



## **Improving MG's Brand Awareness in Finland**

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## Abstract

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<p>This thesis explores Finnish consumer perceptions of Chinese car brands, with a particular focus on the MG brand. Chinese car brands have recently increased their exports to Europe and have rapidly been gaining market share. The commissioning company has recently begun the import and distribution of MG cars in Finland. MG is a 100-year-old originally British brand known for its historical sports cars. The brand has been reborn and is now owned by the massive Chinese car manufacturer SAIC.</p> <p>The brand's relaunch in Finland has been difficult, the Finnish new car sales market is at a record low and most of the competing brands have been operational in the market for decades. Efforts towards increasing consumers' brand awareness and building a stronger brand presence are required. The objective of this thesis is to aid the commissioning company Hedin MG Finland in their efforts by combining relevant brand awareness theory and related models with consumer research which focuses on forming an image of Finnish consumers' current level of brand awareness and the brand's current strength in the market. The thesis concludes on creating a plan with set actions for strengthening the brand in Finland.</p> <p>A quantitative research was conducted in the form of a survey. The goal was to receive a large number of responses from consumers in order to form an overview of the market's current perceptions concerning Chinese car brands as a whole and in particular evaluate the MG brand's strength in relation to Keller's Brand Equity Model.</p> <p>The most important results of the research indicated that while the brand awareness of MG in Finland is already high, consumer perceptions of Chinese car brands and MG remain mixed. Value for money and the aesthetics of MG cars are viewed more positively whereas reliability and reputation were rated as below average. The slight majority of respondents expressed openness to purchasing a Chinese car. The results do however show concerns related to the quality of Chinese cars, geopolitical and ethical issues were also identified as key barriers. Consumer engagement with the MG brand was mostly limited to viewing online content, few respondents had more direct experience through test drives or visits to dealerships.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Brand awareness, brand equity, Keller's Brand Equity Model, consumer research, survey, self-administered questionnaire, automotive industry, Chinese car brands, MG.

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Research Questions.....	1
1.2	Hedin Mobility Group.....	2
1.3	Hedin MG Finland Oy.....	2
1.4	The MG Brand & SAIC Motor Corporation.....	3
1.5	The Rise of Chinese Car Brands in Europe.....	4
1.6	The Finnish Market.....	5
2	Brand Awareness .....	9
2.1	Hierarchy of Effects.....	12
2.1.1	AIDA.....	12
2.1.2	DAGMAR.....	13
2.1.3	AISDALSLove.....	14
2.2	Aaker's Brand Equity Model .....	15
2.3	Keller's Brand Equity Model .....	18
2.4	Comparison of the Models.....	22
3	Research Framework .....	25
3.1	Research Approach.....	25
3.2	Methods of Data Collection .....	26
3.3	Methods of Data Analysis.....	27
3.4	Evaluation of the Development Task.....	28
4	Research Results .....	29
4.1	Background Information .....	29
4.2	Chinese Car Brands.....	32
4.3	MG Brand (Keller's Brand Equity Model).....	35
4.3.1	Brand Identity.....	36
4.3.2	Brand Meaning .....	37
4.3.3	Brand Response .....	39
4.3.4	Brand Resonance .....	41
4.4	Correlations (IBM SPSS).....	42
4.5	Reliability and Validity of the Results.....	45
5	Conclusion .....	48
	References .....	52
	Appendices.....	56
	Appendix 1. The Survey .....	56

# 1 Introduction

This master's thesis is conducted for the commissioning company Hedin MG Finland Oy. The company is part of a large automotive organization operating in multiple countries in Europe, Hedin Mobility Group. Hedin MG Finland has begun importing new MG cars to Finland in spring 2024. The MG brand has a long history in Europe dating back to 1924. The brand has been reborn and is today owned by SAIC Motor Inc. a massive Chinese car manufacturer. The commissioning company has struggled to gain a foothold in a challenging market; sales has been low and new ways to improve brand awareness and increase sales are crucial. Improving the brand awareness of MG in Finland has been listed as one of the company's main goals for 2025.

The chosen thesis topic is very current and relevant, it concerns the European and more so the global automotive industry. Chinese manufacturers have rapidly gained foreign market share and competing European car manufacturers face difficulties in matching Chinese manufacturers on multiple fields including production costs and technological advances.

The thesis aims to support the growth of the MG brand in Finland. The topic for this thesis was agreed upon with the Country Director of Hedin MG Finland, Jon Höckerstedt, and the research was planned with Sales Manager Juuli Jurvelin. The steering group for this thesis consists of the author (me), the contact person from Hedin MG Finland, Juuli Jurvelin, and the thesis supervisor from Haaga-Helia, Heidi Rajamäki-Partanen.

This introductory chapter introduces the reader to the MG brand, the Hedin organization, commissioning company, and the Finnish new car sales market. The subsequent chapters focus on brand awareness, hierarchy of effects models, Aaker's Brand Equity model and Keller's Brand Equity model. These chapters form the theoretical framework of this thesis. The later chapter will present the research framework, and the final chapters focus on the research results and conclusions.

## 1.1 Research Questions

Q1: What are Finnish consumers' current perceptions and attitudes toward Chinese car brands?

Q2: How well are Chinese car brands recognized by Finnish consumers? How willing are they to purchase a Chinese car?

Q3: What are the current key strengths and weaknesses of MG in Finland, based on Keller's Brand Equity Model?

## 1.2 Hedin Mobility Group

The origins of Hedin Mobility Group are in 1985 in Borås, Sweden, when Ingemar Hedin and his son Anders acquired their first car dealership. The organization has grown into one of the largest mobility providers in Europe. It operates in 14 countries, employs over 12,000 people, has around 300 dealerships, and represents more than 40 different car brands. The organization's main business areas include distribution, retail, and overall providing solutions for mobility. In 2023, the group's turnover was approximately 7.2 billion euros. Hedin states: "Our vision is to be a transformative force in the European automotive and mobility industry. As an influential actor in our industry, we continuously strengthen our position by creating sustainable value for our customers, employees, partners, and the communities we operate in." The vehicle imports and distribution operations expanded significantly in 2021–2022. Hedin was appointed the official importer for Ford passenger and commercial vehicles in Sweden and became the distributor for the EV brand MG in Sweden. Together with Salvador Caetano Group, Hedin acquired the import and distribution rights for Renault, Dacia, and Alpine in Sweden and Denmark. Additionally, Hedin secured distribution rights for BYD in Sweden and Germany, INEOS Grenadier in 11 European markets, Hongqi in Sweden and the Netherlands, and the Ford F-150 in Europe (Hedin Mobility Group, 2024).

Business acquisitions have played a major role in the company's rapid expansion and growth. The organization's expansion into Finland began in May 2022, when Kauppahuone Laakkonen Oy, a traditional Finnish automotive dealership, sold its entire car business to Hedin Mobility Group. The expansion was in 2023 followed by the acquisition of another traditional Finnish automotive dealership, Delta Auto Oy, as well as a smaller dealership, Auto Oy Vesa-Matti. The Finnish automotive retail organization currently operates around 30 dealerships, represents 17 brands, and employs around 1000 people in Finland. Hedin also handles the distribution/import in Finland for INEOS and MG vehicles. The acquisition of Ford Oy AB including Finland's import/distribution of Ford cars will most likely be finalized in the summer of 2025.

## 1.3 Hedin MG Finland Oy

Hedin Mobility Group operates multiple companies in Finland and is currently in works to acquire more. Hedin Automotive Finland Oy and Hedin Automotive Retail Oy are companies which focus on retail through their dealerships. Distribution, one of Hedin Mobility Group's main business areas, for MG is managed by Hedin MG Finland Oy. The company was established in early 2024 as the official distributor for MG cars in Finland. The distribution company operates independently from

the retail-focused companies, though some systems and operations do overlap. Retail in Finland is operated entirely by the two retail-focused companies' dealerships.

Hedin MG Finland Oy currently employs six people who report to the parent company in Sweden. The import and distribution of MG cars in Sweden began in 2022 and has been highly successful, with over 20,000 new MGs sold to date. Hedin's MG sales in Finland started in August 2023, with 1,000 MG cars first registered in Sweden and then sold in Finland as imported pre-registered vehicles. Consequently, they were not included in Finland's official new car registration data for 2023. Over 600 MG cars were sold by Hedin in Finland in the latter months of 2023. To date, more than 1,300 MG cars have been sold in Finland by Hedin. The company is pursuing growth and a stronger brand presence in order to grasp a bigger share of Finland's new car sales market in 2025.

#### **1.4 The MG Brand & SAIC Motor Corporation**

The MG brand has existed for 100 years. The brand was originally established as Morris Garages by the British motoring pioneer William Morris in 1924. MG became quickly known for its fast and sporty cars. The MG Rover Group however went bankrupt in 2005, and the rights to the MG brand was purchased by the Chinese car manufacturer Nanjing Automobile Group. This Chinese manufacturer was acquired by a larger company, SAIC Motor, in 2007. Since then, the MG brand has been controlled by SAIC as one of the divisions within the company's passenger vehicles branch.

SAIC Motor Corporation is a massive Chinese state-owned car manufacturer headquartered in Shanghai. SAIC is the largest state-owned car manufacturer in China. Due to the brand's legacy, SAIC leverages the MG name to majorly benefit from its history in Europe. The manufacturer sells vehicles under a range of brands. Some of the MG models are almost identical to models sold under other SAIC's brands in China, such as Roewe. The use of a familiar brand gives SAIC an advantage in Europe compared to other Chinese competitors seeking to capture their share of the lucrative European market. MG has been the most successful and has enjoyed rapid growth within the recent years.

In 2023 SAIC sold 3.59 million units globally and 1.38 million vehicles were sold by the manufacturer's self-owned brands, MG accounted for two-thirds of these sales. "With a model line-up that appeals to drivers in both developed and emerging markets, MG has huge potential to expand its global footprint. On top of this SAIC views the technologically advanced IM Motors as a potential rival to Tesla". (JATO 2024, p.8) The products of IM Motors will likely be included and sold under MG's product-line. The new IM Motors vehicles are expected to be launched in the European

market in late 2025 or 2026, although the effects of the recently introduced increased EU-tariffs are yet to be seen.

### **1.5 The Rise of Chinese Car Brands in Europe**

Between 2020 and 2023 the increase in sales of Chinese car brands outside the domestic market has increased 5.4 times. The inability to compete with Chinese brands production capacities and affordability has sparked actions in European policymakers. Tougher measures in the form of tariffs have been introduced in order to protect European manufacturers. “Despite challenges on the road ahead, China’s manufacturers will continue to gain traction across global markets. Whether their arrival and growing influence poses a threat or an opportunity, there is no escaping the fact that China is a force to be reckoned with in the global automotive market.” (JATO 2024, p.6)

In July 2024, the European Union announced an increase in tariffs on Chinese car manufacturers, with these tariffs becoming permanent starting in November. Countries such as Germany and Spain opposed the tariffs because their brands manufacture some models in China and rely heavily on sales in the Chinese market. SAIC has been hit with the steepest tariffs, amounting to 35.3% on top of the existing 10%. However, the tariffs were applied only to fully electric vehicles, prompting MG to shift its focus within the EU to the import and sale of hybrid models. Previously, MG's product lineup in Finland consisted exclusively of fully electric vehicles, but hybrid models have now been introduced to the market. It remains to be seen how MG's EV prices will change as a result of these tariffs and how much of the additional cost will ultimately fall to the end customer.

According to the market research firm Dataforce Chinese manufacturers have continued to grow their sales in Europe in 2025. European sales of Chinese car brands in February increased 64% from last year. The market share increased from 2.5% to 4.1%. While the sales of Chinese EVs have declined by 3.4% the import of plug-in hybrids has surged by 321%. Chinese car manufacturers are also accelerating their efforts of localizing car production into Europe. Multiple Chinese brands have plans to establish production facilities within or in proximity to the region. It is prominent that despite of the EUs efforts Chinese manufacturers remain committed to establishing themselves in Europe. The competitive advantages in supply chain efficiency, technological innovations and marketing expertise continue to drive the expansion into Europe, even while the Chinese are adapting their strategies to overcome obstacles such as the tariffs (CarNewsChina 2025).

## 1.6 The Finnish Market

The Finnish market for new car sales and registrations is at a record low. In 2024 a total of 74,072 new passenger cars were registered in Finland. Previously, such low numbers were recorded 30 years ago, when in 1994 a total of 67,201 new passenger cars were registered. Autoalan Tiedotuskeskus has forecasted a growth of 8% in new passenger car registrations for 2025. So far, the new car registrations for Q1 have however been even lower than in 2024.

The market is at a record-breaking low due to multiple factors, including global inflation, high interest rates, and uncertain resale values. The shift from buying new cars to purchasing used cars has been remarkable, growing amounts of used cars are being imported from other EU countries such as Sweden and Germany. In 2024 a total of around 45,000 used cars were imported to Finland, with the total sales of used cars increasing by around 7%. In this context, the Finnish new car sales market is not particularly welcoming for a new brand looking to enter and begin distribution. However, it's estimated that the market will begin to recover in 2025, and interest rates have already started to drop.

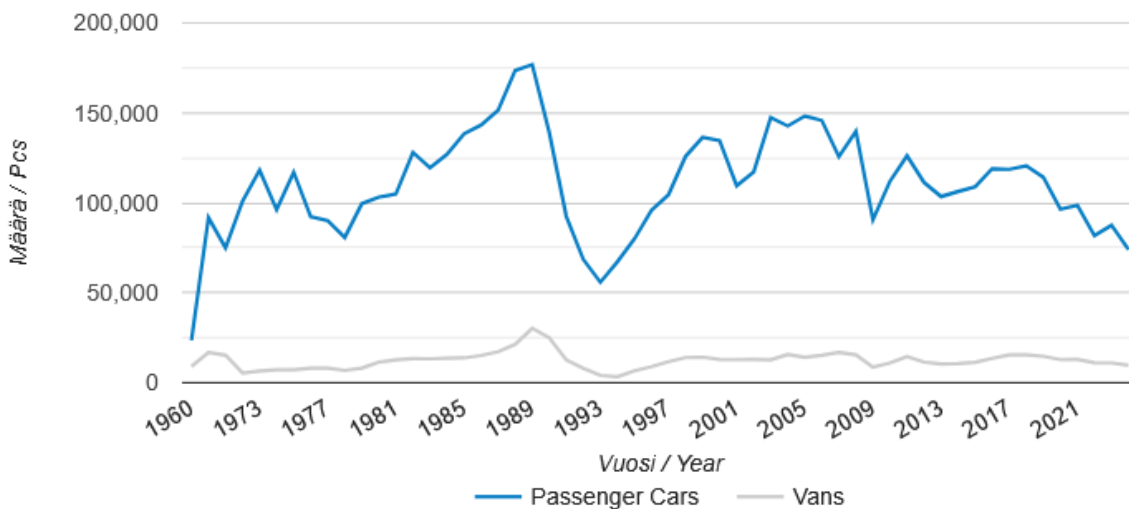


Figure 1: Finland's annual new car registration amounts (Autoalan Tiedotuskeskus)

Gasoline-powered cars continue to lead the fuel type distribution chart of Finland's new car registrations, its followed by BEVs (Battery Electric Vehicles), and then PHEVs (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles). While the sales of BEVs declined in 2024, it is not indicator of disappearance in demand. The decline in BEV registrations from 2023 to 2024 is at least partially attributed by the

shortage of components in 2022. This shortage delayed car deliveries, resulting in most orders being registered and delivered late in 2023. The gasoline-powered cars segment also includes self-charging hybrids, more often referred to as full hybrids. They feature smaller batteries than PHEVs and BEVs. The electric motor's primary function in full hybrids is to reduce emissions and fuel consumption. In 2025 the sale of BEVs has again been on the rise.

