**Developing a brand identity and
a content strategy for its implementation**

Case: Start-up company Hyggelig Oy

Juulia Vesterinen

Abstract

14 October 2019

Author(s) Juulia Vesterinen	
Degree programme Communication Management	
Report/thesis title Developing a brand identity and a content strategy for its implementation Case: Hyggelig Oy	**Number of pages and appendix pages** 60 + 11

This thesis was conducted to meet the branding and marketing needs of a developing company called Hyggelig Oy which will sell recycled design furniture online. The first objective of this thesis was to create a comprehensive brand identity for the company. Another goal was to create a plan, a content marketing strategy model, for implementing the formed brand identity in an organised manner to its target audience.

The theoretical section of this constructive research project combines different relative theories on brand identity development and content marketing but focuses on the Brand Identity Planning Model by David Aaker. The model includes a strategic brand analysis which was utilised as a framework for the thesis' empirical part. In addition to analysing one-self, the strategic brand analysis included examining Hyggelig's target audience's needs and competitors' brand positioning.

The empirical work on the target audience took place during spring 2019 when an online survey was conducted to gain information regarding the needs and challenges of the first prospective target group of Hyggelig; consumer clients. Another interesting target group for Hyggelig, interior designers, were examined by conducting face to face theme interviews. As a result of the gathered information on the target audience, two customer personas were created. Around the same time, an online competitor analysis was done by looking at relative companies' marketing messages and categorising them into different clusters.

Based on the understanding obtained from the strategic brand analysis, the brand identity of Hyggelig as well as a value proposition were developed serving as the first construction of this thesis. Acting as the second construction of this thesis, combining the Implementation part David Aaker's Brand Identity Planning Model model with theories on content marketing strategy, a content marketing strategy model for Hyggelig was also formed.

This thesis shows that the aims of brand identity implementation and content marketing strategies are to a great extent similar as well as utilise at least partly same knowledge. Both of the mentioned practices aim to communicate and offer competitive value to the target audience. In addition to the branding and marketing benefits that this thesis offers for the case company, the results of this study offer valuable insight on how to develop a brand identity from zero by combining one's own visions with target audience's needs. In addition, the research and its construction demonstrate how the brand identity, its value proposition and positioning combined with customer understanding can be utilised for planning content marketing.

Keywords
#content strategy #content marketing #brand identity #startup #2nd hand #customer persona #constructive research

Table of contents

1 Introduction

When starting up a new company, branding and marketing are one of the most important things an entrepreneur should consider. Through branding and marketing activities, a developing company is able to make its offering known to a target audience with the final aim of generating sales. As a result of all touch points with the company, the target audience forms an image of the organisation and its offering. The aim of branding is to make that image as close as possible to the understanding that the entrepreneur has of his/her business. (Nokkonen-Pirttilampi 2014, 15-25; Aaker 2000, 44.)

An entrepreneur should not try to include all things possible about the organisation and its products in a brand. Instead, the focus should be on attaching the brand with certain focus areas that provide most competitive advantage for the target audience. Having a clear and thorough *brand identity* gives direction and purpose for a brand. When defining a brand identity, a strategic analysis on both the environment and the company itself becomes useful. Such an analysis helps to integrate the customers' viewpoint and the strengths and weaknesses of oneself and one's competitors into the brand. (Aaker 2002, 68, 190; Nokkonen-Pirttilampi 2014, 24.)

Once a company has a good understanding of its brand identity and the value proposition that it holds, it is able to conduct brand building programs, i.e. marketing activities. The ongoing change towards more customer-oriented marketing has made content marketing a very popular method for bringing one's brand alive. Having *a content strategy* in place helps to conduct content marketing in a strategic manner. (Aaker 2002, Cespedes & Heddleston 2018; Keronen & Tanni 2017, 23-24.)

Although customer centricity in marketing is extremely important, at the same time, companies need to stay true to their core believes and values. This can be done by including brand identity in the marketing paradigm. My thesis suggests doing this by including the brand identity in a content marketing strategy. By having such a strategy as a part of one's daily marketing routines, companies can succeed in both customer-centric communications and minimizing the gap between their brand identity and image. (Alsem & Kostelijk 2008, 910; Keronen & Tanni 2017, 24.)

2 Hyggelig, a secondhand furniture web store

The purpose of this chapter is to put my thesis into context and explain in more detail why the development project is needed. This chapter will also clarify the objectives of the research as well as the research question.

2.1 Business idea in a nutshell

The business that I am developing is a company called Hyggelig Oy that sells and renovates 2nd hand design furniture and other recycled home decor items. The company specializes in Danish designers which are, when in good condition, currently in great demand and have a sustaining value (Pölkki 2018). At least in the start-up phase, the plan is to run the business through an online store. This seems like a wise decision, as the online sales of used goods in Finland continues to grow annually by five to ten percent (Nieminen 2018). Having already tested the idea to some extent by practising it as a free-time activity, we dare to say that there is a demand for such products. Considering that Circular economy is a hot topic in Finland (Sitra 2019), we can assume that the need to prolong and buy recycled items is not passing quickly.

The mission of Hyggelig is to help consumers in fulfilling their own unique home décor dreams in a sustainable manner that supports the circular economy thinking. Our vision is to sell 2nd hand items that are "better" than the new ones. For us, better than new means providing our customers with products that are in good condition and leave a good conscious. The main income of the business comes from the sales of the used items, but we also sell some services. My partner is a certified electrician which means that in addition to selling e.g. lamps, he is also able to fix them for our customers.

We want to differentiate from our competitors by investing in communicating our brand in a customer centric manner with the help of the content strategy developed in this thesis. Instead of being a traditional "buy and sell" or antique store, our initial aim is to be an easily approachable and modern online provider for our target audience. In the longer run, we could co-operate with other small ideologically similar businesses to create a stakeholder group working towards common sustainability goals. We might also conduct projects with local communities, painters and craftsmen.

2.2 Need for the research

Personal motivation is an important factor when choosing one's thesis topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2016, 26). As a marketing and communications professional, I see understanding brand identity and content strategy as well as their relationship with each

other as a benefit for my future career. In addition to growing my competence, the findings of the thesis serve as direct benefit for Hyggelig.

In addition to personal ambitions, a research topic should also bring something new to the field that it examines (Saunders & al. 2016, 30-31). Although brand identity and marketing activities have a straight linkage to each other (Aaker 2002, 177; Nusa & Ruzzier 2013, 66) there don't seem to be much research made on the relation of brand identity and content strategy. Over the past decade, content marketing has established its position as an every-day marketing method (Cespedes & Heddleston 2018). In their research, Spoon and Norstat (Spoon 2017), found that 84 percent of responding Finnish companies practice content marketing and that 60 percent of them will increase their content marketing budget in the coming year. Thus, we can make a conclusion that there is a need to further examine content strategy as a method to communicate a brand identity to its stakeholders.

In their report (2016) Sitra states that Finnish citizens should participate in the circular economy by using products and services that are based on recycling. According to Jorma Mikkonen, Director for Corporate Relations and Responsibility at Lassila & Tikanoja, Finnish society needs concrete actions that make circular economy a part of ordinary people's everyday lives (Mikkonen 2015). The business idea that my thesis deals with supports the development of a recycling society and hopefully brings new ideas to other companies operating in the field of circular economy. In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the thesis is also needed to create a solution to a practical problem. Like every company, the business that I am developing needs to have a strong brand identity and a plan to market it further.

Based on the factors explained in the previous chapters, we can make the conclusion that my research is important for three different purposes. First of all, it deals with promoting a sustainable brand that takes part in developing the Finnish recycling society. Secondly, it looks into the relation between brand identity and content strategy, which is a topic with little amount of previous research. Thirdly, it serves a concrete need providing brand guidelines and marketing plan for a developing business. The work is done using constructive research methods where both theoretical and practical knowledge are gathered. The solution is also tested and analysed at the end of the research. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2015, 65.)

2.3   Research problem and question

A research problem is the guiding point of one's research work giving an answer to why
the research needs to be made (Walliman 2010, 29). My research problem is very con-
crete; I am starting a new company that needs an elaborated brand identity to support the
company's success in the competitive market. In addition, I need a plan to communicate
the brand identity further which in this case will be a content strategy model.

Research objective	Research problem	Research question
•To build a brand identity for a start up company •To communicate the identity to its target audience with content marketing	•What needs be done to form a brand identity for a start up company and how the formed identity should be utilised in communicating the brand to its target audience?	•RQ1: What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of? •RQ2: How to implement a brand identity using content marketing strategy?

Figure 1. From objectives to questions

Figure 1 shows how I formulate my research problems and questions out of the objec-
tives. I have two research questions:

RQ1: What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of?
RQ2: How to implement a brand identity using content marketing strategy?

In chapters three, four and five I will go through different theories related to the research
questions. Chapter six focuses on the research methodology whereas chapters seven and
eight provide the answers.

3 Building a brand identity

The term brand was born in the 18th century industrialisation as the emerging competition required manufacturers to label their products to distinguish from competitors (Lindroos, Nyman & Lindroos 2005, 20). There are numerous different outlooks for branding. Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 264) take a customer orientated view as they say that "Brands represent consumers' perceptions and feelings about a product and its performance – everything that the product or the service *means* to consumers". According to Malmelin & Hakala (2011, 18) brand should be seen as a comprehensive combination of what a company does, how it communicates, how it looks and sounds like and what is being said about it by others. Aaker (2014, 7) sees brands as assets that drive business strategy forward. The swift from product to customer-oriented marketing has made it even more difficult than before for brands to distinguish from their competition (Flores 2014, 194).

According to Aaker (2000, 40), brand identity is "a unique set of associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain". In order for a brand to succeed in the price competition, it is crucial that the brand identity is unique, distinct, clearly defined and nurtured by the brand strategists. (Aaker 2000, 40; Johansson & Carlson 2015, 7; Da Silveira, Lages & Simoes 2013, 28). Kapferer (2008, 172) says that brand identity describes the brand's vision, values, uniqueness, added value, permanent nature, field of competence and recognizable signs. To be able to maintain a credible brand, the promises of the brand identity must be redeemed through the company's offering (Johansson & Carlson 2015, 7).

Aaker's (2000, 44) Brand Identity Planning Model visualized in figure 2 is a practical three-step framework for developing and communicating a thorough brand identity that takes into account the needs of target audience and the positioning of competitors. There are three steps in the model; *Strategic brand analysis*, *Brand Identity System* and *Brand identity Implementation System*. The model supports the understanding of one's own brand from different viewpoints as well as guides the forming of a value proposition. With the help of all three parts of the Aaker (2000,44) model, the final goal of an entrepreneur or of a marketer is to make the target audience aware of the brand's main points of advantage that provide competitive benefit. I will utilize all of the three parts of the Aaker (2000,44) model visualised in figure 2 in building and communicating my own brand. The strategic brand analysis will act as a framework for the empirical part of my thesis. Through the analysis, I aim to gain an understanding of the goals, challenges and information retrieval habits of Hyggelig's target audience. In addition, I will examine Hyggelig's competitors' brand positioning to understand the current market atmosphere in a deeper level. Through

the competitor analysis, I hope to gain insight for focusing the developed brand to a certain direction.

Strategic brand analysis

Customer analysis
-Trends
-Motivation
-Unmet needs
-Segmentation

Competitor analysis
-Brand image/identity
Strengths, strategies
-Vulnerabilities

Self-Analysis
-Existing brand image
-Brand heritage
-Strengths/Capabilitites
-Organization values

Brand Identity System

Extended

Core

Brand as Product
1. Product scope
2. Product attributes
3. Quality/Value
4. Uses
5. Users
6. Country of Origin

Brand as Organisation
7. Organisation attributes (e.g., innovation, consumer concern, trustworthiness)
8. Local vs, global

Brand as Person
9. Personality (e.g.., genuine, energetic, rugged)
10. Brand-customer relationships (e.g. friend, adviser)

Brand as Symbol
11. Visual imagery and metaphors
12. brand heritage

Value proposition
Functional benefits   Emotional benefits   Self-expressive benefits

Credibility
Support other brands

Brand-customer relationship

Brand Identity Implementation system

Brand position
-At a target audience   -To be atively communicated
-Subset of the brand identtiy and   -Providing competitive advantage
value proposition

Execution
-Generate alternatives   -Symbols and metaphors   -Testing

Tracking

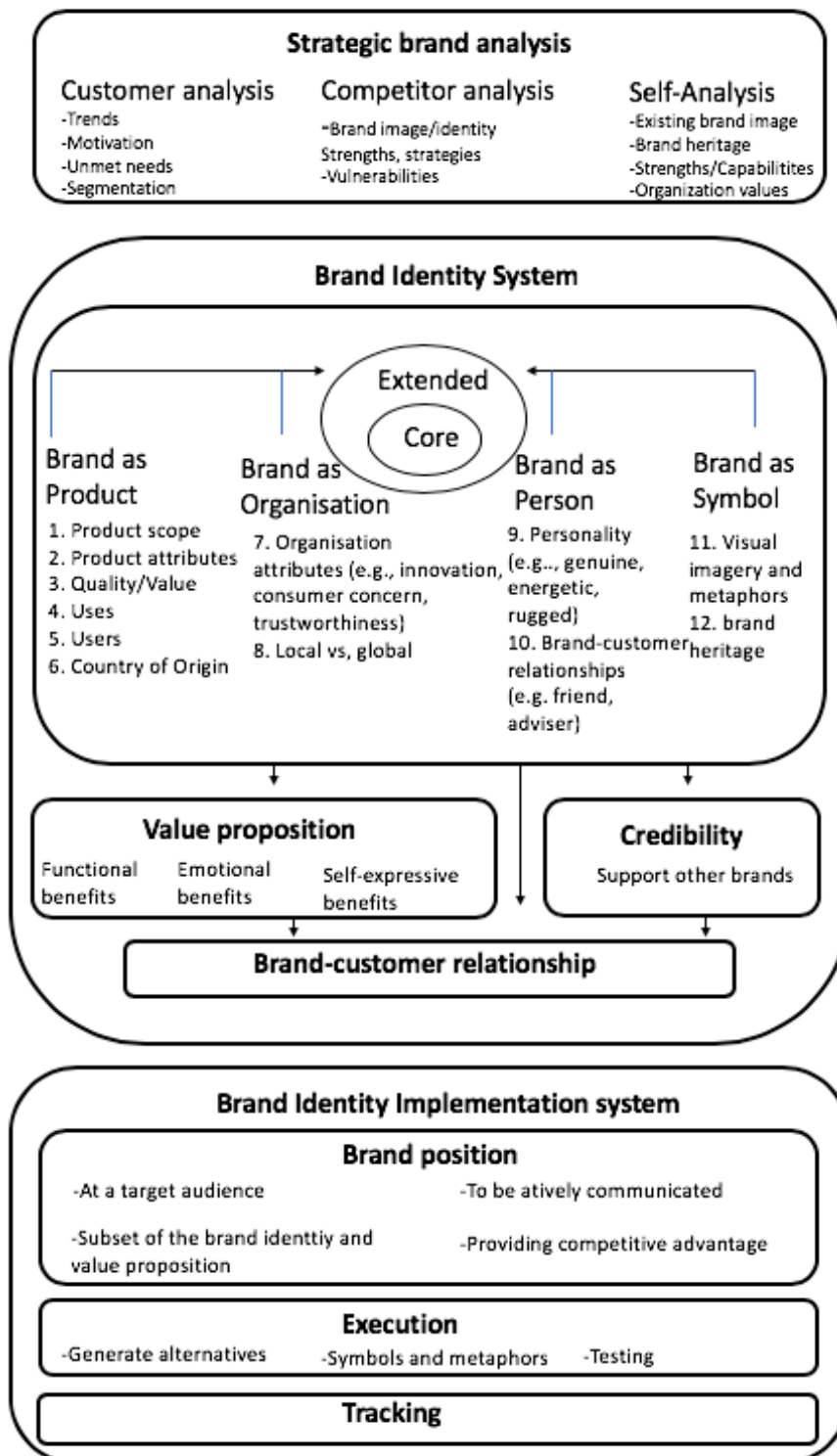Figure 2. Brand Identity Planning Model (Aaker 2000,44)

By combining the knowledge from the Strategic analysis with the second part of the Aaker (2000, 44) model, Brand Identity system, I will utilise the framework in forming the brand identity and value proposition of Hyggelig. I will start the brand identity development from its core, the main reason for the brand's existence which is unlikely to change over time.

On top of the core, I will then form the extended brand identity by analysing it from different perspectives; brand as product, brand as organisation, brand as person and brand as symbol. The aim of such a multi-dimensional analysis is to make sure that the formed brand identity is consistent from different viewpoints. By utilising the target audience understanding retrieved in the strategic brand analysis, I will be able to form a value proposition from the brand identity. The value proposition will crystalize the key benefits that the brand withholds for its target audience.

Finally, I will utilise the third part of the model, brand identity implementation, in the creation of a content marketing strategy. A more detailed theory regarding parts one and two of the Aaker (2000, 44) model; the Strategic brand analysis and Brand Identity System will be provided in the following chapters. The third part of the model, Brand Identity Implementation, will be presented in detail and compared with the content marketing framework in chapter four.

3.1 Strategic brand analysis

The first part of Aaker's (2000,44) Brand Identity Planning Model is the Strategic brand analysis, visualised in figures 2 and 3, which I utilise as a framework for the empirical part of my thesis.

Strategic brand analysis

Customer analysis	Competitor analysis	Self-Analysis
-Trends	-Brand image/identity	-Existing brand image
-Motivation	Strengths, strategies	-Brand heritage
-Unmet needs	-Vulnerabilities	-Strengths/Capabilitites
-Segmentation		-Organization values

Figure 3. A strategic brand analysis (Aaker 2002, 189-190)

The purpose of the strategic brand analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of oneself and one's operating environment. By conducting the customer analysis, one aims to get information about the motives behind the target audience's behaviour. It is not supposed to be a shallow analysis on what the customers simply say they want but look into their behaviour and reasoning. It provides useful information about how the brand could resonate with its prospective customers such as insights about unmet needs and customer sweet spots.

The competitor analysis defines the biggest competitors of the brand in question and looks specifically at their brand's differentiation and positioning in the market. It may reveal valuable information regarding e.g. competitors' weaknesses and their marketing strategies. When conducting the competitor analysis, one should also examine whether and how the competitive brands are trying to distinguish from their peers and if so, how that is done. The purpose of the competitive analysis is to provide insights that can help the developed brand identity to distinguish itself from the clutter. (Aaker 2000, 41, 316)

Finally, with the help of the last part of the strategic brand analysis, the self-analysis, one aims to understand their company's current image, strengths, weaknesses, soul and vision. In addition, by conducting a self-analysis, a company can have a more realistic understanding of the resources and capabilities available which have an important role in forming a brand identity. (Aaker 2000, 40-41, 315.)

