brand image is more

specifically shaped by six associations and variables namely *strength, uniqueness, expectations, perceptions, experiences* and *evaluations* of the brand.

Strength: the strength of a brand image is determined by the magnitude and complexity of the brand identity signals to which the consumers are exposed, as well as the complexity of the processing of the signals (Keller, 2003; ref. Han, 2007).

Uniqueness: it is important that consumers are able to identify unique, meaningful attributes of the brand in order to ensure brand preference and to provide a competitive advantage (Keller, 2003; ref. Han, 2007).

Expectations: The expectations are often formed based on consumers physical and mental image of the brand or product. Physical attributes such as features, and perceived quality are based on visual inspections of the product whereas mental expectations are based more on the company marketing and review from other consumers. (Smith, 2003)

Perceptions and associations: Building a strong brand perception requires that the brand reaches the consumers and are able to create awareness and perception to the receivers that brand offers innovative, unique high-quality products and services. (Keller, 2003; ref. Han, 2007; Van Gelder, 2003; Nilson ja Surrey, 1998)

Experiences: These includes all the encounters with consumer and the brand or product. Past user experiences are significant factor when consumers are making purchase decision. (Keller, 2003; Nilson and Surrey, 1998)

Evaluations: Consumer evaluations are based of all the knowledge consumer have and can obtain about the brand image, product or service during the purchase process. Consumers evaluate both the functionality but also emotional and symbolic attributes. (Coop, 2004; Keller, 2003)

A positive image is created by marketing communication programs that link strong, favorable and unique associations of the brand to the relevant receiver of the brand (Keller, 2003; ref. Han, 2007). Furthermore, Kapferer (1998) argues that individuals develop a product image of

identity signals given on the basis of the physical characteristics of the brand and the message conveyed to the marketing model. The consumer is seen as the “recipient” of brand identity, engaging in intellectual development to embrace the brand as a self-image (Kapferer, 1998). The image refers to the way in which these groups decode all the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand (Kapferer, 2004; ref. Han, 2007)). A brand is thus a sort of identification model, that identifies the tribe, and its members.

Building a brand image is a long process that can be enhanced by technological breakthroughs and unexpected achievements or, conversely, destroyed by ignoring the needs and expectations of the various consumer and affiliate groups who interacting with the brand (Dichter, 1985; Milewicz & Herbig, 1994).

2.3.3 Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as “the attachment that a customer has to a brand”. Brand loyalty can be conceptualized based on a behavioral perspective, which emphasizes repeat purchase. Rossiter and Percy (1987) argued that brand loyalty is often characterized by a favorable attitude towards a brand and repeated purchases of the same brand over time. Oliver (1997) emphasized the behavioral dimensions of brand loyalty and defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior”. Brand loyalty is also conceptualized based on an attitudinal perspective, which includes a commitment in terms of some unique values associated with the brand (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Yoo and Donthu (2001) stated that attitudinal perspective, brand loyalty can be defined as “the tendency to be loyal to a focal brand, which is demonstrated by the intention to buy the brand as a primary choice”.

According to Grover and Srinivasan (1992) loyal consumers respond more favorably to a brand than unfaithful or switching consumers. Therefore, brand loyalty routinely causes consumers to purchase a brand and oppose switching to another brand. However, while the definition of the label issue based on a behavioral perspective highlights the consumers true loyalty to the brand, which is reflected in purchasing decisions, definitions based on attitudinal perspectives highlight consumer intentions to be loyal to the brand.

Brand loyalty is indisputably at the core of any brand's value. Without customer being loyal to the brand, the firm would ultimately have little to gain from building brand equity. Customer satisfaction is of great importance in developing a brand, and without it no loyalty will follow. Hence, brand is not only valuable to the company but also gives value to the customer, acting as a source of consumer-based brand equity. Therefore, to the extent that consumers are loyal to the brand, brand equity will increase. (Kim et al., 2003)

2.3.4 Perceived Quality

Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived quality as “the consumer's judgment about a products overall excellence or superiority”. Zeithaml (1988) identifies perceived quality as a component of brand value and stated that it is not the actual quality of the product, but consumers' subjective evaluations based on their perception of the brand. Thus, perceived quality is an important dimension of brand equity. According to Zeithaml (1988) several aspects might influence the consumer's subjective judgment of quality such as consumption situations, personal experiences with the brand and unique needs. Perceived quality also provides value to the consumers by providing them with a reason to buy and by differentiating the brand from competing brands. Therefore, high perceived quality would drive a consumer to choose the brand with higher perceived quality over other competing brands. Furthermore, Yoo et al. (2000) stated, “to the degree that brand quality is perceived by consumers, brand equity will increase”.

2.4 Measuring Brand Equity

Good brand and market portfolio management begins with achieving a common performance metric (Aaker, 1995). Therefore, it has become necessary for brand managers to understand how brand equity is measured (Ambler, 2003; ref. Chawudhury, 2012). Furthermore, measuring continuously brand equity is vital because its strategic value guides marketing strategy, supporting tactical decisions making and providing a basis for assessing brand extendibility (Ailawadi et al., 2003; ref. Chawudhury, 2012).

The challenge for many managers is to develop credible and sensitive measures of brand strength that supplement financial measures with brand asset measures. In his article *Measuring Brand Equity Across the Products and Markets* Aaker (1996) stated that well-developed and

accepted financial measures such as sales, cost, margins, profits, and ROA tend to be short term and inadequate to provide enough incentive for investment in brand building. (Aaker, 1996) Furthermore, author argues that when brand objectives and programs are guided by both types' financial measures and brand asset measures, the incentive structure becomes more balanced, and it becomes more feasible to justify and defend brand-building activities. Aaker proposed the Brand Equity Ten as a point of departure for an effort to develop a set of brand equity measures. Hence, the measures should reflect the construct being measured, namely, brand equity and the conceptualization and structure of brand equity should guide the development of the measure set. The Brand Equity Ten essentially consisting ten sets of measures grouped into five categories, structured and motivated by the four dimensions of brand equity- brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand awareness-also including market behavior measures that could be applied across the markets and products. Moreover, according to Aaker the measures should reflect the asset value of the brand, focus on a sustainable advantage, detect change, reflect constructs that truly drive the market and should be applicable across brands, product categories, and markets. Such brand equity measures will be more general than those used to manage individual brands for which specific measures of functional benefits and brand personality are likely to be more unique. Thus, some modification to fit the context and task at hand will often be appropriate because the scope of affected decisions might be different. (Aaker, 1996)

In the Brand Equity Ten brand loyalty is a core dimension of brand equity, acting as a barrier to entry, a basis for a price premium, time to respond to competitor innovations, and against price competition. Hence, Aaker (1996) suggests that brand loyalty should be measured by two set of sub dimensions, price premium and satisfaction. Price premium is measured by the amount the customer is willing to pay for the brand in comparison with the other brand. A brand price premium can be determined by simply asking consumers how much more they would be willing to pay for the brand.

However, a more sensitive and reliable measure has been developed, called joint analysis, which provides the consumer with a set of simple choices. The selection is then analyzed together to determine the significance of different dimensions. However, marketers need to know that there are markets where price variation are not significant for legal reasons, such as government-controlled pricing. Therefore, some intention-to-buy measurement become more relevant. Satisfaction can be defined as people who have used a product or service for certain

period of time or are imply based on the user's experience from the customer's perspective. In services loyalty is often a cumulative result of positive user experiences in the past and recommendations. Thus, satisfaction is especially robust measure for service brands.

Nevertheless, satisfaction and loyalty measures are limited to existing customers and do not apply to non-customers. Because, they do not measure the extent of brand equity outside the regular customer base. Perceived quality has been shown to be related to price premiums, price elasticities, brand usage, and earnings per share. (Aaker, 1996) Furthermore, Aaker (1996) suggests that it should be measured by straightforward questions about the perceived quality of the brand in a competitor frame of reference. Furthermore, perceived quality is strongly related to other key brand equity measures. Thus, by providing a surrogate variable for other more specific elements of brand equity.

Since, the key associations components of brand equity usually involves image dimensions that are unique to a brand or to a product class, brand associations are usually a complex outcome of different encounters between the brand and the customer, and thus Aaker (1996) suggests that associations could be structured around three broad categories: the brand-as-product (value), the brand-as-person (brand personality) and the brand-as-organization (organizational associations). Aaker (1996) divides brand awareness in six sub sections which are presented here: Recognition (Have the consumer heard of this brand), Recall (which brands from certain product line the consumer can recall), Top-of-Mind (the first-named brand in a recall task), Brand Dominance (the only brand recalled), Brand Knowledge (consumer knows what the brand stands for), and Brand Opinion (consumer has a firm opinion about the brand). According to Aaker (1996) the proper measurement depends on the research method and phase of the brands lifecycle, for example recall questions can be inconvenient to use in a survey. Therefore, alternative to employing recall is the use of brand knowledge and brand opinion variables. Furthermore, the author stated that if awareness measures focus only on the brand name, an incomplete picture could be obtained. Thus, name awareness cannot be separated from familiarity with the brands symbols and visual imagery. Since, awareness levels can often be affected dramatically by cueing symbols and visual imagery. (Aaker, 1996)

After the division and categorization of the brand equity measures, Aaker (1996) laid the true foundation of subsequent brand equity measurement research by presenting the measures themselves. These measures have been widely used in later research with minor modifications, and they are the basis of much of the subsequent literature.

In their research, Yoo et al. (2000) recognized three dimensions of brand equity: perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand associations with brand awareness.

Kim et al. (2003) examined the underlying dimensions of brand equity and the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and the financial performance, suggested that measures consist of the four dimensions of brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand image. The Appendix 1 contains a summary of scale items.

Kim et al. (2003) suggested that brand image consists of three dimensions of brand associations: their favorability, strength, and distinctiveness (Kim & Kim, 2004). Hence, brand image requires the development of scale items specific to a product category (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). The reason for including brand image as a dimension of consumer-based brand equity arises from its important role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity (Kim et al., 2003). Therefore, according to the pretest framework suggested by Low and Lamb (2000), Kim et al. (2003) developed different scale items for each category.

The researchers recapped their study with the brand equity in the service sector, using quick-service restaurants with similar results. According to the study, brand awareness is not found to be of as much importance in the brand equity constructs as it is in the financial performance. Brand equity as a whole is also found to have a strong correlation with the firms' performance (Kim and Kim, 2004). Both studies made by these researchers utilized very specific measurements that generally suit only the industry in question. Thus, it can be argued that these scales did not function as well as Yoo and Donthu (2001), essentially giving support to their formulation of brand equity measurement. However, it should be noted that in both of the studies the main objective was measure the financial impact of brand equity, not to improve scale development. Pappu et al. (2005) argued that current measurement techniques for brand equity suffers from difficulty of distinguishing sufficient distinction between brand associations and brand awareness. In their study the researchers set out to improve the empirical measurement of brand equity.

3. TRIBALISM AND TRIBAL BEHAVIOR IN CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER COMMUNITIES

In general, groups are people who influence an individual's cognitions and behaviors (Moskowitz et al., 2005). Several types of reference groups have been delineated, including formal and informal, primary and secondary, and membership, aspirational, and dissociative groups. First, several of the distinctions can be combined to better describe specific groups (Moskowitz et al., 2005). Second, while distinctions between all of these groups are useful, consumer behavioral research has focused on two primaries informal, group peers and family. Third issues of major importance to marketing concerning reference-group influence include: (1) What types of influence do reference-group exert on individuals? (2) How does reference group influence vary across products and brands and (3) How does the group cohesiveness affect individual's behavior? (Moskowitz et al., 2005)

The aim of this chapter is to identify the essential elements of tribalism and tribal behavior and develop hypotheses for their relationships with brand equity.

3.1 Identifying Consumer Tribalism and Tribal Brands

Consumer groups formed around a single brand are known in general as brand tribes or brand communities (Cova and Pace, 2006). The term "brand community" is also an inadequate means of describing a tribe. A brand community is established to support a particular brand (Brownlie et al., 2007; Burg-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Subcultures have normally much narrower connections with shared beliefs, values or customs compared to consumer tribes, setting them apart from the dominant societal culture (Schiffman et al., 2008; ref. Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). The difference between these concepts in the literature are not always clear and often confused.

There is a strong connection between brand, individual identity and culture. A brand community is a consumer community that consists of an emotional attachment to a product or a brand (Muninz and O'Guinn, 2001). Significant difference between traditional brands and tribal brands is the amount of support tribal brands dedicate to their consumers rather than trying to establish dominance over them like more traditional brands. By doing so, brands are able to break down the wall between markets, consumers and societies. Strong tribal brands often evolve around products or services that have clearly stated and strong shared values with their

followers. They are the emotional result of personalization over time. The tribal brand creation process involves thousands of social interactions of customers with different aspects of their favourite brand, and over time, the social look that makes up the tribal brand is achieved (Moutinho et al., 2007). Thus, it can be seen that symbolic meanings are essential part of tribal brands and next those will be examined in more detail.