	<u>Petrol</u>	<u>Diesel</u>	<u>BEV</u>	<u>CNG</u>	<u>PHEV</u>	<u>Hydrogen</u>	<u>Ethanol</u>
2015	69 065	38 826	243	158	415		105
2016	77 919	39 462	223	165	1 208		14
2017	79 032	36 062	502	433	2 553		1
2018	84 696	28 934	776	1 161	4 932		0
2019	82 333	21 861	1 897	2 142	5 966		0
2020	62 960	14 131	4 244	1 840	13 231		0
2021	56 631	10 632	10 152	909	20 140	1	12
2022	43 328	7 044	14 530	595	16 171	0	27
2023	34 354	5 056	29 536	453	18 087	0	17
2024	33 365	3 809	21 868	114	14 863	0	46

*Figure 2: Share of fuel types in new car registrations (Autoalan Tiedotuskeskus)*

The Finnish market is well-established, with the same brands consistently dominating new car registrations year after year. The market is often described as being "controlled by Toyota," and registration statistics clearly reflect this dominance. In monthly statistics, Toyota nearly always holds the top position for both brand and model specific registrations. MG's main competitors in Finland are well-established; they hold significant market shares and most often decades of experience in Finland. The main competitors with similar models, price points, and specifications, include Toyota, Kia, Nissan, BYD, and Hyundai.

In Chinese car brands BYD can be considered as MG's biggest competitor. BYD also launched sales in Finland in 2024. BYD recorded around 50 new car registrations per month in 2024, which is more than MG. However, this statistic excludes used car registrations, in which MG has a significant presence due to Hedin still selling leftover stock from the 1,000 cars imported from Sweden in 2023. XPENG is another large Chinese car brand which has recently begun import and sales in

Finland. XPENG's products are considered more premium in comparison to MG, with a higher price point. It is yet to be seen how XPENG succeeds in the Finnish market.

	Make	Market		Market		Market		Cumulative change (%)
		03/2025	share (%)	1-03/2025	share (%)	1-03/2024	share (%)	
1.	Toyota	942	15.5	2,550	15.5	3,721	20.5	-31.5
2.	Volkswagen	655	10.8	1,719	10.5	1,243	6.8	38.3
3.	Volvo	480	7.9	1,463	8.9	1,929	10.6	-24.2
4.	Skoda	483	7.9	1,446	8.8	1,891	10.4	-23.5
5.	Kia	455	7.5	1,211	7.4	1,433	7.9	-15.5
6.	BMW	239	3.9	850	5.2	1,050	5.8	-19.0
7.	Nissan	274	4.5	836	5.1	890	4.9	-6.1
8.	Mercedes-Benz	344	5.7	823	5.0	1,116	6.1	-26.3
9.	Ford	319	5.2	697	4.2	462	2.5	50.9
10.	Audi	251	4.1	693	4.2	633	3.5	9.5
11.	Hyundai	228	3.7	600	3.6	800	4.4	-25.0
12.	Tesla Motors	295	4.9	475	2.9	894	4.9	-46.9
13.	Polestar	182	3.0	429	2.6	70	0.4	512.9
14.	Peugeot	44	0.7	262	1.6	154	0.8	70.1
15.	Dacia	64	1.1	250	1.5	136	0.7	83.8
16.	Mazda	107	1.8	225	1.4	153	0.8	47.1
17.	Renault	70	1.2	203	1.2	107	0.6	89.7
17.	Suzuki	64	1.1	203	1.2	202	1.1	0.5
18.	Citroen	49	0.8	144	0.9	112	0.6	28.6
19.	Cupra	40	0.7	132	0.8	71	0.4	85.9
20.	Lexus	42	0.7	126	0.8	102	0.6	23.5
21.	BYD	35	0.6	123	0.7	154	0.8	-20.1
21.	MG	76	1.2	123	0.7	.	,	-
21.	Opel	52	0.9	123	0.7	154	0.8	-20.1
22.	Porsche	52	0.9	122	0.7	73	0.4	67.1
23.	Mitsubishi	42	0.7	109	0.7	173	1.0	-37.0
24.	Subaru	39	0.6	100	0.6	100	0.6	0.0
25.	Land Rover	26	0.4	99	0.6	77	0.4	28.6
26.	Smart	29	0.5	59	0.4	.	,	-
27.	Seat	25	0.4	56	0.3	38	0.2	47.4
28.	Mini	18	0.3	41	0.2	43	0.2	-4.7
29.	Alfa Romeo	10	0.2	24	0.1	17	0.1	41.2
30.	Honda	8	0.13	23	0.14	63	0.35	-63.5
	Others	43	0.71	108	0.66	94	0.52	14.9
	Total	6,082	100.00	16,447	100.00	18,155	100.00	-9.4
	Motor homes	91		257		299		-14.0
	Passenger cars total	6,173		16,704		18,454		-9.5

Figure 3: 30 Most registered passenger cars by make 3/2025 (Autoalan Tiedotuskeskus)

A total of 16,704 new passenger cars were registered in Q1 2025, 9.5% less than in Q1 2024 (18,454). For March the total registrations were 6,173, down 4.8% from 2024 (6,487). The top 5

most registered car brands in Finland for 2025 Q1 are Toyota (2,550), Volkswagen (1,719), Volvo (1,463), Skoda (1,446) and Kia (1,211). In Q1 the monthly registration amount of new MG cars has seen growth from the months in operation for 2024. March has been the best month so far since the relaunch of the brand in Finland amounting to 76 new car registrations. MG, BYD and Opel are tied for the 21st spot on the most registered brands for Q1, with 123 registrations each. So even in the Finnish market the registration amounts of Chinese brands are growing. They are starting to close the gap or even catching up some to European brands which have operated in the market for longer or even for decades. Although there still is a long way to go before reaching the amounts of top 10 brands.

## 2 Brand Awareness

This chapter forms a theoretical framework for the thesis. The subchapters explain several key theories and models related to brand awareness and building brand equity which is more of an overall indicator of a brand's strength. The latter part of the chapter concludes the various theories and models while delving deeper into a chosen model that is considered most relevant for the development task.

Brand awareness is a relatively new term in business theory, particularly in marketing literature. Modern studies have highlighted its value and stressed its importance. Increasing brand awareness should be an objective for advertisers, because it plays a key role in the path to purchase while helping to reduce the likelihood of brand recall for competing brands. Brand awareness has been directly linked to maintaining competitiveness and is considered crucial in this regard. It has a significant impact on purchase intention and can be considered as a necessary precursor to other goals on the path to purchase. Brand awareness can even prevent competing brands from being considered. The various findings underscore its universal importance, and overall brand awareness can be seen as the foundation of a successful brand (Chen 2024, 239-241).

Despite its central importance in achieving most long-term advertising goals, the past several decades of academic research have placed too little emphasis on brand awareness, focusing more often on attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention. In part because of this, no globally accepted definition of brand awareness has evolved, and there is a need for greater theoretical development of the concept. The American Marketing Association (AMA 2021) defines brand as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies the seller's goods or service as a distinct from those of other sellers." This definition by the AMA contrasts with the broader definitions of a brand as "something that has actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence and so on in the marketplace" (Bergkvist, Taylor 2022, 294-295).

A brand is formed based on how consumers perceive and experience it. Thoughtful and informed consumers tend to purchase brands which are both familiar and favourable to them. Brand recognition often remains the most significant factor influencing purchase decision, even when consumers intend to buy a specific product. When a consumer considers a product and instantly recalls the brand, this shows a strong level of brand awareness. If the product meets or even exceeds expectations, the consumer not only stays loyal but often also promotes the brand through word-of-mouth recommendations. Products with high brand awareness are more likely to succeed in the market, contributing to increased company profits. Therefore, as brand recognition and customer

base expand, both market share and profitability are likely to grow as well (aZafar, Hussain, Shahid 2017, 34).

The definition of brand awareness is more often not formally defined by advertising scholars. It seems that many advertising scholars assume the understanding and agreement of brand awareness within the advertising research community. There have however been attempts to formally define brand awareness in marketing literature. The definition of brand awareness by Rossiter, Percy and Bergkvist (2018) defines brand awareness in terms of its outcomes: ““Brand awareness is defined as the buyer’s ability to identify (recognize or recall) the brand, within the category, in sufficient detail to make a purchase”. Keller (1993) defines brand awareness in terms of its outcomes but also in terms of its preceding: “Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by consumers’ ability to identify the brand under different conditions.” Prior definitions however have limitations which apply to them thus a new theoretical definition which addresses these limitations has been proposed by Bergkvist and Taylor: “Brand awareness is the likelihood that a person retrieves a brand identifier and a product category or category need from memory across brand-relevant situations.” The definition refers to memory retrieval rather than the preceding or outcomes of the process, it also doesn’t include vague or ambiguous terms. This definition clarifies the relation of brand awareness to the brand name and other brand identifiers while relatively enduring across various situations and over time. It doesn’t limit brand awareness to purchase situations but allows other relevant situations such as recalling a brand from recommendations or recognizing a brand identifier. The definition includes the consideration of the competitive nature of memory retrieval (Bergkvist, Taylor 2022, 295-297).

Brand awareness refers to how strongly a brand is present in a consumer's mind. Aaker described it as how easily potential customers can recognize or remember that a brand belongs to a certain product category. Keller explained that brand awareness includes both brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is when a person can identify a brand as one, they’ve seen or heard of before, while brand recall is when someone can bring a brand to mind when thinking about a specific product type, need, or situation. A high level of brand awareness can signal quality and reliability, making consumers more familiar with the brand and more likely to consider it when making a purchase (Shahiskala, Suresh 2013, 8).

Brand awareness typically has two frequently measured indicators which are brand recognition and brand recall. They measure the outcome of brand awareness but not brand awareness itself. It’s challenging to conceive of a measure of memory retrieval which would correspond directly with the definition of brand awareness, so for now the measurement of brand awareness has to be indirect. Brand recognition refers to the probability for an individual to identify a brand symbol and connect it

to a specific product category or a particular need within that category, this often happens at the moment of purchase. For example, when a consumer spots a can of Mountain Dew on a store shelf, recognizes the brand and associates it with beverages, then adds it to their cart. Brand recognition thus is the likelihood of recalling the product category when presented with the brand. Brand recall refers to the likelihood that an individual remembers the brand when prompted by the product category, the personal need it satisfies, or some other cue which is related to purchase or consumption. For example, when a consumer is making a shopping list at home and realizes they need shampoo, remembers Pantene Pro-V, and then writes it down. Brand recall is the likelihood of remembering the brand when presented with a product category. A specific type of brand recall is top-of-mind brand awareness, referring to the first brand that comes to mind when consumers are asked to recall one. The relationship between brand recognition and brand recall is asymmetric, and recognition is considered easier to form than recall. Research shows that recalling a brand is significantly more difficult than recognizing it. According to associative network theories, the strength of the connection between a brand and its product category can vary, with recognition often having a stronger link than recall. While a brand cue may trigger the category, a category cue may not always trigger the brand, especially if other brands have stronger associations. For example, a consumer might recognize Garnier as a shampoo brand but not recall it when thinking of the shampoo category, as brands like Pantene may have stronger associations. Therefore, brand recognition and recall are distinct concepts and should be measured separately, they are not directly comparable (Bergkvist, Taylor 2022, 297-298).

Brand awareness has been often overlooked in advertising strategy, but it is considered extremely important. It refers to how well a buyer can recognize or identify a brand in a product category when making a purchase. Although recognizing a brand doesn't always mean remembering its name. Sometimes just seeing the packaging for example is enough to trigger a buying decision. Thus, the brand is recognized visually at the point of purchase, even if the name wasn't remembered beforehand. This is known as brand recognition, which is different from brand recall. Marketers often confuse these two types of brand awareness, but understanding the difference is key to building an effective advertising strategy. Brand awareness can thus work in two ways: recognition awareness means that seeing the brand triggers the need and recall awareness which means that the need triggers the memory of the brand. Both types are essential in various buying situations, and advertisers must understand which one to focus on to make their efforts effective. Without building the right kind of brand awareness, advertising is unlikely to succeed (Percy, Rossiter 1992, 264).

## **2.1 Hierarchy of Effects**

The world of advertising has grown very rapidly, not only based on creativity, but also from the strategic perspective and due to technological advances. This chapter explains what hierarchy of effects models are and how they have developed. They describe the various stages a consumer goes through from the initial awareness of a product to making a purchase decision. Hierarchy of effects models are widely used in marketing and advertising to design effective strategies of influencing customer behaviour. They are mainly based on the idea that advertising works in various phases of influencing emotions, cognition and behaviour. The following subchapters present variations of hierarchy of effects models; they have each been tailored to their specific contexts.

Developing a marketing strategy is not as simple as it used to be. Advertising is nowadays used for more meaningful purposes such as building brand awareness and creating value through consumer loyalty. Hierarchy models have been developing since the beginning of the 1900s. The earliest adaptation AID (Attention, Interest, Desire) was developed already in 1898 by E. St Elmo Lewis as a sales guide for salesmen to be successful in moving a prospect to buy. The theoretical framework was developed by Strong in 1925. Many hierarchies of effects models are still developed by academicians, researchers and practitioners since its inception over a century ago (Barry, Howard 1990, 121-122).

In hierarchy of effects models, the consumer starts out completely unaware of the advertised brand. The initial objective of advertising is thus to capture the consumer's attention, prompting them to mentally engage with the advertisement and the brand itself. Ideally, the advertisement will create interest and maintain the consumer's focus long enough to create an association between the unfamiliar brand and its relevant product category. Once the mental connection is formed, the consumer becomes aware of the brand and is more likely to consider it when making a purchase decision. As a result, building brand awareness through gaining attention and generating interest is the primary goal of advertising within the hierarchy of effects framework (Chen, Smith, Yang 2008, 50).

### **2.1.1 AIDA**

One of the earliest attempts to create a model for describing the effects of advertising is the AIDA model. AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. The model was originally designed to represent the stages through which a salesperson should take prospect. It was however later adopted as a basic framework for explaining how persuasive communication mainly advertising works. The AIDA model is considered to be the most popular and widely used in studies to

measure the effects of advertising. Over the decades it has inspired the birth of numerous hierarchy of effect models such as AIDAS, AICCA, AIDCA, ACCA, EPCCA, and ACALTA (Wijaya 2012, 76-80).

Businesses spend a lot of money on advertising to promote their brands and for staying in touch with their customers. Advertising helps keep people informed and encourages them to buy things. Hierarchy of effects models such as AIDA are still widely used to see how well ads work and how they affect people's thoughts and actions. Over the decades the AIDA model has been studied a lot, it has been found that the model and its various alterations can be used widely in print, social media, mobile, online, and digital advertising. It can be used for both traditional and digital marketing (Ahmed, Hyder, Javed, Nawaz, Rehman 2014, 306). A major deficiency of the AIDA and other hierarchical models is however considered to be the absence of post-purchase effects such as satisfaction, consumption, repeat patronage behaviour and other post-purchase behavioural intentions such as referrals or participating in the preparation of online product reviews (Egan 2022, 42-43).

### **2.1.2 DAGMAR**

Another popular hierarchy of effects model developed as a suggested formula for setting communication-oriented objectives by Colley in 1961 is the DAGMAR model (Defining Advertising Goals for Measuring Advertising Results). It is mainly used to measure how well an advertising campaign works. It has three main parts first setting clear goals for the ad, second going through the four steps—awareness, understanding, belief, and action; and last checking the results and measuring the advertising results (Ahmed, Hyder, Javed, Nawaz, Rehman 2014, 303).