3.2 Brand Identity system

As visualized in figure 4, the strategic brand analysis Is followed by the **Brand Identity system** consisting of the actual brand identity, value proposition and brand-customer relationship. The starting point of the brand identity is the core identity which consists of associations most unlikely to change over time. The core identity plays an important role in making a brand successful in the long run. Even if the extended identity, brand position and brand implementation strategies change over time, the core identity should stay more or less the same. The core identity can be seen as the brand's soul and core reason for the organization's existence. In addition to the core, there is an extended identity providing additional information about the brand as well as guiding the marketing strategies. (Aaker 2002, 85 – 88.)
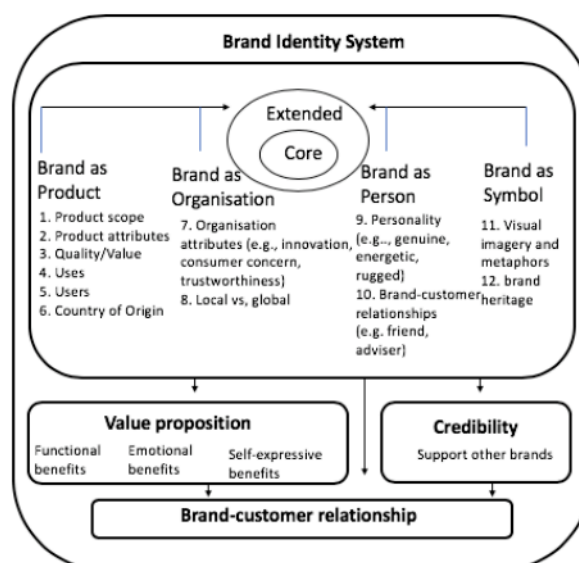

Figure 4. Brand Identity System (Aaker 2000,44)

3.2.1 Brand identity perspectives

In addition to the core and extended identity, as presented in figure 4, Aaker's (2002, 78) Brand Identity System also examines the brand identity through four different perspectives: *brand as a product*, *brand as an organisation*, *brand as a person* and *brand as a symbol*. With the help of these four elements, an organisation is able to create a brand that has great depth and works for different purposes. It is not necessary to include all of the four perspectives and their sub-categories in one's brand, but it is wise to at least consider all of them. (Aaker 2002, 78.)

To get a comparing view on Aaker's model, Kapferer (2008, 182 – 183) explains brand identity through the prism presented in figure 5. The prism shows an entity formed by six dimensions; personality, culture, self-image, reflection, relationship and physique, as well as the synergies between them. Kapferer's model also explains which elements are permanent and which are likely to change. (Kapferer 2008, 187).
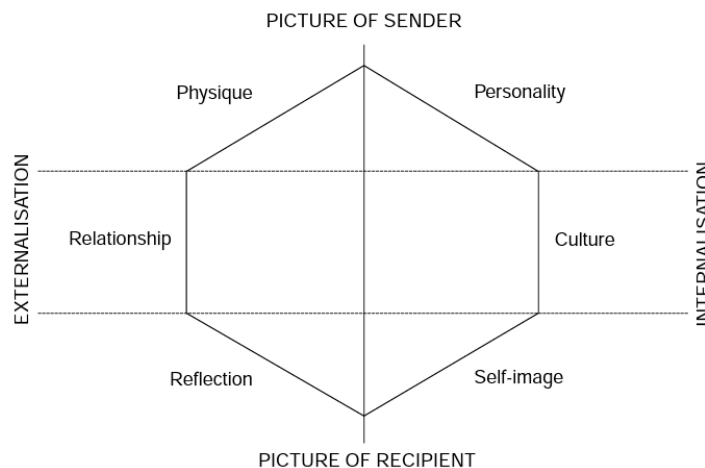

Figure 5. Kapferer's brand identity prism (2008, 183)

The major difference between the two models is that Kapferer involves the internal/external and sender/receiver viewpoints to the thinking. However, even though Aaker's model does not mention the external view directly, some of the elements represent the external point of view. A comparison of the two models is presented in figure 6, where the rectangles stand for Kapferer's six brand identity facets and the smaller shapes inside of them for Aaker's brand identity perspectives' sub-categories. The comparison visualized in figure 5 interestingly shows how the sub-categories under Aaker's four brand identity perspectives are scattered between different facets of the Kapferer model. In the next chapter, the figure is explained in more details by comparing the views of Kapferer (2008, 183) and Aaker (2000,44.) Combining and comparing these models as explained is im-

portant for me as it raises my understanding of the different perspectives that a well elabo-rated brand identity has. However, since I am using the Aaker Brand Identity Planning model as a framework for my thesis, I will also use Aaker's (2000, 44) version of the per-spectives.
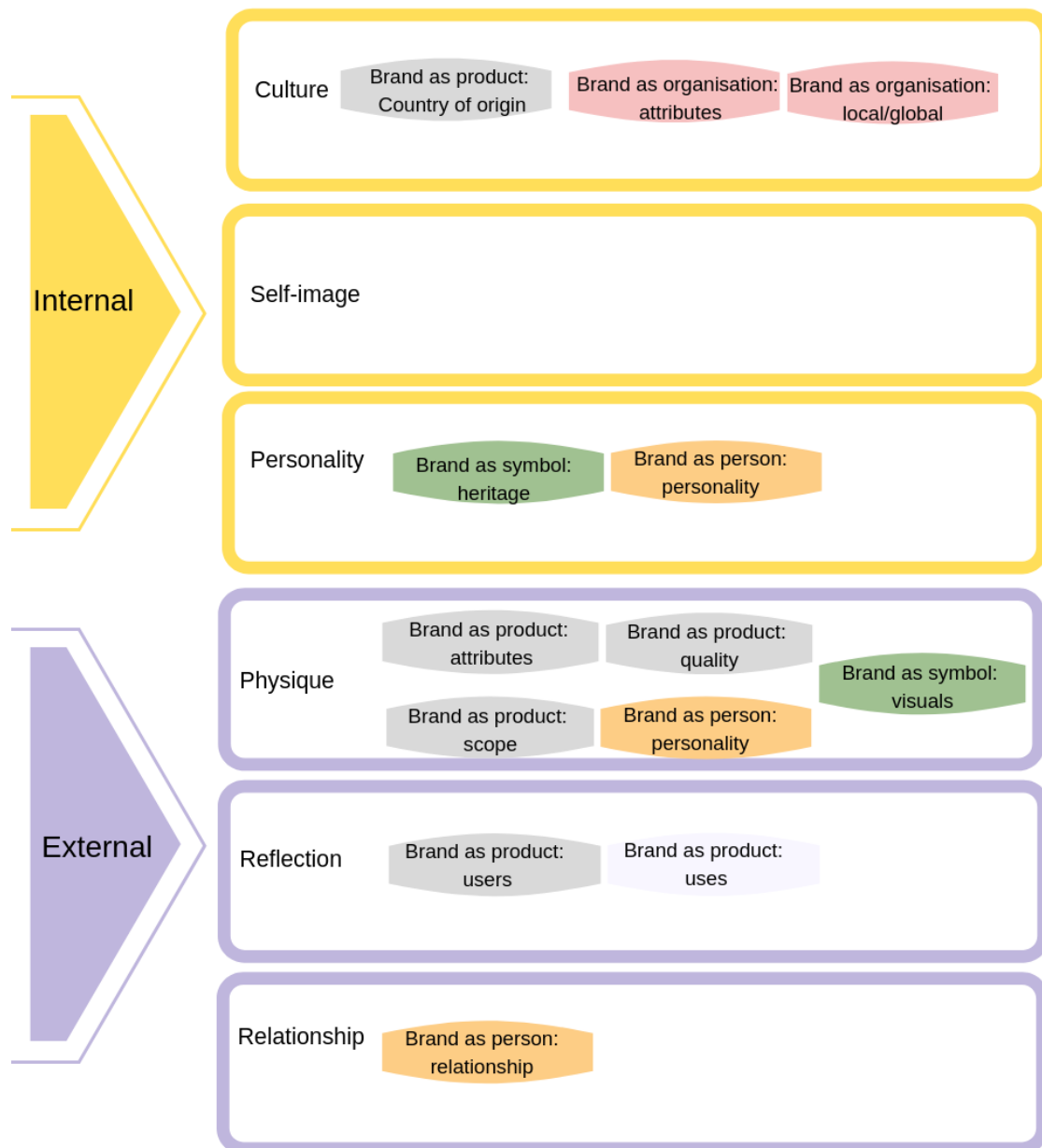
Figure 6. Merging Aaker's and Kapferer's brand identity models (Adapted from Aaker 2000, 44 & Kapferer 2008 183)

Personality view on brand identity

Kapferer describes a brand personality as the result of how an organization speaks about its offering. According to him, by communicating about itself in a certain manner, the brand describes what kind of person it would be if it was human. This should not be con-fused with how externals see the brand as according to Kapferer, brand personality is the sender's view on itself as a person. Traits that Kapferer relates to brand personality are

e.g. "dynamic", "creative", "optimistic", "rational", "elegant" and "serene" which could all describe the personality of a human being. Kapferer 2008, 110 & 184. Kapferer (2008, 184) argues that Aaker's (2002, 83) *brand as person: personality* perspective would be more about brands' physical traits. However, Aaker (2002, 83) says that "like a person, a brand can be perceived as being upscale…casual, formal or intellectual." Hence, as presented in figure 6, Aaker's brand as person view has elements of both Kapferer's physique and personality facet.

Cultural view on brand identity

According to Kapferer, a brand needs to possess a unique culture. As presented in figure 6, both of Aaker's brand as organization categories; *attributes* and *local/global* belong under Kapferer's culture facet. According to Aaker, qualities related to an organisation, such as innovativeness or concern for the environment, directly affect the brand identity. Kapferer speaks about the same matter within his cultural facet and gives an example on how the holistic Nestle brand suffered from negative attributes related to the organization. Also Aaker's brand as product sub-category: *country of origin*, falls under the "culture" facet of Kapferer's brand identity prism. According to Aaker, it means utilizing a country's good reputation in a certain product class as a branding asset. Kapferer points out similar branding assets in the culture context and mentions an example of Mercedes as the embodiment of German punctuality. (Aaker 2002, 82 & Kapferer 2008, 184).

Self-image view on brand identity

Kapferer's self-image facet on brand identity means the inner relationship that the consumer builds between himself and the brand. It deals with the consumer utilizing a brand as kind of an internal mirror. (Kapferer 2008, 186.) Aaker speaks about a similar point of view within his brand as product: user perspective. Additionally, the Aaker model (2002, 81) also introduces brand as product: use occasion view which refers to a brand having a strong link to certain situation where it is used. As such, this is missing from the Kapferer model.

Reflection view on brand identity

According to Kapferer, a comprehensive brand identity also takes into account what kind of a person a brand brings to the target's mind. The reflection view deals with consumers using brands to build their own identities. It is important not to mix reflection with target audience. Brand's target audience can be very different by e.g. age or lifestyle from the reflection that it mirrors. The reflection is not who the targeted consumers are but who they relate to. (Kapferer 2008, 185.) As presented in figure 6, this point of view is missing from Aaker's brand identity system.

Relationship view on brand identity

Kapferer's third brand identity facet; relationships, describes how a brand identity affects the style of interaction between the brand and its users. According to him, brand identity relationship is visible in the way brands behave, deliver and relate to its customers. In line with this, Aaker's *brand as person; relationship* view means the relationship between the customer and the brand. (Aaker 2002, 84 & Kapferer 2008, 185)

Physical view on brand identity

Kapferer sees brand's physique as both its concrete essence (*attributes, scope and quality* in Aaker) and appearance (*symbol: visuals* in Aaker). Even though Kapferer has a separate facet for brand personality, I have placed Aaker's *brand as person: personality* under the physique facet. This is because according to Kapferer Aaker's *brand as personality* viewpoint describes products' physical attributes rather than actual personality features. (Aaker 2002, 78 - 81 & Kapferer 2008, 182).

3.2.2   Value proposition

As presented earlier in figure 4, the next step in the Brand Identity System is to provide a value proposition. According to Aaker (2002, 95), a brand's value proposition is: "a statement of the functional, emotional, and-self expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer." The functional benefits are related to the concrete benefits that buying the company's products and services will deliver to the customer. In the example of Coca Cola, such a benefit could be to provide refreshment for a thirsty person. It is important that the functional benefit somehow stands out from the ones of competitors. (Aaker 2002, 95-96.)

The emotional benefits of a value proposition can be considered even more important than the functional ones. They deal with the feelings that the customer experiences when buying products or services. When thinking of the emotional benefits, marketers should consider what kind of positive emotions arise when the customer uses their product. Functional and emotional benefits are not alternatives but in best case synchronized with each other. In the case of a perfume, the functional benefit could be "I smell better" and the emotional benefit "I feel myself attractive because I smell good". Thirdly, a value proposition also includes self-expressive benefits. Such benefits mean the customer's ability to reinforce his/her self-image by utilising a certain product. (Aaker 2002, 97-101.) When forming a value proposition, one should not forget about pricing. Generally, a lower price is a signal of lower quality where as a higher price promises a bigger amount of benefits for the customer. (Aaker 2002, 102.)

4   Brand Identity Implementation

As visualised in figure 7, the final step in Aaker's (2002, 79) Brand Identity planning model is **Brand Identity Implementation system;** the stage where the defined brand identity and its value proposition are communicated to the target audience. Like presented in figure 7, the implementation consists of **brand position**, **execution** and **tracking**. Brand position, presented in figure 8, means "the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates an advantage over competing brands" (Aaker 2002, 176).
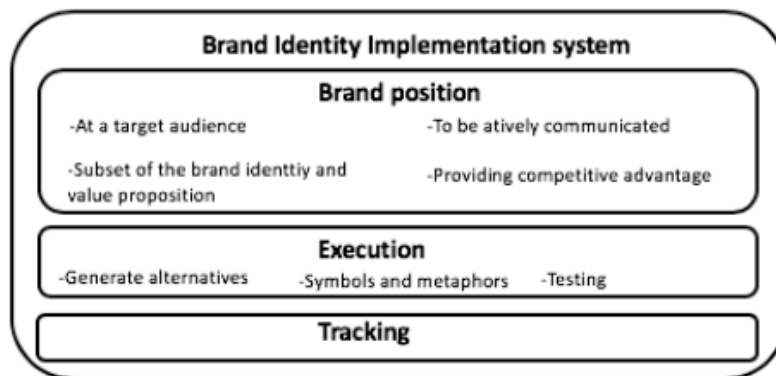
Figure 7. Brand Identity Implementation system (Aaker 2000,44)

When doing the positioning, the idea is not to communicate everything about the brand identity but to focus on certain differentiating factors that bring most benefit for the customer. It is the focusing that makes it possible for a brand's positioning to change overtime without a need to change the brand identity. As visualised in figure 8, marketers should consider four aspects when forming the brand position; the part of the brand identity and value proposition to be actively communicated, the target audience, communication objectives and points of advantage. (Aaker 2002, 176-178.)
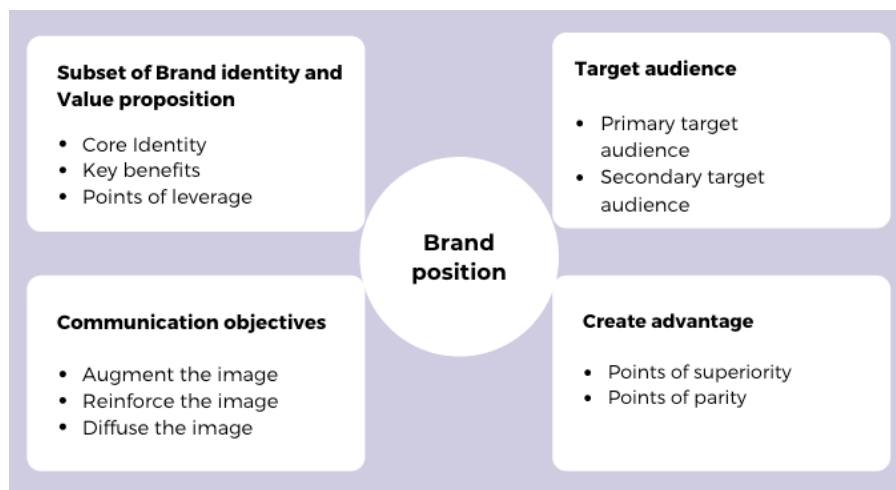

Figure 8. Elements of Brand position (Aaker 2002, 184)

Once the positioning is done, it is time for the ground level **execution** work, which requires a clever communication program. To succeed in the execution, one should think of alternative ways to entertain, involve and provoke their audience in order for the brand to stand out from its competitors. The execution should be followed by continuous **tracking,** to see whether the marketing efforts have made a difference in the brand position. (Aaker 2002, 187-189.)

4.1   The role of brand identity in marketing

To understand Brand identity implementation in an in-depth manner, it is important to clarify the relation of brand identity and marketing. It is clear that Aaker's (2002, 177) Brand Identity planning model suggests using brand identity as a starting point for a company's marketing communications. Also, Alsem & Kostelijk (2008, 907-908) highlight the importance of including brand identity in companies' marketing strategies. In their *identity-based marketing method* visualised in figure 9, they integrate the brand identity into marketing processes and thus allow the inclusion of strategic content in one's marketing messages.
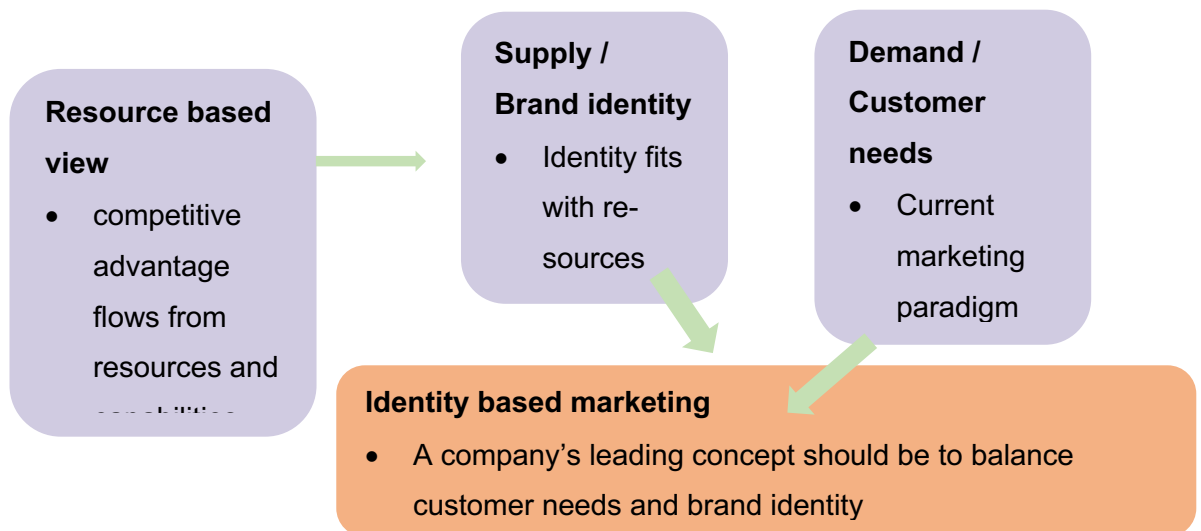
Figure 9. Identity based marketing paradigm (Alsem & Kostelijk 2008, 907-908)

According to Alsem & Kostelijk (2008, 910), brand identity represents what a company has chosen to be based on its true supply and competence, here referred to as resources. This is in line with Aaker's (2002, 68) thinking on brand identity providing direction and purpose for the brand. When a company includes brand identity in its marketing paradigm, its messages derive from the company's mission and stay real. Even though listening to customers is important, it can be dangerous to follow all of the wishes and result as e.g.

16

widening one's offering unrealistically. Hence, having the brand identity included in the marketing paradigm helps to keep the business's core idea in the focus and the offering clear. (Alsem & Kostelijk 2008, 910.)

According to Alsem & Kostelijk (2008, 911-912), brand identity-based marketing allows companies to influence their target audience's unmet needs and grow the brand awareness. As the identity speaks for the company's values, including it in the marketing enables the company to build relationships through the believes that the identity represents. This thinking is in line with Aaker's (2002, 79) Brand Identity Implementation system which aims to create a brand-customer relationship by communicating a subset of the core identity, representation of the brand values, and the key benefits to a target audience. Brand identity as a part of the marketing paradigm also acts as a compass for the business. It describes whether a demand from the market is in line with the company's identity and thus something that should be reacted to or not. The method reduces the gap between brand identity and brand image by keeping companies' communication on a straight and consistent path. (Alsem & Kostelijk 2008, 911-912.)