3.1.1 Symbolism

Researcher have found that certain brands contain symbolic attributes and their consumption depends more on their social significance than their functionality. The product symbol therefore means what the brand means and what linking value it provides to the consumer. (Levy, 1959; Elliot, 1999).

Individuals use products and brands to build and maintain relationships with the group and their identity (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Because the symbolic value of labeled consumer goods is able to provide the necessary unifying value to consumers (Belk, 1988; Solomon, 1983; Leight and Gabel, 1992). Studies show that individuals send signals to other individuals through their consumption behavior. In addition, they also interpret other actions through these signals (Holman, 1980; Belk et al., 1982). How well these processes are performed depends on the signals used from individuals' data (McCracken and Roth, 1989). These messages are successfully conveyed only if the symbolism of the offer is socially recognized (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). It is therefore clear that individuals use symbolic meaning to express what their status and identity are compared to other members of society.

Consumers often choose their clothing more often for symbolic consumption rather than functionality such as protecting themselves from the elements (Hyatt, 1992), making consumers more likely to choose and use clothing brands that are socially visible to others in order to convey the preferred message of their identity to others (Hwan Lee, 1990). Clothing is a socially consumed product group with strong social norms that influence an individual behavior (Bourne, 1957). Furthermore, clothing is important since it signifies a wide range of aspects of the nature of people who wear it, their musical tastes, social roles, occupation, lifestyle, group membership and personality (Hawkings et al., 2001). Clothing market is dominated by major brands but there are functional and even design similarities among these. It seems rational that clothing branding and imagery have meanings and symbolize different values for consumers.

Furthermore, symbolism includes messages that individuals convey to others. Individuals can convey these messages either consciously or completely unconsciously. Different groups also interpret messages differently, so the desired message is not always delivered to the recipient in the desired way. For example, consumers communicate with similar clothes or by using similar symbols in their clothes when they want to inform others of them belonging to a certain group. The importance of this is emphasized when an individual meets new people. (Hawkings et al., 2001)

Symbolic representation is related to aesthetic or image enhancement. For example, the durability of a sport jacket is part of an instrumental performance, while style represents a symbolic performance. Clothing seems to perform five main functions: protecting from the environment, increasing sexual attraction, aesthetic and sensual satisfaction, the status indicator and expanding self-image. Except for the protection from environment these functions are all dimensions of symbolic performance. (Hawkings et al., 2001) Swan and Combs (1976) studied the relationship between performance expectation, actual performance, and satisfaction with clothing purchases and argued based on their findings that, dissatisfaction is caused by a failure of instrumental performance, while complete satisfaction also require the symbolic functions to perform at or above the expected levels. Thus, it can be argued that symbolic consumption act as important function in order to achieve brand loyalty.

“Consumers in a role transition, have a symbolic characteristics of goods that help them to perform the desired role (Leight and Gabel, 1992). Such transition could be for an example starting a new hobby or job. Ambiguity and uncertainty about their role lead to symbolic buying behavior (Hawkings et al., 2001). The degree of visibility of the product also affects the communication of self-identity message through consumption symbols. As product visibility increases, an individual’s own choices are more likely to depend on the consumption choices of socially significant others (Hwan Lee, 1990). Therefore, it is important for individuals to find out how other people in their social group interpret the meaning of certain products and brands (Ligas and Cotte, 1999). Individuals can then use the symbolic content of selected consumption objects to reflect their belonging or connection to a particular social group (Elliot and Wattanasuwan, 1998). On the other hand, consumers can also avoid certain products on the basis of their symbolic meaning if they don’t want to be affiliated to certain groups (Elliot, 1999; Hogg, 1998).

In postmodern consumer behavior the image does not represent the product, but the vise-versa (Cova, 1999); objectivity provides space for symbolization (Venkatesh et al., 1993). The utilization of cult symbolism is inherent to tribal groups; products become social tools serving as means of communication between the individual and his significant references. Consumption manifests itself as value surrounding a common passion. (Banister and Hogg, 2004; ref. Mitchell & Imria, 2011) In context of action sports, the real links are not only the sacred places they hold in value, their equipmentm the “secret” gestures but also the brands they buy. In addition to hobbies, these are lifestyles that have a big impact on the fashion, entertainment, professional sports and brands overall. (Mountinho et al., 2007). The consuming individual as a tribe member exists beyond the emotional and narcissistic project describe in the consumer research category. The individual is no longer seen as an independent figure trying to gather constantly more experiences. Instead, consumers belong in tribes, where brand symbolism creates a whole universe for tribe. (Ostergaard and Jantzen, 2000; ref. Cova & Cova 2009) Therefore, the meanings of the symbols are not separate, but are built into the culture of the tribes. They have been selected on the basis of common interpretattions of individuals in the subculture (Cova and Cova, 2002). Communication of symbolic meanings is based on shared language, knowledge and, understanding with others in the social group. purchasing branded products is an important part of adhering to group norms, but also in marking individuality to make them attractive to others in the group (Hawkings et al., 2001).

3.1.2 Rituals

Finding a connection between consumption practices and tribal imagination, starting with the idea that people do not work in a social vacuum by acting only on the impression of advertising effects (Cova, 1997). Thus, when individuals engage in a number of repetitive and apparently simple behaviors in their daily lives. Although they look simply, these types of repetitive behaviors link us to our physical, temporal, social and cultural environments. The characteristic for rituals is as following: often consist of sequence of well-rehearsed and carefully mastered expressive, symbolic, movements and action. Ritual behavior is highly formal and often requires a certain amount of drama and must be approached with seriousness and intrinsic intensity (Rook, 1985).

Some important features of a ritual include scripted behavior, the use of artifacts, a serious and intense atmosphere, an audience, evocative and stylized staging, a community of believing

participants and symbolic meanings of action (Gainer, 1995). Rituals involve a variety of social and psychological processes, which perform many individual and societal functions (Werner et al., 1988). A significant underlying feature of a ritual is that it can be public or shared with others in some ways (Gainer, 1995). An important function of these shared rituals is to encourage and to commemorate a sense of group cohesiveness (Werner et al., 1988). Furthermore, individuals participate in these rituals in order to maintain the bond of a particular small world (Gainer, 1995). Thus, it serves the function of constructing the relationships of a future social life in a specific small world. Moreover, the social connections are becoming quite explicit nowadays as an increasing number of people are joined together by strong emotional bonds such as the sharing of same tastes, habits intellectual pursuits or participating in events (Maffesoli, 1996).

As previously shown postmodern tribes do not exist in any other form than the symbolically and ritually demonstrated by their members. In addition, tribes are constantly made to be formed by repeated symbolic rituals of members that last no longer than the appeal of these rituals (Bauman, 1992).

Belonging to a group is motivated by an individual's desire to positively distinct from other social groups (Madrigal, 2002). Performing rituals such as gathering tribal artifacts, dressing in group symbols, and visiting groups sacred places are an important part of the group identification and affiliation process (Mountinho et al., 2007). As emotional investment grows scares in public life, it is this emotion and communion of tribes which lead postmodern person to the re-integration of rituals and transcendence in everyday life. There are numerous sociological studies which emphasize the return of rituals, but in a profane and not religious manifestation (Ferrarotti, 1993; Mountinho et al., 2007). This new rituality therefore expresses the creativity of postmodern society and its numerous tribes (Cova, 1997).

In tribal marketing the main purpose is to consider brands from the perspective of its linking value rather than use value (Cova, 1999). Rituals are a tribe's expression of shared belief and social belonging (Segalen, 1998). The meaning ascribed to products and services is often related to societal occasions and to social links, and rituals are one of the best collective opportunities to affirm, evoke, assign or revise these meanings (Cova, 1997). Moreover, when rejecting the materialism and aesthetics of everyday life that characterized our postmodern condition, the search for rituals and their integration in the design of brands may play a role in the active

memory of sacred-seeking society. Therefore, many entrepreneurs today earn their livelihoods from their ability to supply consumers with ritual objects or objects used in the performing rituals. (Solomon, 1992) Hence, it is more important for a company to know how its brand can support the tribe in its essence than how to provide the product to the consumer. Therefore, tribes rely on rituals to assert its existence and maintain their membership (Cova and Cova, 2002). The tribe or at least some of its members gather and perform its rituals in public places of worship or commemoration. There are rituals at large social events and small loyal meetings which can be utilized by tribal marketing activities (Cova and Cova, 2002). These spaces are “anchoring places” They provide a temporary home to perform tribe members social gatherings. These place and associated rituals need to be supported in many ways enabling participants to focus building their emotional bond with the place and other tribe members. Such elements include cult objects, ritual clothing, sacred or ceremonial places, ritual words, idols, icons and sacred images. (Aubert-Gamet and Cova, 1999; ref. Cova & Cova, 2009) Furthermore, when building, long term customer loyalty the tribal approach relies on these rituals and cult sites (Cova and Cova, 2002). According to Prebish (1984) customer loyalty is expressed through a series of formal public and private rituals, which require a symbolic language and space that worshipers consider to be sacred (Prebish, 1984; ref. Cova & Cova, 2009).

Marketing activities that take place clearly outside the support of tribe are usually targeted at a small number of “tribal sympathizers” who identify with the core members but whom stand out clearly from the “mainstream tribal members” (Cova and Cova, 2002).

3.2 Sociocultural Dimensions of Consumption and Tribal Behaviour

Prior to 1980, there was relatively little attention to the socio cultural aspects of consumer behavior (see Levy and Zaltman, 1975) and most of the research concentrate around three main paradigms: (i) the effects of social class membership on various consumer behaviors, (ii) the influence of consumer psychographics, or lifestyles on purchase attitudes and behaviors, or (iii) the relationship between consumers’ cultural values and similar dependent measures. In early 1980s, consumer researchers developed new especially qualitative, research methods. Ethnographic field studies, projective techniques and individual in-depth interviews were among these and began to appear in the academic literature. Providing a whole new perspective and understanding of the symbolic meaning of the brands. (Earl and Kemp, 1999)

All consumers belong to groups, trying to please others and choose in behaviors by observing the actions of the individuals around them. Therefore, the desire of individuals to “adapt” or identify with desired individuals or groups is the primary motivation behind many of the purchase decisions and activities in which they engage (Solomon et al., 2002). Furthermore, groups are particular interest to marketing managers because behavior in groups is more promptly predictable than that of individuals. All facets of individual consumer behavior, such as perception, information processing, motivation, personality as well as situational influences on choice are influenced by the social structure which consumer is embedded (Foxall et al., 1998). In many cases, group influence is instrumental in determining an individual’s buying behavior (Evans et al., 2006). Almost all consumer behavior takes place within a group setting. In addition, groups serve as one of the primary agents of consumer socialization and learning (Hawkings et al., 2001). Therefore, understanding how groups’ function is essential to understand consumer behavior.

A group is defined as a set of individuals who interact for a certain period of time and who have a common need or goal and who interact to achieve those goals: everyone see each group member as a member of the group and all members are committed to each other by patterns and networks interactions over time. The interdependence of group ideology, which reinforces group beliefs, values, characteristics, and norms. (Oddi, 1986; Olmstead, 1962) Individuals belong to numerous groups, each of which may have some impact on buying behavior (Robertson and Kassarijian, 1991). The social structure consists of the institutions and relationships which bind the individual to the wider society, through which he expresses himself and in which he works out a preferred and values lifestyle (Foxall et al., 1998). Thus, group and diffusion processes are important elements of consumer microenvironment.

When individuals are forming their values, beliefs, and attitudes towards the product, they use reference groups to which consumers can compare themselves with others in order to determine the suitability of their attitudes and behaviors (Hyman, 1942).

Aspiration groups are those sets of individuals to which consumer admires and wish to be affiliated. Therefore, an aspiration group can become a reference group

- Dissociative group is another type of reference group. In this case, the consumer wishes to separate himself from the group. The dissociative group still acts to form

a point of reference; however, it is a point of reference which the consumer wants to avoid being associated. They may attempt to avoid buying the products used by the dissociative group.

- Formal group usually have a recognized organizational structure, officers and regular meeting times. For the marketer, formal groups are easily identifiable and thus, they also have more control and potential influence towards the group. Large groups tend to be more product or industry-specific and thus are high in comparative effect (Cooley, 1962).
- Informal group are less organized, such as students living in a dorm. Small informal groups can have a stronger impact on individual consumers. These groups tend to be more involved in the lives of consumers and are more important to the individual, since their high normative influence (Cooley, 1962).
- Another type of group is the primary group. The factor that denotes this group is the frequent face-to-face interaction of its members (Cooley, 1962). Families and co-workers would be examples of primary groups. Group is characteristic essential to its functioning is the desire of members to have satisfaction with the relationships among the people of the group.

The Reference to peer groups in persuasive attempts to market brands demonstrates the belief that reference groups expose individuals to behavior and lifestyles influence self-perception, promote values, attitudes, and create pressure to adhere to group norms and conformity (Bearden and Etzel, 1982).