The DAGMAR model incorporated the elements of Awareness, Comprehension, Conviction and Purchase as stages of influence that advertising messages have on consumer behaviour. Awareness being the stage where advertising raises the audience's awareness on the message, which is similar to Attention and Interest in AIDA. Comprehension is the stage during which the consumer audience understands the core message of an advertisement, after which during the Conviction stage the audience believes the genuineness of the advertisement message. This is similar to Desire in the AIDA model since the strong conviction may raise a desire to purchase. Purchase stage is when the consumer audience follows up on the belief in the advertising message through the act of purchase, being similar to Action in AIDA (Wijaya 2012, 76).

### 2.1.3 AISDALSLove

Social media has changed the way people communicate, socialize and influence consumer audience behaviour. A shift from product-oriented marketing to consumer-oriented marketing or people-oriented marketing has happened. The prior hierarchy of effect models could not completely accommodate the phenomena of modern information technology. It has been argued that advertisers should move away from the explicit and implicit reliance of hierarchical models on the effects of advertising. Instead, models should be developed which place experience and affection at the centre of the advertising process. This has led to the evolution of the AIDA model and the addition of several relevant elements in order to form a modernized version. Search, Like, Share and Love have been added to the recently formed alteration AISDALSLove.

Search as a new element refers to the assumption that modern-day consumers are increasingly critical. The information which is obtained from advertising is often not accepted instantly to becoming a belief or directly creating a desire for purchase, no matter how interesting the displayed stimulus may be. Today's consumers will search and complete the obtained information with other information before making a purchase decision. The process of information searching that occurs includes both internal and external search. Internal search refers to the consumers' memories which consist of feelings and past experiences. Time pressure and/or distraction may however limit internal search. When uncertain consumers engage in external search consisting of outside sources such as friends and relatives or the internet. External search is used to collect additional information about available brands as well as the attributes and benefits associated with the brands in consideration (Wijaya 2012, 80-81).

The Like or Dislike element is closely related to consumers' experiences after purchasing and using the advertised product. Satisfaction is an attitude related judgement following an experience of consumption. Feelings of satisfaction often lead to reordering or repurchasing. If the purchased product or service is better than expected the resulting judgement is positive and on the other hand negative if worse than expected. Consumers evaluate the products or service's performance through their experience and by comparing it to their expectations and what they perceive as being received. A consumer's experience can cause a snowball effect and lead to share their experience to others about the advertised product or service. This growing effect has led to the share element being added to the model. Consumers have an increasing power to perform actions which can cause major impact on a brand or the image of a product, for example through social media. The experience of a single consumer can have a significant impact on a large amount of other consumers image of a product, service or brand. If a certain individual feels that a brand's product or service offering is unsatisfactory a whole group of people may begin to believe so, even if most people

do not feel that way. The reliance on the opinion of small numbers can be very powerful, people tend to have confidence in the opinions of friends or relatives whether they reflect the majority or not. It's vital that brands empower consumers by delivering exceptional experiences which inspire them to share their positive experiences. Business results have been found to be driven by consumers sharing their experiences by word of mouth across social media (Wijaya 2012, 81-82).

The long-term effect of advertising is the development of consumer love or hatred. Positive experiences which are influenced by an advertisement's message, combined with consumer satisfaction, can lead to brand loyalty and deep emotional connections. The progression from neutral feelings towards love, is often fuelled by meaningful advertising stories. Strong brand experiences create loyalty and form a sense of belonging. By contrast negative experiences result in dissatisfaction, spreading of negative perceptions, and potentially influencing consumer hatred. Advertisers should avoid solely focusing on the short-term effects of advertising and pursuing a single purchase action. Effectively communicating the brand's values and fostering positive consumer experiences requires careful planning of both the content and delivery of advertising messages. Long-term effects such as brand loyalty are vital and key in driving business success over longer periods of time (Wijaya 2012, 82-83).

## **2.2 Aaker's Brand Equity Model**

In the modern business environment brand equity has also emerged as a crucial factor in product differentiation and building consumer loyalty. Brand equity as a term refers to the overall value of which a brand adds to a product or service. It represents the perception of a brand from the viewpoint of consumers. For companies striving to build strong and lasting brands it's vital to understand the various components of brand equity.

Branding has been around and used for centuries for helping people tell one company's products or services apart from another's. They make shopping easier, help people understand their choices, and give confidence in what they buy. They play an important role in people's lives and also increase a company's value. Strong brands not only perform better financially but also help businesses handle change by supporting growth and transformation. Because of this, brands are valuable business assets, they can affect how people behave, be bought and sold, and bring in long-term profits. It's important to understand what makes a brand strong and how to manage it well for continued success (Shashikala, Suresh 2013).

Aaker's brand equity model was developed by David A. Aaker; the model is one of the most foundational frameworks for analysing brand equity. Aaker's model identifies five key components

which all together contribute to the formation of brand equity. The components aid in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a brand and help in forming strategies to enhance its value. Each component of the model has a distinct role in building a strong brand. The five components of Aaker's Brand Equity Model are Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Associations, and Other Proprietary Assets.

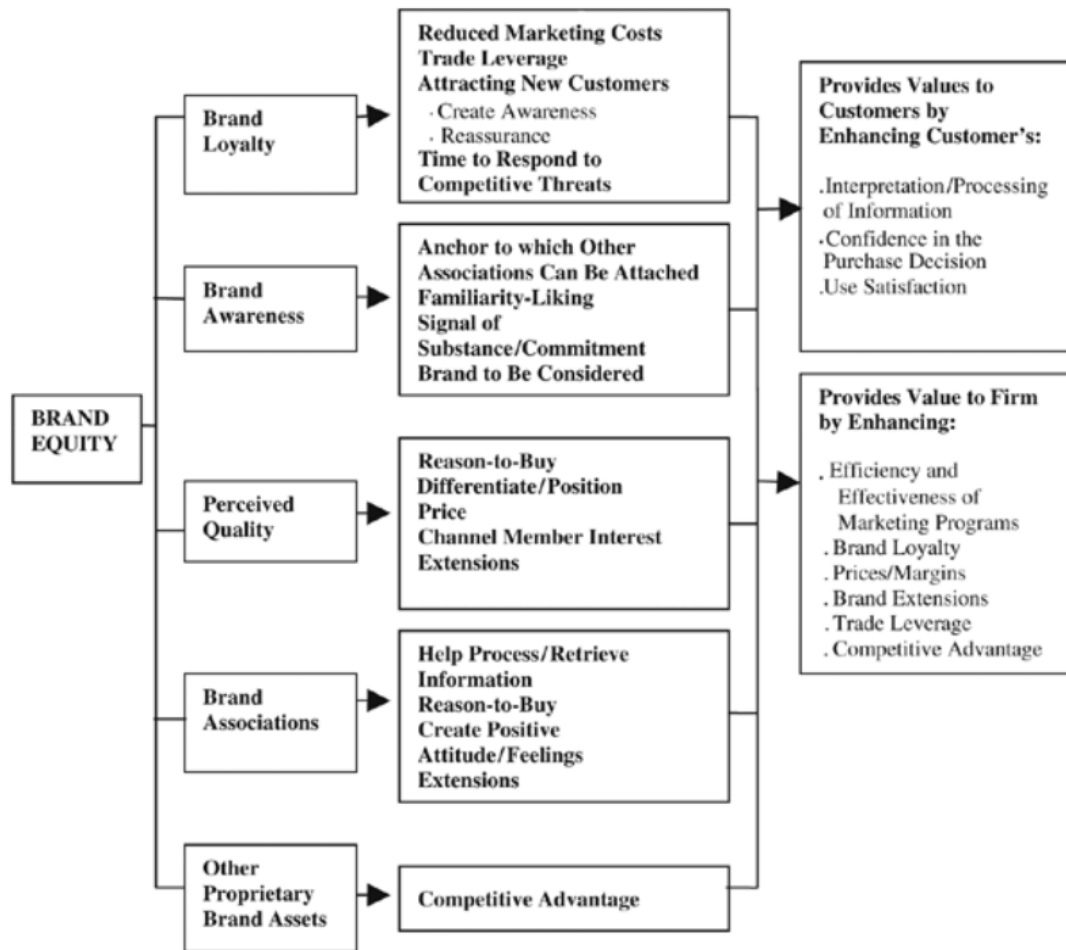


Figure 4: Brand Equity Model (Aaker, 1991)

Brand loyalty is a core dimension of brand equity. It is however qualitatively different from the other major dimensions since it is tied more closely to the use experience. Brand loyalty can also not exist without prior purchase and use experience. If customers are indifferent to a brand and buy with little concern to the brand and instead buy due to features, price or convenience there is likely not much brand loyalty or equity. On the other hand, if they continue to purchase the brand even when a competitor has superior features, price and convenience then substantial value exists in the

brand. Brand loyalty is a measurement of the attachment that a customer has to a brand. It is an indicator of how likely a customer is to switch to a competitor, especially if/when there are changes in price or product features. Higher brand loyalty reduces the risk of customers shifting to rivals. It serves as a measure of brand equity which is demonstrably linked to future profits, as brand loyalty leads directly to sustained sales (Aaker 1991, 73-77).

Brand awareness is the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall from their memory that a brand is part of a certain product category. The role of brand awareness in brand equity depends on both the context and achieved level of achieved awareness. Brand recognition is the minimal and first level of brand awareness. A link between a product class and the brand has been formed, although it may not be strong. This level is particularly important when a buyer is choosing a brand at the point of purchase. Brand recall is the next level; it's associated with a stronger brand position and improved memory recall. A brand which achieves top-of-mind awareness, means that the brand is first that comes to a person's mind ahead of other brands in the product category. An even stronger brand recall position is a dominant brand, the ultimate level of brand awareness. A brand is the only brand which is recalled for a high percentage of people. In many purchase situations having a dominant brand means that no other brand will even be considered (Aaker 1991, 107-110).

Perceived quality can be defined as customer perceptions of the overall quality and/or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, in relation to the alternatives. It is the perception that is formed by customers and thus differs from related concepts such as actual quality, product-based quality and manufacturing quality. Perceived quality can't necessarily be determined objectively as it is a perception and because judgments about what is important to customers are involved. Customers do differ sharply in their personalities, need and preferences. Perceived quality also differs from satisfaction. A customer may be satisfied because they had low expectations. There is also a difference to attitude, a positive attitude could be formed because a product of low quality is very inexpensive, and conversely a negative attitude towards a higher quality product which is overpriced. Perceived quality can be described as an intangible overall feeling about a brand. It is often however based on fundamental dimensions that are characteristics of the products to which the brand is attached such as performance and reliability. For understanding perceived quality it's useful to identify and measure the underlying dimensions but perceived quality as a whole is a broader concept (Aaker 1991, 141-144).

A brand association is anything linked in a person's memory to a brand. This association or memory link to a brand has a level of strength and it's stronger when based on multiple experiences or exposures to communications. It will also be stronger when/if supported by a network of

other links. A brand's image is a set of association which is often organized in some meaningful way. The associations can be mental pictures that come to mind such as visual images of a brand. An association and image are both perceptions which may and may not reflect reality. Brand positioning is closely related to the concept of association and image except it implies a frame of reference, usually in reference to the competitors. A well-positioned brand will have a competitively attractive position which is supported by strong brand associations. Associations represent bases for purchase decisions and are meaningful in creating brand loyalty. Possible associations are multiple, and they provide value in various ways. Strong brand associations create value for the brand and its customer by differentiating the brand, generating reasons for purchase and providing positive attitudes/feelings (Aaker 1991, 176-179).

Other proprietary brand assets are brand-equity assets that provide a competitive advantage which often present actual barriers to competitors. They are for example patents, trademarks, channel relationships. Brand assets are considered to be most valuable if they can be used to prevent competitors from interfering with the customer base and their loyalty. Trademarks provide protection against competitors who may want to confuse customers by utilizing a similar name, symbol or packaging. If a patent is strong and relevant to the customer choice can prevent direct competition. For brand assets to be relevant they must be tied directly to the brand (Aaker 1991, 47-50).

### **2.3 Keller's Brand Equity Model**

Companies increasingly recognize the value that a strong brand brings to an organization. In today's world of business markets are more often highly competitive and brands serve as essential assets for success. Understanding and managing brand equity is vital for long-term business success as it influences consumer perception, loyalty and ultimately financial performance. Still one of the most influential models used to analyse and strengthen a brand was introduced by Kevin Lane Keller in his book *Strategic Brand Management* first published in 1993. The model provides a thorough framework for building, measuring and managing brand equity from the customer's perspective. Keller's Brand Equity Model is structured as a pyramid with four levels, each level presenting a step forward in building a strong brand.

Keller explained brand equity as how people remember and think about a brand, it's based on two main parts which are brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is about ensuring people know of the brand's existence, while brand image is about the ideas and feelings people connect to the brand. For building brand equity, managers should first focus on making the brand known and then work on creating a strong, positive image. This can be done through things such

as advertising, packaging, pricing, and where the product is sold. When these are used well, they help people recognize the brand and form a clear, positive picture of it in their minds (Katsanis, Pitta 1995, 53).

Keller's consumer-based brand strength approach to brand equity, suggests that brand equity represents a condition in which the consumer is familiar with the brand and recalls some favourable, strong and unique brand associations. Hence, there is a differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of a brand. Brand strength is considered as a function of brand description (Wood 2000, 663).

The four steps of Keller's pyramid are a representation of fundamental questions that customers invariably consider and ask about a brand. The four questions are (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 107):

- Who are you? (brand identity)
- What are you? (brand meaning)
- What about you? What do I think or feel about you? (brand responses)
- What about you and me? What kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you? (brand relationships)

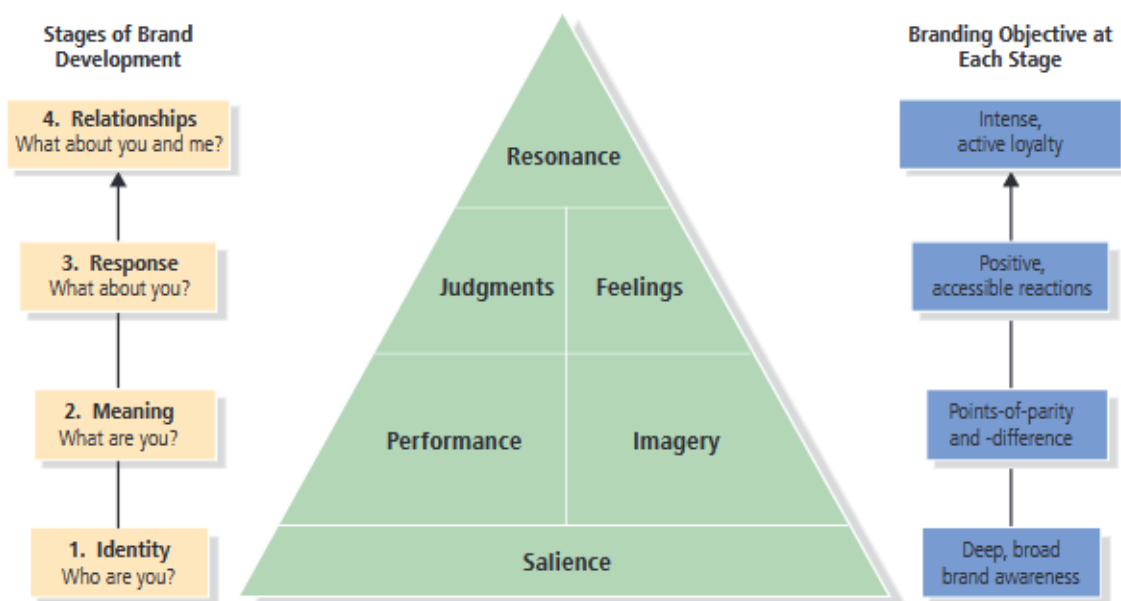


Figure 5: Brand Resonance Pyramid (Keller, Swaminathan 2020)

Achieving brand identity involves building brand salience, which is a measure of how easily and how often a brand is encountered in various situations. Brand awareness is considered to be a key component as it refers to the ability of customers to recall and recognize a brand in various conditions while linking it to a specific association such as the product category or need it satisfies. Building brand awareness helps customers understand the product or service category in which the brand operates, and which products or services are sold under the brand name. The depth of brand awareness assesses how likely a brand element is remembered and how effortlessly it comes to mind. A brand that is readily recalled demonstrates a greater depth of awareness compared to one that is recognized only when encountered visually. On the other hand, the breadth of brand awareness, refers to the variety of purchasing and usage scenarios in which the brand element is remembered, largely influenced by how brand and product knowledge is structured in memory (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 107-108).