4.2   Using content marketing in implementing a brand identity

We have now understood that the role of marketing is to implement the brand identity to its target audience (Aaker 2002, 177). In his later book (2014, 106) Aaker states that in the modern world, digital marketing methods such as blogging and social media play a significant role in brand building. According to him (2014, 115), entertaining, functional, strategical and interesting content is a key to success in digital branding. In line with this view, in my thesis, the implementation part of the Aaker (2002, 79) Brand Identity planning model is done utilising *content marketing*, a customer-oriented marketing method that provides a solution to buyers' reluctant attitudes towards outbound marketing methods. De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van Den Bergh (2018, 227) state that "content marketing is creating and communicating content that is relevant for the target audience, and in that way, builds up knowledge, trust and a favourable disposition towards brands."

When practicing content marketing, an organization publishes valuable information to a clearly defined target group at a specific point in their buying journey. This is done without directly selling anything, yet however, with the final aim of business profit. (Rowles 2018, 27; Murthy 2011, 31; Kananen 2018, 11; De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 227.) Nonetheless, De Pelsmacker & al. (2018, 227) remind that throughout its history, effective marketing has dealt with providing valuable content and don't thus see the concept solely as a phenomenon of the social media era. Content marketing enables companies to promote themselves as experts of the field they operate in (Keronen & Tanni 2018, 20). Even

though content marketing is really popular, a study by Content Marketing Institute revealed that only 30 percent of B2B marketers are doing their content marketing effectively (Westergaard 2016).

Content marketing can also be seen as a solution to the negative attitudes that many consumers nowadays have towards direct advertising such as banners or cold calls. Whereas traditional marketing utilizes outbound methods, content marketing is all about inbound method. In this context, inbound means consumers proactively seeking for valuable information when it suits them and thus ending up dealing with organizations that provide products and services to meet their needs. Through content marketing methods, companies aim to create crossing points between their offering and consumer needs. (Lieb, 2011, 1-2; Kananen 2018, 11).

4.3 Elements of a content marketing strategy

To conduct content marketing in an organised manner, a content marketing strategy becomes useful. Interestingly, Aaker's (2002, 176) thinking around Brand Identity Implementation has a lot of similarities with the elements often included in *a content marketing strategy*. The purpose of both of the concepts is to communicate the brand identity's value proposition to its target audience (Aaker 2002, 176; Keronen & Tanni 2017, 25; Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 460). In line with Aaker's (2002,177) views on brand implementation, also Kotler & Armstrong (2018, 460) suggest that a content strategy should derive from the customer value-creation and positioning strategies. Also, Westergaard (2016), sees content strategy as a way to accomplish branding objectives. According to him, when planning content, one should put focus on what is best for his/her brand. As presented in figure 10, according to Westergaard (2016), content strategy at its simplest consists of Why, Who and What, where why stands for the business objectives, who for the target audience and what for the valuable content. Westergaard (2016) points out that the business objective can be branding.

Figure 10. Content strategy, a simple model (Adapted from Westergaard 2016)

18

As visualized in figure 11, Keronen & Tanni (2018, 25) see content strategy as the tool that communicates a brand identity to its target audience. In line with this, Rowles (2018, 17, 28) sees content as a brand building tool. Rowles sees digital branding as a result of one's all online experiences, i.e. contents. According to him, regardless of the industry in question, through content marketing, organisations can strengthen their brand's value proposition and positioning. Interestingly, industries that are less likely to create interest in consumers, have a lot of possibilities to grow their engagement rates through smart content and digital branding. (Rowles 2018, 14, 28, 18, 21.)

Figure 11. Relation of strategy, brand and content (Keronen & Tanni 2017, 26)

In figure 12 I integrate Aaker's (2002, 176) Brand Identity Implementation system to the above explained content marketing strategy concept. As stated above, Aaker's (2002, 176) Brand Identity Implementation system and the content marketing concept have a lot of similarities. Aaker (2002, 176) includes the following four aspects as key in his **brand position**, the first part of the Brand Identity Implementation system, *a subset of the brand identity and value proposition*, *a target audience*, *active communication* and *competitive advatange*. All of the above mentioned as well as the **execution** and **tracking** phase of the Brand Identity implementation system, are alike central matters in the content marketing concept (Jefferson & Tanton 2015; Rämö 2019, 44; Keronen & Tanni 2017, 25.)

Brand Identity Implementation System
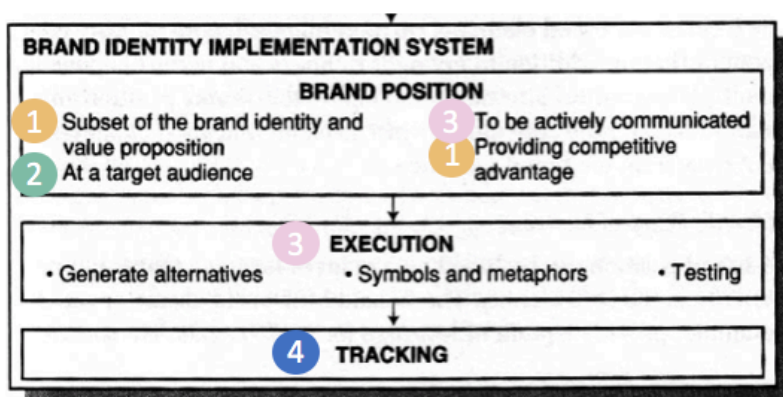
Core elements of a content marketing strategy

Figure 12. Synergies between Brand Implementation system and the content marketing strategy concept (Adapted from Aaker 2002, 79; De Pelsmecker & al. 2018; Kotler & Armstrong 2018; Kananen 2018; Westergaard 2016; Keronen & Tanni 2017)

Jefferson & Tanton (2015, 23) state that, "… the purpose of sharing all this content is to drive profitable action. Value to your customer: value to you and your business - that's the balance you are looking to strike with your marketing." In line with this, also Aaker (2000, 41) highlights the importance of strategically choosing the parts of the brand identity and value proposition that do not only benefit the customer but also the company and its brand. As visualised with **point number one** in figure 12, both of the thinkings aim to communicate the brand identity and its value proposition with a clear competitive advantage to a specified target audience in an organised manner. Alike, both of the thinkings see having a clear understanding of one's own targets as a starting point for conducting marketing communications (Aaker 2000, 40, Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 460; Keronen & Tanni 2017, 25-26; Westergaard 2016; De Pelsmecker & al. 2018, 227.)

As visualised with point number 2 in figure 12, both Aaker's (2000,44) Brand Identity Implementation system and the content marketing framework (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 23; Jutkowitz 2014) include providing value to customers as one of the corner stones of building a brand. Pinpointed with bullet point number three in figure 12, just as Aaker's (2000,44) Brand Identity Implementation system, also the content marketing concept highlight the importance of active communication (Jefferson & Tanton 2015, 10). Alike, as presented with point number four, just as Aaker's Brand Identity Implementation system

(2002, 189) also the content marketing framework includes tracking and measuring as one of the key components for developing the communication of value (Rämö 2019, 100). Points number two, three and four of figure 12 are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

4.3.1 Target audience as customer personas

As explained in chapter 3.4, Aaker (2002, 176-178) sees including and understanding brand's target audience as one of the most important parts of both brand identity building and implementation. As visualised in figures 2 and 7, brand's target audience is included in both Aaker's strategic brand analysis and brand positioning part of the Brand Identity Implementation system. A target audience is related to the fact that companies are not supposed to reach all consumers there are on the planet. Instead, they should focus on one or more customer groups whose needs match with the company's products or services. This is called segmentation, which at its simplest form is done through sorting consumers by demographic factors such as age, gender, education etc. However, such narrow a segmentation is seldom enough, and psychological and behavioural factors are often added to the analysis. (Bergström & Leppänen 2015, 115 - 117.)

My thesis handles Aaker's (2002, 176-1768) target audience with the perspective of *why* the customer is doing his/her purchase decisions. This has to do with observing the audience's needs, problems and attitudes. As presented in figure 12 with point number two, just as in Aaker's (2002, 79) Brand Identity Implementation system, also within the content marketing strategy concept, the importance of target audience is highlighted (De Pelsmecker & al. 227). In the framework of content marketing, the target audience is often included by creating *customer personas,* presented in figure 13*,* which are fictional characters based on customer insights. A specific customer persona has specific behavioural patterns in his/her purchase process; to be discussed in the next chapter. In addition to creating the crossing point between the company and the customer, such personas help marketers in creating personalised marketing messages. (Kananen 2018, 26 – 28, Komulainen 2018.)

Purchase habits

Demographical factors

Information retrieval habits

Goals and values

Seeked benefits

Challenges

Figure 13. Customer persona (Adapted from Kananen 2018, 28; Komulainen 2018)

In addition to traditional demographical information, the factors included in the customer persona description vary according to organisational needs but may include e.g. the customer profile's problems and needed information to solve the problem(s), information channels and search habits as well as goals and values. The insights of a customer persona play a significant role in being able to target the marketing messages. First of all, the challenges of a customer persona indicate the needed solution that a company should emphasize in its marketing messages. Also, understanding the goals and values of a customer persona help in promoting the solution in a manner that matches the customer persona's objectives and believes. (Kananen 2018, 28-29.)

Established companies can create customer personas based on their own databases or e.g. social media analytics. It is more difficult to do the profiling when the company does not yet have established customers. One way to gain information is to conduct a qualitative theme interview survey where selected things are asked from potential customers. (Kananen 2018, 31)

4.3.2   Brand identity execution at different stages of a buying process

As explained in chapter 3.4, Aaker (2002, 177-180) suggests having clearly defined communication objectives in addressing the brand identity and its value proposition to the target audience. According to him, the communications should provide an advantage over competitors and resonate with the customers by providing benefit (Aaker 2002, 182). Aaker (2014, 109) also states that while going through the purchase process related to a certain brand, customers benefit from pieces of information that make their decision making easier. As visualized in figure 12 with point number three, when practicing content marketing, the benefits can be communicated efficiently by paying attention to communicating the brand according to the different stages of a purchase funnel. (Rowles 2018,

31.) The purchase funnel and communications at its different stages is explained in the following chapters.

Table 2. Marketing at different stages of the purchase process (Kananen 2018, 44-47)

State in the purchase process	Objective	Example of marketing content
A: Awareness	Draw attention and get visitors for web-site	Article, Podcast, Paid search
I: Interest	Arise interest	Detailed description of the product, social media
D: Desire	Clicking to a landing page	Attractive product pictures, brochures
C: Conviction	Convict the prospect through ratings of other consumers	Customer reviews
A: Action	Place purchase	Give discount on first purchase

A traditional model for explaining customer purchase process is AIDA where A stands for attention, I for interest, D for desire and A for action. There are also some extensions to the model as e.g. AIDCA where C stand for conviction. A practical example of marketing at different phases of the AIDCA model is visualised in table 2. (Kananen 2018, 44-47.)

It is also important to understand which mediums are used in which steps of the journey. In a B2B example generated by Google's "the customer journey to online purchase" tool, social media plays the role of an awareness builder and traditional e-mail acts as the deal breaker. A company website is often the step that follows awareness created in social media. Free and valuable material at a website, such as video tutorials generate trust and build a brand image as well as aim to create a conversion point. (Rowles 2018, 33.)

As shown in figure 14, Keronen & Tanni (2018, 159 – 164) divide a customer journey into three steps; information window, purchase window and customer experience window. When planning the marketing activities for each window, one should consider the customer state, used channels, conversion points as well as the content itself and its main targets. When planning content for the different stages, one needs to also think of a connecting content for the next (and or previous) step. Depending on the company's strategic initiatives, it can be wise to focus on a certain step of the customer journey.

The information window is for the early phase prospects that are interested in finding out more about a certain topic or phenomenon. It includes three different customer states; steady state, information search and consideration. The channel that is utilised in the information window is often the organisation's own website or social media and the content form e.g. blogs, video tutorials, case examples or manuals. The main purpose of the next step, the purchase window, is to lower the barrier for a purchase decision. This can be done by providing information about the company's services or products for the prospects that are in the consideration stage. In the last step, the customer journey window, the goal is to nurture the existing customer relationship by helping the customer to make most of his/her purchase. (Keronen & Tanni 2017, 160-161.)
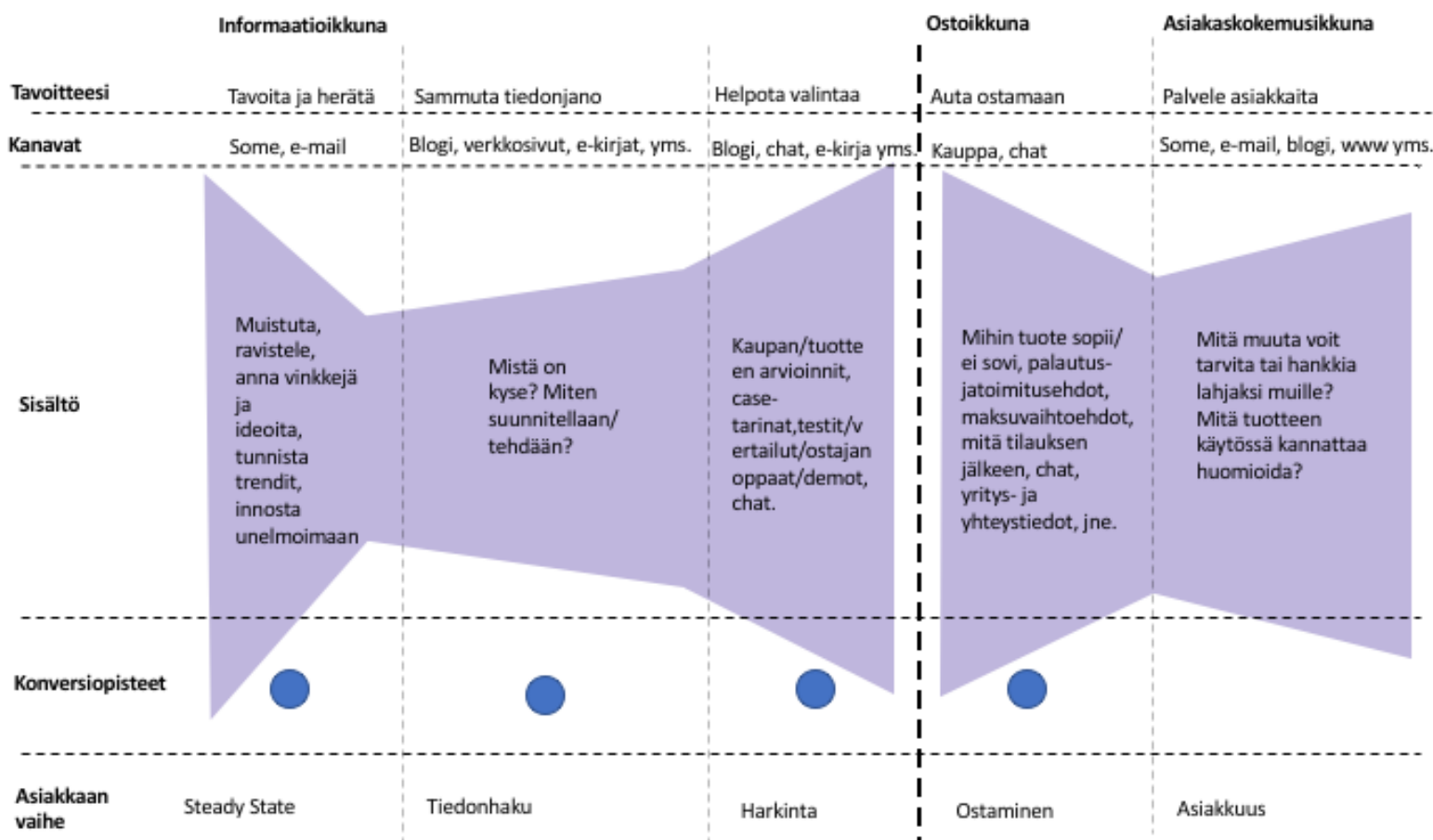
	Informaatioikkuna			Ostoikkuna	Asiakaskokemusikkuna
Tavoitteesi	Tavoita ja herätä	Sammuta tiedonjano	Helpota valintaa	Auta ostamaan	Palvele asiakkaita
Kanavat	Some, e-mail	Blogi, verkkosivut, e-kirjat, yms.	Blogi, chat, e-kirja yms.	Kauppa, chat	Some, e-mail, blogi, www yms.
Sisältö	Muistuta, ravistele, anna vinkkejä ja ideoita, tunnista trendit, innosta unelmoimaan	Mistä on kyse? Miten suunnitellaan/ tehdään?	Kaupan/tuotte en arvioinnit, case-tarinat,testit/v ertailut/ostajan oppaat/demot, chat.	Mihin tuote sopii/ ei sovi, palautus-jatoimitusehdot, maksuvaihtoehdot, mitä tilauksen jälkeen, chat, yritys- ja yhteystiedot, jne.	Mitä muuta voit tarvita tai hankkia lahjaksi muille? Mitä tuotteen käytössä kannattaa huomioida?
Konversiopisteet	●	●	●	●	
Asiakkaan vaihe	Steady State	Tiedonhaku	Harkinta	Ostaminen	Asiakkuus

Figure 14. Sisältöpolku ® (Keronen & Tanni 2017, 164)

4.3.3 Brand identity implementation tracking with modern tools

As visualised earlier in figure 12, both Aaker's (2002, 189) Brand Identity Implementation System and the content marketing strategy concept (Keronen & Tanni 2017, 194) include measurement as a key part. Aaker (2002, 189) states that the tracking of how well the brand implementation has succeeded can be done by both quantitative and qualitative means.

Also, within the context of communicating brands with content marketing tools, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for measuring the success. Some suggested methods for measuring digital marketing are e.g. social sharing, time-on-page and click-through rate. However, more important than the method, is a unified and agreed manner in doing the measuring. (Kamdar 2017.)

4.3.4 Conclusion

As a conclusion of the above presented theory, my thesis suggests utilising brand identity as a starting point of a content marketing strategy. As visualised in figure 12, this is done by connecting Aaker's (2002, 79) Brand Identity implementation system with the central components of a content marketing strategy; intelligence on customer personas and their buying process. The actual brand identity-based content marketing strategy will be presented as a solution to the research question in chapter 8.

5   Creating the brand identity and a content marketing model

This chapter presents the proposed research method and planned research actions to be implemented in the empirical part of this thesis. The findings from the empirical research are presented in chapter six (6).

5.1   What is constructive research

When one is aiming at creating an innovative and concrete model with their research, *constructive research* is a methodology to be considered (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 65; Lukka 2001). Lukka (2001) defines constructive research as one sub-category for a case study. My research questions; "*What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of?"* and *"What is the relation between brand identity and content marketing strategy?"* aim at creating a brand identity with different perspectives and positioning
included as well as a content strategy model that includes the brand identity

The aim of constructive research is to create a new kind of reality based on research infor-mation by using practical approaches. With the help of this particular methodology, one also tries to create a new structure for something by using the data gathered in the empiri-cal part of the study. In a nutshell, constructive research combines already existing knowledge with new findings from real-life situations. (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 65.)