3.2.1 Consumer Tribes and Postmodern consumer behavior

In the Dawn of the twenty-second century, fifteen year later when Gainer and Fischer (1994) suggested that “*our neglect of non-individual level phenomena stems from the biases of our dominant perspective and theories. The goal of most consumer behavior studies has only been explained how individual cognition, perception or traits influence individual behavior*”. The

question remains as to whether it is possible to go beyond the individual level of analysis on marketing in order to better understand consumer behavior.

Firat and Shultz (1997) argued that postmodern society is characterized by social dissolution, extreme individualization of taste and consumption patterns and a fragmentation of collective meanings. However, others such as Maffesoli (1996), Bauman (1992) and Cova and Cova (2001, 2002, Goulding et al., 2001) argue for a reverse movement leading to active efforts in alternate social measures and new communities, in which consumers are joining together by developing strong emotional bonds, such as sharing of same tastes, habits, intellectual pursuits or participating in events like animal rights protest or anti-capitalism campaigns. Thus, it is important to study and obtain greater understanding how this two different school differs from one another.

Evans et al. (2006) states that in postmodern world consumers can express individuality, but within the safety of groups. Some researchers have introduced concepts such as “communitas” (Arnould and Price, 1993) or “communality” (Goodwin, 1994) in their research to gain a better understanding of the emotional and collective dimensions of consumption. Godbout and Caille (1992) and Cova (1995) goes even further by developing the concept of “linking value” of a brand in order to understand these collective dimensions of consumption. Authors state that consumers seek brands for their linking value rather than actual usage in order to satisfy their need to belong to community. Thus, consumers might want to identify with style or behavior groups, and this leads to tribal behavior.

The word “tribe” refers to local sense of identification, religiousness, and group narcissism (Cova, 1997). According to the Maffesoli (1996) society is like a network of societal micro-groups, where individuals are linked to each other by shared vision of life and, a common subculture. Tribes are formed from meanings developed by all these groups based on their symbols and complexes of meanings. Furthermore, these tribes can be defined as a heterogenous group based on their age, gender, income united by their shared passion and emotions (Dionisio et al., 2008). This has some important implications because marketers may not be able to treat consumers as a homogeneous market segment. However, the problem can be resolved by paying attention ‘to the tacit and the visceral, especially the feelings of the consumers’ (Firat and Shultz, 1997). This is the logical blending of extension of individualism

and group conformity as explored by Patterson's (1998) tribes or the style group of Evens and Blythe (1994).

In the particular case of surfing, even the non-practicing followers of the associated beach lifestyle want to be part of the aspiring lifestyle in the extent that they want to pretend to be real surfers by using the similar clothing, gestures, signs and products that actual surfers. This is called "role adaptation" mechanism, which includes a reinforcing individual's identity and social recognition. This phenomenon is particularly strong if the activity is related to any aspiring lifestyle (Mountinho et al., 2007). Thus, it has a vital social dimension, combining self-recognition with social recognition by affiliating with aspired social group individuals seek to improve their social identity (Fisher and Wakefield, 1998). This will lead to increased self-esteem if accepted as a member of the group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Tribal groups focus on the linking value that keeps individuals in a group, rather than the normative effects of the group. Thus, comparing the tribal groups with psychological segments is not meaningful in this context. These short-lived and unstable group of consumers connected by sharing emotions, feelings and passions on a relatively small scale are called as a neo-tribe (Cova and Cova, 2002). However, unlike the archaic tribes, a consumer can belong to many tribes at a time (Shankar and Elliot, 1999), because the boundaries of such a grouping are conceptual rather than physical (Cova and Cova, 2002), each group is sending invisible and visible signals, which help other members to identify and share moments and cult rituals which are part of their shared imagery (Mountinho et al., 2007). One of the defining qualities of postmodern neo-tribalism is the need to belong multiple groups simultaneously without requiring individual to have same values or personality traits with other members of the group. Making them simultaneously primary and secondary group structures (Cova and Cova, 2002). Furthermore, being part of these kind of group exceeds traditional cultural, national and race barriers, anyone with shared values and belief are able to join as part of the group (Cova, 1997). Study conducted by Maffesoli (1996) stated that the elective and affective ties among tribal members formulate common practices which evolve to identities for these neo-tribe members. There is a universal need to join others because individuals are seeking fulfill their need for belonging (McGee-Cooper, 2005). There are instances of where the tribe is not only a rallying point for shared values, but these are expressed specifically through a brand. Such is a case of the exceptional loyalty among Harley-Davidson or Startrek fans. Thus, brand community has been defined as non-geographically community, which is based on social structure among the

brand devotees (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Therefore, brand communities differ from tribes being solely commercial. Hence tribe is not necessarily a "brand community". However, there are many similarities between brand community and tribal consumers, if a tribe is formed around shared passion for a cult-object such as a Tesla (Cova and Cova, 2002).

Similarities in tribal relationships among the brand community and neo-tribe members are related to the fact that both types of communities are symbolically formed and based on shared values, norms and through these mental concept's members are able to express their own meanings. Consumers are looking brands as promise for an experience and sharing them with others will lead to forming brand community and sense of belonging. Furthermore, tribes exist in no other form but the symbolically and ritually manifested commitment of their members. (Cova and Cova, 2002) As long as the brands are able to deliver meaningful and attractive experiences for the consumer there will be brand loyalty among these groups (Thompson, 1997). Thus, is it important to understand how ritual- and symbolic consumption affects in tribal behavior.

Especially for teenagers, the search for individuality is manifested in a 'search for identity and belonging' thus supporting the importance of tribes: 'the majority tends to be more transient and consumer led. Teenagers buy a look, an identity and an attitude (Evans et al., 2004). Furthermore, Bromberger (1998) argues that these tribes do not limit themselves to teenage groupings, as shown by the number of adult tribes where people gather around shared "ordinary passions". It seems that the common denominator of postmodern tribes is the community of emotions or passions. Thus, instead of focusing directly on the relationships between consumers and the business, marketers can place their brand as a linking value among consumers aiming to develop more emotional brand loyalty (Cova and Cova, 2001,2002). Furthermore, this argument is supported by Weil (1994), who states that, without orientation and a compass of a group, consumers' yields to the temptation of trying everything as if consumption were a game. Therefore, consumers become increasingly disloyal and are even more likely to change their consumption behavior. Thus, tribal behavior seems to convert higher levels of brand loyalty over individualism.

Connections to desired social groups derive the sense of identity and strength for individuals (Mountinho et al., 2007). According to Tajfel (1982) individuals are incapable to form self-images in the absence of group affiliations. Stronger identification leads to higher similarity

and cohesion with other group members through adapting more of the desirable group characteristics (Fisher and Wakefield, 1998).

Furthermore, individuals value more the social aspects of life beyond consumption and usage of products. Most valued and relevant products for them are those through their linking value (Cova, 1995). This linking value is the linking value of the brand. Consumers support brands which support and bring members together as a community of individuals with shared passions and beliefs. This includes anything that strengthens the sense of community, tribal belonging and membership to the group. (Cova, 1997). The greater the contribution of a brand to the development and strengthening of the tribal bond, the greater its linking value will be (Cova & Cova, 2001). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

The stronger the linking value the higher the brand equity.

H1: The stronger the value links the higher the brand Awareness.

H2: The stronger the value links the higher the brand Image.

H3: The stronger the value links the higher the Perceived Quality.

H4: The stronger the value links the higher the brand Loyalty.

3.2.2 Group Cohesiveness and conformity

Cohesiveness is the degree to which members of a group are attracted to each other and value their group membership (Solomon et al., 2002), “the overall level of attraction towards the group” (Evans et al., 2006) which can be equated with loyalty (Argyle, 1969). It is this factor of cohesiveness, which makes a group something more than a mere collection of individuals; it evolves feelings of belongingness and integrity and develops as the group fulfils the interpersonal needs of its members (Evans et al., 2006). Smaller groups tend to be more cohesive, because it is more difficult to relate larger group of people. As the value of the group membership for the individual grows, so too does the likelihood that the group will influence consumption decisions (Solomon et al., 2002).

Many purchases are subject to group pressure as consumers are pursuing a sense of belongingness and acceptance to a group by trying to buy products that they think will make others approve or even envy them, or products they think others want them to have. This can also be because they have learned about the product or service from other valued members of the group (Foxall et al., 1998). Therefore, also group membership involves the individual in the acceptance of a degree of conformity and that the group itself evolves norms of behavior which specify the ideal patterns of behavior to which members should conform (Evans et al., 2006). Thus, the study of group influences is the study of conformity in human beings (Foxall et al., 1998). Conformity may be defined as a “change in behavior or belief towards a group as a result of real or imagined group pressure” (Kiesler and Kiesler, 1969).

The ability of a group to make a person conform depends upon the nature and needs of the person as well as the properties of the group. One such factor is the amount of information that the person has for a decision. Thus, when little information is available for the decision or when the information is ambiguous, the group will have more impact on the consumer's decision (Venkatesan, 1966). The attractiveness of the group and the person's need to be affiliated with the group often work together to create conformity pressure. Thus, the individual will tend to conform to group norms and pressures in order to belong. Furthermore, when a product is highly salient and conspicuous to others, conformity pressures will increase (Lessig and Park, 1978).

Group influence is determined by the power the group wields (Assael, 1984). Researchers have found different types of social power or conformity influences (Mascarenhas and Highby, 1993; Fisher and Ackerman, 1998; French and Raven, 1959). According to Mascarenhas and Highby (1993) Conformity can take three forms: Informational, normative and identification. These three functions closely parallel the expert, referent, and reward powers of the groups, presented by French and Raven (1959). Thus, for the managers it is essential to make distinction between these types, since choosing the right marketing strategy varies on the type of influence involved.

Informational impact happens when a person follows other group members and interprets their opinions and behavior as potentially useful information. This is based either on the resemblance of the members of the group and person, because high degree of loyalty and identification will exert greater influence on its members, or the expertise of the influencing group members, because individuals are members of many groups, several different groups might have input into a particular purchase decision. The group whose members have more expertise relevant to

the decision will have greater influence on the purchase (Mascarenhas and Highby, 1993). Furthermore, informational influence can occur in three different situations. First, an individual may seek out information from others. Second, a group member may simply volunteer information that may influence the listener. Third, the information may be transmitted through observation (Peter and Olson, 1987).

Normative influence occurs when an individual fulfills group expectation to gain a direct reward or to avoid a sanction, this is also described as ‘utilitarian influence’, because it operates when responding favorably to the referent results in positive reinforcement by the group (Lessig and Park, 1978). Hence, individual might purchase particular brand of clothing to win approval from admired group (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998). On the other hand, identification influence, occurs when individual have internalized the group’s values and norms. These then guide the individuals’ behavior without any thought of group sanctions or rewards (Mascarenhas and Highby, 1993). Thus, it can be seen that there is two major type of conformity that can varied from obedience, where individuals merely conforms to the wishes of the group without really accepting the group’s values, to private acceptance in which the person actually changes his belief in the direction of the group. The size of the group has also been found to influence decisions, particularly when the group is of a transient nature (Asch, 1952).

While conformity is an inevitable feature of social groups, absolute compliance is never found. Independence is also a valued trait for many people. The motive, which is responsible for this desire to maintain freedom, has been called reactance and there is experimental evidence to suggest that, where compliance is forced, individuals are willing go through great effort to achieve some degree of autonomy and independence (Venkatesan, 1966).

“A highly committed online community member may have a desire to conform to the community which results in information seeking behavior at the community.” (Park and Cho, 2012). Thus, it can be argued that group conformity leads in higher levels of information seeking (Park and Cho, 2012), and thus it may enhance brand awareness, and thus further brand equity.

The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand equity

H5: The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Awareness.

H6: The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Image.

H7: The stronger the group conformity, the higher the Perceived Quality.

H8: The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Loyalty.

Even though there are limits to the pressure a group can exert on an individual consumer, such pressure may be greater for certain types of products than for others. Bourne (1956) examined several studies of reference group influence and presented a framework for studying the reference effects of non-membership groups. Identifying conspicuousness as the most pervasive product attribute involved in reference group influence, he pointed out that this has two aspects. Not only must the product be capable of being seen by others; it must also stand out and command attention. The strength of reference group influence differs from product to product; it is likely to be strongest for products and brands about which people have evolved strong norms specifying ideal behavior or usage patterns, and for which they have correspondingly strong brand preferences. The reference group influence might attach mainly to the brand or mainly to the product. For clothing, it would be stronger for the brand than the product. The differences in reference group influence across brands and products might depend on whether they are consumed in public or in private reference group influence is strongest for publicly consumed luxuries, weakest for privately consumed necessities (Bearden and Etzel 1982).