The product itself is at the heart of brand equity as it shapes consumer experiences, influences word-of-mouth, and forms the basis of brand communication. A well-designed and delivered product which fully satisfies consumer need and wants is a necessary for successful marketing. For creating brand loyalty and resonance it must be ensured that consumer experiences with the product at least meet and preferably surpass their expectations. Brand performance evaluates how well the product meets functional needs, quality standards, and customer desires. Often the strongest brand positioning relies on performance advantages of some kind and rarely brands can overcome severe deficiencies in performance. Five key attributes which form the supports of brand performance are: primary features, product reliability, service effectiveness, style/design and price (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, p. 112-113). Brand imagery is the other main type of brand meaning. It depends on the outward properties of the product or service, including how the brand attempts to meet customers' social or psychological needs. Brand imagery is the way people think about the brand abstractly, instead of what they think the brand actually does. It thus depends on the more intangible aspects of a brand, and imagery associations are formed by consumers' own experiences, indirectly through advertising or by some other source such as word of mouth (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 113).

Brand judgments are personal opinions and evaluations of the brand. Consumers form them by combining all the various associations related to brand performance and imagery. A brand's customer may make all types of judgments concerning a brand, the four types which have been found to be particularly important concern quality, credibility, consideration and superiority. Brand attitudes are consumers' overall evaluations of the brand, which very often guides their brand choices. These attitudes are shaped by the specific attributes that matter to consumers. Key attitudes revolve around perceived quality, customer value and satisfaction which are also essential to brand

equity. Brand credibility reflects how customers perceive the company behind a brand based on three key dimensions that are expertise, trustworthiness and likability. While favourable attitudes and credibility are important, they are not enough if customers don't involve the brand in their purchase consideration. This serves as a key factor in building brand equity, and it depends on how relevant the brand personally is to customers. For fostering this consideration strong and favourable brand associations are crucial. Brand superiority reflects how customers perceive a brand as unique and better than others. It relies on the brand's ability to offer distinct advantages and is essential for building strong, active customer relationships (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 117-118).

Brand feelings are emotional reactions of customers to a brand; they influence how they feel about themselves and their relationships with others. These emotions can range from mild to intense and/or positive to negative. They are critical for building an emotional connection. Emotions for a brand often become strongly associated with the product, they shape consumer perceptions and experiences. Companies are more and more attempting to tap into consumer emotions with their brands. Six important types of feelings related to building a brand are: warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval and self-respect. The feelings fall into two categories; they are experiential and immediate or private and enduring. Ultimately evoking positive and accessible emotional responses are a driving force for brand loyalty and favourable consumer behaviours (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 119-120).

Brand resonance is the final step of Keller's pyramid. It represents the ultimate level of connection and identification between a customer and a brand, characterized by depth of the psychological bond (intensity) and the active loyalty (activity). Intensity reflects the depth of emotional connection and sense of belonging to the brand, while activity indicates how often the consumer purchases and uses the brand, as well as participates in other activities unrelated to buying or consuming the product. Brands with historically high resonance such as Apple, Harley-Davidson and Amazon inspire strong connections through behavioural loyalty, emotional attachment, community and active engagement. The two key dimensions of brand resonance can be divided into four categories which are behavioural loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement. Behavioural loyalty is measured by repeat purchases and the amount of category volume attributed to the brand. To drive profits, brands must ensure high purchase frequency and volume. Behavioural loyalty is necessary, but it is not sufficient for resonance to occur. Resonance requires a strong personal attachment and emotional connection. To form deeper loyalty, a brand must fully meet consumer needs and foster emotional attachment, this turns loyal customers into brand advocates and strengthens brand equity. Brands may represent more than just a product or service by forming a sense of community among its customers. Communities can consist of fellow users, employees, or company representatives, and can exist both online and offline. A strong brand

community can improve customer loyalty, leading to more positive brand attitudes and stronger intentions to continue engaging with the brand. Finally, the strongest affirmation of loyalty to a brand occurs when customers invest additional time, energy, money, or other resources beyond those expended during the act of purchasing or using the brand. This may include joining a brand-related club, receiving updates or interacting with other users or brand representatives (Keller, Swaminathan 2020, 120-122).

## **2.4 Comparison of the Models**

Some of the most common and widely used models related to building a brand have been presented. Brand awareness can be considered as a stepping stone on the path to building a strong brand with high market value. Building brand awareness is crucial in the early stages of a brand's lifecycle, if not formed consumers cannot engage or develop preference for a brand. High levels of brand awareness ensure that consumers consider the brand during the purchasing process, this is considered to even more vital in mature and/or highly competitive markets. Increasing brand awareness should be a main focus for brands when entering new markets. Brand equity on the other hand is a broader concept that incorporates multiple components which overall define the value that a brand adds to the product or service. It becomes more relevant once a brand has already established awareness and aims more to build long-term customer loyalty, differentiate from competitors or enhance the brand's overall value.

Brand awareness has different levels, depending on how easily a person can remember a brand. If someone has seen ads or heard about the brand from others but can only remember it when given a hint, this is called brand recognition or aided recall. This is a low level of awareness and usually isn't enough to make someone choose the brand on their own, because they don't have a strong mental image of it. They would need to see the brand in a store and recognize it as an option to consider. Even though this type of awareness is weak, it can still help, especially for products people often buy in stores. In those cases, simply recognizing the brand can influence what they choose. For low-involvement products which are things people don't spend much time thinking about just knowing the brand name might be enough. The key to building brand awareness is making sure the brand exists in people's memory in the first place. This creates a "memory node" that future brand associations can connect to. Without this basic memory of the brand, it's not possible to build a full brand image (Katsanis, Pitta 1995, 53).

After reviewing information and insights from multiple relevant articles, it can be concluded that consumers tend to prefer purchasing the brands which they are familiar with. Consumers are often

cautious when it comes to trying new products. Many wise consumers often conduct market research or seek advice from trusted sources before making a purchase decision. Once they are well-informed about what to buy, how to buy it, and where to get it, they proceed with the purchase. However, if they come across any negative information about a product, they are likely to avoid it (aZafar, Hussain, Shahid 2017, 37). This indicates the importance and need for companies to work actively in creating and maintaining a positive brand image. Businesses must continuously promote their brand and invest in advertising to keep consumers engaged and loyal, while ensuring that an even wider audience becomes aware of them and their products or services.

Aaker's and Keller's Brand Equity Models are both widely used for understanding the value and strength of a brand. Aaker's model identifies broad components of brand equity and doesn't focus explicitly on the progressive consumer journey. Keller's model on the other hand is entirely built around consumer perspectives and is built in stages ranging from awareness to forming an emotional connection. Aaker's model is grouped into the components of brand equity, which are presented as a set of interrelated factors. Keller's model has clear levels which allows the systematic examination of where a brand excels or falls short based on consumer perceptions.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Keller's Model</b>	<b>Aaker's Model</b>
Focus	Consumer perceptions and relationship	Brand-level components
Structure	Step-by-step pyramid	Interrelated factors
Emotional Connection	Balance focus on rational and emotional	More functional than emotional
Depth	Explores deep brand relationships	Limited focus on relational depth
Ease of use for research	Simple, focused, actionable	Broader, less structured

Considering that MG is a new or at least a reborn brand entering a mature and challenging market Keller's Brand Equity Model was chosen to be the most valuable model to use in conducting the research. The model is built around the idea that brand equity is a result of what consumers think, feel and do about a brand. This aligns directly with goals of conducting consumer research and make it ideal for understanding consumer behaviour, attitudes and emotions. Each step of Keller's

brand equity pyramid helps pinpoint specific areas to investigate such as awareness, associations, emotional connections and customer loyalty. The model focuses directly on consumer's perspectives, making it a perfect fit for research that aims to understand consumer attitudes, behaviour and perceptions. Overall Keller's Brand Equity Model can be used as a vital tool in consumer research to form a structured, consumer-centric and actionable framework to provide understanding and for creating a plan to improve how consumers perceive and understand the brand.

### **3 Research Framework**

This chapter explains the research framework. It covers the chosen research approach, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. The main objective of the research was to conduct a consumer study to provide an overview of the market's current level of brand awareness and to evaluate consumer perceptions of the MG brand and Chinese car brands as a whole. The research aimed to collect and analyse a substantial amount of relevant consumer data by conducting a survey. Keller's Brand Equity Model and relevant theories were used as the foundation for designing the survey questions concerning the MG brand. Keller's model was applied to assess the brand's current strength in relation to Keller's brand pyramid.

The research was planned in collaboration with personnel from the commissioning company, Heidin MG Finland Oy. The sales manager, product manager, and country manager participated in a meeting where the questionnaire was designed to align with the company's objectives for the study. This meeting was also held to define the survey's scope, while ensuring that the survey remained clear and manageable. This approach was necessary to avoid excessive complexity, facilitate data processing, and generate valuable insights to support the growth of the MG brand in Finland.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Quantitative research relies on numerical data and statistical analysis which is used to identify patterns, trends and/or relationships. Common methods of conducting quantitative research include surveys, experiments and analysing secondary data. The results are objective, measurable and found useful for generalizing findings to larger amounts of population (Ghanad 2023, 3795-3796).

The aim of the research was to gain an understanding of Finnish consumers' perceptions of Chinese car brands, with the particular focus on the MG brand. The target population was therefore large, and the goal was to collect a substantial number of responses to analyse and identify trends in consumer perceptions. As a result, quantitative research was found more suitable than qualitative research. This approach was chosen as the most appropriate considering the thesis topic and the research objectives. The decision was also agreed upon with the commissioning company, which emphasized the importance of gathering a large number of responses. In line with the company's preferences, quantitative research was selected as the most effective method. The study was conducted as a quantitative survey, specifically in the form of a structured survey.

Quantitative research is essential for marketing and brand research due to its ability to provide numerical data that can be used for strategic decision making. By applying surveys, experiments and/or statistical analysis businesses can gain a comprehensive understanding of market trends and consumer behaviour. When measurable data is collected patterns can be identified outlining consumer preferences. The generated insights are vital for tailoring product and services to meet market demands more effectively. Quantitative research can be used to analyse customer behaviour on a larger scale, and it is considered to be essential for the development of effective marketing and brand strategies (Lim 2024, 1-3).

### **3.2 Methods of Data Collection**

Quantitative data collection methods are designed to gather numerical data, which can then be analysed statistically. These methods are often used in research that seeks to identify measurable variables, test hypotheses, and establish patterns or relationships (Ghanad 2023, 3796). The target population of the research is large, and the goal is to receive a substantial number of responses from a broad group of participants. In market research, it is common to collect both primary and secondary data. Primary data is self-generated, and for this research, conducting a survey is considered as the most appropriate method. MG and other Chinese car brands have only recently begun distributing and selling their products in Finland, so there is limited prior research or secondary data concerning this phenomenon.

Questionnaire can be either self-administered or researcher administered. Self-administered questionnaires involve standardized questions, so all respondents receive an identical set of questions with the same wording. They are cost-effective and easy to administer to larger groups. A questionnaire can include either open-ended or closed-ended questions, or a combination of both. Closed-ended questions limit responses to a fixed set of options and are best used to collect quantitative data on categorical variables. These questions are ideal for performing statistical analyses (Ojasalo, Moilanen, Ritalahti 2022).

The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered and to include mainly closed-ended questions. This decision was made because the goal was to gather a substantial number of responses, and analysing open-ended questions would have been very time-consuming. Closed-ended questions are easier to analyse and draw conclusions from when the number of responses is large. To gather responses the survey was distributed through various social media channels, such as car-related Facebook groups and LinkedIn. This was considered as the most effective way to reach lead users, consumers who are well-aware and even ahead of the market in adopting new

products. Lead users are a highly valuable group of either current or potential customers. They can play a key role in discovering future opportunities or for assessing new ideas. Gained insights from lead users can produce rich information relatively efficiently (University of Cambridge).

The survey was designed with the aim of defining the current relationship the respondent has with the MG brand while also exploring perceptions of Chinese car brands. The respondents' background details, such as age, gender, and geographic location, are vital data that can provide valuable insights for the commissioning company's marketing and brand strategy. In Keller's book *Strategic Brand Management*, a set of questions is listed for measuring each step of the brand resonance pyramid, ranging from the lowest step of brand salience to the highest step of brand resonance. This set of questions was used to develop the base of questions for the survey. The set of questions was designed and agreed upon with personnel from the commissioning company. The data collection and administration of the survey was conducted through Google Forms.

### **3.3 Methods of Data Analysis**

The survey generated a mass of quantitative data which needed to be analysed. IBM SPSS Statistics was used for in depth data analysis and to examine correlations. Keller's Brand Equity Model was used as a framework for evaluating brand perception, consumer loyalty and the overall strength of the MG brand. Before data analysis the collected data was cleaned and screened for completeness and accuracy. The used data analysis methods provided a thorough understanding of brand equity factors using Keller's framework. Descriptive and inferential techniques allowed for a thorough examination of brand awareness, consumer judgment, and emotional resonance.

Descriptive statistics was used for summarizing and organizing the data to make it more understandable. This involved methods for describing the main features of the dataset. Various measures indicated the medians and variances of data. To effectively communicate the findings of the data analysis, various data visualization tools such as bar charts, and pie charts were used. Descriptive statistics is important when summarizing large amounts of data and in a meaningful way. It provides insight into the trends and patterns while aiding the exploration of data before applying it to inferential statistics. Inferential statistics is a branch of statistics which enables the formation of conclusions or predictions about a larger population based on a generated set of data. Contrary to descriptive statistics which simply summarizes data, inferential statistics uses theories of probability to generalize findings beyond an immediate dataset.

### **3.4 Evaluation of the Development Task**

The research collected vital data for evaluating the current state of brand awareness. The results concerning the development task relied greatly on the research, which type of consumer data was found and collected during the data collection phase. If the questionnaire succeeded in collecting a mass of relevant, recent, and valuable consumer data it would provide more vital information for the development task and aid in creating a more efficient plan for the growing the brand.

It is quite difficult to directly evaluate the accomplishment of the development task, and the results cannot be directly evaluated. The number of responses received can be considered as one factor of accomplishment. The results of the research and the brand growth plan were presented to and evaluated by relevant personnel of the commissioning company. The evaluation is based on the opinions of the commissioning company's representatives. It depends on their thoughts concerning how valuable/effective they see the research results and the formed growth plan for increasing MG's brand awareness.

## 4 Research Results

This chapter presents the results of the research. The survey gained a mass of responses in a short period, 373 responses in total were collected. The response-link to the survey was posted on the author's personal LinkedIn-profile and Facebook-profile. It was also posted on Facebook groups: Sähköautot – Nyt, MG-sähköautot, BYD-sähköautot and Tesla Club Finland. The majority of responses were most likely collected from the Facebook-group Sähköautot – Nyt which at the time had over 52 thousand members.

The following subchapters will examine the responses to parts of the survey. Each subchapter presents the most vital results considering the development task. The final subchapters go more in depth to the data analysis conducted through IBM SPSS Statistics-software, the validity and reliability of the research results will also be critically examined.