In constructive research the focus is on creating a solution to a problem. As stated in chapter 3, my start-up business has a concrete need for a brand identity that takes into consideration the current market situation and needs. Through the market analysis about the 2nd hand furniture business, I will also bring new insights for the entire community which is also something that constructive research aims to accomplish. A key element of constructive research is the collaboration and communication between the researcher and the individuals who will utilize the findings of the study. As my case company is not an al-ready exiting organization with a group of people but instead just myself and my business partner, I will be both the researcher and the one who puts the model into use along with my partner. (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 65.) My constructive research process is presented in fig-ure 15.
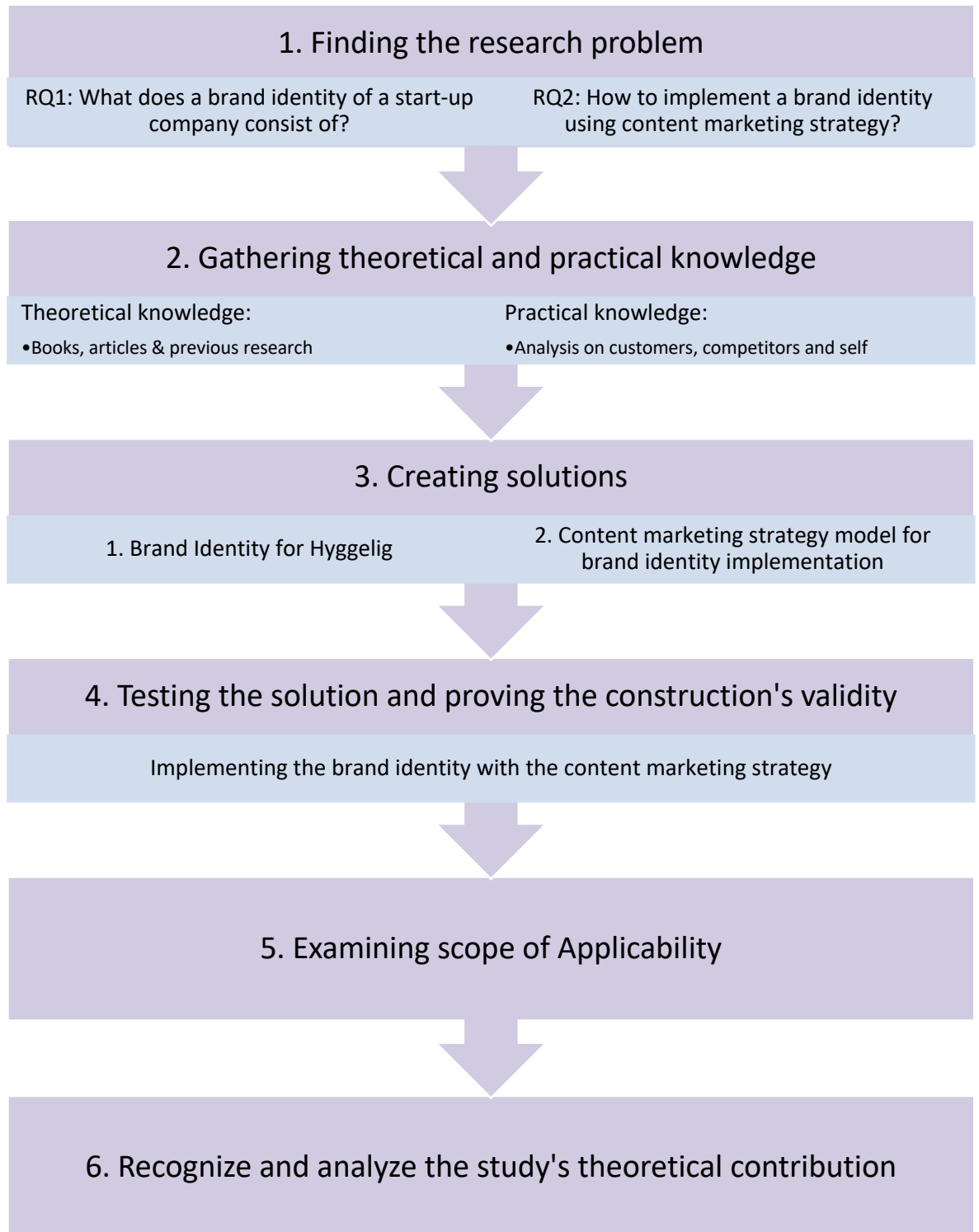
1. Finding the research problem

RQ1: What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of?

RQ2: How to implement a brand identity using content marketing strategy?

2. Gathering theoretical and practical knowledge

Theoretical knowledge:

•Books, articles & previous research

Practical knowledge:

•Analysis on customers, competitors and self

3. Creating solutions

1. Brand Identity for Hyggelig

2. Content marketing strategy model for brand identity implementation

4. Testing the solution and proving the construction's validity

Implementing the brand identity with the content marketing strategy

5. Examining scope of Applicability

6. Recognize and analyze the study's theoretical contribution

Figure 15. My constructive research process (Adapted from Ojasalo & al. 2015)

5.2 Finding the research problem

As visualized in figure 15, the first step in constructive research is to find a research problem which has been done in chapter two (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 67). As stated in chapter two, my thesis has the two following research questions

RQ1: "What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of?" and

RQ2: "How to implement a brand identity using content marketing strategy?"

Additionally, like presented in table 3, I have formed five investigative questions out of my research questions that help me reach my research objectives. By utilizing the investigative questions, I am able to determine what data I need to gather to answer them and their mother-questions.

Table 3. Formulating sub-questions

Research question	Investigative question
RQ1 and RQ2	1. Who are our main competitors and what kind of branding insights does their brand positioning reveal?
RQ1 and RQ2	2. What are the key challenges and needs of an interior designer prospect?
RQ1 and RQ2	3. What are the key challenges and needs of a B2C prospect?
RQ1 and RQ2	4. What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of an interior designer prospect?
RQ1 and RQ2	5. What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of a B2C prospect?

5.3 Gathering practical knowledge

It is suggested that when conducting constructive research, one should use several different ways to gather the research data (Ojasalo & al. 2015, 68). The empirical part of my thesis utilizes Aaker's (2002, 177) Brand identity implementation system's first part; a strategic brand analysis, visualized in figure 16. When creating a brand, an analysis needs to be made on three perspectives; competitors, customers and self. Analyzing the different viewpoints is necessary for a brand to understand its own strengths against competitors' weaknesses as well as gain knowledge on market needs. (Aaker 2002, 190).

Strategic brand analysis

Customer analysis	Competitor analysis	Self-Analysis
-Trends	-Brand image/identity	-Existing brand image
-Motivation	Strengths, strategies	-Brand heritage
-Unmet needs	-Vulnerabilities	-Strengths/Capabilitites
-Segmentation		-Organization values

Figure 16. A strategic brand analysis (Aaker 2002, 189-190)

5.3.1 Competitor analysis

When doing a competitor analysis, the first step is to decide who one's competition is. This means focusing on a certain market rather than going after all possible companies that offer an alternative choice for your target audience's needs. In my competitor analysis, I have chosen to focus on the used design furniture market. Secondly, I will focus on *direct competitors* which are companies that sell the same or very similar products that my business does. (see e.g. Barringer & Ireland 2016, 187.)

The term Desk research, or secondary research, is a method utilized e.g. in market research and it refers to gathering information without conducting a field study. Among other areas, the method can be used for obtaining information regarding a market's suppliers and their brands. Using the internet is one method under desk research. A google search is a simple yet good way to define a company's main competitors. When using google in tracking down companies, a narrow search sentence should be utilized. (Kananen 2018, 20; Kananen 2017, 82; Hague, Cupman, Harrison & Truman 2016, 47 - 62).

5.3.2 Customer analysis

As explained in chapter 4.3.1., my thesis utilizes customer persona thinking as a means to do Aaker's (2002,177) customer analysis. According to Kananen (2018, 31) conducting a qualitative theme interview is a good method for gaining in-depth data for buyer persona creation. He also suggests surveys as a data collection approach. The first buyer persona segment of my thesis; B2B: interior design planners, is examined by conducting a qualitative theme interview. Data concerning the second segment, B2C customers, is gathered through an online quantitative survey. Kananen (2015, 162) sees an online survey as a method for contacting target groups that are geographically scattered which is the case in my B2C customers.

As presented in chapter 5.2, investigative questions two – five act as the basis for designing the survey and theme interview. An online survey is conducted to find answers to investigative questions three *"What are the key challenges and needs of a B2C prospect?"* and five *"What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of a B2C prospect?"*. As proposed by Saunders & al. (2016, 447-448), the investigative questions help us understand what data we need to retrieve from the survey. Investigative questions two "*What are the key challenges and needs of an interior designer prospect?"* and four "*What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of an interior designer prospect?"* are answered by conducting theme-interviews for interior designers. Both the survey template and interview themes are attached in

6   Presenting the findings

The following chapters present the findings of the strategic brand analysis; competitors, customers and self.

6.1   Competitor analysis

To be able to utilize the internet in defining the main competitors of a company, one must first understand which search terms to use (Elezaj 2018). Google Keyword Planner is a useful tool in defining the search terms that you will be competing of. When doing a key-word search with "used design furniture (käytetyt design huonekalut)", the ideas presented in attachment 1 pop up. From these terms, we select five key terms presented in table x that are most close to our business' substance. By conducting searches with the six key words in question, we get results of competitors. By looking at the competitors offering and comparing it to ours, we are able to determine four main competitors presented in table 4. The paid google adverts are left out from this analysis.

Table 4. Finding the key competitors with Google Keyword Planner

Search term	Search result	Search result	Search result	Search result	Search result
Old furniture (Vanhat huonekalut)	Competitor A (1)	Competitor E (1)	Competiror F (1)	Competitor B (1)	Competitor G (1)
Used furniture (Käytetyt huonekalut)	Competitor G (2)	Competitor A (2)	Competitor F (2)		
Design lamps retro (Design valaisimet retro)	Competitor H (1)	Competitor C (1)	Competitor A (3)	Competitor D (1)	Competitor B (2)
Vintage furniture (Vintage huonekalut)	Competitor A (4)	Competitor E (2)	Competitor B (3)	Competitor D (2)	Competitor I (1)
Vintage home decor online store (Vintage sisustus nettikauppa)	Competiror B (4)	Competitor A (5)	Competitor C (2)	Competitor D (3)	
Retro lamps (Retro valaisimet)	Competitor C (3)	Competitor H (2)	Competitor A (6)		

Based on the search term analysis, we are able to determine our four main competitors who are referred to as Competitor A, Competitor B, Competitor C and Competitor D in this thesis. As the main competitors are defined, we are able to analyze their brands.

6.1.1 Competitors' brand analysis

According to Aaker, doing an examination on how the competitors' brands are positioned in the market is a useful way to retrieve information for the strategic brand analysis. To be able to get the data for this, Aaker proposes to organize competitors' advertising into "a brandscape" of clusters. The brandscape can be then utilized for positioning the brand to be implemented. This is done by analysing the strength of each cluster and considering which cluster the brand wants to join. (Aaker 2002, 193.) Using the Aaker (2002, 194-195) method, the clustering presented in figure 17 with different brand themes were created by first gathering marketing messages from the four main competitors as shown in appendix 2. By analyzing and theming the messages I was able to come up with six different branding themes. I have created the names for the themes based on the things that the marketing messages emphasize.
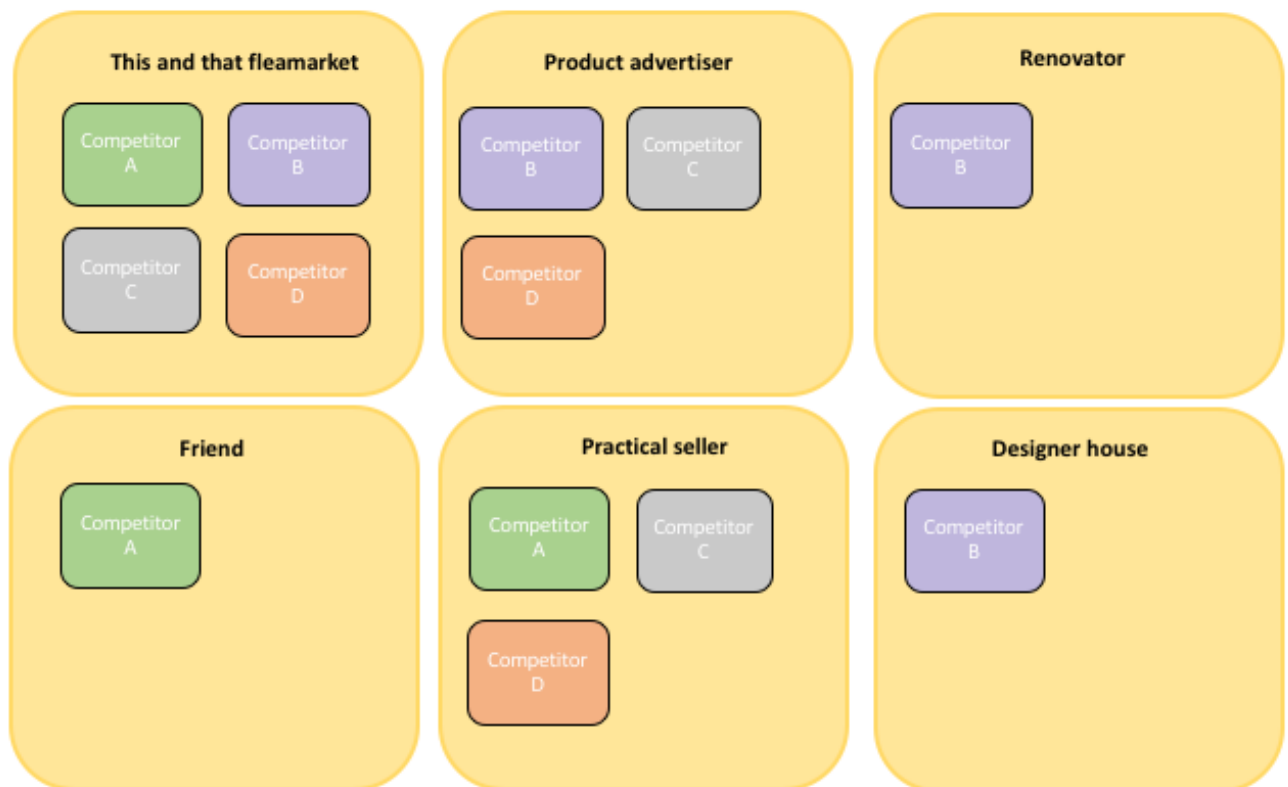

Figure 17. Hyggelig's competitor brandscape (Adapted from Aaker 2002, 193)

Through the brandscape visualized in figure 17 we can make a conclusion that all of our four main competitors fall under a cluster called "this and that fleamarket". This means that they are not branding themselves according to a specific product category. Three out of four competitors also belong to the clusters called "product advertiser" and "practical seller". The practical seller cluster refers to marketing that promotes e.g. delivery and payment terms and other practicalities as a central part of their marketing messages. The product advertiser cluster means marketing that focuses on plain product advertisements and messages that go into details in explaining products' attributes.

The brandscape shows that clusters named "Friend", referring to relationship-oriented marketing, and "Designer house", making designers central in company messages, have the least competition.

6.2   Customer analysis: Creating Debbie the Design vintage lover customer persona

To be able to develop my first customer persona which represents consumers, I reached out to the correct target audience through 2nd hand design furniture related Facebook groups. A group of people interested in 2nd hand furniture, based on their belonging to Facebook groups "Scandivian sustainable quality home décor (Skandinaavinen ekologinen laatusisustaminen)" and "Modern yet retro home décor (Modernisti retro sisustus)", answered to my online survey in April 2013. The survey resulted in a total amount of 103 replies. The survey included single and multiple-choice questions, "yes" or "no" questions and open questions (see Appendix 3). The multiple-choice and "yes" or "no" questions were analysed using quantitative methods. The open questions were analysed using *content analysis*, which is an analysis method for qualitative research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 78).

The first step of the content analysis was to go through the open answers picking out the interesting points and leaving out the insignificant material. My research questions "*What are the key challenges and needs of a B2C prospect?"* and *"What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of a B2C prospect?"* helped me understand what I was looking for from the answers. Additionally, my theoretical understanding on customer persona and purchase process, as presented in chapters 4.3.3 and 4.3.4, made it easier to understand what in the answers was relevant. After that the interesting information was coded and grouped in order for me to draw conclusions presented in the following chapters. (See Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 78)

6.2.1 Background of B2C customer persona

When forming a customer persona, it is common to include some background information to the profile (Komulainen 2018). The survey results showed that with 36 percent, most of the respondents live in the Uusimaa region. However, except Ahvenanmaa, Pohjanmaa and Etelä-Karjala, all Finnish provinces were included in the results. Almost all, 99 percent, of the respondents were women with age group 36 – 45 being the biggest one. The respondents had several different occupations but there was a clear emphasis on health and social care with 26 persons working in that field. What comes to the respondents' interests, 76 percent stated home décor as a hobby. The second biggest interest with 50 percent was culture, arts and literature.

6.2.2 Goals of B2C customer persona

Understanding what the respondents want to achieve through their home décor choices gives us information about the customer persona's typical goals. A clear majority of 86 percent of the respondents said that their personal values have an impact on the products that they style their homes with. The four values that stood out the most from the open answers were **recycling**, **environmental awareness, ethicality** and **sustainability/quality** in products. In addition to values, also preference in style helps us determine the customer persona's goals. There was some dispersion in the home decor style of the respondents. However, the style that stood out from the answers with 39 percent was "retro or vintage". A question related to one's home décor dreams also revealed that the target audience seems to have rather concrete goals related to the topic. The answers showed that the customer persona has a rather long-term view on what kind of home they want to live in.

> "I purchase sustainable and high-quality products. I also find things from flea-markets. I want to say "no" to disposable junk." Respondent no. 10

To sum up the customer persona's goals, the survey showed that the audience group in question prefers to use recycled furniture and other home décor products instead of buying new ones. In addition to prolonging the lifecycle of a product, also other aspects related to sustainability and ethicality are considered important by the customer persona. Also, the persona seems to look at their home's décor as a long project that progresses slowly furniture by furniture. The goals may also change along the way.

6.2.3 Needs of B2C customer persona

In addition to goals, it is important to understand the needs of a target audience group. Almost all of the respondents, 98 percent, said that they are interested in 2nd hand design furniture, which signals that there is clearly a crossing point with the customer needs and our company's offering. To get more detailed information about the customer needs, the respondents were asked to determine the most important attributes of furniture, lamps and other home décor items. As visualised in figure 18, **quality** and **matchiness to one's personal style** were the biggest attributes that stood out. A **reasonable price**, **aesthetics**, **condition**, **design** and **environmental awareness** were also considered important by the target audience. By analysing these results, we can make the conclusion that even though the target group takes into account their personal values as mentioned in the previous chapter, practicalities such as price, condition and looks seem to be even more important.
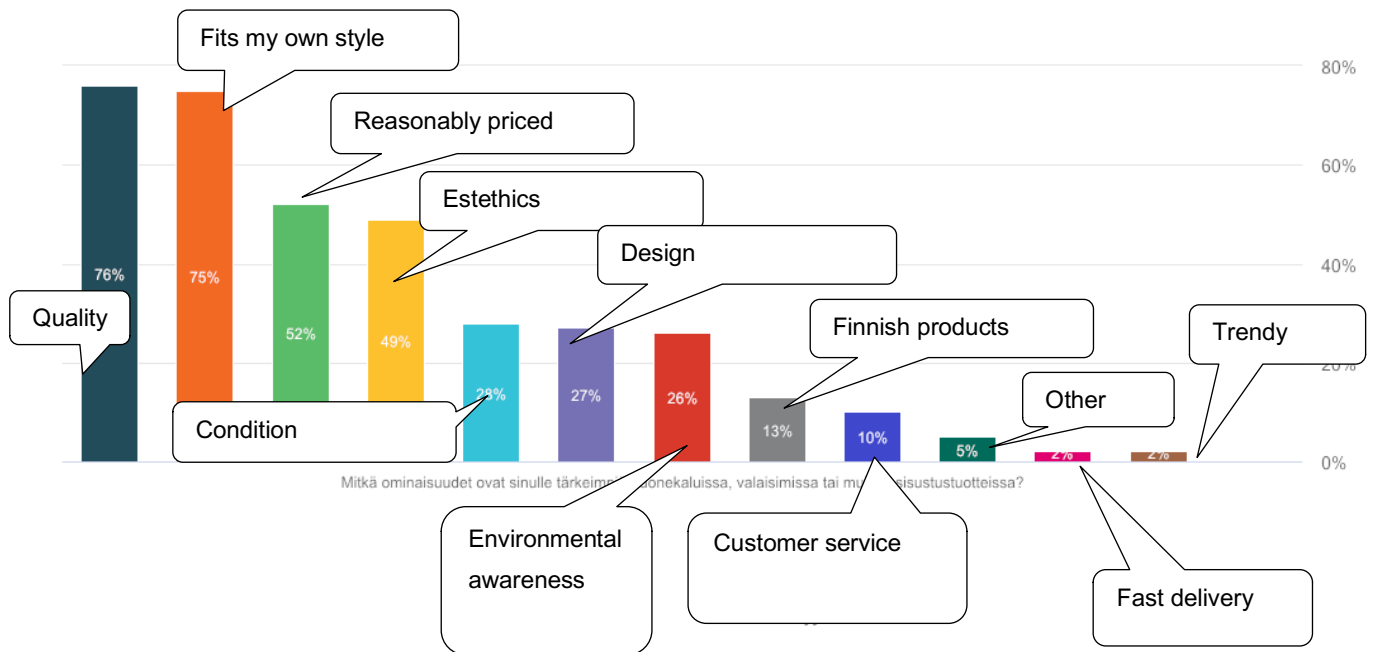

Figure 18. The most important attributes of furniture, lamps and other home décor items

A little over a half, 56 percent, of the respondents said that they are currently interested in a specific product. The respondents were also asked to name specific products which proved that many have a certain piece of designer furniture or lamp that they are dreaming about. As shown in figure 18, trends do not seem to play a significant role for the customer persona.