Another way in which groups influence consumers is through a need by people to assess their opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others. The process through which people evaluate the suitability of their opinions, the extent of their abilities, and the appropriateness of their possessions has been called social comparison (Festinger, 1954). Two approaches are used by individuals to obtain ability and opinion information. The first is through reflected appraisal. In this process the individual consumer examines the manner in which others in a reference group interact with him. Thus, if the other person responds positively to the person, compliments the person, and generally treats the person well, the individual will conclude that he is acting correctly and vice versa. The second method of obtaining social comparison information is through comparative appraisal. The consumer evaluates his own relative standing with respect to an attitude, belief, ability or emotion by observing the behavior of appropriate reference group (Jones and Gerald, 1967).

McMillian and Chavis (1986) argued that one of the key characteristics of mature communities are shared emotional connections that relies on interactions between group members. Furthermore, in these highly cohesive communities, positive interactions enable social

processes, strong culture and development of community. When members share collective goals and cultures, they are more likely to consider themselves part of the brand community (Dholaki et al., 2004). In these highly cohesive communities, emotional connections with the brand community have positive effects on consumer behavior (Lieberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973). Brand community characteristics are used among members to define themselves (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Thus, they are more likely to identify with the brand. Furthermore, researchers have found that consumers that have higher brand identification are more loyal to certain brand products and more likely to try new products from these brands (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Thus, one can argue that the stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand equity.

The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand equity.

H9: The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Awareness.

H10: The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Image.

H11: The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the Perceived Quality.

H12: The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Loyalty.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY

The aim of this chapter is to explicate the empirical research that included a survey exploring consumers' tribal behavior and forming of Battery brand equity. Accordingly, the research was accomplished as a quantitative study, which requires careful measure building and wide statistical analyses. First a brief description will be given of the case Brand, Battery, so that the reader can better adjust to the particular nature of the brand and market in question. The basis of the company information comes from a semi-structured interview (Appendix 2) conducted in 2011. Additionally, previous research and company material have been used to gain a more comprehensive picture of the company history. After the firm description, the research methods of the study are discussed. Finally, the design of the questionnaire and development of the scales are presented.

4.1 Company Overview and History

Company behind the Battery energy drink is Oy Sinebrychoff AB. Furthermore, this 200-year-old company is the oldest brewery in Scandinavia, founded 1819. Finland's leading manufacturer of beers, ciders, soft drinks and energy drinks. 1999 Sinebrychoff was acquired to be part of the Carlsberg concern.

Battery is caffeine containing energy drink, which effects are based on coffee, guarana and taurine extracts. Providing an energy boost to keep you going. As their slogan also states Battery "keeps you going". Sinebrychoff launched the Battery energy drink 1997. At that time there were no other energy drinks in the Finnish markets. World's leading energy drink Red Bull entered the Finnish markets 1999. In 2003 also the Finland's second biggest brewery Hartwall launched their own energy drink ED. Battery has been market leader since it was launched 1997. Furthermore, Finland is the only country with Australia where leading international brands such as Red Bull have not been able to take the market leader position (see appendix 3).

According to marketing manager (Appendix 3). The growth has slowed significantly after the cheaper price point private label brands came to the market. Battery as market leader aims to be in premium price point in the future as well. Battery has managed to keep the leadership in revenue even though their rival brand Hartwall's Ed energy drink has passed them in production volume.

According to one of the biggest retailers S-Ryhmä, 2016 energy drink sales in Finland were over 12 million liters and the growth was 20%. The Largest consumer group is 18-24-year-old and 30-40-year olds. Consumption related to sport activities was 52% for adults and 41% for adolescents.

Thus, Battery is also sponsoring a range of sports and athletes especially in extreme motorsports. Motorsports are seen as a natural link since the product itself is packed with energy. By doing this they are able to provide unique content and interesting initiatives inside the for the followers. Motorsports have clearly been the main focus for many of the energy drink brands to find loyal consumer base. There is fierce competition for the “ownership” of these sports and fans between the brands. Battery is evaluating and measuring the consumer brand image constantly (Appendix 3).

Health and wellbeing are a raising trend. Consumers are demanding more functional features from the beverages. According to product director Heini Autio, Battery is adapting to this by bringing isotonic waters and energy drinks with added natural juices.

4.2 Research Methods

The empirical results were gathered by using a research questionnaire (see Appendix 1) that was posted to 6 selected online forums. As an incentive for the consumers to partake in the research, a 50euros gift certificate was given to one randomly selected participant also added to attract attention, and to get more filled questionnaires. More detailed information about the process of selecting the websites as well as the sample is presented in chapter 5.

The main part of the empirical research will be carried out using mostly quantitative means, more specifically the set of multiple regression analyses. Thus, allowing analyzing the relationship between an independent and several dependent variables (Hair et al.1998). This set of analysis methods will be used in analyzing how the studied tribal behavior elements affect brand equity.

4.3 Questionnaire Design and Scale Development

The employed questionnaire (Appendix 1) was first pre-tested on a small group of enthusiast members of the selected groups and improved through the process. The scale items representing each concept are grouped together, and the questions are arranged so that the simplest ones are in the beginning, and the more complex ones are for the end, in order to make it easier for the customer to start filling in the answers. All of the survey's questions consisted of statements that involved a given response scale. Conscious choice to use a six-point Likert –scale was made to examine the respondent's disagreement or agreement (1=disagree, 6=agree). Thus, forcing respondents to lean in either end of the scale in absent of a neutral option. In addition, multiple choice questions were used to measure the background of the respondent.

Since using of measures whose reliability and validity are already examined is advisable (Metsämuuronen 2005), previous brand equity studies were used in forming the measures of brand awareness, -image, -loyalty and perceived quality. Additionally, the questionnaire consisted of earlier validated items measuring the group cohesiveness (McClure and Broughton, 2000) and group conformity (Veloutsou and Mountinho, 2007). Furthermore, earlier studies of tribal behavior (Cova and Cova, 2002) were utilized in forming the measures of consumer and company based linking values. Next, the scale items and the constructs are discussed.

5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this part of the study the aim is to discuss the empirical findings of this study. In the beginning, a brief overview of the background of sample is given but the emphasis is on analyzing the data and tests the research hypotheses.

5.1 Sample Description

The study was conducted in 6 websites online forums (see Appendix 6), which were selected so that they would represent the whole selected groups as accurately as possible. Thus, informal interviews were conducted with the sport enthusiast from all the selected groups to ensure, that all the most current sites were included to the study.

The study took place between the 21th of August and 21th of September in 2011. Overall, 395 questionnaires were filled. None of the questionnaire had a significant number of missing answers or other inconsistencies. Thus, all 395 questionnaires were accepted and used in the analysis. In statistical sense the size was determined adequate. Since, statistical tests for samples of 1000 or more make the statistical significance test overly sensitive and in contrast very small sample (e.g. 20 respondents) are appropriate only for analysis by simple regression with a single independent variable (Hair et al. 1995).

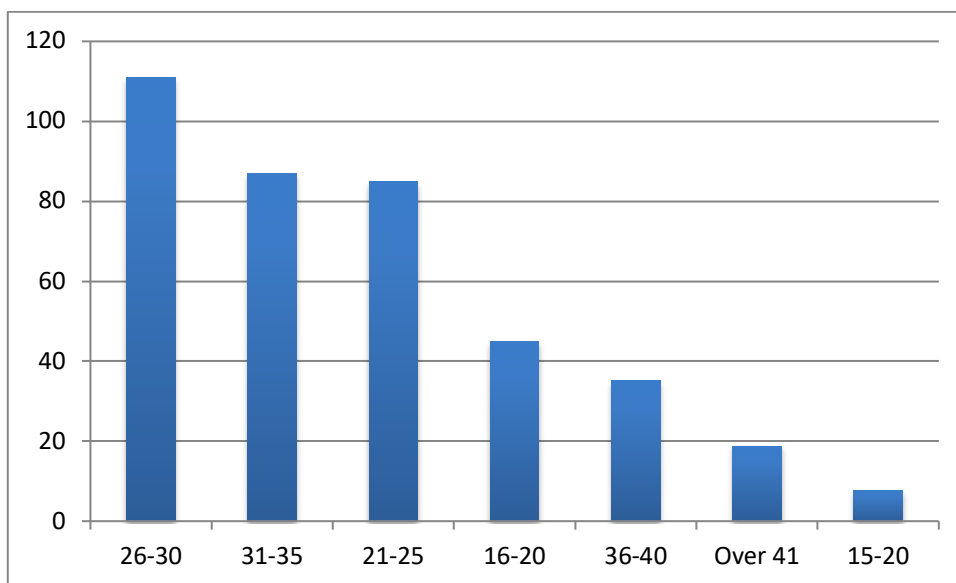


Figure 7. Age distribution among participants

Most of the respondents belonged to the age group 26-30 years old (28,1%), the next largest age groups being the 31-35 years old (22%) and the 21-25 years old (21,5%) respondents, followed by 16-20 years old (11,4%) and 36-40 (8,9%). In addition, the interest of respondents over 41 years remained low (4,8%), probably due to the fact that selected groups are physically challenging and contain high injury risk, which makes them more suitable for younger participants. The questionnaire fairly reached respondents from the age group 11-15 (2%), which was surprising since, this age group is significant especially among snowboarders and motocrossers. This phenomenal might be due to the reason that questionnaire used fairly sophisticated foreign language, or due to the fact of large number of questions. Furthermore, 1,3% of the respondents did not report their age.

A total of 386 participants identified their gender, and of these 81% were male (n=320) and 16,7 females (n=66). It indicates that a very dominant respondents' group is males aged 21-35 years old, which has to be considered when generalizing the results. Although in this particular study it represents satisfactorily the target audience of the selected brand.

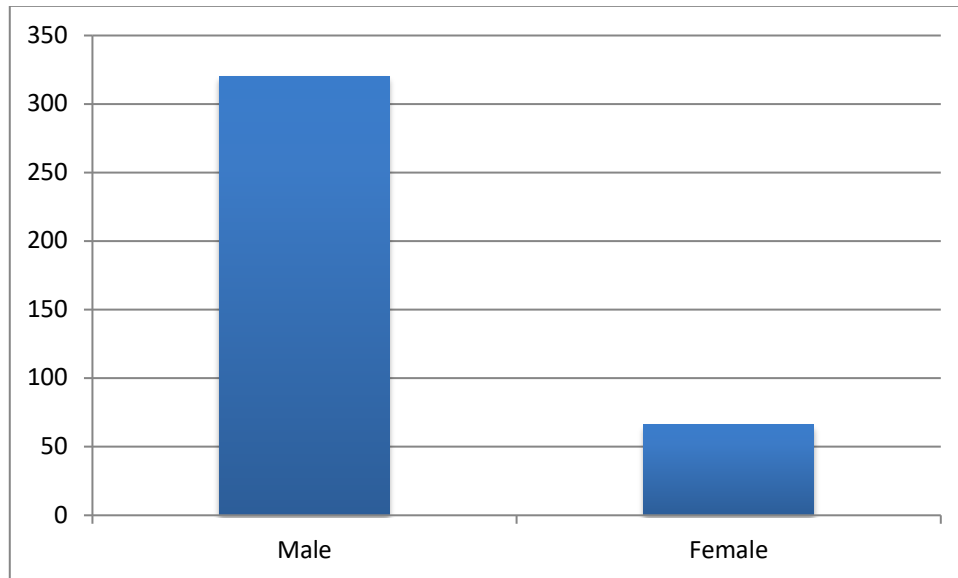


Figure 8. gender distribution among participants

Figure 9 represents the distribution of the selected groups in the sample. Largest groups being climbers (34,9%) and snowboarders (30,9%), representing over half (65,8%) of the total subjects. Skydivers constituted 14,9% and surfers 11,9% of the total sample, which can be explained due to significantly lower participant numbers in Finland than the first two groups. Noticeable minority (7,3) of the respondents belonged to the group motocrossers. Since, this group is still significantly bigger in participants numbers in Finland than skydivers or surfers, the result could indicate that this group is less active in online environment or selected websites were not most commonly used by most of the participants.

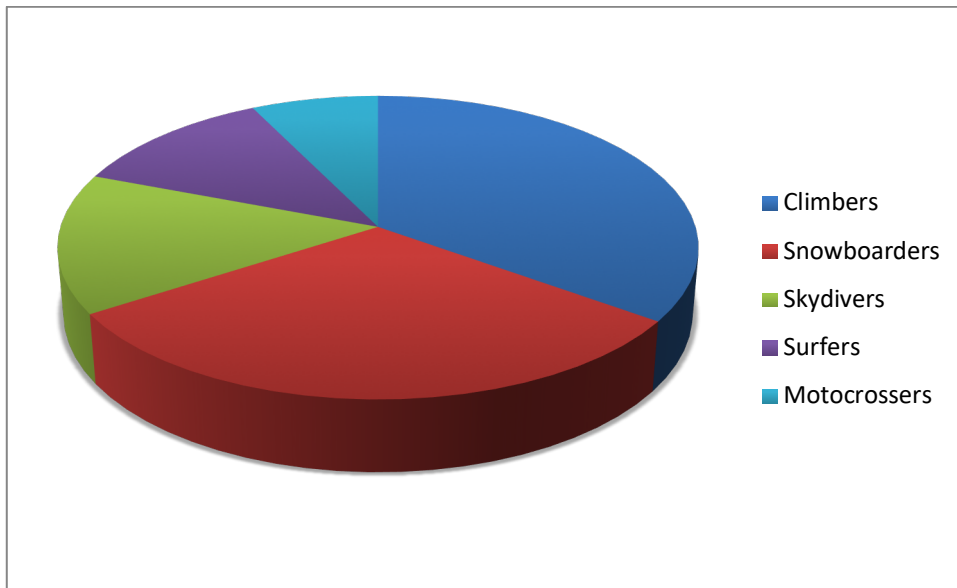


Figure 9. Distribution of the sample groups

When asked about the participants skill level which indicates the participants involvement in the sport. About one third belonged the highest group “advanced” (30,1). Most of the participants were part of the intermediate group (42,3) and majority of the rest were novices (22%). Only 4,8% of the participants were beginners. Therefore, the results strongly indicate, that while your skill level grows so does the involvement and participating to online forums.