### 4.1 Background Information

This subchapter presents the results of the questions which focused on background information and respondent demographics. The respondent's gender, age and living region in Finland were collected. The questions also aimed to form an understanding of the respondents' car ownership, evaluate their general knowledge of cars and the importance of the car brand in purchase consideration.

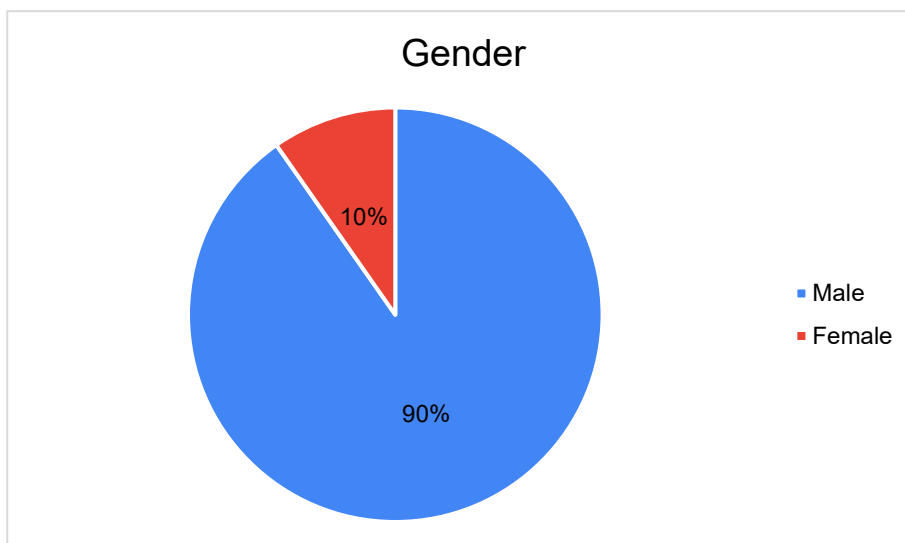


Figure 6: Respondents' gender distribution

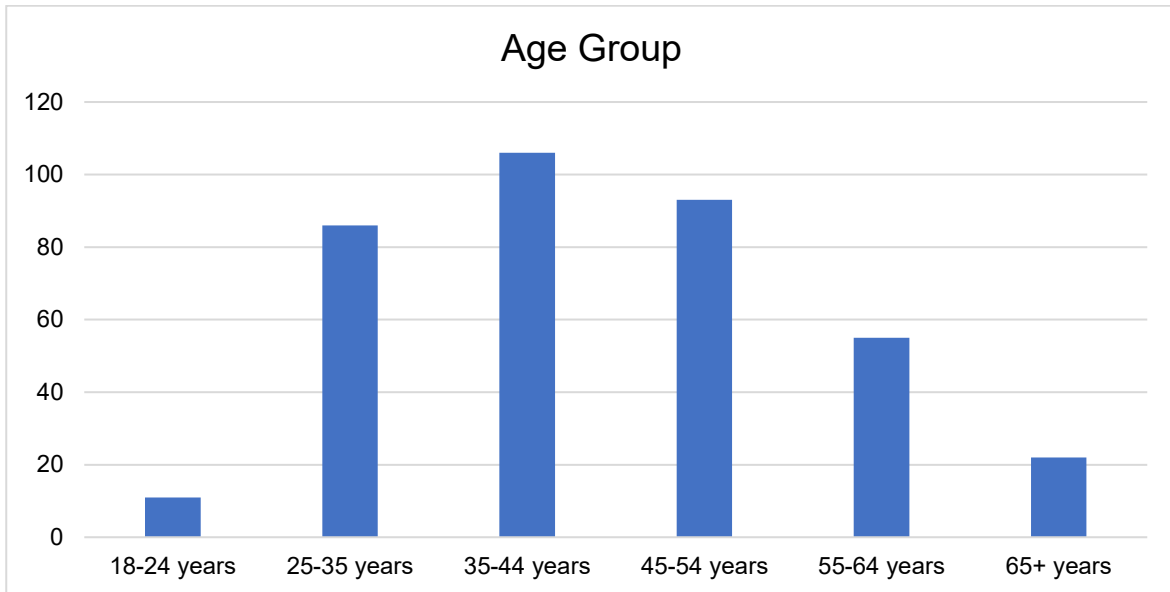


Figure 7: Respondent age groups

A majority of the respondents were male, 90% and only 10% female. The largest age group is 35-44 years, followed closely by 45-54 and 25-35, indicating that the majority of respondents are middle-aged.

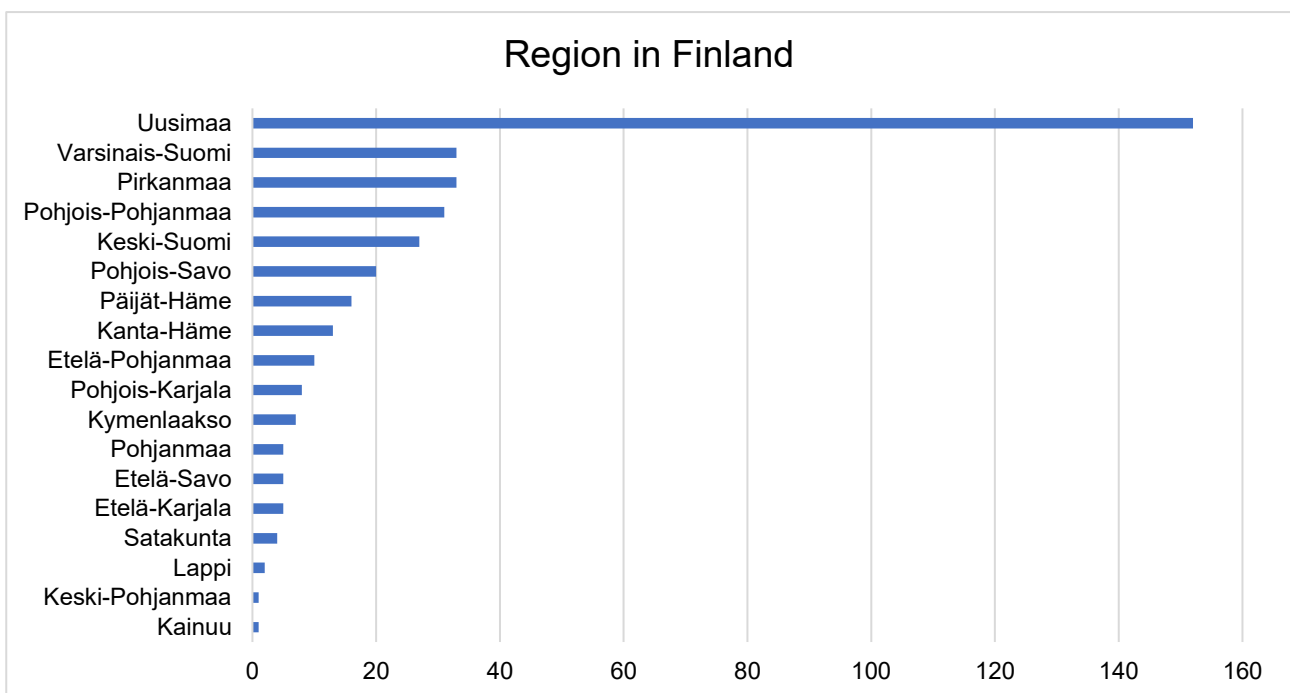


Figure 8: Respondents' regional distribution

Uusimaa vastly outnumbers all other regions with respondents, which was expected being the most populated region. Pirkanmaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa and Keski-Suomi have moderate representation, since they are also highly populated regions. The other regions are more rural so the number of respondents from these regions are few.

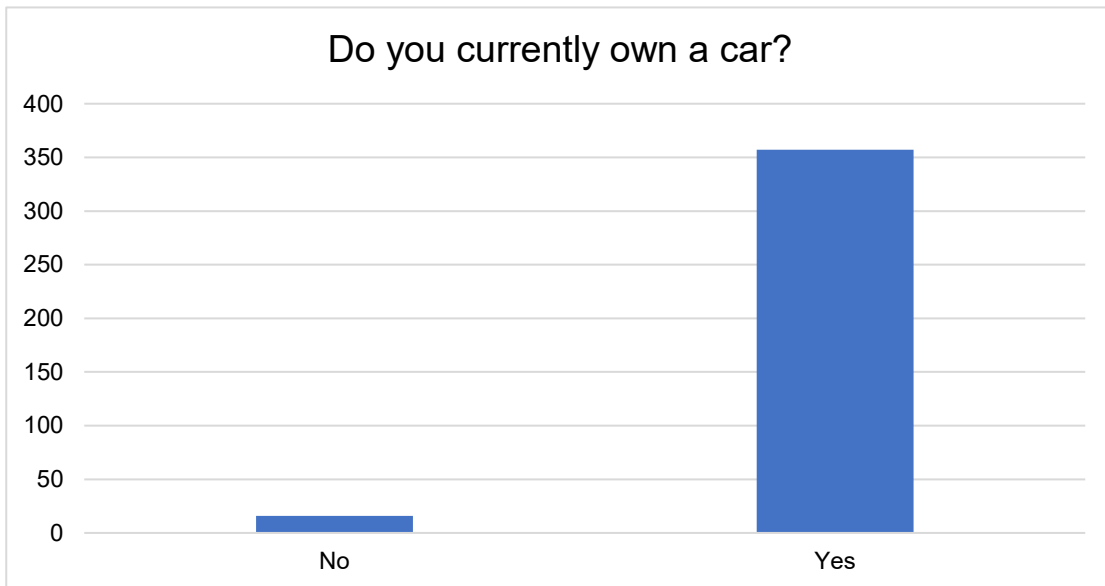


Figure 9: Respondents' car ownership

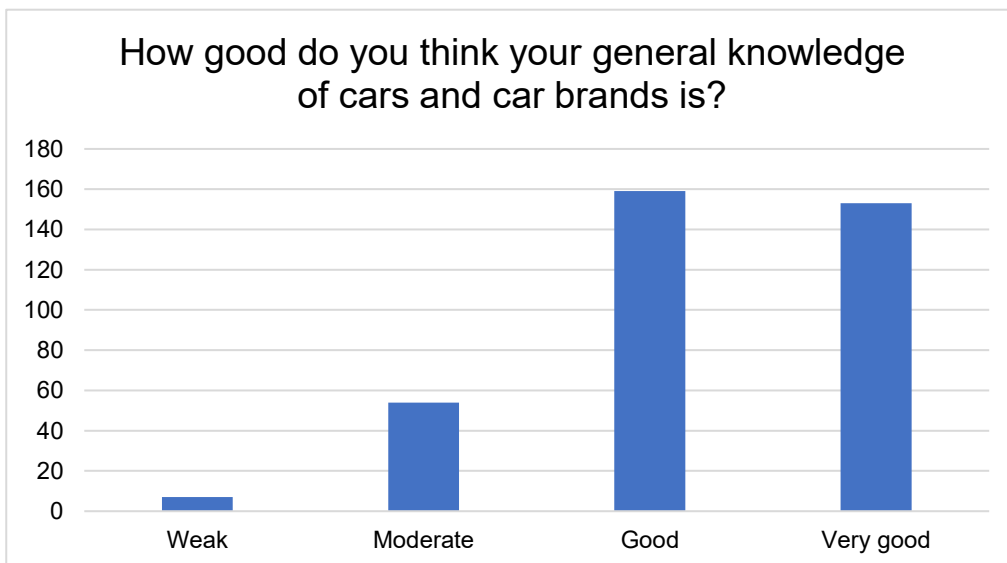
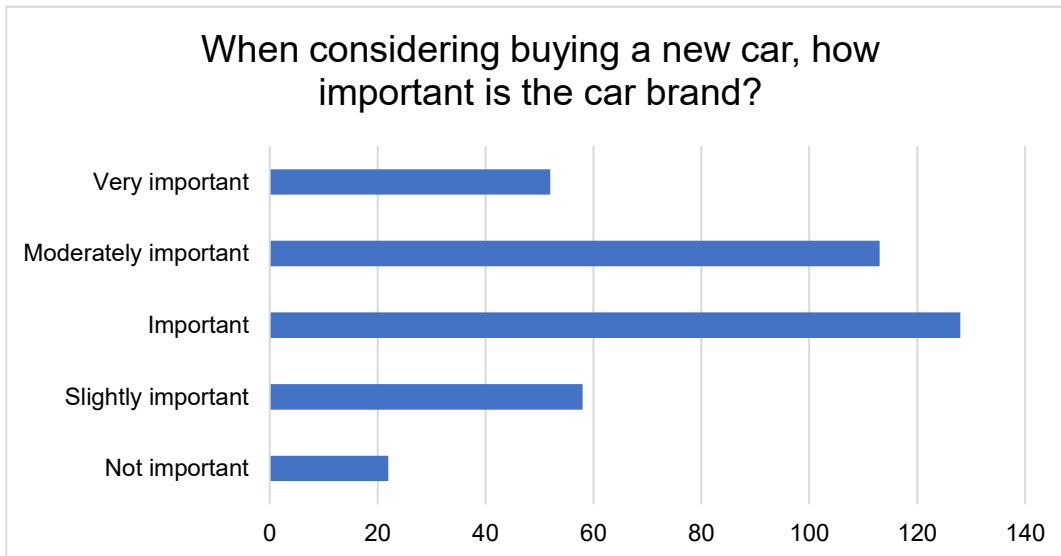


Figure 10: Evaluation of general car and car brand knowledge

A vast majority of the respondents currently own a car (Yes: 357, No: 16). The respondents also consider their general knowledge of cars and car brands to be quite good. 302 respondents evaluated their knowledge either good or very good.

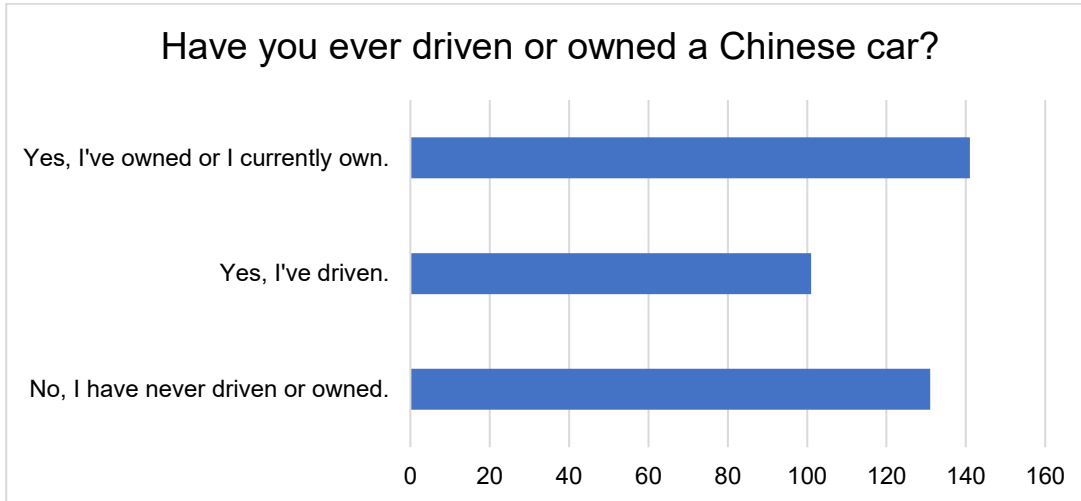


*Figure 11: The importance of car brand in purchase consideration*

There is a noticeable preference among the respondents who favour the importance of the car brand when considering the purchase of a new car (average rating 3.35 out of 5).