6.2.4 Challenges of B2C customer persona

According to the answers, getting rid of unwanted furniture and having more space in one's home seem to be an unsolved problem for the customer persona.

> "I want to get rid of some furniture from my old home that still has not found its place from my current apartment." Respondant no. 20

Based on the survey answers, another challenge for the customer persona is to find what they are looking for. It is sometimes challenging and time consuming to find the desired items with a reasonable price in the market

6.2.5 B2C customer persona's information needs and habits

As visualised in figure 19, when considering buying a piece of furniture, product measurements were the most important piece of information for the target audience. In addition, information about the quality, photos and suitability to one's own home were considered central. Many who selected "other" explained that price is an essential piece of information.
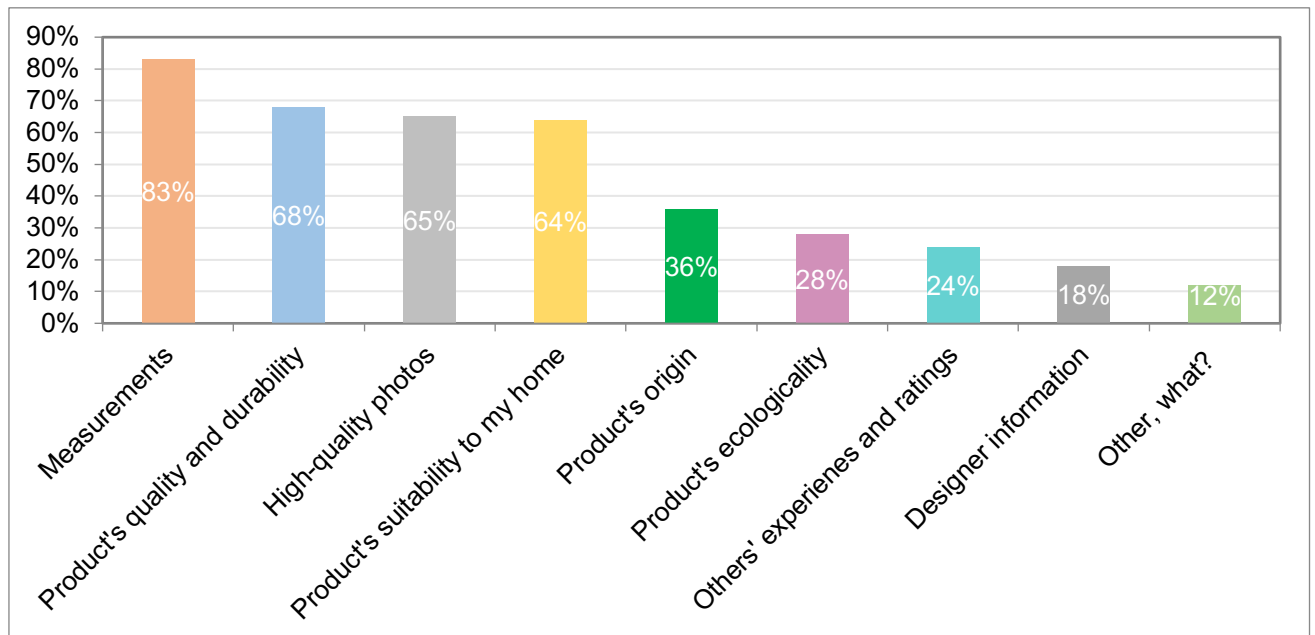

Figure 19. B2C customer persona's information needs related to furniture and other home décor items

As presented in figure 20, the customer persona's most important source of information regarding home décor and furniture are interior magazines. In addition, Facebook, Instagram and Google are used a lot. The customer persona also likes to watch home décor tv series and read blogs. Many had explained that they use Pinterest in the "other" option.
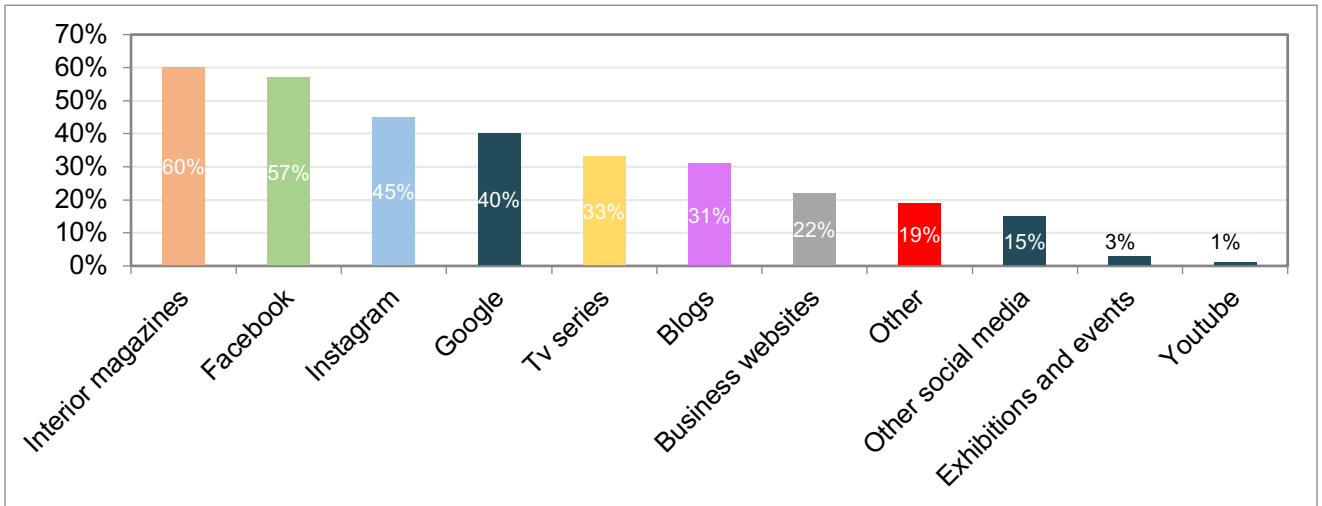
Figure 20. B2C customer persona's information search habits

6.2.6 B2C customer persona's purchase habits

The survey revealed that customer persona discussed about home décor most with friends and family. In addition, a social media network was considered as an important discussion network by 33 percent of the respondents. 83 percent of the respondents explained that the causing factor for buying a piece of furniture is a practical need when e.g. an old lamp gets broken. Also, 70 percent said that they decide to buy a product when they finally find something that they have been looking for a long time. A good offer was considered as a causing factor by 34 percent of the respondents. The survey revealed dispersion in the preferred buying location. The preferences to buy from online flea markets and brick and mortar stores was almost even. When considering factors that may prevent the customer persona from buying lack of measurements and photos was revealed to be most crucial.

DEBBIE THE
DESIGN VINTAGE LOVER

BACKGROUND

- 40 years old woman
- Lives in Helsinki
- Works as a nurse
- Interested in home decor, culture & arts

GOALS

- Wants to implement values into life-style
- Products: recycled, ecological, sustainable, time lasting & ethical
- Clear idea about the ideal home

NEEDS

- Products must match own style and values
- Seeks for affordable price in quality design with a clear conscience
- is looking for a specific product
- not interested in trends

CHALLENGES

- Wants to get rid of stuff
- Finding the specific thing with reasonable price and good condition takes time and effort

INFO NEEDS & HABITS

- Needed product info; measurements, price, durability, quality, photos, suitability
- Loves reading interior magazines
- SoMe: FB, IG, Pinterest
- Google and other websites

PURCHASE HABITS

- Search period is often long
- A sudden need or bargain can also trigger the purcase
- Buys from online and in store

Figure 21. Debbie the Design vintage lover customer persona

6.2.7 Purchase process of Debbie the Design vintage lover

As visualised in figure 22, it is common for Debbie to get inspired by a product while reading an interior magazine or browsing e.g. Pinterest. The interest grows as Debbie searches for more information and discusses about the product with her network. As an old product goes broken, Debbie goes into more details in finding the product she has had in my mind. At this point measurements and photos are really important. As she finally finds a recycled option with an affordable price and good condition, Debbie feels confident enough to make the purchase.
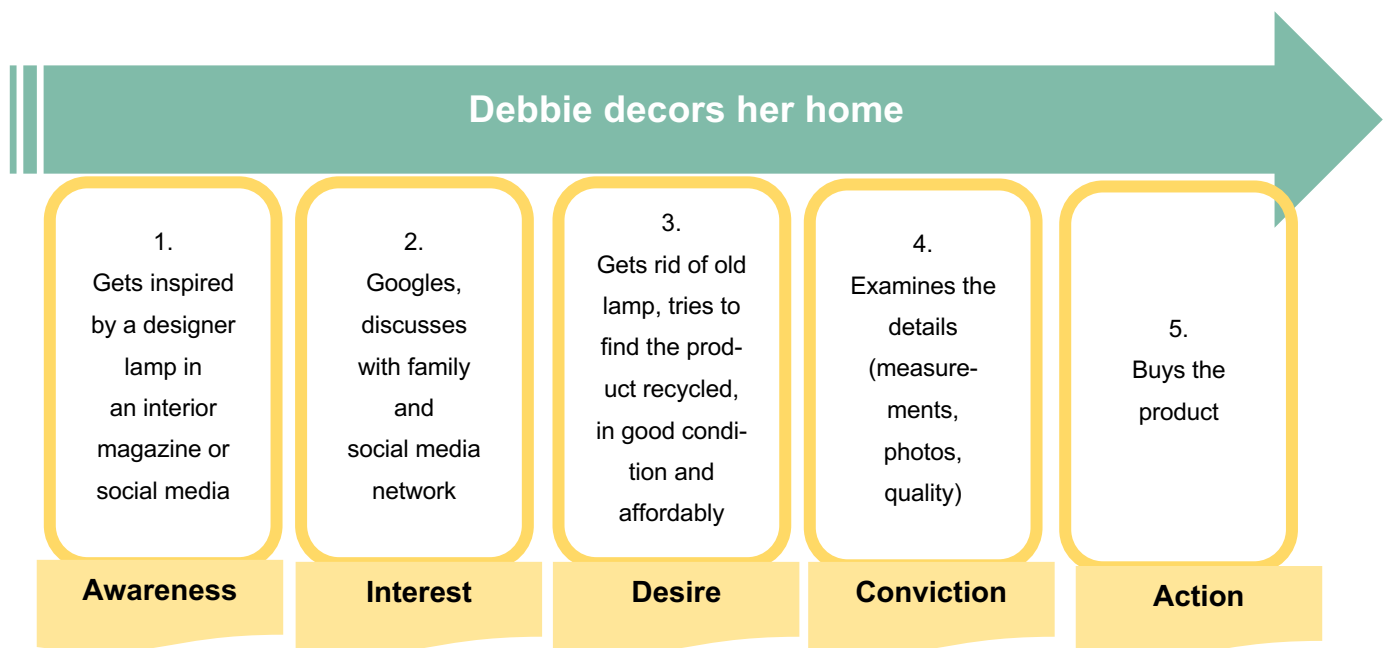
Debbie decors her home

Awareness	Interest	Desire	Conviction	Action
1. Gets inspired by a designer lamp in an interior magazine or social media	2. Googles, discusses with family and social media network	3. Gets rid of old lamp, tries to find the product recycled, in good condition and affordably	4. Examines the details (measurements, photos, quality)	5. Buys the product

Figure 22. Debbie the design vintage lover's purchase process with AIDCA model (Adapted from Kananen 2018, 47.)

6.3 Customer analysis: Creating Interior Designer customer persona with purchase process

The second target group that I examined were interior designers. I interviewed five designers using a qualitative theme interview. Five interviews were enough to be able to answer to investigative questions two "*What are the key challenges and needs of an interior designer prospect?*" and four "*What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of an interior designer prospect?*". To be able to analyse the interviews I coded the interviewees' thoughts by the themes and supporting questions. After coding the material, I use theoretical classification to reflect the collected material with the theory on customer persona as presented in chapter 4.3.3. (Kananen 2017, 131-141.)

6.3.1 Background of Interior Designer customer persona

All of the interviewees work through their own companies as solo-entrepreneurs in the capital region area of Finland focusing on consumer customers. In addition to sitting in front of the computer designing, retrieving information and answering to customer inquiries, the interior designers' workdays are filled with meetings with the customers and different kinds of info sessions organised by e.g. furniture importers. The interviewed interior designers' clients come from different backgrounds, but it became clear that the people buying interior design services are rarely under the age of 30. The client projects that the interior designers work on are often related to changes in habitation in their clients' lives such as moving to an new home, renovations or building entirely new houses.

6.3.2 Goals of Interior Designer customer persona

The goals of the Interior Designers were surprisingly similar. The ability to design interiors based on the customers' wishes was a key goal for everyone. Also using quality products that endure time and or are made in an ecological manner was highly appreciated. Some of the designers mentioned that instead of buying new items, they like to suggest their customers to keep some of their old furniture and e.g. upholster them to get a fresh look. Rather than going after rapidly changing trends, the interviewees aim to create timeless spaces that have unique features. In addition, providing the customer with suggestions on e.g. furniture that he or she would not have thought of, is a key goal for the Interior Designer customer persona.

6.3.3 Needs of Interior Designer Customer persona

The Interior Designer customer persona prefers to use furniture providers whose offering is stable and clearly defined, which creates a sense of trust and saves time. They favour Finnish furniture in their projects but are not able to utilize solely domestic products due to a rather limited offering. The demand for recycled furniture continues to grow and many of the designers' customers are looking for pieces from the 50s, 60s and 70s. At least different kind of cupboards, dressers, wooden benches and dining tables are in high demand. It became also clear that practicality is an important attribute in furniture for the customers of an interior designer. According to the interior designers, even though trends have some impact on e.g. colours, their overall influence on customer wishes remains rather small. Since interior designers are decorating homes by profession, getting more extensive service than a B2C customer, is very much appreciated. The interviews revealed that in the context of a customer getting rid of valuable furniture, there is also a need for a trusted partner who would come and pick up those items and resell them. This customer persona could also appreciate the possibility to return products to the seller which is not possible

when buying from a private person. Additionally, a service where the customer persona could ask the seller for a specific product which is currently not in offering, was also brought up as an unmet need.

6.3.4 Challenges of an Interior Designer Customer Persona

Clients unrealistic hopes on the amount of furniture they can fit into an apartment as well as budget are a challenge for the interior designer. The interviews revealed that it is often difficult for the clients to make decisions between different options and for couples to come to a consensus. Such situations put the customer persona in a challenging position and may result in delays. Online stores and the rapidly growing offering of different products seem to be both an advantage as well as a challenge. It was revealed that having a reasonable price is very important for the clients and even though internet makes it is easy to find what you're looking for, it also dumps the prices and lures the client to search for a cheaper option. The move from brick and mortar to online has also decreased the possibilities to physically test a product which is an important thing for an interior designer.

What comes to 2nd hand furniture, currently the biggest challenge for the customer persona is the instability in offering. If an interior designer spots an interesting product, it is most likely already gone when he or she would need to order it. Looking for recycled pieces is also time consuming and not something that an interior designer could be doing on a regular basis.

6.3.5 Needed information of Interior Designer Customer Persona

Having as detailed information as possible on the measurements and materials of a piece of furniture is very important for the customer persona. Also, the product photos in an online store should be of high standard. Detailed information such as light temperature on lamps and cleanability on fabrics are appreciated by interior designers as it helps them do their work better. Information about recycled items are often missing, but it would be beneficial if the seller could at least give an estimate on e.g. the used materials and colours. Having background and history information about 2nd hand products is also beneficial for the customer persona.

6.3.6 Information search habits of Interior Designer Customer Persona

According to the interviews, internet is the main information source for interior designers. Importers' and stores' websites as well as different collection sites are used a lot. The customer persona likes to use sites and providers that have a clear offering which makes it easy to find what you are looking for. In terms of social media, Instagram was the most

popular medium and used by four out of five designers. Different kinds of events and exhibitions are also important for interior designers, and depending on the occasion, act as opportunities for both networking and getting inspired. It is common for the customer persona to collect links on interesting pieces that could be later on utilised in client projects. Based on the interviews, it seems that interior content on blogs and magazines is at least partly "old-information" for the interior designers who are one step ahead of amateur decorators in what comes to trends.

6.3.7 Purchase habits of Interior Designer Customer Persona

It is hard to determine what triggers the buying of a product for an interior designer. The customer persona can get inspired by a product basically anywhere which then leaves a memory trace that pops up in a suitable project. Based on the interviews, it is seldom for the client to ask for a specific product. In turn, it is often the client's old piece of furniture that sets the direction for the rest of the items. Lack of product information as well as too high a price are factors that can prevent the customer persona from buying. On the other hand, also low prices can be a turn off for interior designers as they are often signals of poor quality.

6.3.8 Purchase process of Interior Designer Customer Persona

By analysing the theme interviews, I am also able to provide an answer for investigative question five "*What elements are central in the purchase behaviour of an interior designer prospect?"*. As presented in figure 24, I have utilised the AIDCA model presented in chapter four of this thesis to model Debbie's purchase process. The interviews revealed that in the context of Izzy the Interior Designer, the AIDCA process is never ending. The customer persona is constantly alert for new products to be used later on in a suitable project. The decision stage of the purchase process activated when Izzy matches a customer project with a product in mind. Once the need to buy a product emerges, it is important for Izzy to have a trusted provider with a stable offering.