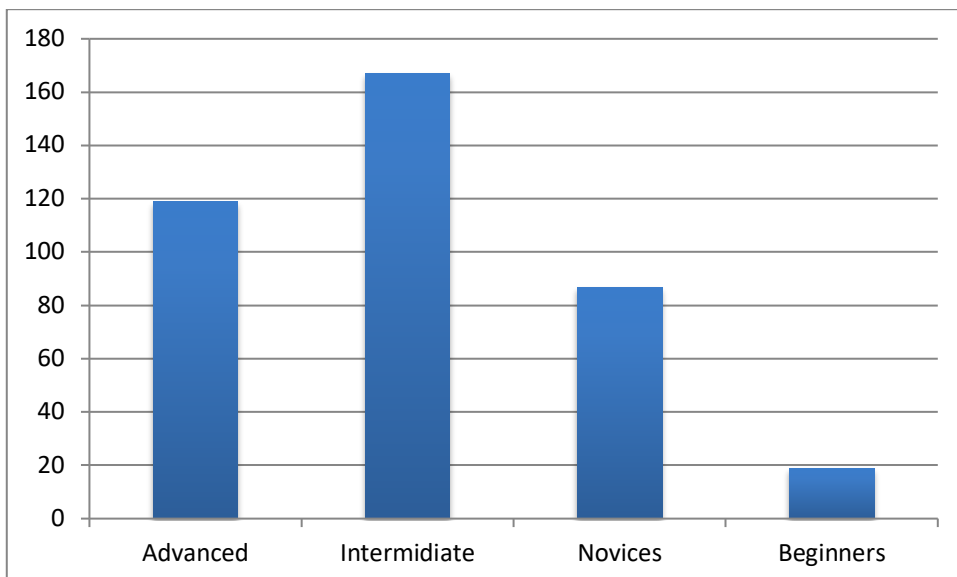


Figure 10. skill level distribution among participants

More than half of the respondents (60,3%) lived in Southern Finland. Western Finland was the next largest group 18,2%. Oulu (8,9%) being surprisingly third leaving Eastern Finland (5,6), Lapland (5,1) and Åland (0,5) barely containing over 10% of all the participants.

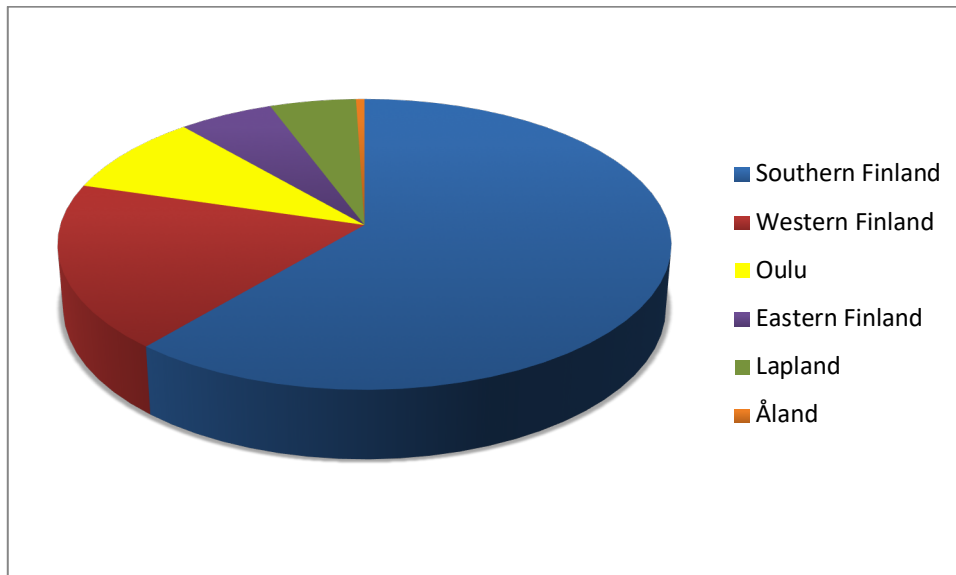


Figure 11. Geographic distribution of participants.

5.2 The Measurement Scales

Although most of the scales of this study were adapted from previous research, factor analyses were conducted in order to confirm the goodness of the scales. Factor analyses were considered reasonable to validate the scales of the multidimensional concepts of the study.

5.2.1 Factor Analyses

Factor analyses provide a tool to find entities from a large number of variables, discovering underlying correlations between scale items. Thus, creating summated scales that describes the data in a much smaller number of items than the original individual variables. Factors are formed to maximize their explanation of the entire variable set. This means that all the variables loading highly on a factor are combined and the average score of the variables is used as a replacement variable for these combined variables. Therefore, factor analysis also reduces the amount of analysis needed. (Hair et al. 1995; Metsämuuronen, 2003). There are also some

existing premises before conducting an exploratory factor analysis. First, pure correlations should exist between the variables. Second, the variables should be measured at least with an ordinal scale. Third, the sample size should be satisfactory, not less than 200 (Metsämuuronen, 2005). All the existing premises were met in this study.

As this study followed Aaker's conceptualization of brand equity, it was evident that four factors needed to be extracted, each representing a dimension of brand equity. The items analyzed here include five items for brand awareness (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA4, BA5), four for brand image (BI1, BI2, BI3, BI4), six for perceived quality (PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4, PQ5, PQ6), and six for brand loyalty (BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, BL6). Factor analyses were also conducted for cohesiveness (15), Conformity (7), linking value (7), social ties (14), consumption of activity (6), symbols (4), rituals (4) and belief (3) variables.

Before being able to perform a factor analysis for the commonalities of each variable must be assessed. By doing this we will find out how much is the variables variance in relationship to the given factors. The closer the number is to one means that the given factors are able to explain more of the variance of the variables. In the opposite case when number is close to zero there should be consideration whether it makes sense to include the variable in the analysis.

In this study maximum likelihood factoring with Direct oblimin rotation was used in the factor analysis to help assess the dimensionality and correlations between the items. Direct oblimin is an approach to obtaining a non-orthogonal rotation of factors (Hair et al., 1995). Furthermore, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) and Bartlett's test are required to confirm the variables' appropriateness for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity provides a statistical probability that the correlation matrix has significant correlations at least among some variables. The significant level of Bartlett's test should be ($p < 0,001$) (Metsämuuronen, 2005). KMO test measures the degree of intercorrelations among variables. When the KMO test value is near one (values over 0,6) there are only small intercorrelations and the variables are appropriate for factor analysis. Finally, the number of factors is extracted using the latent root criterion or eigenvalues. The factors having eigenvalues greater than $p < 1$ are considered significant (Hair et al., 1998). These were confirmed.

i) Brand equity

Factor analysis is conducted to all brand equity variables. As this study followed Aaker's conceptualization of brand equity, it was evident that four factors needed to be extracted, each representing a dimension of brand equity. The items analyzed here include five items for brand awareness (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA4, BA5), four for brand image (BI1, BI2, BI3, BI4), six for perceived quality (PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4, PQ5, PQ6), and six for brand loyalty (BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, BL6).

Table 1. Factor Analysis Communalities

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
BA1	,409				
BA2	,542				
BA3	,627				
BA4	,670				
BI1	,462	,462			
IB2		,723			
BI3		,415			
PQ1		,848			
PQ2			,589		
PQ3			,548		
PQ4			,501		
PQ5			,813		
PQ6			,450		
PQ7			,565		
BL1				,705	
BL2				,776	
BL3					,671
BL4					,337

After first extracting five factors, one of the items (BI1) loaded to two factor neither being significantly high loading. After removing this item, another factor analysis was conducted, and

four factors remained. Analysis revealed two problematical items BI1 and BL4, which did not load considerably to any factor, and thus was also removed. The removal of these three items also slightly improved the communalities of remaining items (see table 2). Furthermore, item (BL6) loaded significantly (0,584) to brand awareness and thus was merge to brand awareness items. The communalities reached acceptable levels, with an average of 0,552. The suggested minimum threshold for the communality levels is 0,5 (Metsämuuronen, 2005) which most of the items clearly surpassed.

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
BA1		,556		
BA2		,729		
BA3		,800		
BA4		,813		
BI1				,690
BI2				,706
BI3				,408
PQ1	,853			
PQ2	,647			
PQ3	,782			
PQ4	,664			
PQ5	,874			
PQ6	,626			
PQ7	,584			
BL1			,809	
BL2			,849	
BL3			,805	
BL5			,466	

As seen in Table 3, the remaining items loaded to the factors as expected with loadings ranging from 0,556 to 0,874, excluding items BI4 (0,408) and BL5 (0,466). Despite lower loadings items were included in subsequent analyses thus, the loading values are high enough to support the dimensionality of brand equity and items used. Furthermore, removal of these items did not improve the loadings or communalities of the remaining items. The new items illustrating the brand equity dimensions were then formed on the basis of the factor analysis by calculating the means of the grouped item scores. These items were used in analyzing the relationships between the consumer tribal behavior elements and brand equity dimensions.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy reached a level of 0,900 in the factor analysis, noticeably higher than the suggested minimum level of 0,7. In addition Barlett's test of sphericity had a significance level of 0,000, suggesting that no violations regarding the assumptions of equality of variances of homoscedasticity were made.

Table 3. Extracted Factor Analysis Eigenvalues

component	total	% of variance	Cumulative %	rotated
1 PQ	6,737	37,430	37,430	5,924
2 BA	2,095	11,640	49,070	3,207
3 BL	1,062	5,899	54,696	4,200
4 BI	,757	4,207	59,176	3,120

According to Metsämuuronen (2001), the goodness of factors can be estimated by the loadings of the items. Eigenvalue can be used for this purpose. As stated earlier it represents the amount of variance accounted for by factor, and the number of factors extracted should exceed the value 1,00 (Hair et al., 1998). It can be seen that first three factors are reliable with eigenvalues clearly over 1,00. Contrariwise, the fourth factor remains under this value (0,757). However, there is debate concerning this limit being quite artificial and overly sensitive, especially with small samples (Hair et al., 1998). Furthermore, Metsämuuronen (2005) suggested that as long as the factors can be clearly read, this limit need not be absolute. Thus, this should pose no problem, as the figures are still quite acceptable. The four extracted factors explain 59.18% of total variance.

ii) Tribal behavior

Three multi-item scales were used to measure consumer tribal behavior (n=29); group cohesiveness (COH 1-15), - conformity (COM 1-7) and Brand linking value (LV 1-7). The purpose is to determine if these are distinct constructs and loaded separately, as the theory would implicate.

After the initial factor analysis cohesiveness items (COH 1, 5-7, 10, 14) were removed from the final solution due to their non-existing or poor loading and low communality values

(Appendix 4). Furthermore, the linking value items (LV1, LV2) were removed due to their strong cross-loadings for two factors.

Five factors are extracted instead of earlier expectations about three factors. All group conformity variables loaded to the one factor but cohesiveness and linking value both divided into two factors, representing their sub dimensions. Thus, all cohesiveness and linking value variables loaded separately and significantly to these four factors, it is essential to treat them separately. Two, group cohesiveness factors were named emotional- (COHE) and behavioral (COHB) cohesiveness and linking value factors, action-based link (ABL) and community-based link (CBL).

Table 4. Rotated Factor Analysis Eigenvalues

component	total	% of variance	Cumulative %	rotated
1 CONF	1,891	9,456	9,456	1,947
2 COHE	5,388	26,940	36,396	4,988
3 ABL	2,769	13,843	50,239	3,806
4 CBL	,828	4,141	54,380	2,370
5 COHB	,545	2,725	57,105	3,143

Table 5 indicates that two factors (COHB, CBL) both have eigenvalue under 1,00 (0,545, 0,828). However, this should pose no problem since the figures are still quite acceptable. Moreover, this five-factor solution (emotional cohesiveness, behavioral cohesiveness, group conformity, action based linking value and community-based linking value) is explaining 57% of the variance among the variables, which can be considered decent. In addition, the KMO test's value is 0,858, which is higher than the threshold value and Barlett's test of sphericity (sig. 0,000) shows significant correlation among variables so the correlation matrix is acceptable to factor analysis.

iii) Tribal identifiers, symbols, ritual, belief

It has been argued in theory that all tribes share tribal identifiers such as symbols, rituals and shared belief. Therefore, three scales were assumed to be discovered from the factor analysis. The first try three factors were extracted. It was noted that R1 (places) did not load to any of the factors so it was removed from further analysis. Second try indicated that S4 (images) cross-loads for two factors. This might be due to its relatively difficult conceptualization. R4 loads into same factor with shared belief. Although the loading is fairly weak and thus both items (S4, R4) are also removed from the final solution. The removal of these items also slightly improved the communalities of the remaining items.