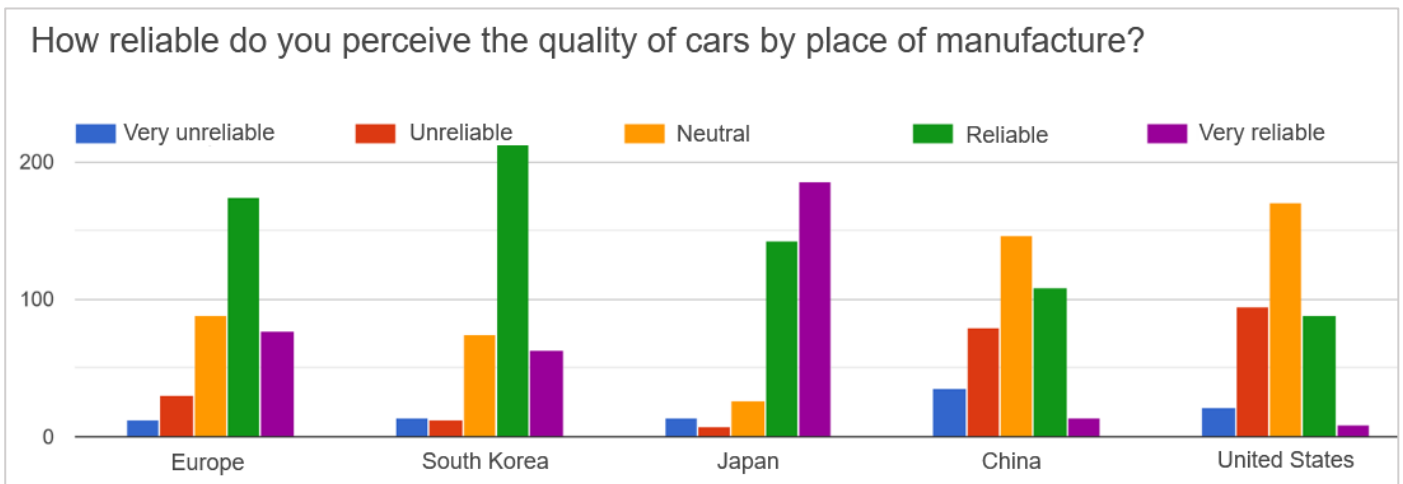
## **4.2 Chinese Car Brands**

This subchapter presents the survey results for the part of the questionnaire which concerned Chinese car brands as a whole. The questions were designed to and aimed to form an understanding of current consumer perceptions.



*Figure 12: Respondent's direct experience with Chinese cars*

131 respondents had never driven or owned a Chinese car; 101 respondents had driven and 141 respondents either had owned or currently own a Chinese car.



*Figure 13: Perceptions of reliability on car quality based on place of manufacture*

According to the responses Japanese cars are perceived to have the best quality, 181 respondents felt that Japanese cars are very reliable. South Korean cars are perceived next as the more reliable, 214 respondents answered that South Korean cars are reliable. European cars are perceived as the 3rd reliable after Japan and South Korea. The responses concerning Chinese and American

cars are quite similar, but it's clear that according to responses they are perceived as worse quality than South Korean and Japanese cars.

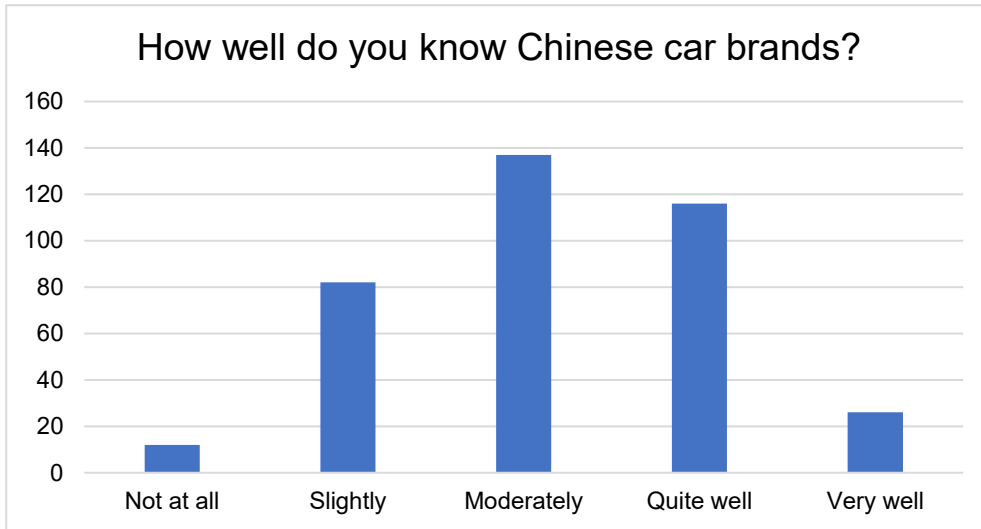


Figure 14: Respondents' Chinese car brands knowledge

The average respondent rating for their knowledge of Chinese car brands is 3.17 out of 5, so relatively good. There was also a question with multiple options for which Chinese car brands do the respondents recognize. MG had the highest amount 360, followed by Polestar 353, BYD 351, Maxus 324, XPENG 263, Geely 260, Hongqi 241, NIO 201 and Voyah 183.

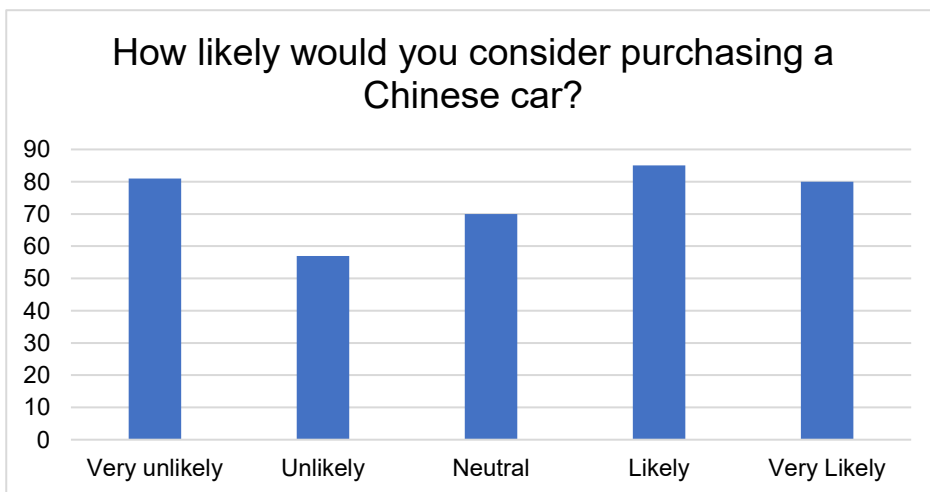


Figure 15: Likelihood for purchasing a Chinese car

The respondents had a slight preference for the likelihood to purchase a Chinese car; the average rating was 3.07 out of 5. Although a large number of respondents did consider it as very unlikely.

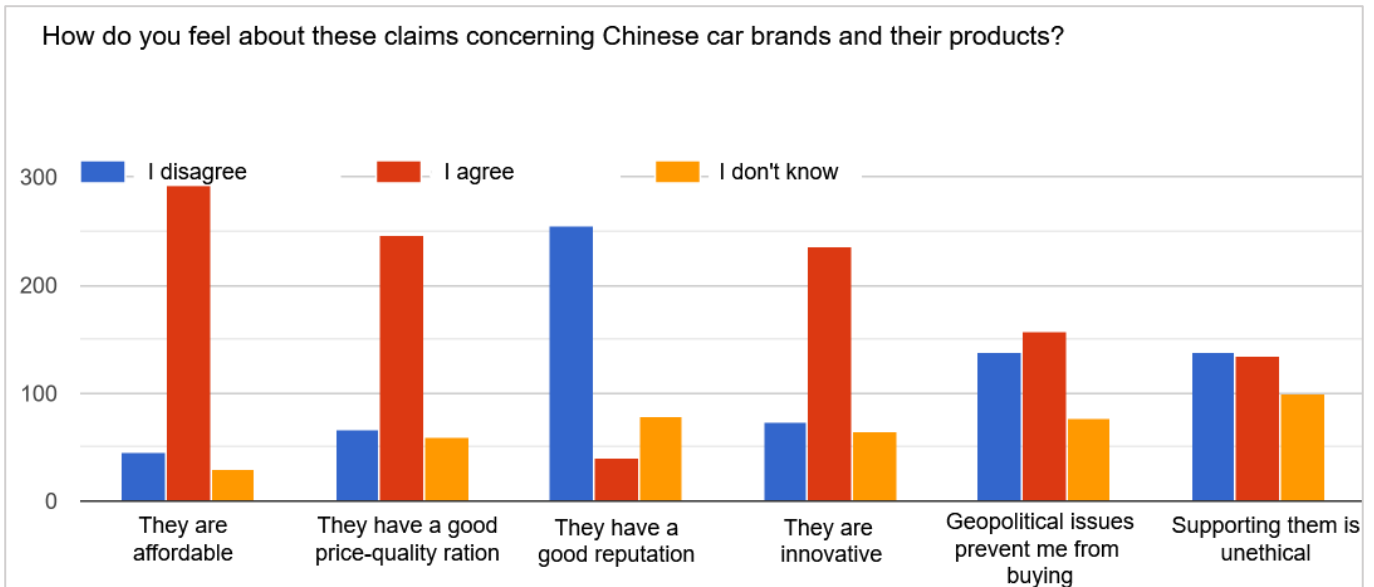


Figure 16: Respondents' views per statement

The responses concerning respondent feelings about presented claims are quite interesting. 297 respondents felt that Chinese car brands and their products are affordable. 247 respondents felt that that Chinese cars have a good price-quality ratio. 255 respondents did not agree with the claim that Chinese car brands have a good reputation. 236 respondents agreed with the claim that Chinese car brands and their products are innovative. The slight majority of respondents felt that geopolitical issues prevent them from buying a Chinese car, 158 respondents agreed with the claim, 138 did not agree and 77 did not know how they felt about the claim. The slight majority of respondents however did not agree with the claim that supporting Chinese car brand is unethical. 138 respondents disagreed, 135 respondents agreed and 100 did not know how they felt about the claim.

### 4.3 MG Brand (Keller's Brand Equity Model)

This subchapter presents the results of the latter part of the questionnaire which focused more in depth on the MG brand's strength in Finland in relation to Keller's Brand Equity Model. Each part

contained a set of questions which evaluated the brand's strength and respondent's opinions concerning the MG brand in relation to Keller's model.

#### 4.3.1 Brand Identity

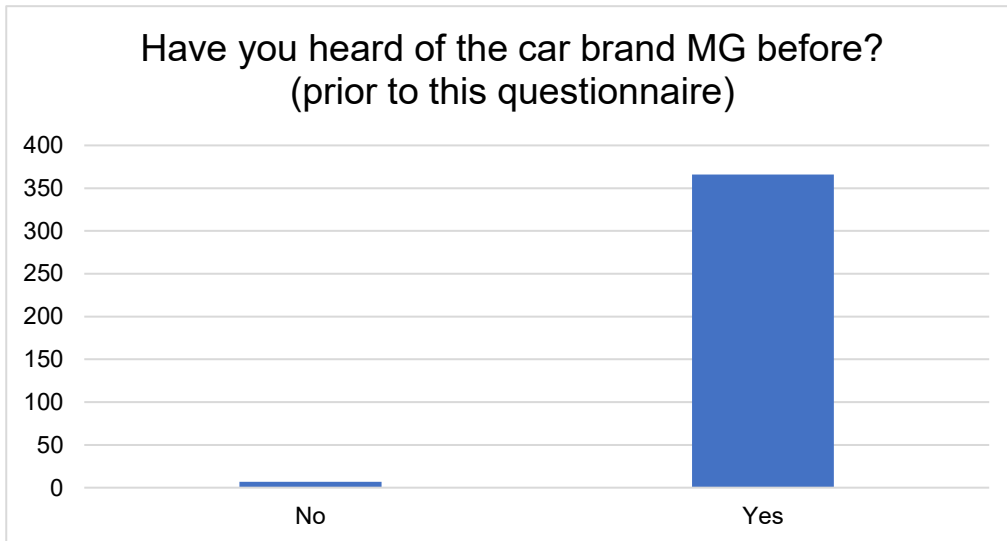


Figure 17: Respondents' prior knowledge of the MG brand

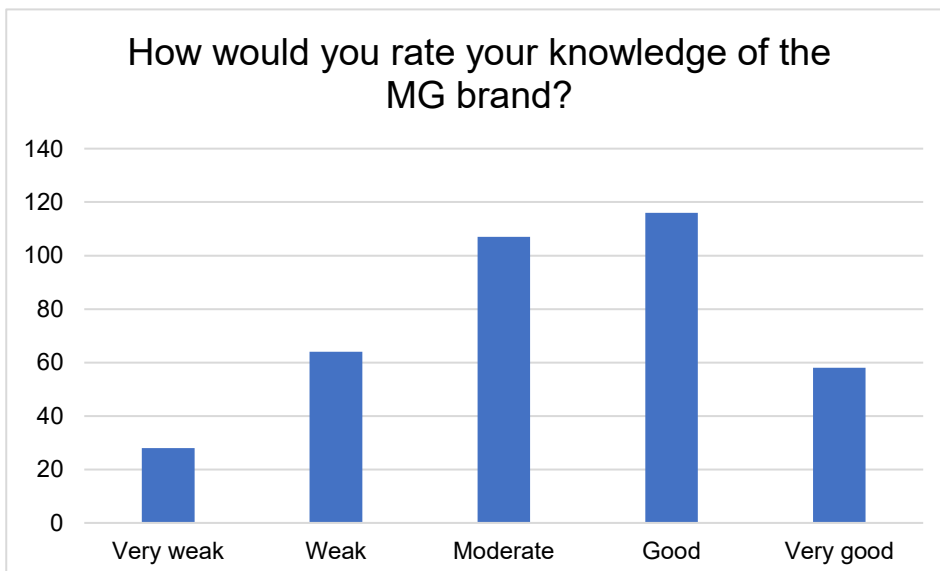


Figure 18: Respondents' rating of MG brand knowledge

The majority of respondents had heard of the MG brand before. Only 7 respondents had not heard of the brand prior to the questionnaire. The respondents rated their knowledge of the MG brand to an average of 3.30 out of 5.

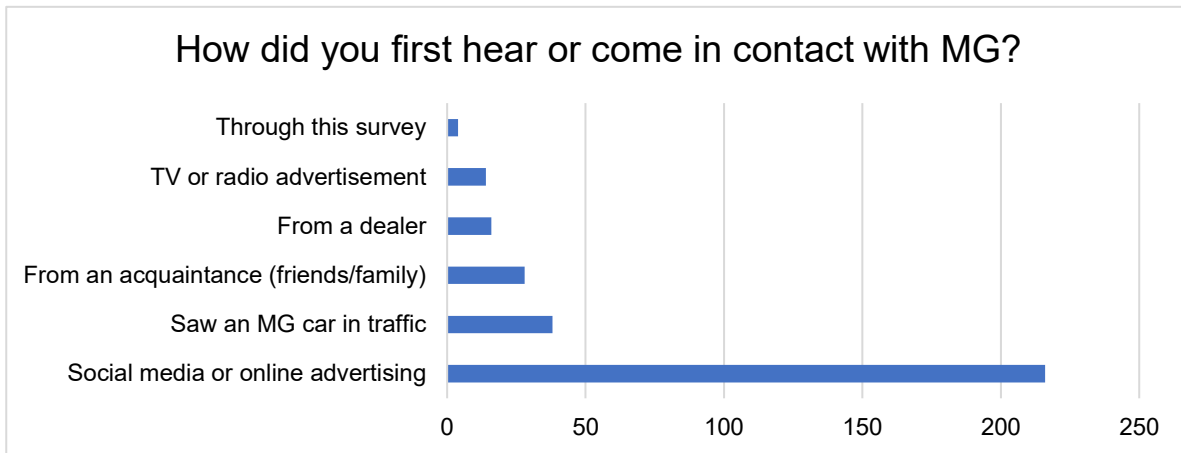


Figure 19: First point of contact with MG

The majority of respondents had first come in contact with the MG brand through social media or other online advertising, although there was also a large number of respondents who answered the open-ended question and had known the brand already as a British sports car brand.