IZZY THE INTERIOR DESIGNER
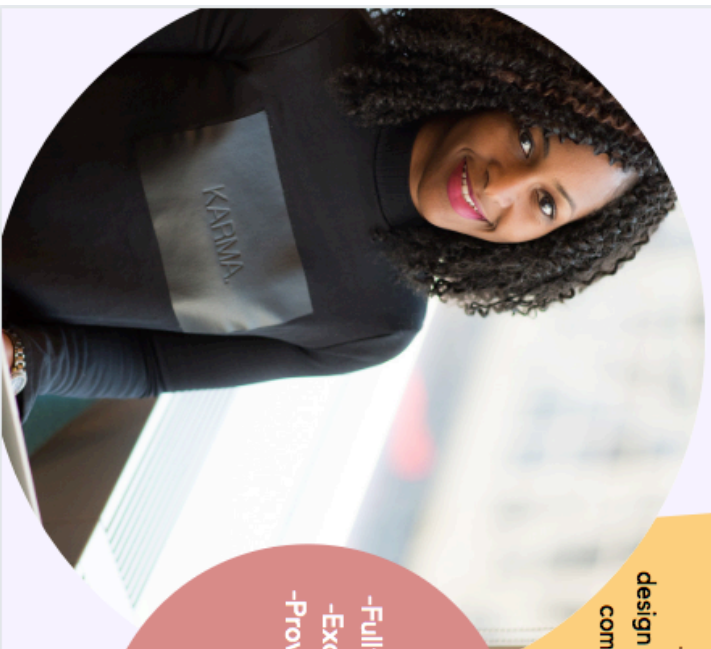
BACKGROUND
- Solo-entrepreneur
- Clients: home builders/ renovators
- Work days: design and other work on computer, meetings & events,

GOALS
- Fullfilling customer needs
- Exceeding expectations
- Providing unique solutions
- High quality, sustainability, timelessness

NEEDS
- Stable and focused offering
- Top quality customer service
- Additional services (fast-lane, item hunt, pick up)

CHALLENGES
- Balancing wishes and reality
- Price competition in service and products
- Unable to see/ test products
- 2nd hand current offering unstableand time consuming

INFO NEEDS & HABITS
- Detailed product info & photos
- 2nd hand: Background information
- Internet: furniture stores and importers sites, collection sites
- Info sessions, exhibitions
- SoMe:Instagram

PURCHASE HABITS
- Picks up ideas everywhere
- Customers' old pieces set the direction
- Stores products in "Mind backlog" to be used in suitable project
- Shops online, in store & direct contact with seller
- Lack of info & poor service prevent from buying
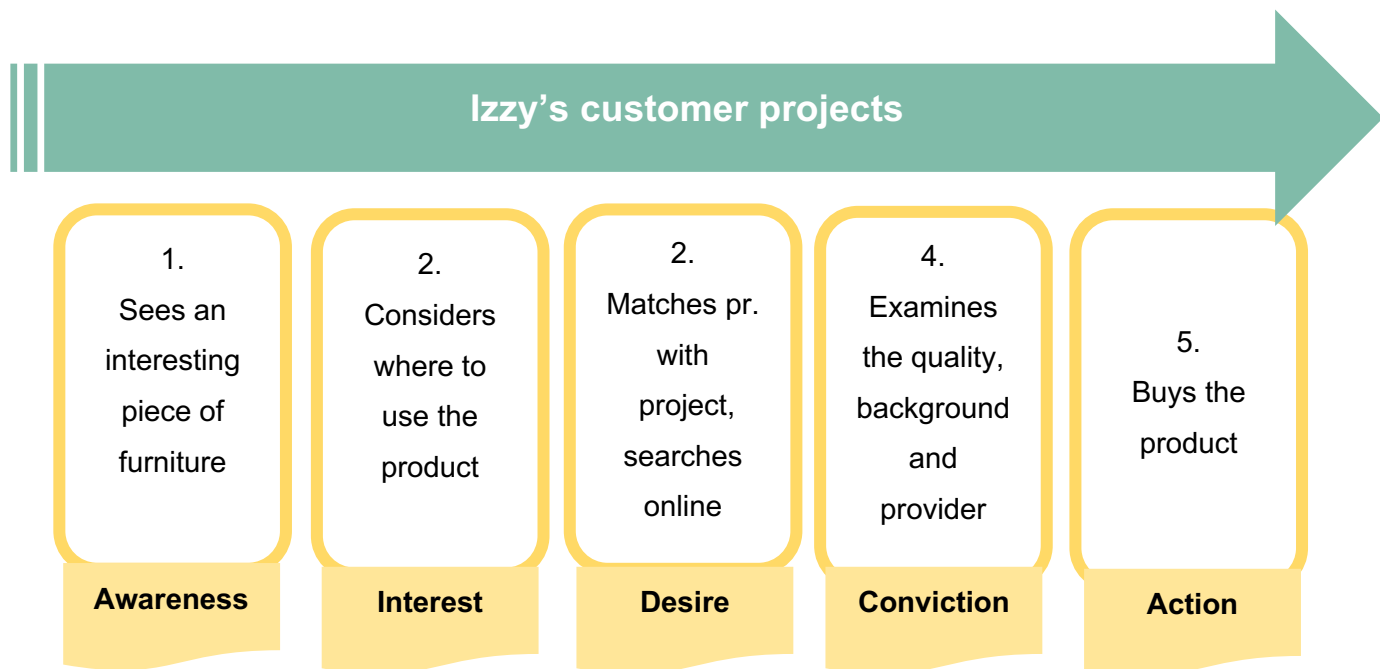
Figure 23. Izzy the Interior Designer Customer Person

Izzy's customer projects

Awareness	Interest	Desire	Conviction	Action
1. Sees an interesting piece of furniture	2. Considers where to use the product	2. Matches pr. with project, searches online	4. Examines the quality, background and provider	5. Buys the product

Figure 24. Purchase process of Izzy the Interior Designer according to the AIDCA model (Adapted from Kananen 2018, 47)

6.4 Self-analysis

After obtaining a thorough understanding on the competitors and customers, it is time for a self-analysis, the third part of Aaker's (2002, 196) strategic brand analysis. Since we are discussing a company without history, the self-analysis focuses on the company's strengths and weaknesses as well as the soul of the brand and organisation. As visualised in figure 25, I examine the strengths and weaknesses of my brand by utilising the SWOT model. This analysis helps to create a realistic brand identity that takes into account e.g. available resources. (Aaker 2002, 196-200.)

The biggest strength of Hyggelig is a specified and differentiating business idea. The conducted competitor analysis reinforces my believe on our ability to differentiate from our peers by providing an offering with a clear focus in Danish mid-century products. I also see my competence in marketing and communications and my partner's understanding on the furniture as key strengths for our company. Our biggest weakness is being new to the field with no ready customers. In addition, we have limited resources to run the company as both of us also have other jobs. What comes to opportunities, I see interesting possibilities in co-operating with other circular economy companies. Considering threats, I think that many new competitors with similar offering would be the most unfortunate situation.
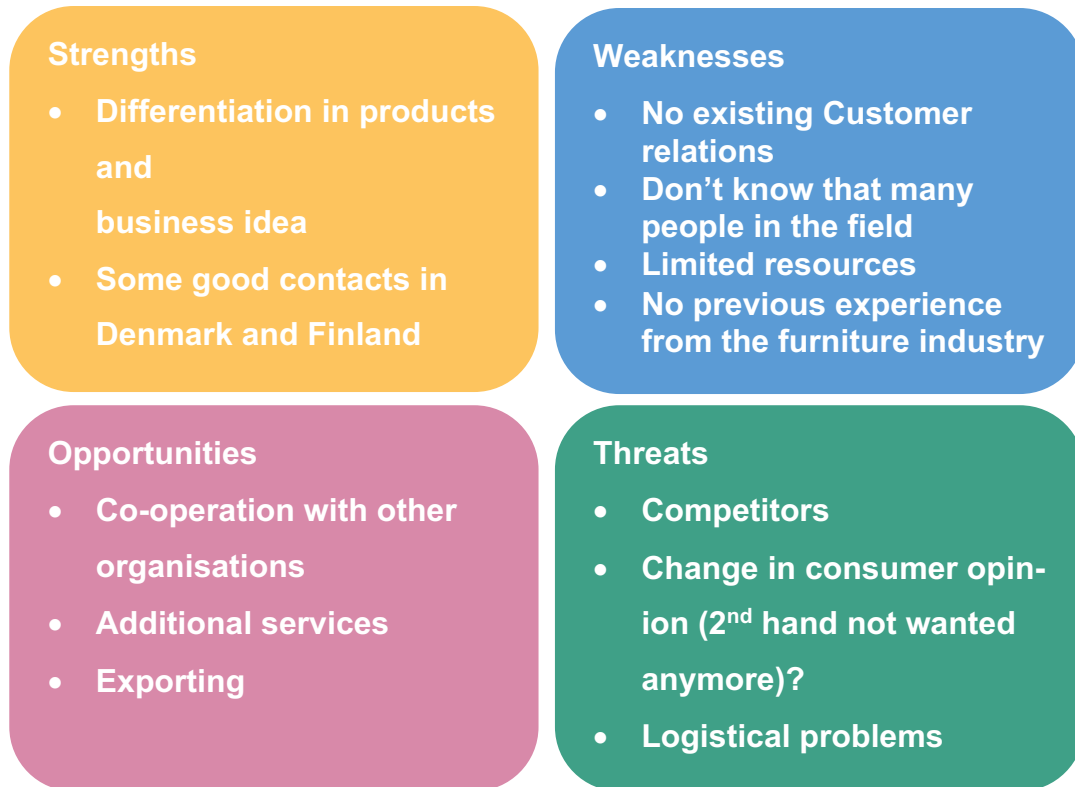
Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Differentiation in products and business idea** • **Some good contacts in Denmark and Finland**	• **No existing Customer relations** • **Don't know that many people in the field** • **Limited resources** • **No previous experience from the furniture industry**
Opportunities	Threats
• **Co-operation with other organisations** • **Additional services** • **Exporting**	• **Competitors** • **Change in consumer opinion (2nd hand not wanted anymore)?** • **Logistical problems**

Figure 25. SWOT analysis on Hyggelig

In addition to strengths and weaknesses, Aaker (2002, 200) suggests including the soul of the brand in the self-analysis. In this context, the soul refers to the vision and dream of the brand. Our vision is:

"Enabling Danish design and making second hand better than new."

7 The Hyggelig Brand identity

In this critical step one creates an innovative construction for their problem. This is a creative process with no ready models or solutions. In the context of constructive research, simply applying an already existing model into a new topic is not really a constructive solution as itself but needs to have an innovative element in it. (Lukka 2001.) This chapter presents the Hyggelig Brand Identity whereas chapter eight focuses on the other construction of this thesis; the content marketing strategy model.

Figure 26 presents a summary of Hyggelig's brand identity. The core identity represents the unchangeable reasoning for the brand's existence formed from values, soul and mission. In addition to examining the self, the product, organisation, person and symbol perspectives are formed by understanding competitors' brand positioning and the needs of the target audience. The core identity and different brand identity perspectives are discussed in more detail in the following chapters.
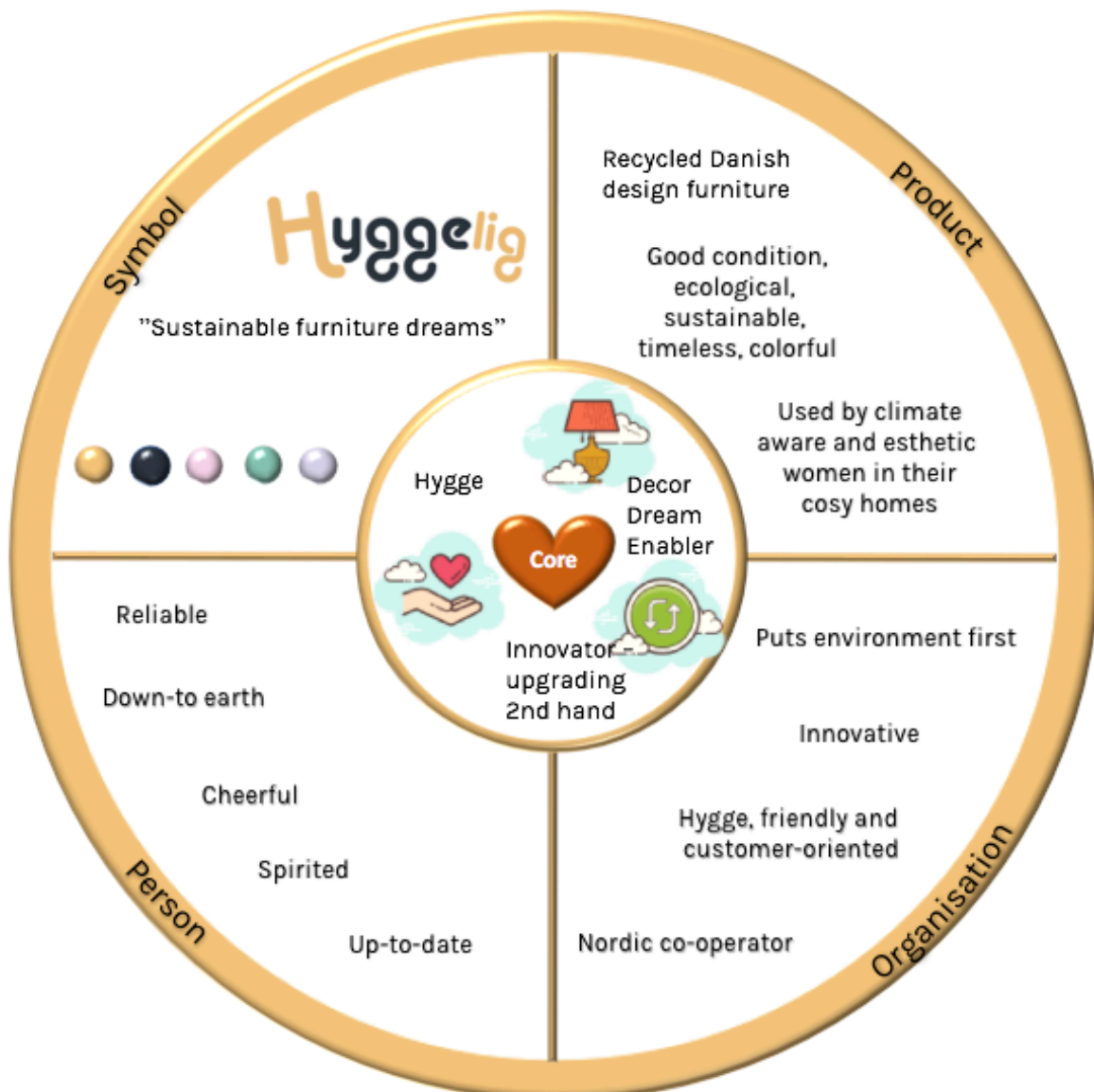

Figure 26. The Hyggelig Brand Identity wheel

7.1 The Core Brand Identity

The core identity of Hyggelig, visualised in figure 27, consists of the time-resistant elements of the company. A key reason for Hyggelig's existance is **Enablement**. We want to enable regular people to fulfil their wildest home décor dreams affordably and without too much effort. Secondly, at our core, we are also **Innovators**. We don't think that 2nd hand design furniture is any worse than new, actually quite the opposite. With our innovative attitude, we improve the reputation of recycled furniture and together with our customers participate in the circular economy. The third core identity element of Hyggelig is the **Hygge** itself. According to Visit Denmark (2019), "Hygge means creating a warm atmosphere and enjoying the good things in life with good people." In the context of our company, it also means being easily approachable and as far as arrogant as possible.
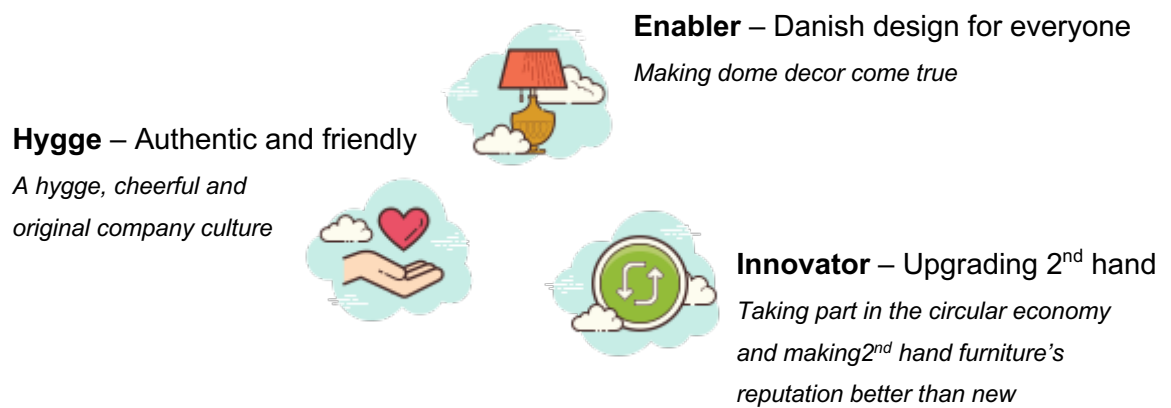
Enabler – Danish design for everyone

Making dome decor come true

Hygge – Authentic and friendly

A hygge, cheerful and original company culture

Innovator – Upgrading 2nd hand

Taking part in the circular economy and making2nd hand furniture's reputation better than new

Figure 27. Hyggelig Core Brand Identity.

7.2 Hyggelig Brand as Product

Hyggelig's product scope, visualized in figure 28, consists of recycled Nordic furniture with a focus on Danish design pieces. The attributes that we attach to our products are **good condition**, **sustainability**, **ethicality, environmental awareness**, **colorfulness** and **beauty**. The quality/value aspect of our product brand is high, and the use occasion is a beautiful and personal yet conscious home. The product end users are socially aware women who have beautiful and uniquely styled homes that the like-minded look up to. In addition, the product brand is strongly linked to Denmark as a country.

Figure 28. A representation of Hyggelig **Brand as Product**

7.3 Hyggelig Brand as Organisation and Person

The attributes that our organisation identifies with are environmental awareness, friendliness, innovativeness, happiness and a relaxed atmosphere. In brand as organisation, Aaker (2002,79) makes a distinction between global vs. local. However, we see our organisational brand more as a bridge builder between Denmark and Finland. The perceived qualities are a combination of analysing our true motives and our environment.

I utilised Jennifer Aaker's (Berkeley Haas Dean's Speaker Series 2016) brand personality model to analyse Hyggelig's brand as a person. When thinking about Hyggelig, we want our audience to think of a person that is reliable, down-to-earth, cheerful, spirited and up to date. Based on the strategic brand analysis, our conclusion is that such a character would be a good fit for the current market.

7.4 Hyggelig Brand as symbol

With our visual brand, we want to express the things associated in other brand identity perspectives. The company name Hyggelig, which is also our logo as seen in figure 29, associates strongly with Denmark and cosiness; elements included in our brand identity. The yellow colour in the logo reflects happiness, down-to-earthiness and an overall "Hygge" mentality. The font in the logo, Alba, represents past decades which gives an idea of a company that sells 2nd hand goods.

Figure 29. Hyggelig's logo

Our slogan "Circulated furniture dreams" says that we enable our target audience to make sustainable yet desirable home décor choices at the same time.

Figure 30. Hyggelig's brand colors

Circulated Danish design

K e s t ä v i ä   s i s u s t u s u n e l m i a

Figure 31.

As visualised in figure 31, the heading font of Hyggelig is Rubik. Rubik fits Hyggelig's brand identity as it is described as "unique and fun to use while keeping things classy and sharp" (Wilde Signs 2018). The chosen body font is Karla.

Figure 32. Screen shot of the landing page for website (draft version)

49

As shown in figure 32, our website's landing page includes cosy interior photos that are in line with our brand identity in terms of atmosphere (hygge, cosy) and colours (bright, warm).

7.5   Hyggelig's Value proposition

Value proposition is an important part of the brand identity system. It includes the brand's functional-, emotional- and self-expressive benefits. Figure 33 shows Hyggelig's value proposition. The functional benefits are related to the products' high-quality which means that they last long and also sustain their value if to be resold afterwards. Another functional benefit is the fact that the products are rather rare in Finland and not something that one would with a guarantee find from online flea markets or other web shops. Completing the functional benefits, also our smoothness in terms of service and delivery are an important part of the value proposition. What comes to the emotional benefits of the value proposition, making our customers feel happier at their homes by getting that dream piece of furniture for an affordable price is a key element. Since the products are recycled, the users get a good-conscious from buying them and don't have to experience feelings of guilt from consuming. In addition, we aim to provide emotional benefits through the "hygge" and warm-hearted content that we provide on our website.