Results showed that first two factors are reliable when eigenvalue is considered. However, the third factor remains under the threshold value (0,636). As mentioned earlier eigenvalue is not a strict limit if factor can be clearly read (Metsämuuronen, 2003). It has been argued that also scree plot test can be used as a criterion for choosing factors (see appendix 5). The point at which curve first begins to straighten out is considered to indicate the maximum number of factors to extract (Hair et al., 1995). Thus, the third factor can be included to further analysis as the screen plot indicates that maximum number of factors is four. Furthermore, it can be seen that the communalities of two symbol items are fairly low but as they reach the level 0,30, they are considered acceptable (Hair et al., 1995). Moreover, KMO (0,773) and Barlett's tests (sig. 0,000) indicated good values and that correlation matrix is suitable for factor analysis.

5.3 The final summated scales and reliability and validity of the study

After the factor analysis all the variables that loaded highly to one factor are combined in order to create summated scales. The idea is to combine several variables that measure the same concept into a single variable in an attempt to increase the reliability of the measurement through multivariate measurement (Hair et al., 1998). Thus, an average score of the variables is used as a replacement of a variable. Using summated scales provides two significant benefits. First, a summated scale is able to represent the multiple aspects of a concept in a single measure. Second, summated scale provides a means of overcoming at least to some extent the measurement error inherent in all measurement variables. (Hair et al., 1998)

When building a scale, validity and reliability need to be ensured, since they are important indicators of the goodness of retained scales. Assessing the reliability of each summated scale involves the assessment if the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of the variable. Cronbach's alpha is perhaps the best indicator of general scale reliability. Thus, it explains the scale reliability by measuring the scales' internal consistency based in the average inter-item correlation. The generally suggested minimum for Cronbach's alpha in theory testing is 0,7 or 0,6 in exploratory research. (Metsämuuronen, 2005; Hair et al., 1998)

The Cronbach's alpha measures for the final items after the factor analyses are summarized in table 6 below. All the measures show high reliability, which was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Alphas range from 0,707 to 0,905 so they are all over the 0,7 threshold which is suggested minimum for theory testing (Metsämuuronen, 2005), as is the case here.

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Levels of Scale

	N of cases	N of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Brand			
Awareness	374	4	,808
Brand			
Image	380	3	,734
Perceived			
Quality	360	7	,905
Brand			
Loyalty	371	4	,842
COHE	373	5	,832
COHB	377	4	,707
CONF	374	7	,895
ABL	372	2	,854
CBL	373	2	,788

Item-total correlations reflect the correlation of the item to the summated scale score, and should exceed 0,5 (Hair et al., 1998). Thus, the values reflect the correlation between the specific item and the scale as a whole, and as can be seen from Table 7, the correlations for

most of the items surpassed the 0,5 threshold. Even though the items (CB 3, CB 4, CF 7) are somewhat under the suggested 0,5 level they correlate more than sufficiently and thus offer further support for the selected scale items.

Table 6. Item-total Correlations of Scale

	N of cases	N of items	Item-Total Correlation
Awareness	374	4	
BA1			,549
BA2			,670
BA3			,627
BA4			,679
Image	380	3	
BI1			,514
BI2			,669
BI3			,497
Quality	360	7	
PQ1			,858
PQ2			,716
PQ3			,629
PQ4			,662
PQ5			,863
PQ6			,630
PQ7			,683
Loyalty	371	4	
BL1			,696
BL2			,771
BL3			,757
BL4			,521
COHE	373	5	
CE1			,653

CE2			,718
CE3			,702
CE4			,514
CE5			,576
COHB	377	4	
CB1			,562
CB2			,583
CB3			,391
CB4			,449
CONF	374	7	
CF1			,786
CF2			,831
CF3			,694
CF4			,749
CF5			,759
CF6			,604
CF7			,470
ABL	372	2	
ABL1			,747
ABL2			,747
CBL	373	2	
CBL1			,652
CBL2			,652

Descriptive statistics of the numeric scale items measuring brand equity are listed in the following table 1. The abbreviations BA equals Brand Awareness, BI Brand Image, PQ Perceived Quality and BL Brand Loyalty. The mean levels can be considered overall quite high. Especially with brand awareness which was not surprising since studied brand is well established and known in the Finnish market. Standard deviation figures can also be described somewhat high although for the size of the sample still normal.

Table 7. Descriptives of Data

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
BA1	374	5,29	1,172
BA2	374	5,18	1,212
BA3	374	4,74	1,483
BA4	374	5,18	1,128
BI1	380	2,85	1,391
BI2	380	3,10	1,327
BI3	380	2,73	1,383
PQ1	360	3,49	1,301
PQ2	360	3,11	1,315
PQ3	360	4,36	1,179
PQ4	360	3,23	1,216
PQ5	360	3,56	1,183
PQ6	360	2,97	1,220
PQ7	360	2,65	1,431
BL1	371	1,80	1,197
BL2	371	1,86	1,183
BL3	371	1,80	1,160
BL4	371	2,41	1,397

5.4 Multiple Regression Analyses

Next sections will examine the model that was proposed earlier in this study. Multiple regression analysis methods were used to determine whether the consumer tribal behavior elements – group cohesiveness, conformity, linking value – have effect on the dimensions of brand equity and furthermore, to examine how much different variables explain from dependent brand equity variables.

5.4.1 Assumptions of the Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is a technique that is used to examine the relationship between a single dependent variable (y) and various independent variables (x), and it is perhaps the most commonly used technique for normally distributed samples. The objective of regression analysis is to predict the dependent variable by means of the independent variables. Each independent variable is weighted in the procedure in order to ensure maximal prediction from the set of independent variables. Furthermore, before applying the analysis, it should be noted that there are several assumptions that the sample used for the analysis must meet. Regression analysis is sensitive regarding several elements: normality of distribution, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and singularity (Hair et al., 1998; Metsämuuronen, 2005). Before analyzing and presenting the results of the multiple regression analysis, the underlying assumptions of the technique will first be presented, and sample tested regarding these assumptions.

The most fundamental assumption in multivariate analysis is the normality of the data. Reliable ways to explore normality is a visual check of histogram or normal probability plot. (Hair et al., 1998) The normal probability plots were checked and they met the requirements. Furthermore, normality should be ensured by checking the values of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. (Pallant, 2001). The test was run on the formed factors and met the requirements.

Second important assumption is homoscedasticity that relates primarily to dependence relationships between variables (Metsämuuronen, 2005). It can be best analyzed visually examining the scatterplots (see Appendix 5), which is a graphical plot of residuals that can be used to reveal the presence of homoscedasticity or its opposite heteroscedasticity. (Hair et al., 1998) If no violations to the assumptions of homoscedasticity is made, the residuals should have absolute values below 3,3 (Pallant, 2001) and the scatterplot should be more or less oval-shaped (Hair et al., 1998).

Furthermore, regression analysis is sensitive for too high correlations between the independent variables (Metsämuuronen, 2005). This phenomenon is known as multicollinearity. The commonly used measures to test multicollinearity are values of tolerance and the variance

inflation factor (VIF). The concepts are related, as VIF is the inverse of the tolerance value. Thus, very small tolerance values and large VIF values denote high collinearity. The common cut-off threshold is a tolerance value of 0,10, which correspond to VIF values of above 10 (Hair et al., 1998). (see Appendix 7.)

The final assumption to check is the one concerning singularity, which means that some variables or some of the variables are combinations of other variables or two variables are identical (Metsämuuronen, 2005). If there is existence of singularity in the data, the statistical program gives an error message in these cases saying the matrix is ill-conditioned. Since, no such reports were given by the program, it can be safely assumed that singularity is not present in this sample, and that all the assumptions for multiple regression analysis are fulfilled.

Moreover, independent variables should also correlate reasonably highly with the dependent variables. Correlation is an important indicator of connection between two variables. Two variables are said to be correlated if variations in one variable are associated with variations in the other variable. Correlation can be positive or negative. Correlation is positive, when the values of both variables are high. In contrast, correlation is negative when the values of first variable are high and another variable's low.

In this study Pearson correlation was used for this analysis, as it is most powerful correlation analysis tool for normally distributed samples (Pallant, 2001). Correlation can range from -1 to 1, with 1 indicating a perfect positive relationship, 0 indicating no relationship and -1 indicating a perfect reverse relationship (Hair et al., 1998). When the value of correlation varies between 0,80-1,00, it can be considered very high, values between 0,60-0,80 high and 0,40-0,60 fairly high or reasonable (Metsämuuronen, 2005).

5.4.2 Applying Multiple Regression Analyses

In multiple regression analysis, one of the key figures to examine the statistical significance of the model, is the squared multiple correlation (R^2). Thus, it measures the percentage of the dependent variable's variance that can be explained by the independent variables. When analyzing the R^2 values one should consider the sample size and number of independent variables, since it affects on acceptable significant minimum. (Hair et al., 1998; Metsämuuronen, 2005) R^2 values for different sample sizes and numbers of independent variables are listed in Appendix 8.

Furthermore, F value is used to test the hypothesis that the amount of variance explained by the regression model is greater than the amount of variation explained by the average. Thus, testing the hypothesis that R^2 would be zero. Beta (β) value explains the standardized regression coefficient, which is the value calculated from standardized data. Beta values allows a direct comparison between coefficients in their explanatory power of the dependent variable. Moreover, T-test can be used to measure the statistical significance of regression coefficients. When the t-value is 2 or greater and the significance is 0,05 or less, the variable is reliable and can be included in the model (Hair ert al., 1998; Metsämuuronen 2005).

The analysis was conducted so that each brand equity dimension in turn was selected as the dependent variable in the analysis, while the five tribal behavior items – cohesiveness (COHE, COHB), conformity (CONF) and linking value (ABL, CBL) – were used as independent variables. The results for the whole model are shown first, followed by coefficient analysis regarding each independent variable. The results of the multiple regression analysis for brand awareness are shown in tables 8 and 9.

Table 8. Squared Multiple Correlation Values for Brand Awareness

	R	R^2	Adj.R2	F	F Sig.
Awareness	,398	,159	,145	12,033	,000

The results clearly indicate that brand awareness is affected by the tribal behavior variables. First of all, the R^2 value is 0,159 indicating that 15,9% of the variation in brand awareness can be explained by the independent variables, which can be considered a satisfactorily high amount. The F value of 12.033 was also found significant.

Table 9. Independent Variables Coefficient in Analyzing Brand Awareness

	β	t	Sig.
COHE	,484	7,213	,000
CONF	,217	3,723	,000
COHB	,309	4,713	,000
ABL	,115	2,071	,039
CBL	,108	-1,815	,071

As indicated by the beta values in Table 9, Emotional cohesiveness has the highest relative impact on brand awareness, however the effects of behavioral cohesiveness and conformity is significant as well. t values and the significant levels of these variables support this conclusion. In this case overall cohesiveness can be seen to have a clear, positive effect on brand awareness, as the hypothesized. Action based- and company based linking value do not have a high effect on brand awareness on the basis of these results.

Table 10 and 11 show the result of the multiple regression analysis for brand image.

Table 10. Squared Multiple Correlation Values for Brand Image

	R	R^2	Adj.R2	F	F Sig.
Image	,441	,195	,182	15,662	,000

According to the results, 44.1% of the variation in brand image can be explained by the tribal behavior variables as indicated by the R^2 . This indicates a strong explanatory relationship. Furthermore, the F value of 15.662 indicates that the result is statistically significant and is unlikely to be random.

The coefficient for the five tribal behavior variables in analyzing their effects on brand image can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11. Independent Variables Coefficient in Analyzing Brand Image

	β	t	Sig.
ABL	,105	2,625	,009
CBL	,273	3,532	,000
COHE	,262	2,676	,008
CONF	,249	4,355	,000
COHB	,251	2,793	,006

As illustrated by Table 11, all the tribal behavioral variables have a strong, positive affect on brand image. All the variables have t values of above 2 – 2.625 to 4.355, although the statistically significant level of both cohesiveness variables and action based linking value were close but not below the selected threshold ($\text{sig} < 0.005$). In some cases, this could be deemed acceptable but, in this study, the strict threshold set will be followed.