#### 4.3.2 Brand Meaning

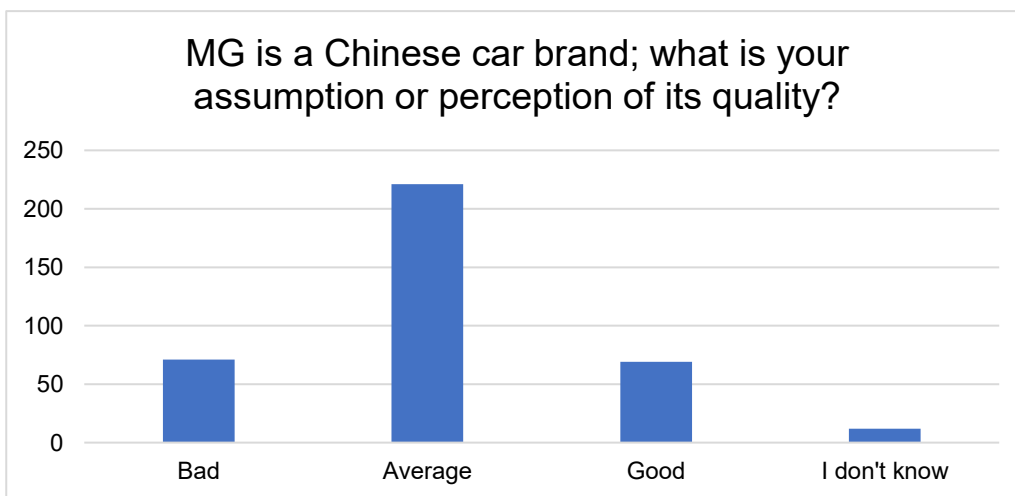


Figure 20: Assumptions of MG's quality

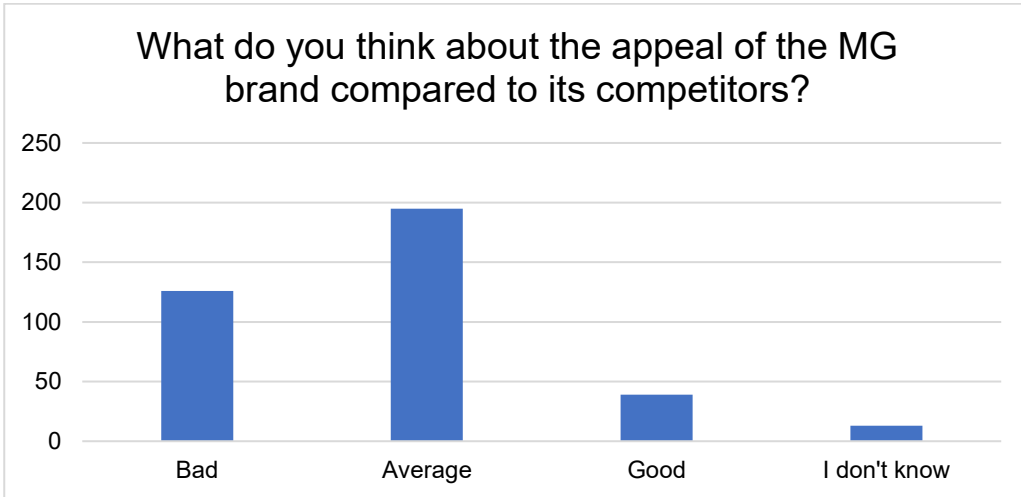


Figure 21: MG’s brand appeal in relation to competitors

The perception of MG’s quality among respondents is average. 221 respondents perceive the quality to be average, 71 perceived it as bad and 69 respondents as good. The appeal of MG in comparison to competitors was majorly seen as worse. 126 respondents rated it worse, 195 as average and only 39 rated it good.

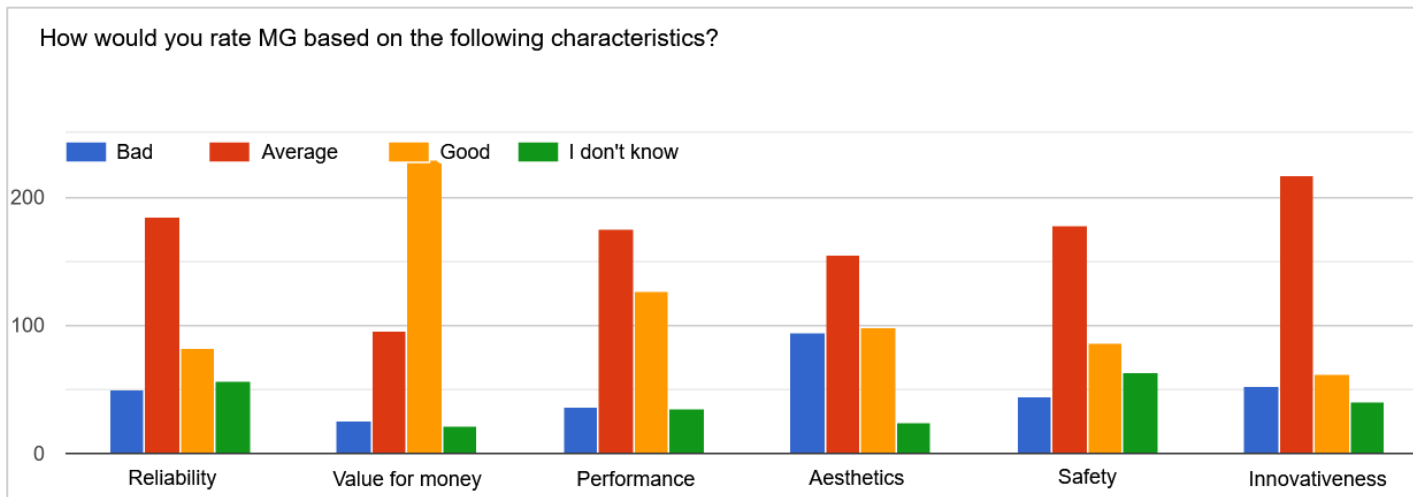


Figure 22: Rating MG based on chosen characteristics

The next rating question asked respondents to rate MG based on certain characteristics. The majority of respondents rated average on reliability (184 responses). Value for money was seen as

better, 229 respondents rated it as good. The rating for performance was also seen as better than average, 175 respondents rated it as average and 127 as good. Aesthetics rating was also slightly better than average, 155 rated it average and 99 as good. Safety also was better than average, 175 average ratings and 86 good. Innovativeness was seen majorly as average, with 217 average ratings.

#### 4.3.3 Brand Response

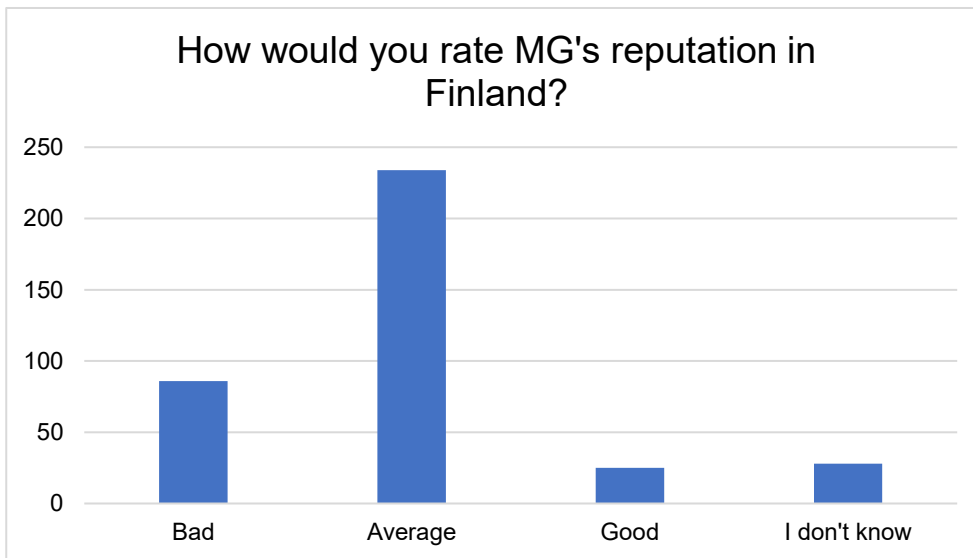


Figure 23: Rating MG's reputation in Finland

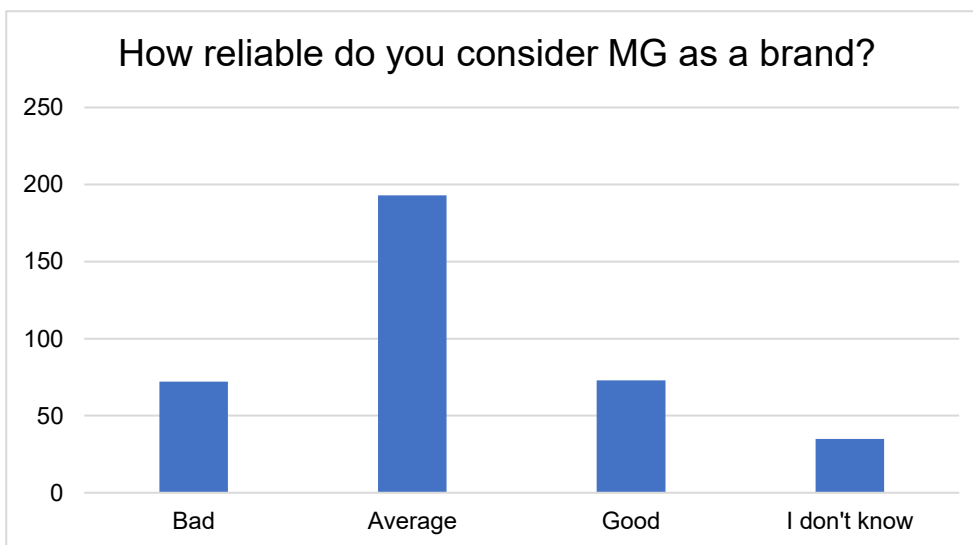
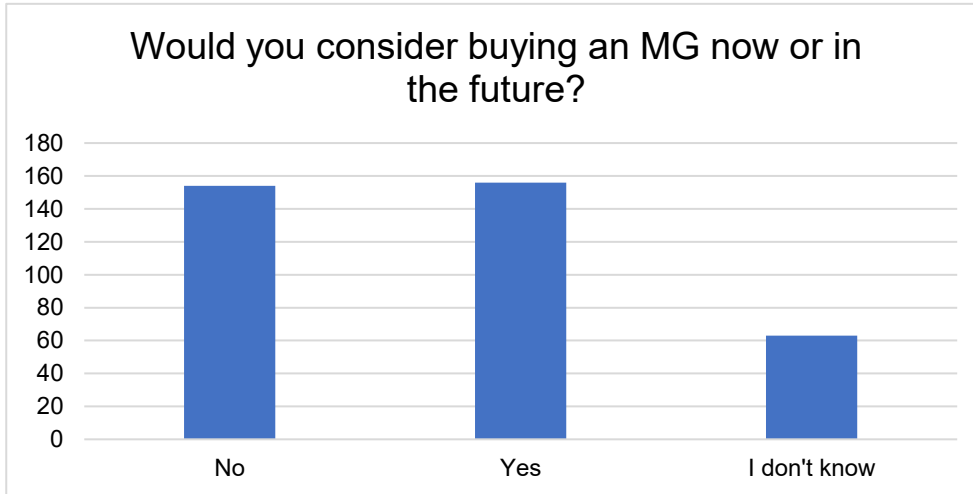


Figure 24: Respondents' reliability rating of MG

The respondents rated MG's reputation in Finland worse than average. 234 respondents rated it as average and 86 as bad. The rating of MG's reliability was average, the responses were 72 bad, 193 average and 73 good.



*Figure 25: MG purchase consideration*

The responses for whether respondents would consider buying an MG were split almost evenly, 154 no and 156 yes responses. 63 respondents did not know. The open text question for reasons that prevented respondents from buying an MG were mainly related to the brand's Chinese origin and being made in China.

#### 4.3.4 Brand Resonance

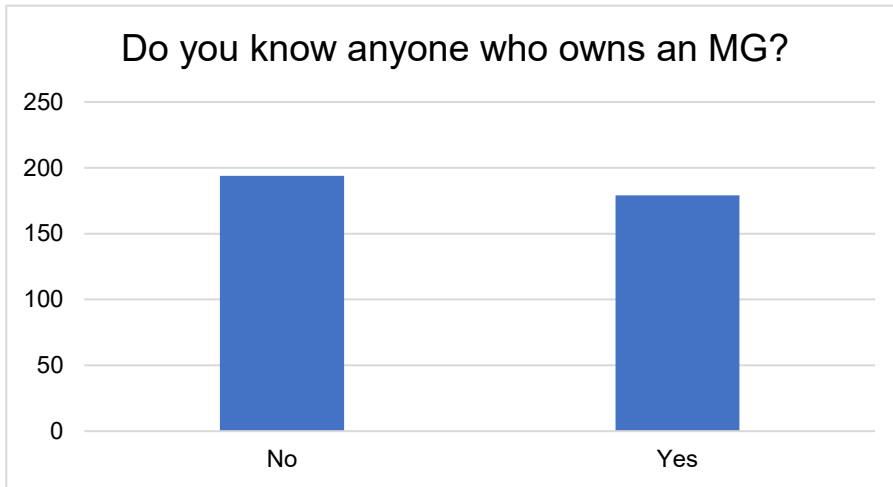


Figure 26: Respondents' knowledge of anyone owning an MG

The majority of respondents (194 responses) did not know anyone who owns an MG. 179 respondents did know someone who owns one.