The value proposition of Hyggelig

Functional benefits

- High quality products that last time
- Unique products that are hard to find
- Well-functioning service and delivery

Emotional benefits

- The products make me feel happier at home
- I get a good conscious
- I enjoy the interesting content of Hyggelig

Self-expressive benefits

- The products reinforce my identity as a conscious consumer
- The products allow me to express my visual style in home decor

Figure 33. The Hyggelig value proposition

The last part of the value proposition is the self-expressive benefits. In our case, those deal with reinforcing one's identity as a conscious consumer and environmentally friendly citizen. In addition, our customers are able to express their own visual style by utilising our unique and beautiful pieces of furniture and other home décor items.

8   Brand Identity based content marketing strategy

As explained in chapter four, it is the brand position; a selected part of the brand identity and value proposition, that one should communicate further. Hence, my content marketing strategy starts with determining the brand position for Hyggelig. As explained in chapter four, brand position consists of subset of the brand identity and value proposition to be communicated to a target audience providing benefit. Figure 34 shows Hyggelig's brand position. As mentioned earlier, the target audience that the brand identity is to be communicated to consists of two customer personas; Debbie the Design vintage lover representing the consumer customers and Izzy the Interior Designer representing the Interior Designer prospects.
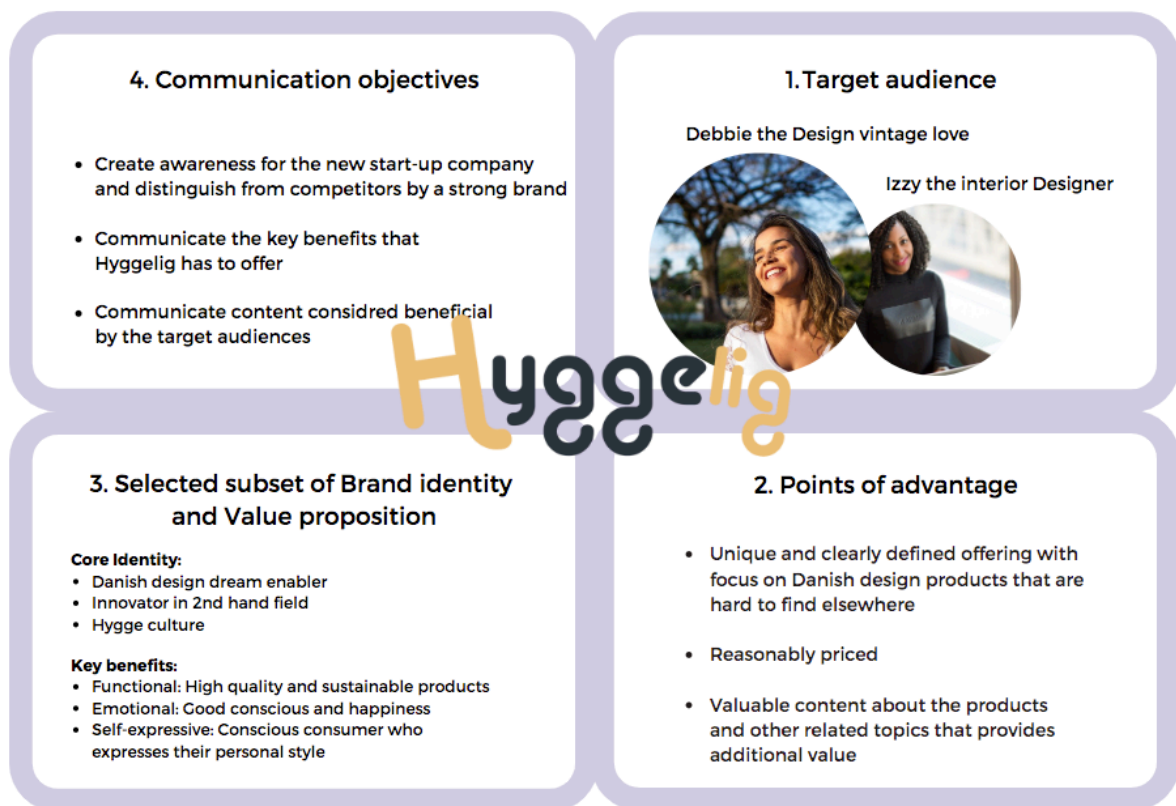
Figure 34. Hyggelig brand position

Another important part of the brand position by Aaker (2000,44) is to demonstrate the main points of competitive advantage of one's brad. As visualised in figure 34, one of the main competitive advantages that Hyggelig has to offer is its clear focus on Danish design items that are not that common in Finland. In addition, the items are reasonably priced considering the competitive market. Another important point of advantage that Hyggelig offers is the content that it publishes through which it serves information about the pieces of furniture, their designers and sustainable home décor in general.

According to Aaker (2000,44) when forming the brand position, it is important to strategically select a subset of the brand identity and value proposition to be communicated further. As visualised in figure 34, the core identity and value proposition of Hyggelig serve a solid base for building the communications on top of. Finally, the brand position should also include the main communication objectives. Hyggelig's communication aims to create awareness for the new company and communicate the key benefits that it has to offer for its target audience. In addition, the communications of Hyggelig aim to serve other information needs that its prospects have.

From the elements visualised in figure 34, we are able to form the brand position statement, which summarizes in one sentence what we want to communicate about our brand. The brand position statement of Hyggelig is:

"Enabling sustainable Danish design furniture for happy and unique homes." As visualized in figures 35 and 36, I formulate three different brand promises from the brand position statement. These promises will act as an important part of the content marketing strategy developed in this thesis. The brand promises are:

- **Enabling and developing sustainable home décor**

- **Enabling rare design furniture**

- **Generating hygge atmosphere through customer service and content for community**

With the help of the content marketing strategy, the aim is to communicate these strategically chosen themes of the brand position at different stages of our customer personas' buying process. The brand promises capture the matters that are both important for me and my business partner as well as considered valuable by the target audience based on the empirical research done on this thesis.
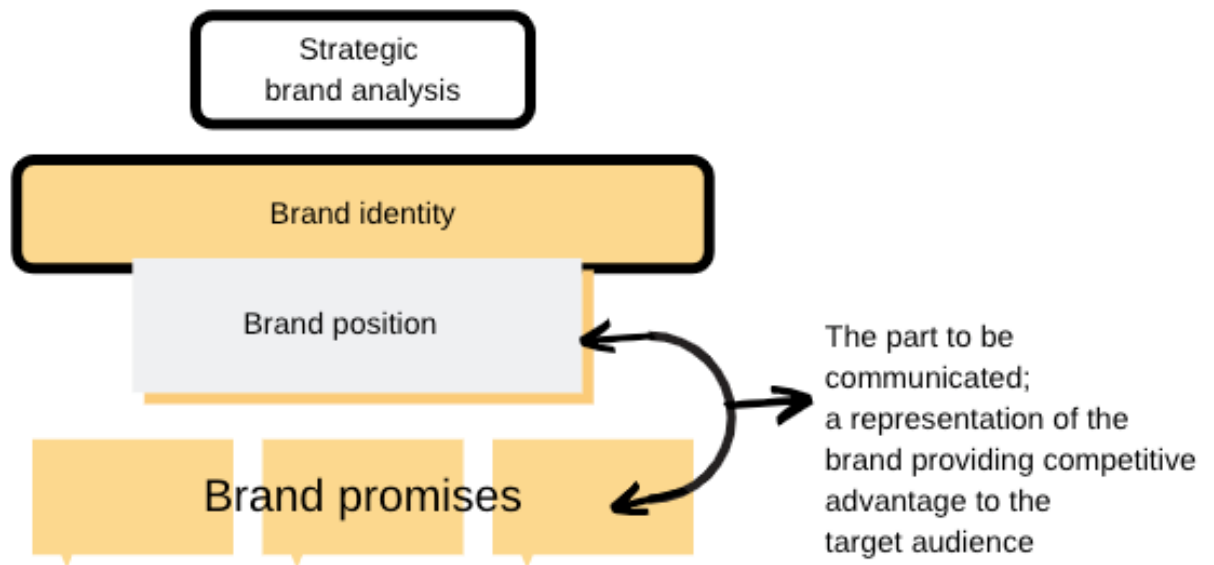
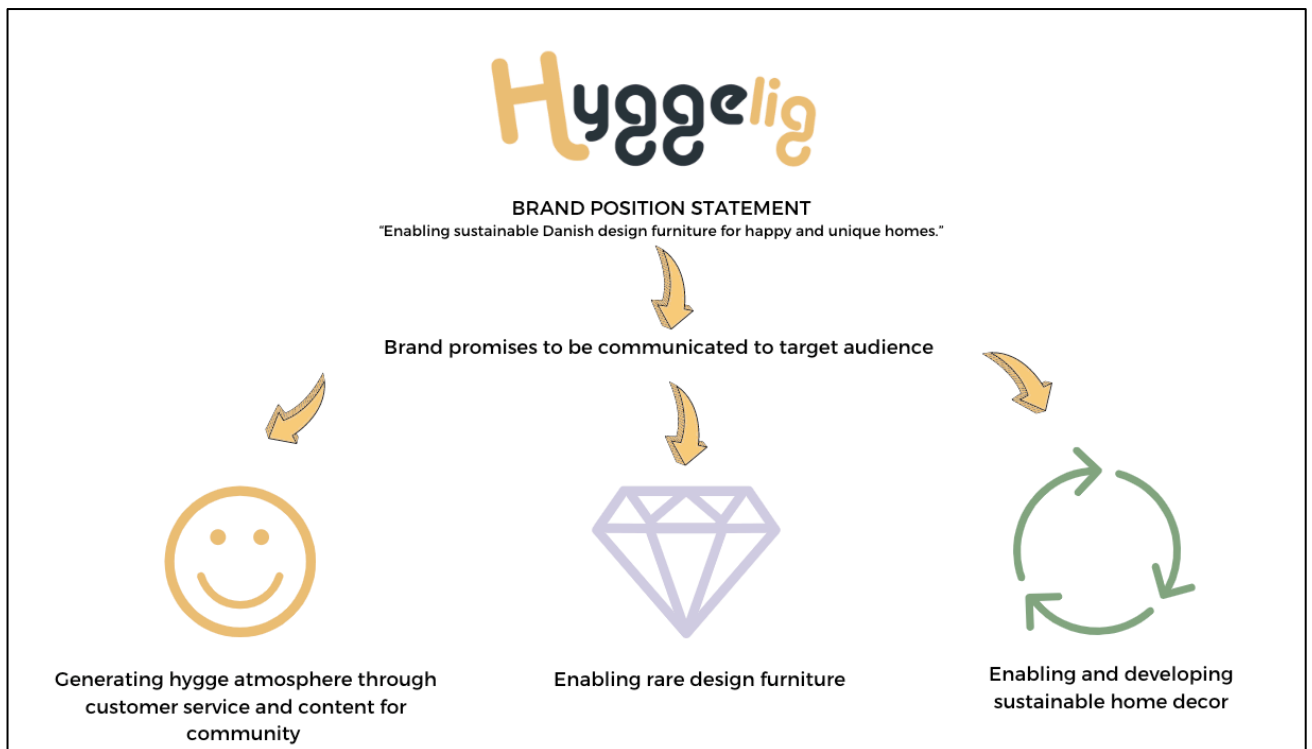Figure 35. Forming the Brand promises from the brand positioning

Figure 36. Forming the brand promises from the Brand Position

The developed content marketing strategy consists of two parts. To be able to utilize the strategy, one needs to have a thorough understanding of one's brand identity and the part of it to be communicated, i.e. the brand promises explained in the previous chapters. In addition, for the model to work, one should have information about target audience's information needs and habits.

The first part of the model is the most important one as it is the phase where the creative work is done based on the customer insight and brand promises. The template utilized in the first part, visualized in figure 37 as a plain version and in appendices 3 and 4 filled in for the customer personas, facilitates the innovation of content topics, labeled as **brand benefits** in my model. The brand benefits belong to one (or more) of the brand promises at the same providing an answer to a specific need in the customer persona's buying process. As a result, the created marketing messages, derived in step 2 from the branded benefits, are both true to the brand identity as well as beneficial for the target audience. The branded benefit needs to always provide an advantage for the customer persona and hence, there are not necessarily counter parties for all the stages and brand promises. To help the work in step 2, the branded benefits are labeled with a number indicating the stage of the purchase process and a color that marks the branded promise they belong to.

The planning of the actual content pieces from the branded benefits is done in step 2 of the content marketing strategy, visualized in figure 38 for Debbie the Design vintage lover customer persona. In this stage the branded benefits are brought to life by deriving content pieces from them. In the template one needs to consider the actual message and format as well as the channel and sharing. Although the branded benefits of each brand promise should be published chronologically from Awareness to Care (1 to 4), it does not mean that the customer persona necessarily sees all of them in that particular order. More importantly, the purpose of the model is to simply ensure that there is information available for all stages. As an example, content piece A2 needs to be beneficial for the customer persona as such, even if the customer persona never sees content pieces A1 and A3. As can be seen from figure 38, the branded benefits of the Awareness stage (1) are in practice often paid adverts in search engines or social media. The branded benefits that belong to Interest and Conviction (2 and 3) stages are the ones where there is most actual content produced. However, integrating all of the stages to the brand identity is still expedient because it ensures that correct words and tone of voice are used e.g. in paid adverts.
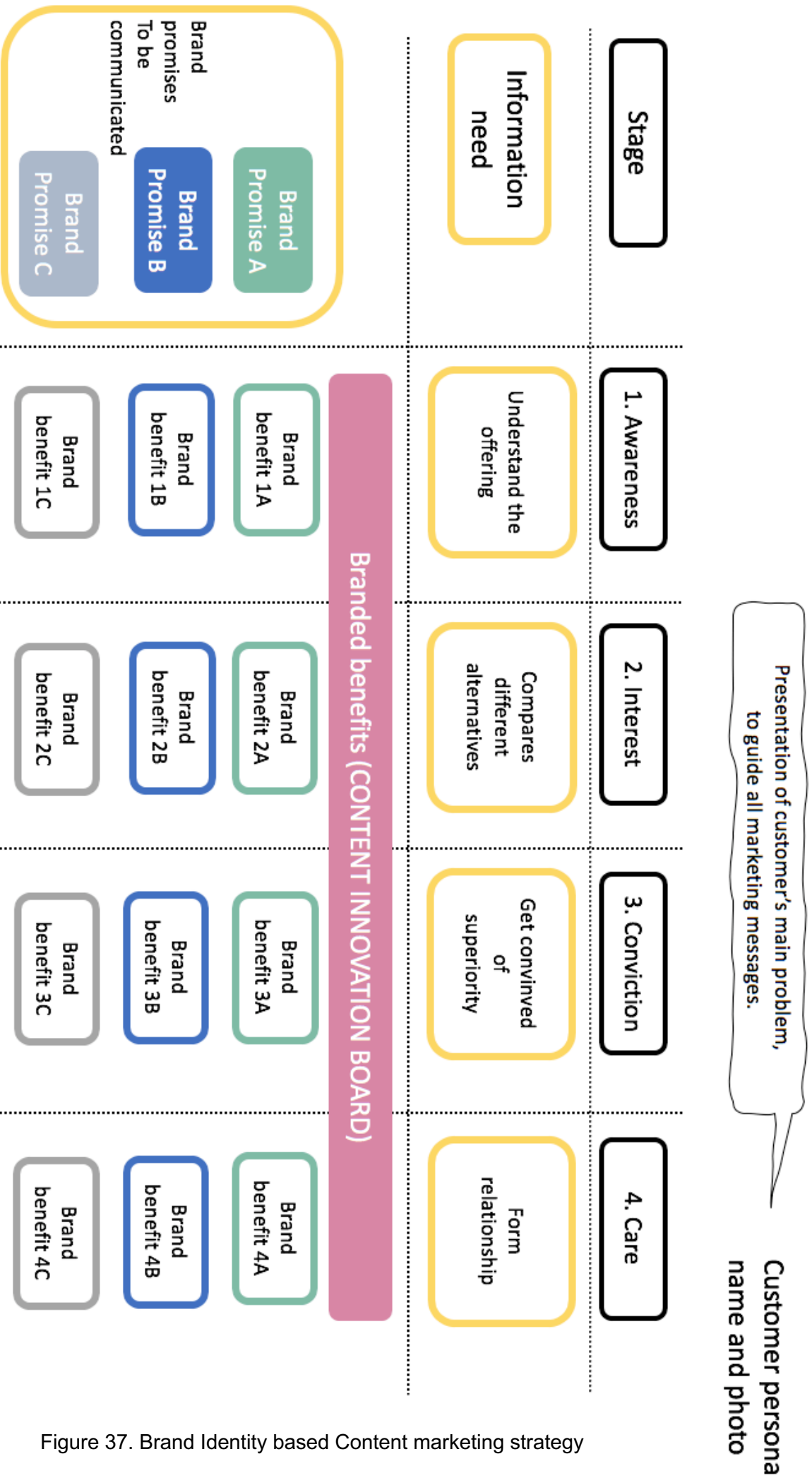
Figure 37. Brand Identity based Content marketing strategy

Branded benefit	Form and detailed description	Channel	Share	Completed
Week 1				
Mon — Branded benefit A1	Paid search with following words: XXXX	Google	-	
Tue				
Wed — Branded benefit A2	Blog post about X	Website	FB TW	
Thu				
Fri				
Week 2				
Mon — Branded benefit B1	Paid and targeted advertisement about: X	IG	-	
Tue — Branded benefit A3	E-book about: X	Website	FB TW Email	
Wed — Branded benefit B2	Podcast episode about: X	Soundcloud/Website	FB IG story	
Thu				
Fri — Branded benefit A4	Webinar about: X	FB live	FB IG story Email	

Figure 38. Editorial calendar

9 Conclusion

As explained in earlier chapters, my thesis aimed to answer to the following research questions:

RQ1: What does a brand identity of a start-up company consist of?
RQ2: How to implement a brand identity using content marketing strategy?

My thesis succeeded in answering to both of the research questions. Through related theories including the Brand Identity planning model of Aaker (2000,44), and my own empirical work, I gained an extensive understanding of what a thorough brand identity consists of. Further most, my thesis proved that a brand identity system should be developed by integrating the understanding of one-self from multiple different perspectives. When proceeding to the formulation of a value proposition and brand positioning, understanding the target audience needs and competitors positioning becomes also central. My thesis shows that above else, brand identity building is systematic work that evolves from understanding the value and authenticity a company has to offer not solely as a product or service, but as an entire experience from the customer. By putting emphasis on brand identity work, that customer experience can be made consistent throughout different touchpoints, whether one is dealing with the company through their website or in person.

Regarding RQ2, my thesis succeeded in showing the connection between brand identity and content marketing strategy. Through my work, I was able to pilot the usage of content marketing as a method for Aaker's (2000,44) Brand Identity Implementation phase. Content marketing is a useful method for combining the value that a company has to offer, i.e. brand identity and value proposition, with the needs and challenges of a target audience. My thesis suggests that by including the brand identity in a content marketing model, one is able to ensure that the messages are both true to the company's resources and core benefits as well as provide value for the target audience.

As I am writing this thesis, I have not yet been able to fully test the success of the brand identity and its implementation plan in the competitive market. The time for brand identity implementation has not arrived yet as the online store for Hyggelig is currently under progress. However, the developed brand identity with its different perspectives and value proposition as well as the information about the target audience and competitors have already helped us in a deep manner in developing the business. Having a well elaborated brand identity and all the other insight about the market that this thesis has given me, has made it much easier to plan different branding and marketing activities and to design e.g. the website. Thanks to my study, we have a very good understanding of who we are and

how we should communicate it to our target audience. I am rather sure, that if I would have started the business without my thesis, the brand identity would have been much shallower and more vulnerable for external changes.