Table 12. Squared Multiple Correlation Values for Perceived Quality

	R	R ²	Adj.R2	F	F Sig.
Quality	,511	,261	,249	22,355	,000

Table 12 indicates the explanatory capabilities of the model on perceived quality. The R²value indicates that selected variables explain as much as 26.1% of the variance in perceived quality in this study. Also, the F value is 22.355 and the effects on the independent variables on the dependent variable can be deemed statistically significant.

Table 13. Independent Variables Coefficient in Analyzing Perceived Quality

	β	t	Sig.
ABL	,180	5,035	,000
CBL	,289	4,214	,000
COHE	,291	3,315	,001
CONF	,177	3,427	,001
COHB	,252	3,138	,002

As depicted by Table 13, all the tribal behavioral variables analyzed have a strong positive affect on perceived quality. All the t values also exceeded the threshold of two, and the relationships are significant as well. What should be noted is that action based linking value (ABL) and conformity (CONF) are noticeably lower beta values.

Table 14. Squared Multiple Correlation Values for Brand Loyalty

	R	R ²	Adj.R2	F	F Sig.
Loyalty	,659	,434	,426	50,356	,000

Table 14 depicts the multiple regression analysis results for brand loyalty. According to the results, 43.4% of the variation in brand loyalty can be explained by the selected variables, which is considerably high amount of explanatory capability. The F value being 50.356 and thus, statistically significant beyond doubt.

Table 15. Independent Variables Coefficient in Analyzing Brand Loyalty

	B	t	Sig.
ABL	,046	1,500	,135
CBL	,727	12,067	,000
COHE	,208	2,729	,007
CONF	,095	2,148	,032
COHB	,197	2,820	,005

Table 15 illustrates, clearly that action based linking value and conformity do not have high effect on brand loyalty. On the other hand, both cohesiveness variables have positive affect to brand loyalty. Although, emotional cohesiveness (COHE), significance level stays slightly under the given 0.005 threshold. Furthermore, the company based linking value (CBL), however, is quite significantly higher as indicated by all the values.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Purpose of this last chapter of this research paper is to provide summary of the research findings. In addition, it talks about the theoretical and managerial implications. In the end of this chapter the limitations and future research suggestions will be discussed.

6.1 Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 1-4 concerning the relationship between Linking Value and the Brand equity dimensions as conceptualized by Aaker (1995). This study found did not found support that linking value affects brand awareness but effects for rest of the brand equity dimensions especially Brand Loyalty were found with the consumption based linking value. Whereas action based linking value had little or no effects on brand awareness. This result was supported by the correlation analysis.

Hypotheses 5-8 were proposed to measure the effect that group conformity have on brand equity. Results indicated the group conformity effects on the dimensions brand awareness and brand image but did show only little or no affect for perceived quality or brand loyalty. Furthermore, correlation analysis results were all below 0,2 thus hypothesis cannot be supported.

Hypotheses 9-12 examined the effect group cohesiveness have on brand equity. Group cohesiveness was divided for emotional and behavioural dimensions. Emotional dimensions have significant effect on all the Brand equity dimensions. Especially high affect for brand awareness was found. This was supported by correlation analysis also. In multiple regression Behavioural dimension showed affects all but brand loyalty dimension. Furthermore, the correlation analysis confirmed that only brand awareness dimension was significantly affected.

Table 16. Summary of Tested Hypotheses

H1	<i>The stronger the value link the higher the brand Awareness.</i>	<i>Not supported</i>
H2	<i>The stronger the value link the higher the brand Image.</i>	<i>Supported (partly CBL)</i>
H3	<i>The stronger the value link the higher the Perceived Quality.</i>	<i>Supported (partly CBL)</i>
H4	<i>The stronger the value link the higher the brand Loyalty.</i>	<i>Supported (highly CBL)</i>
H5	<i>The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Awareness.</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H6	<i>The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Image.</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H7	<i>The stronger the group conformity, the higher the Perceived Quality.</i>	<i>Not Supported</i>
H8	<i>The stronger the group conformity, the higher the brand Loyalty.</i>	<i>Not Supported</i>
H9	<i>The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Awareness.</i>	<i>Supported (highly)</i>
H10	<i>The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Image.</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H11	<i>The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the Perceived Quality.</i>	<i>Supported</i>
H12	<i>The stronger the group cohesiveness, the stronger the brand Loyalty.</i>	<i>Supported (partly Cove)</i>

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Even though there has been significant amount of research in the brand equity scale development in the past decade, there is still lack of consensus of the brand equity constructs and dimensions. After several suggested models by various researches the Aaker's (1996) and Keller's (2003) models of brand equity are the most used ones. In a general sense, brand equity is defined in terms of the marketing effects that result individually from a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993).

The tribal brands should emphasize the social links and identities that comes with them (Cova & Cova, 2002). Brands have the capability to help consumers to define their actual or desired selves and distinct themselves from others by associating with the brands (McCracken, 1990).

Tribal brands have the potential to express, reinforce and strengthen brand-self associations, thus increasing the willingness to make an effort and invest resources in maintaining the relationship with the brand (McCracken, 1990; Cova & Cova, 2002). Brands increase their value and become more meaningful for their consumers when they can create a link between consumers with similar shared beliefs and shared values. Thus, tribal relationships can be seen as the link which connects different dimensions of brand equity.

Most significant findings of this study were: First, this study found that group cohesiveness and especially the emotional attachment factor was positively and significantly affected to the brand equity. Second, this study found that linking value has a positive influence on brand equity. This result strongly supports the notion of crucial importance the tribal consumer behaviour has on the dimensions of brand equity. Furthermore, confirms the results of previous research.

6.3 Managerial Implications

The main crucial implication of this research is that marketing managers should look more carefully at the possible strong consumer groups and find new ways to support their group members on the brand building process and thus build a strong relationship to the brand. This provides opportunities to companies for reaching targeted lifestyle or tribal groups and possibility to make highly targeted marketing communication tailored for those target groups.

It is also clear that managers should focus on long-term plans when building brand equity and involve these tribal consumer groups as a vital part of their brand building strategy. Since, these groups are more informal than more conventional segmentation groups the strategy should involve constant and two-way communication between the company and the tribal consumers in order to build trust and sense of ownership towards the brand.

It is essential that managers see their brands do not have to be an absolute value but rather as something that can create value to the members and works as a social glue in their mutual interactions. This can bring much higher value and build long term brand equity. This linking value will increase the brand loyalty as confirmed also in this study. This is something that energy drink brands have managed to especially well, by supporting different kind of extreme sports and making their priority to improve and adding value to the actual sports and its

practioners. This can turn against the brand and have negative impact if the group members experience that the motivation and actions from the company are not genuine.

6.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study is based on interview of the case company and a questionnaire conducted in 2011. This should be considered when analysing the results. Furthermore, the questionnaire contained 78 questions and was criticised by some of the respondents that it was too long and took too much time to fill up. Thus, this increase the probability that one might not focus on the answers in the later part as well.

In addition, not to make the research overly complicated and to have better focus the decision was made to exclude certain dimensions from the empirical part of the study such as social connectedness, social assurance, symbols, rituals, and beliefs. This were still overviewed in the theoretical part in order to give reader better understanding of the factors related tribal consumption. Furthermore, decision was made not to compare and analyse the results between different groups that were selected to the study. Thus, this is suggested for future research.

Studies show that there is difference in brand equity forming process between brands, especially between service and product brands. Thus, future research should examine in depth to identified different types of brands and find a consensus of how to measure those. Thus, meaning to study and find the relevant dimensions and how these difference between different types of brands.

There has been significant increase in numbers and popularity of private label energy drinks coming into markets. It would be interesting to know in marketer's perspective how tribal behaviour affects consumer choices. Future research should examine differences in relationship in brand equity and brand tribalism, between private label brands and well-established beverage brands. In addition, further study should conduct to measure how group conformity, and group cohesiveness varies between difference tribal consumer groups and what types roles adapted inside the tribe and subtribes. Furthermore, there should be more research on managerial mplications how to reinforce the linking value between the potential consumer groups and the brand.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Research Questionnaire and abbreviations of scale items.

Brand Awareness

- BA 1 I am aware of Battery brand
- BA 2 I can recognize Battery amongst other competing brands of energy drinks
- BA 3 I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Battery
- BA 5 I know what Battery energy drink looks like

BA

Brand Image

- BI 2 I have a clear impression of the type of people who use Battery
- BI 3 Battery has a strong personality
- BI 4 Battery is a different brand from other energy drinks

Brand Loyalty

- BL 1 I am committed to the Battery brand
- BL 2 I pay more interest towards Battery brand over other brands
- BL 3 I always buy Battery because I really like it
- BL 5 Battery would be my first choice when considering energy drinks

BL4 tippui pois

BL-----PQ7 muutui

- BL 6 I would recommend Battery to others

Perceived Quality

- PQ 1 Battery is of high quality
- PQ 2 The likelihood that Battery would be functional is very high
- PQ 3 Battery appears to be of very poor quality
- PQ 4 Battery offers the best quality among energy drinks
- PQ 5 The Battery products are very good quality
- PQ 6 I believe the Battery energy drinks are of good quality in relation to the price
- BL 6=PQ 7 I would recommend Battery to others

Cohesiveness emotional

- COH 15 I feel like I belong amongst other skydivers
- COH 8 I am proud to be part of this group (skydivers)
- COH 9 I am strongly committed to the group
- COH 11 People with different backgrounds work well together in this sport
- COH 12 I dont fit very well around here (skydiving community)

Cohesiveness Behavioral

- COH 2 I know the names of the people I see regularly when I go skydiving
- COH 3 When I need a favor, there's always some skydiver I can ask for help
- COH 4 When I started to skydive, people went out of their way to help me learn
- COH 13 News travel fast in the skydiving community

- COH 1 I feel that I can achieve my personal goals in skydiving
 COH 5 I dont think what other skydivers think of me
 COH 6 Most of the rules in skydiving makes good sense to me
 COH 7 I often go out of my way to help other skydivers
 COH 10 When events are planned in the skydiving community, people find a way to contribute
 COH 14 I think skydivers differs a lot from other people

Conformity

- COM 1 I buy certain brands because I am sure that other skydivers approve them
 COM 2 I am very loyal to certain brands because other skydivers also use them
 COM 3 Skydivers use certain brands and I use them too just because I want to be like them
 COM 4 I often look what products and brands the more experienced skydivers use and start using them too
 COM 5 the skydiving community has a strong influence on the products and brands I use
 COM 6 u don't use products that I know most of the skydiving community disapproves
 COM 7 I often ask about other skydiver opinion about brands before buying them

Linking value company

- LV 3 Battery is a visible part in a lot of the skydiving events
 LV 4 Battery is a valuable sponsor for skydiving

Linking value Consumer

- LV 5 Battery has helped me to connect other members of the skydiving community
 LV 6 Lot of times when we sit down to have a break with other skydivers, we drink Battery

I think Battery is trying to help skydiving evolve as a sport

- LV 1 Battery has done a lot for my sport
 LV 2 Battery is a strong part of skydiving culture

COA

- 1 if possible, I spend all my free time skydiving
 2 I rather go skydiving than to a friend's party
 3 most of the holiday trips I make involves skydiving
 4 when I am not skydiving I still spend a lot of time online forums
 5 when I am not skydiving I still spend watching or reading about
 6 I actively try to improve the facilities and environment of the sport

Appendix 2. scales

Brand Awareness

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LV 1 Battery has done a lot for my sport

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Appendix 3. Battery marketing manager Interview

Miten energiajuoma markkinat on kehittynyt Suomessa?

Synebrychoff lanseerasi 1997 Battery suomessa ensimmäisenä energiajuomana markkinoille. Energiajuomien markkinoiden kasvu 1997-2007 on ollut todella rajua muihin vakiintuneisiin kategorioidiin verrattuna 20-40% mutta noin 2008 kasvu hidastunut selvästi ja nyt 2-3% vauhtia enään. Tähän on vaikuttanut markkinoiden saturoituminen ja selvästi vahvimmissa kasvussa ovat private label eli suurten keskusliikkeiden omat brändit. Niiden suurin markkinaosuuden kasvu on kuitenkin nyt varmaan jo nähty ja tilanne vakiintuu. Ei usko, että merkittävää markkinaosuuden kasvua enään tulee jatkossa.

Ensimmäiset 10 vuotta energiajuoma markkina on ollut arvoltaan korkeaa mutta nyt kun hintapisteeltä edullisemmat private label brändit on tullut mukaan niin se on laskenut koko markkinan keskiarvoa. Tavoitteena on, että Battery edelleen säilyttää sen premium mielikuvan ja on jatkossakin kallein kaikissa kategorioissa. Tässä Battery on onnistunut pitämään arvomarkkinaosuuden, kun taas Hartwalin Ed brändi on jo mennyt tuotantovolyyymissa ohi.

Ketkä on Battery suurimmat kilpailijat?

Kilpailijat: Ed, Red Bull, Euroshopper ja Teho

Miten battery suhtautuu tutkimuksen kohderyhmiin?