9.1   Own evaluation and improvement ideas

Based on my observation, there are not too many guidelines for developing a brand identity for a new business as many branding books are targeted for already existing companies. In addition, based on my research, the relation of brand identity development and content marketing has not been examined to a great extent. Hence, I believe that my thesis can be beneficial for other developing small companies that need to build their brand from scratch as well as communicate it to the target audience utilising modern marketing techniques. My thesis provides clear and practical steps for the brand identity development as well as highlights the importance of examining customer needs and competitors' positioning with the aim of formulating a beneficial value proposition. Based on my observation, there are not too many guidelines for developing a brand identity for a business idea as many branding books are targeted for already existing companies.

In addition to the brand identity development, also the brand identity implementation plan, content marketing strategy, can be easily applied to other businesses. In fact, I will be using a tailored version of the strategy to one of my clients who needs help in communicating their brand which proves that the model is useful for real life practices. The model can be used as a marketing strategy for both B2B and B2C companies. However, the model is not meant for large enterprises as it is developed for the needs of a start-up company. Regarding further research, I am planning to develop the content marketing model further. There is potential to enhance the model to a more detailed level tool for content marketing practices. However, the main idea of the model will still be about utilising brand identity as a bases for innovating marketing content.

9.2   Reliability and validity

My thesis can be considered reliable as it proceeds in a logical and consistent manner from the objectives, to the theoretical section, empirical part and solutions. All of the mentioned parts are in line with and support each other in an organized manner. Another point of reliability is that the formed views about the target audience needs and challenges gained from the online survey and interviews were in line with each other in their own groups. Based on the empirical part, I was able to form unified views for both of the target audiences. (Kajaanin ammattikorkeakoulu 2019; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015, 186)

This constructive research process can be considered valid, as the theory utilized in the research is consistent with what was researched. In addition, the online survey replicants were found from related Facebook groups and the interviewees from their own association. Hence, the insights gained from the survey and interviews can be considered as a good representation of the opinion of the target audiences in question. Another point of validity for my thesis is impartiality. As a researcher, I was not part of the examined audiences and can be consider as a neutral observer. (Hiltunen 2009; Vilkka 2015, 124-126; Kajaanin ammattikorkeakoulu 2019).

9.3   Evaluation of own learning

As I started my master's studies in Haaga-Helia in the fall of 2017 I immediately began to think about an interesting subject for my thesis. Already prior to that, the idea of starting an online store that sells recycled furniture had developed in the minds of myself and my business partner. Hence, I got really interested in the possibility to write my thesis about a subject that the business idea could benefit from. Already from the start I was interested in both branding of the start-up and planning its content marketing activities. After discussing with my tutor, I decided to first develop a brand identity and after that create a content marketing plan for its implementation. I will continue to further develop and productise both of the constructions that I developed in this thesis. Now that the thesis is done, I feel like I have a new set of skills that enable me to support my client organisations in their brand identity building and implementation.

Throughout the work the fact that my thesis did not have any external organisation, as the case company was my own business, acted as a double-edged sword. I was really motivated about the work because I knew that all the effort, I make for the thesis is also an effort for my business. I also liked the fact that I was able to decide what I wanted to do and did not have to take into account others' wishes. On the other hand, working as your own boss in a project as extensive and long as a master's thesis, is a very demanding task that requires a high-level of self-discipline. Although as an entrepreneur I am used to self-management, at some points, it was a struggle to continue working and believing in your own ideas without getting any feedback from an ordering party. Having said that, I am very happy that I was able to push through the obstacles because I feel like I learned so much about managing myself which is a skill that I will most definitely need in the future as an entrepreneur. I also grew my competence in developing a product, the content marketing strategy model, and productising it. In the future, it will be easier for me to innovate new models.

10 Sources

Aaker, D. 2014. Branding. 20 principles that drive success. Morgan James Publishing. New York.

Aaker, D. 2000. Brand leadership. Free press. New York.

Aaker, D. A. 2002. Building strong brands. Free Press. London.

Alsem, K. & Kostelijk, E. 2008. Identity based marketing: a new balanced marketing Paradigm. European Journal of Marketing, 42, 9/10, 907-914.
URL: https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560810891064
Accessed 12 March 2019.

Bailie, R. & Urbina, N. 2013. Content Strategy. Connecting the dots between business, brand and benefits. XML Press. California.

Barringer, B. & Ireland, D. 2016. Entrepreneurship: Succesfully launching new ventures. 5th ed. Pearson. Harlow.

Bergström & Leppänen 2015, Yrityksen asiakasmarkkinointi. Business Edita. Helsinki.

Cespedes. & Heddleston R. 2018. 4 Ways to Improve Your Content Marketing. Harvard Business Review Digital Articles, April, pp.2-5. URL:
https://hbr.org/2018/04/4-ways-to-improve-your-content-marketing
Accessed 18 September 2019.

Clark, D. 2016. Content Strategy: An Integrative Literature Review. Professional Communication, IEEE Transactions on, 59, 1, pp. 7-23 URL:
https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7438943/citations#citations
Accessed 30 September 2019.

Da Silveira, C., Lages, C., & Simões, C. 2013. Reconceptualizing brand identity in a dynamic environment. Journal of Business Research, 66, 1, pp.28-36.

De Pelsmacker, P., Geuens, M. & Van Den Bergh, J. 2018. Marketing Communications: A European Perspective. 6th ed. Pearson Education Limited. Harlow.

Elezaj, R. 2018. Competitor research practices for developing your app. SyndiGate Media Inc. URL: https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/docview/2077160476?accountid=27436 Accessed 7 March 2019.

Farquhar, J. 2012. Case study research for business. URL: https://ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi:2169/readonline/9781446258767 Accessed 7 April 2018

Flores, L. 2014. How to Measure Digital Marketing: Metrics for Assessing Impact and Designing Success. Palgrave Macmillan. Hampshire.

Hague, P., Harrison, M. Cupman, J. Truman, O. 2016. 3rd ed. Kogan Page. London.

Halvorson, K. & Rach, M. 2012. Content strategy for the web. 2nd ed. New Riders. Berkeley.

Hiltunen, L. 2009. Validiteetti ja realibiliteetti. Jyväskylän yliopisto. URL: http://www.mit.jyu.fi/OPE/kurssit/Graduryhma/PDFt/validius_ja_reliabiliteetti.pdf Accessed 18 September 2019.

Jefferson, S. & Tanton, S. 2015. Valuable content marketing: how to make quality content your key to success. 2nd ed. Kogan page. London; Philadelphia.

Johansson, J. & Carlson K. 2015. Contemporary Brand Management. SAGE Publications Inc. California.

Jutkowitz, A. 2014. The Content Marketing Revolution. Harvard Business Review. URL: https://hbr.org/2014/07/the-content-marketing-revolution Accessed on 14 September 2019.

Kajaanin ammattikorkeakoulu 2019. Luotettavuus. URL: https://www.kamk.fi/fi/opari/Opinnaytetyopakki/Teoreettinen-materiaali/Tukimateriaali/Luotettavuus Accessed 22 September 2019.

Kamdar, S. 2017. Five things we learned about how brands measure content marketing. Forbes. URL: https://www.forbes.com/sites/sachinkamdar/2017/04/14/5-things-we-learned-about-how-brands-measure-content-marketing/

Accessed 9 July 2019.

Kananen, J. 2015. Online research for preparing your thesis. JAMK University of Applied Sciences. Jyväskylä.

Kananen, J. 2017. Laadullinen tutkimus pro graduna ja oppinäytetyönä. Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu. Jyväskylä.

Kananen, J. 2018. Strateginen sisältömarkkinointi. Miten onnistun verkkosivujen ja sosiaalisen median sisällöntuotannossa? Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu. Jyväskylä.

Kapferer, J. 2008. The New Strategic Brand Management. 4th ed. Kogan Page. London and Philadelphia.

Kaupan näkymät 2020. Kaupan liitto 2018. URL: https://www.epressi.com/media/userfiles/88260/1533533938/kaupan-nakymat-2020-ii-18.pdf Accessed 6 March 2019.

Keronen, K. & Tanni, K. 2017. Sisältöstrategia: Asiakaslähtöisyydestä tulosta. Alma Talent. Helsinki.

Komulainen, M. 2018. Menesty digimarkkinoilla. Kauppakamari.

Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. 2018. Principles of Marketing. 17th ed. Pearson. Harlow.

Lieb, R. 2012. Content marketing. Think like a publisher – how to use content to market online and in social media. Que publishing. Indianapolis.

Lindroos, S., Nyman, G. & Lindroos, K. 2005. Kirkas Brändi. WS Bookwell Oy. Porvoo.

Lukka, K. 2001. Konstruktiivinen tutkimusote. Metodix. URL:
https://metodix.fi/2014/05/19/lukka-konstruktiivinen-tutkimusote/
Accessed 7 October 2019.

Malmelin, N. & Hakala, J. 2011. Radikaali Brändi. Talentum. Helsinki.

Mikkonen, J. 2015. Kiertotalous kaipaa arkipäiväistämistä. Helsingin Sanomat. URL:
https://www.hs.fi/mielipide/art-2000002838325.html
Accessed 7 October 2019.

Murthy, A. 2011. Content marketing. Prima, 2, 1, pp. 31-45. URL: https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/docview/1478064964?accountid=27436 Accessed 20 Feburary 2019.

Nieminen, J. 2018. Käytetyn tavaran myynti netissä kasvaa. Karjalainen, 7.2.2018.

Nokkonen-Pirttilampi, M. 2014. Pienyrittäjän markkinointiviestinnän käsikirja. Extreme Translation.

Nusa, P. & Ruzzier, M. 2013. Brand Identity Development and the Role of Marketing Communications: Brand Expert's view. Managing Global Transitions, 11, 1, pp. 61-78.

Ojasalo, K. Moilanen, T. & Ritalahti, J. 2015. Kehittämistyön menetelmät. Uudenlaista osaamista liiketoimintaan. Sanoma Pro Oy. Helsinki.

Pölkki, M. 2018. Kalusteita lahjoitetaan niin paljon, etteivät kaikki kelpaa edes kirpputo-reille. Nämä käytetyt huonekalut viedään käsistä, näitä ei huolita edes ilmaiseksi. Helsingin sanomat, 20.10.2018.

Roll, M. 6 March 2008. Branding: The Country Of Origin Effect. Branding strategy insider. URL: https://www.brandingstrategyinsider.com/2008/03/branding-the-co.html#.W0SYz1OFPom. Accessed: 10 July 2018.

Rowles, D. 2018. Digital Branding: a complete step-by-step guide to strategy, tactics, tools and measurement. Kogan Page. London.

Rämö, S. 2019. Viesti perille. Edita Publishing Oy. Helsinki.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. 2016. Research Methods for Business Students. Seventh ed. Pearson Education Ltd. London.

Sitra 2019. Kiertotalous. URL: https://www.sitra.fi/aiheet/kiertotalous/#ajankohtaista Accessed 24 June 2019.

Sitra 2016. Kierrolla kärkeen. Suomen tiekartta kiertotalouteen 2016 – 2025. URL: https://media.sitra.fi/2017/02/27175308/Selvityksia117-3.pdf Accessed 24 June 2019.

Spoon 2019. The current state of content marketing in the Nordics. URL:
https://spoonagency.com/academy/content-marketing-nordics/
Accessed 30 April 2019.

Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. 2017. Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi. Tammi. Helsinki.

Vilkka, H. 2015. Tutki ja kehitä. PS-kustannus.

Visit Denmark 2019. What is Hygge? URL: https://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/high-
lights/hygge/what-hygge
Accessed 30 September 2019.

Walliman, N. 2010. Research methods: the basics. URL: http://ezproxy.haaga-he-
lia.fi:2048/login?url=http://www.dawsonera.com/depp/reader/protected/external/Ab-
stractView/S9780203836071. Accessed 16 January 2019.

Westergaard, N. 2016. Your Content Marketing Strategy Doesn't Have to Be Complicated.
Harvard Business Review. URL: https://hbr.org/2016/05/your-content-marketing-strategy-
doesnt-have-to-be-complicated
Accessed 14 February 2019.

Wilde Signs 2018. Fascinating Fonts: Rubik – a slightly rounded font that works almost
anywhere! URL: https://www.wilde-signs.com/blog/rubik/
Acccessed 15 September 2019.

Yohn, D. L. 2017. Why Your Company Culture Should Match Your Brand. Harvard Busi-
ness Review. URL: https://hbr.org/2017/06/why-your-company-culture-should-match-your-
brand. Accessed 11 July 2018.

LEARN: Creating Buyer Personas. Youtube 2017. URL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4jPp2NdDYY
Accessed 3 April 2019.

Berkeley Haas Dean's Speaker Series 2016. David Aaker: The Power of Brand Personal-
ity. Youtube. URL:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOtSlDhwSdM
Accessed 10 June 2019.

Appendix 1. Utilizing Google Keyword Planner for a competitor analysis.

Google Keyword Planner 7 March 219.

Appendix 2. Analysing competitors' marketing messages. Confidential.

Appendix 3. Competitors brand scape. Confidential.

Kierrätettyjä design -huonekaluja myyvän start-up yrityksen brändäys

Taustatiedot (käsitellään anonyymisti)

1. Maakunta

- Ahvenanmaa
- Etelä-Karjala
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- Etelä-Savo
- Kainuu
- Kanta-Häme
- Keski-Pohjanmaa
- Keski-Suomi
- Kymenlaakso
- Lappi
- Pirkanmaa
- Pohjanmaa
- Pohjois-Karjala
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjois-Savo
- Päijät-Häme
- Satakunta
- Uusimaa
- Varsinais-Suomi

2. Ikä

- alle 20 vuotta
- 20-25 vuotta
- 26-35 vuotta
- 36-45 vuotta
- 46-55 vuotta
- 56-65 vuotta
- yli 65 vuotta

3. Sukupuoli

- Nainen
- Mies
- Muu
- En halua kertoa

4. Ammatti

5. Mielenkiinnon kohteet

Valitse maksimissaan kolme keskeisintä mielenkiinnonkohdettasi

- Kulttuuri, taiteet ja kirjallisuus
- Sisustaminen
- Käsityöt
- Kunnostus tai remontointi
- Urheilu
- Ruoka
- Matkustelu
- Mökkeily
- Viihde (ohjelmat, pelit, tv)
- Muu, mikä?

Arvomaailma

6. Vaikuttaako henkilökohtainen arvomaailmasi tuotteisiin, joilla sisustat kotiasi tai vapaa-ajan asuntoasi?

- Kyllä, miten (lyhyesti)?
- Ei

7. Mitkä ominaisuudet ovat sinulle tärkeimpiä huonekaluissa, valaisimissa tai muissa sisustustuotteissa?

Valitse maksimissaan neljä keskeisintä ominaisuutta.

- Asiakaspalvelu
- Design
- Esteettisyys
- Kohtuullinen hinta
- Kotimaisuus
- Laatu (kestävyys)
- Nopea toimitus
- Omaan tyyliini sopiva
- Tanskalaisuus
- Trendikkyys
- Tuotteen kunto
- Muu, mikä?
- Ekologisuus

70

8. Oletko kiinnostunut käytetyistä design- tai klassikkohuonekaluista?

Klassikkohuonekaluilla tarkoitetaan tässä kyselyssä esimerkiksi jollekin tietylle vuosikymmenelle tyypillisiä huonekaluja, jotka ovat arvossa, vaikkei suunnittelija välttämättä olisi tiedossa.

- Kyllä
- En, miksi? [_____]

9. Omistatko käytettyjä design tai klassikkohuonekaluja?

Klassikkohuonekaluilla tarkoitetaan tässä kyselyssä esimerkiksi jollekin tietylle vuosikymmenelle tyypillisiä huonekaluja, jotka ovat arvossa, vaikkei suunnittelija välttämättä olisi tiedossa.

- Kyllä
- En

Oma sisustustyyli

10. Miten kuvailisit omaa sisustustyyliäsi?

- Boho
- Klassinen
- Maalaisromanttinen
- Minimalistinen
- Moderni
- Mustavalkoinen
- Retro tai vintage
- Skandinaavinen
- Teollinen
- Valkoinen
- Muu, mikä? [_____]

11. Minkälaisia sisustusunelmia sinulla on tällä hetkellä?

[_____]

12. Oletko kiinnostunut jonkin tietyn huonekalun, valaisimen tai muun tuotteen hankinnasta?

- Kyllä, minkä? [_____]
- En

13. Oletko kiinnostunut muuttamaan sisustusvalintojasi ekologisempaan suuntaan esimerkiksi käyttämällä enemmän kierrätettyjä tuotteita?

- Kyllä
- En

En, sillä sisustan jo nyt erittäin
ekologisesti.

14. Voisitko olla kiinnostunut design -klassikkohuonekalujen vuokraamisesta samaan tapaan, kuten nykyään voi vuokrata esim. taidetta?

Kyllä

En

Tiedonhankinta

15. Mistä etsit pääasiassa tietoa huonekaluista tai sisustuksesta?
Valitse maksimissaan neljä vaihtoehtoa.

Blogit

Facebook

Google

Instagram

Maahantuojien tai huonekaluliikkeiden sivut

Messut tai muut tapahtumat

Muu sosiaalinen media

Sisustuslehdet

Tv-ohjelmista

Youtubesta

Muualta, mistä?

16. Minkälaista tietoa tarvitset harkitessasi jonkin huonekalun tai muun sisustustuotteen ostoa?

Mitat

Muiden kokemukset tai arvostelut

Tarkat valokuvat

Tietoa mahdollisesta suunnittelijasta

Tuotteen alkuperä

Tuotteen ekologisuus

Tuotteen laatu ja kestävyys

Tuotteen sopivuus omaan kotiini

Muuta, mitä?

17. Keiden kanssa keskustelet sisustuksesta, huonekaluista tai muista sisustustutotteista?

Luen tai kuuntelen asiantuntijoiden tai muiden vaikuttajien mielipiteitä

Perheeni

Someyhteisöiden jäsenten

Ystävieni

Muiden henkilöiden, keiden?

Huonekalujen ja muiden sisustustuotteiden hankintaan vaikuttavat tekijät ja esteet

18. Mikä saa sinut ostamaan huonekalun tai muun sisustustuotteen?

- Hyvä tarjous
- Käytännön tarve (esimerkiksi entinen valaisin on rikki)
- Löydän jonkin tuotteen, jota olen etsinyt jo pidempään
- Trendien tai oman maun muuttuminen
- Teen heräteostoksia
- Muu, mikä? [_____]

19. Mistä ostat mieluiten huonekaluja tai muita sisustustuotteita?

Valitse vaihtoehto, jota käytät eniten.

- Huonekaluliikkeiden myymälästä (ei verkko)
- Kirpputoreilta
- Messuilta tai tapahtumista
- Tavarataloista
- Tori.fi, huuto.net ja yms. facebook-kirppiksiltä
- Verkkokaupasta
- Muualta, mistä? [_____]

20. Minkä tiedon puuttuminen voi estää jonkin tuotteen hankinnan loppumetreillä?

Valitse maksimissaan kolme keskeisintä asiaa.

- Ei tietoa tarkoista mitoista
- Muiden kokemukset tai arvostelut
- Tarkkojen valokuvien puuttuminen
- Ei tietoa tuotteen alkuperästä tai suunnittelijasta
- Ei tietoa tuotteen ekologisuudesta
- Ei tietoa tuotteen laadusta
- En pysty kokeilemaan miten tuote sopii sisutuskeeni (esim. verkkokaupasta löytyvällä mallinnustyökalulla)
- Muu, mikä? [_____]

Appendix 5. Brand Identity based content marketing strategy for Debbie the Design vintage lover. Confidential

Appendix 6. Brand identity-based content marketing strategy for Izzy the Interior Designer. Confidential.

Appendix 7. Editorial calendar for Debbie the Design vintage lover. Confidential.