Selvästi tärkeimpänä kohderyhmänä ja lajina urheilun puolelta nähdään moottoriurheilu. Tämä on ollut selvästi lähtökohta sitoutuneen kuluttajakunnan rakentamiseen monille energiajuomille. Tämän jälkeen tulevat muut trendikkäät nuorison suosiossa olevat ”äärilajit” kuten lumilautailu ja skeittaus. Tämä perustuu siihen, että itse tuotekin edustaa tehoa. Kiipeily ei ole ollut keskiössä ja myös laskuvarjo urheilu on nähty hieman marginaalisena kohderyhmänä.

Brändien välillä käydään kovaa taistoa siitä kuka ”omistaa” lajit ja niihin kuuluvat lojaalit seuraajat. Nähdään että brändin tulisi olla mukana lajissa aidosti ja tukea siellä lajin harrastajia sekä huippuja. Batterylla mitataan jatkuvasti sitä mitä kuluttajat ajattelevat brändistä.

Miten kuvailisit Battery energiajuomaa?

Tehokas, laadukas, hyvänmakuinen, tekninen, moderni, kehittyvä, edelläkävijä.

Battery on juoma, joka sopii kaikkiin tilanteisiin niille, jotka tarvitsevat energiaa.

Erottuu muista. edellä mainituilla asioilla.

Appendix 4. Factor analysis for the variables

	Factor component				
	1	2	3	4	
AW1	,556				
AW2	,729				
AW3	,800				
AW4	,813				
IM1			,690		
IM2			,706		
IM3			,408		
PQ1	,853				
PQ2	,647				
PQ3	,782				
PQ4	,664				
PQ5	,874				
PQ6	,626				
PQ7	,584				
BL1		,809			
BL2		,849			
BL3		,805			
BL4		,466			
	1	2	3	4	5
CE1	,500				
CE2	,814				
CE3	,808				
CE4	,326				
CE5	,583				
CB1	,571				
CB2	,673				
CB3	,538				
CB4	,505				
CF1		,876			
CF2		,926			
CF3		,760			
CF4		,764			
CF5		,817			
CF6		,552			
CF7		,412			

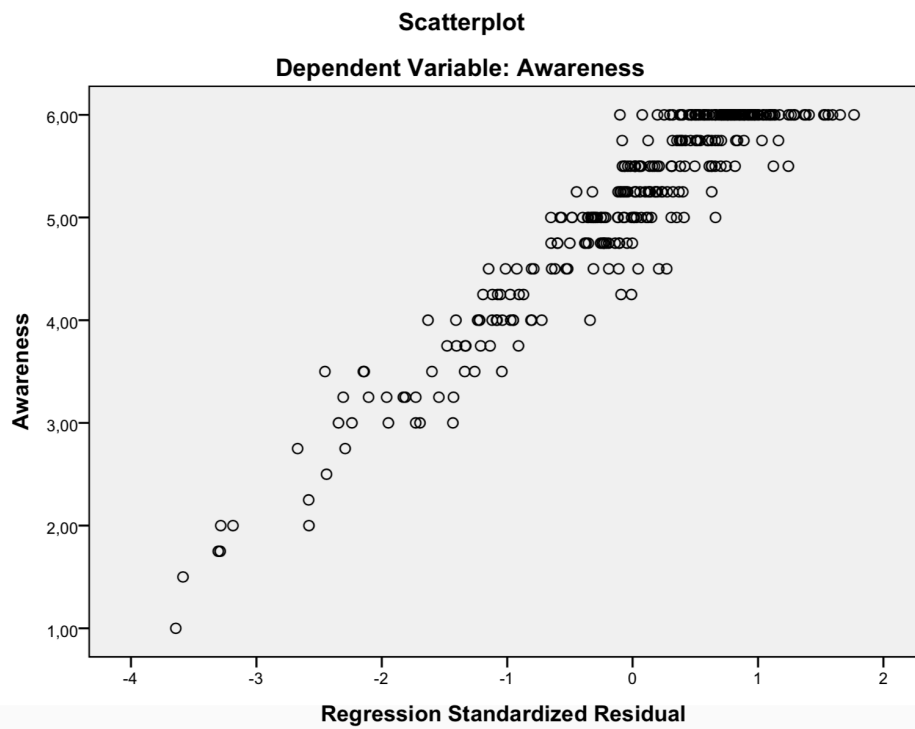
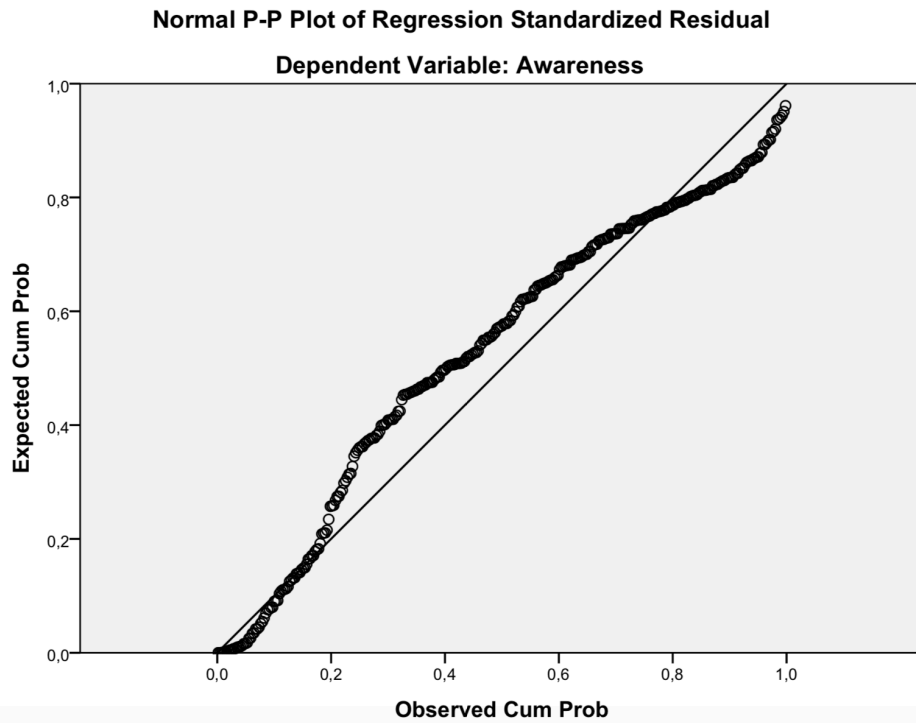
ABL1			,730	
ABL2				1 007
CBL1				,769
CBL2				,799

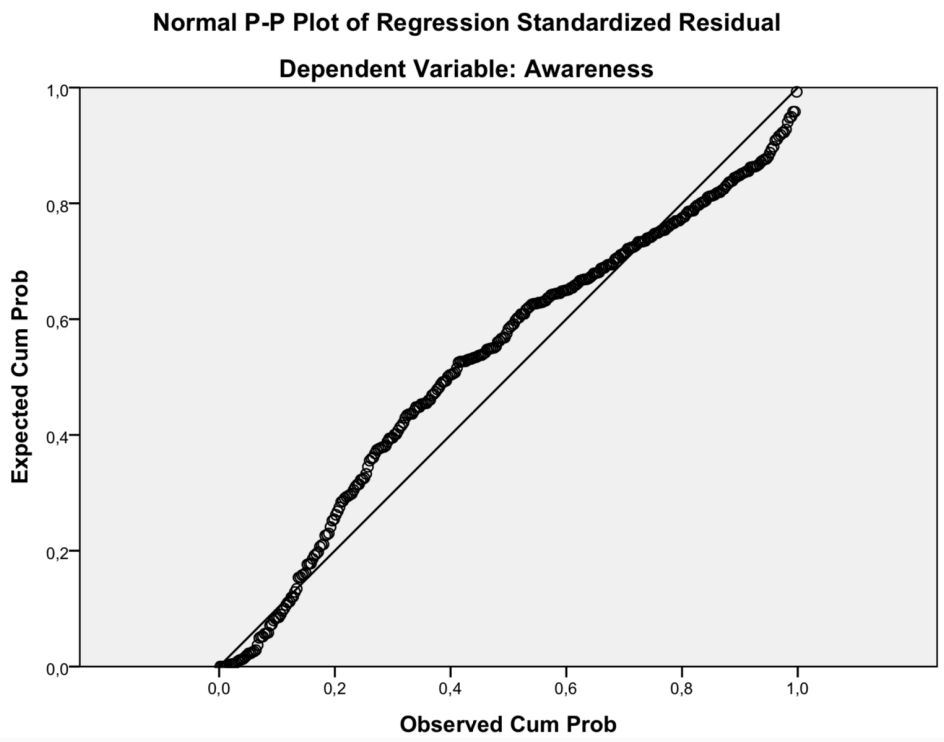
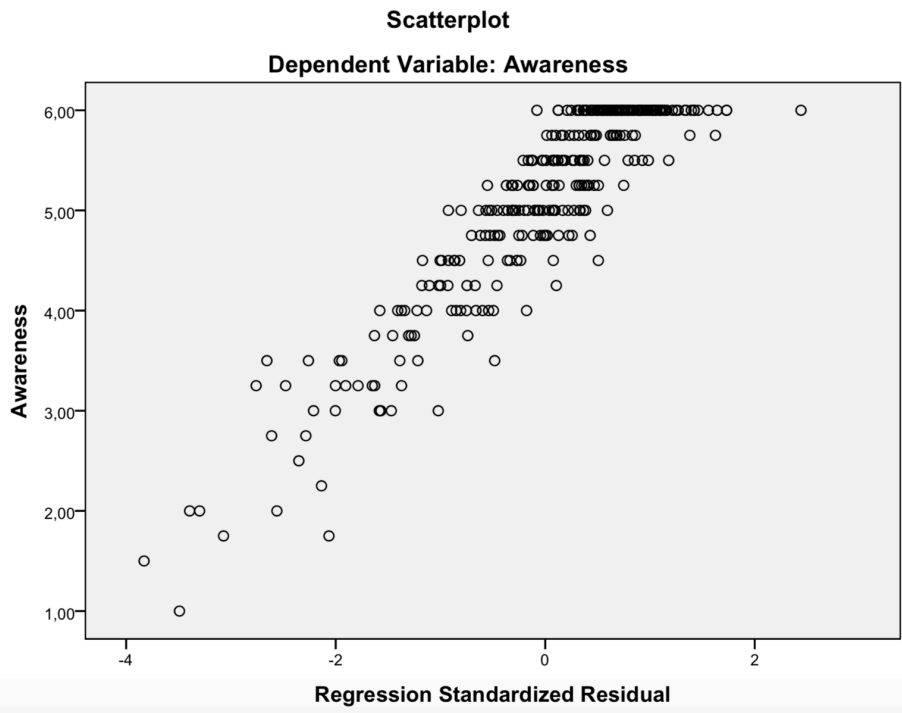
Extracted
communalities

AW1	,409			
AW2	,542			
AW3	,627			
AW4	,670			
IM1	,462	4,62		
IM2		,723		
IM3		,415		
PQ1		,848		
PQ2			,589	
PQ3			,548	
PQ4			,501	
PQ5			,813	
PQ6			,450	
PQ7			,565	
BL1			,705	
BL2			,776	
BL3				,671
BL4				,337
CE1	,512			
CE2	,704			
CE3	,738			
CE4	,387			
CE5	,375			
CB1		,470		
CB2		,548		
CB3		,245		
CB4		,357		
CF1			,779	
CF2			,838	
CF3			,641	
CF4			,587	
CF5			,654	
CF6			,357	

CF7	,255		
ABL1		,641	
ABL2		,999	
CBL1			,645
CBL2			,691

Appendix 5. Scatterplots and P-Plots for awareness





Appendix 6. Websites where the questionnaire was conducted

Motocross: <https://www.xracing.fi/forum>

Kiipeily: <http://www.relaa.com/forum/kiipeily>

Lumilautailu: <http://www.relaa.com/forum/lumi>

Laskuvarjo: <https://www.skydivefinland.fi> / Paraportaali

Surffaus: <http://www.relaa.com/forum/vesi>

Appendix 7.

Tolerance

	BA	BI	PQ	BL
ABL	,859	,859	,853	,851
CBL	,741	,741	,725	,725
COHE	,586	,586	,585	,590
CONF	,778	,778	,760	,766
COHB	,613	,613	,612	,619

VIF

	BA	BI	PQ	BL
ABL	1 165	1 179	1 172	1 175
CBL	1 350	1 383	1 379	1 379
COHE	1 707	1 699	1 710	1 694
CONF	1 285	1 298	1 317	1 306
COHB	1 633	1 625	1 634	1 616

Appendix 8. Statistically Significant Minimum R2 Values (Hair et al. 1998)

Significance Level = .01
Number of Independent
Variables

Sample size	2	5	10
20	45	56	71
50	23	29	36
100	13	16	20
250	5	7	8

Significance Level = .05
Number of Independent
Variables

Sample size	2	5	10
20	39	48	64
50	19	23	29
100	10	12	15
250	4	5	6