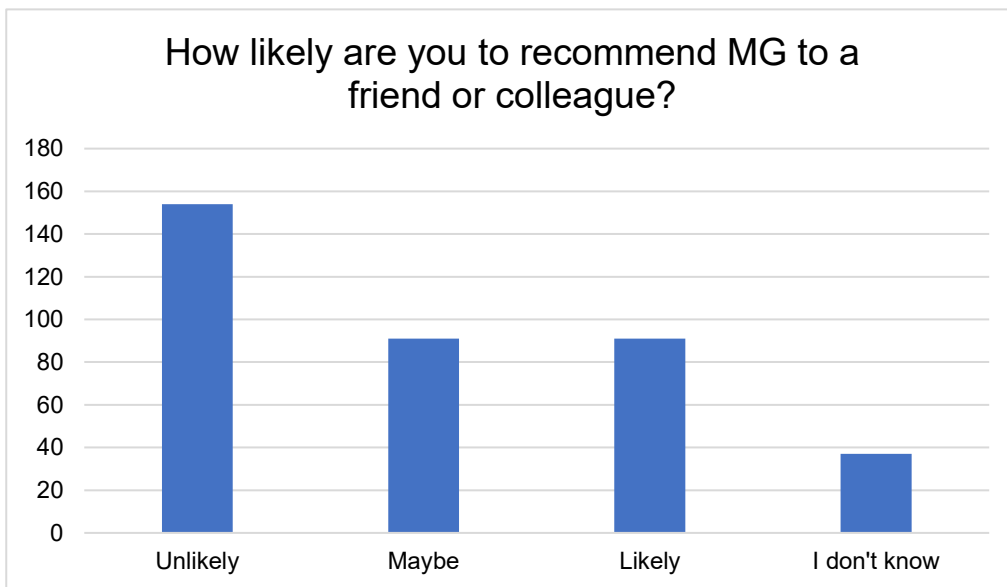
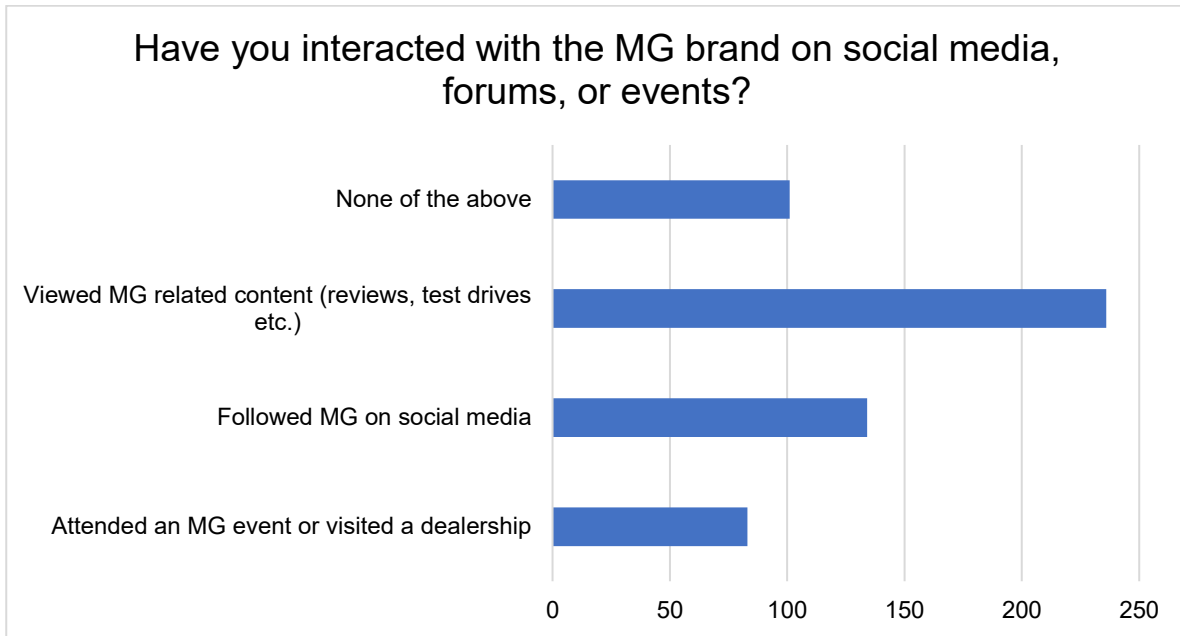


Figure 27: MG Recommendation likelihood



*Figure 28: Interaction with the MG brand on social media, forums or events*

The majority of respondents would unlikely recommend MG to a friend or a colleague (unlikely: 154, maybe: 91, likely: 91). 236 respondents had viewed content related to MG including reviews, test drives and/or commercials. 134 respondents had followed MG on social media. 83 respondents had attended an MG related event or visited an MG dealership. 101 respondents had not interacted with the brand in any of the mentioned options.

#### **4.4 Correlations (IBM SPSS)**

Nonparametric tests were conducted using IBM SPSS to examine relevant hypotheses. Based on the results and specifically where significant correlation was found or not, certain variables were selected for further analysis. Means and proportions were then compared and visualized. The most noteworthy findings are presented in the graphs. The key respondent background factors were considered to be age group, living region and gender. However, after conducting nonparametric tests, no significant correlations were found between the various living regions.

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. <sup>a,b</sup>	Decision
The distribution of General Knowledge Of Car Brands is the same across categories of Age Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.019	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Car Brand Importance is the same across categories of Age Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.040	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Rating Knowledge Of MG is the same across categories of Age Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.046	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of MG Performance Rating is the same across categories of Age Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.003	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of MG Safety Rating is the same across categories of Age Group.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.018	Reject the null hypothesis.

Figure 29: Hypothesis Test Summary (Age Groups)

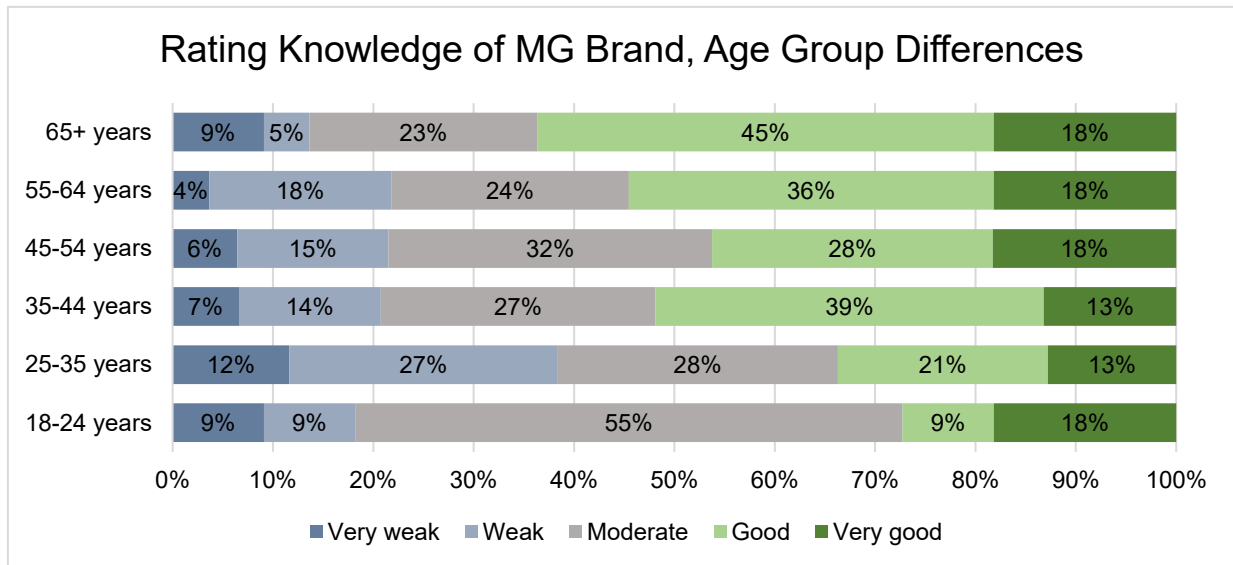
Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. <sup>a,b</sup>	Decision
The distribution of General Knowledge Of Car Brands is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Manufacture Origin Rating (Europe) is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.019	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Manufacture Origin Rating (Japan) is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Manufacture Origin Rating (China) is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.015	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Manufacture Origin Rating (USA) is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.008	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Chinese Brand Knowledge Rating is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Rating Knowledge Of MG is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.007	Reject the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Rating Of MG Compared To Competitors is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.047	Reject the null hypothesis.

Figure 30: Hypothesis Test Summary (Gender)

Based on the hypothesis test summaries of age groups and gender the most important ones were selected for further analysis. "Retain the null hypothesis" have been removed. Significant correlation was found for multiple responses. The knowledge rating of the MG brand was considered as the most important for age groups, due to it being directly related to the level of brand awareness. For gender the origin of manufacture rating for Chinese cars was considered to be the most important, it provides interesting insight in gender related perceptions.

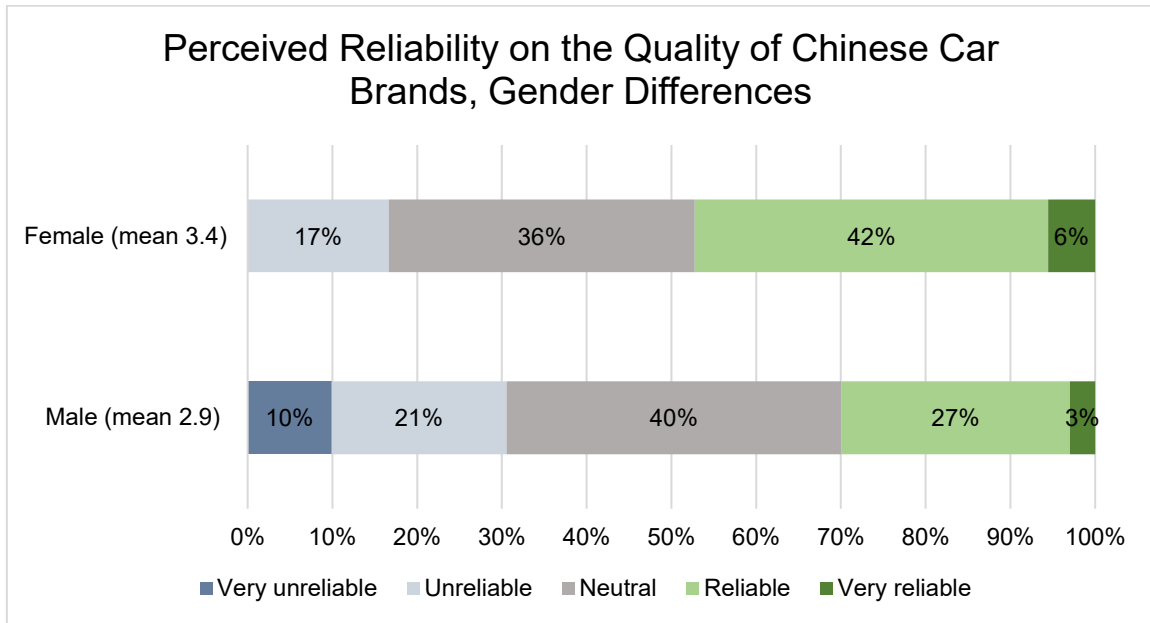
Overall, respondents rated their general knowledge of car brands as very high. The highest average rating was 4.73 out of 5 among 18-24-year-olds, while the lowest average was 4.04 out of 5

among 55–64-year-olds. The importance of car brand when considering the purchase of a new car was also the highest among the 18-24-year-olds (3.64) and 25-35-year-olds (3.60). Whereas the 55-64-year-olds (3.05) and 65+-year-olds (3.18) rated brand importance the lowest on average.



*Figure 31: Correlation of rating knowledge of MG brand and age group*

Significant correlation was found between age groups and the respondents' knowledge rating of the MG brand. The oldest age groups 65+-year-olds (3.59) and the 55-64-year-olds (3.47) had the highest average rating out of 5. Whereas the 25-35-year-olds (2.97) and the 18-24-year-olds (3.18) had the lowest rating. This correlation could be linked to the history of the MG brand; the older age groups most probably relate their knowledge of MG to brand's historical sports cars.



*Figure 32: Correlation of perceive reliability on quality of Chinese cars and gender*

Significant correlation was found between gender and the perceived reliability on the quality of cars based on place of manufacture. Based on the results female respondents did also consider their general knowledge of car brands, Chinese car brands and of MG lower on average than male respondents. Female respondents considered the quality of Chinese car brands to be more reliable than male respondents. The average for female respondents is 3.36 out of 5, whereas for male respondents the average is 2.93. Female respondents (3.81) on average considered the perceived reliability on the quality of Japanese cars to be lower than male respondents (4.33). The perceived reliability on the quality of European and American cars was on the other hand also higher among female respondents than male respondents.

#### **4.5 Reliability and Validity of the Results**

Ensuring the reliability and validity of the research results are critical for evaluation of the quality and trustworthiness of drawn conclusions. This subchapter critically examines the reliability and validity of the conducted research. Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the research over time and across various contexts. Validity concerns whether the research actually measured what it intended to (Scribbr).

A total of 373 responses were collected, this provided a solid sample size for the data analysis. The relatively large number of respondents enhances the consistency and reliability of the research findings. The survey was distributed through personal LinkedIn and Facebook profiles and multiple large and active Facebook groups which are related to electric vehicles and relevant car brands. The distribution method ensured that the exposure was rapid and widespread. The chosen method proved to be very effective and suitable for the set timeframe for the data collection phase. The chosen method targeted lead users and the majority of respondents most likely are them. Having joined relevant social media groups thus expressing interest in electric vehicles, Chinese car brands, and newer automotive technologies. The responses also show that the respondents considered themselves that their knowledge of cars and car brands is very high. As the majority of respondents are lead users the representativeness of the broader Finnish population in the results is limited.

The survey was structured carefully with closed-ended questions and standardized rating scales which minimized interpretation differences among the respondents. The use of IBM SPSS for deeper data analysis further ensured the systematic handling of the data. Correlations within the data showed logical consistency, respondents who rated their knowledge of cars and car brands highly also tended to recognize more car brands. IBM SPSS could have been used even more for data analysis and the examination of correlations. However, the program was new to the author and the timeframe for this stage of the research was limited. In the survey there were also some open-ended questions, but their analysis would be very time consuming. The open questions will however be presented to the commission company in a presentation of the research results. It must be acknowledged that because participation was voluntary responses may reflect stronger opinions than would be found in a fully random sample.

The questionnaire was well-designed and covered essential aspects for assessing brand awareness, perceptions of quality, likelihood of purchase, and the various components of Keller's Brand Equity Pyramid. The set range of questions ensured extensive data collection on the key constructs. There were multiple related questions for measuring theoretical concepts such as brand reliability, brand reputation and purchase intent. The direct rating scales and agreement with statements were effectively used for assessing perceptions. The research findings are strongly valid for the target group, however generalizing the results to the entire Finnish population should be done with caution. The majority of respondents were middle-aged and 90% male, nearly 50% of respondents were from the Uusimaa region. Internal validity within the survey is recognizable since clear relationships between variables were found. For example, the correlation of perceived quality of Chinese cars and willingness to purchase suggests that the findings reflect actual patterns rather than random variation.

Overall, the results can be considered reliable and valid within the context of the survey population. The results of the research provide a solid foundation for understanding consumer perceptions of Chinese car brands and MG's current brand positioning in Finland. However, the identified limitations require caution when attempting to generalize the findings to the broader Finnish market without further studies.

## 5 Conclusion

This chapter presents conclusions based on both the theoretical framework and the research findings. Based on these conclusions the chapter and thesis conclude on creating a plan for the commissioning company to improve the MG brand's strength in Finland. Based on the identified issues concerning Chinese car brands and the MG brand's current strength in Finland a set of actions can be created which Hedin MG Finland should consider and emphasize in their marketing efforts. With the end goal of forming a stronger brand with a loyal customer base and increased sales numbers.

The research set out with the goal of investigating current consumer perceptions of Chinese car brands, as the topic is very relevant in the global automotive industry. Chinese car brands have increased imports and are taking over market share in foreign markets. MG has recently been re-launched in Finland under Chinese ownership and the brand has been reborn. The particular focus was on MG and understanding the current brand strength in Finland using Keller's Brand Equity Pyramid as a framework. The survey was distributed mainly through social media channels such as Facebook groups and LinkedIn. The survey received an impressive 373 responses in a short time period.

Demographically the respondents to the survey were majorly male (90%), and the most dominant age groups were 25-35-year-olds (86), 35-44-year-olds (106), and 45-54-year-olds (93), thus indicating a mostly middle-aged audience. Geographically the responses did reflect Finland's population distribution, the vast majority of respondents were from Uusimaa (152). The majority of respondents currently own a car (357, 95.7%) and they considered their automotive knowledge to be strong. The importance of a brand when considering the purchase of a new car was rated moderately high (average rating 3.35 out of 5), which reinforces that brand reputation plays a crucial role in making purchase decisions.

The results concerning Chinese car brands showed mixed but still on average moderately positive attitudes. Many respondents did not yet have direct experience of driving or owning a Chinese car (35.1%), although a large amount had driven (27.1%) and owned or currently own one (37.8%). The most recognized Chinese car brands were MG, BYD, Maxus and XPENG which have already launched distribution and sales in Finland. Japanese and South Korean cars were considered to be the most reliable, while Chinese and American cars were perceived less favourably. A slight majority of respondents (average rating 3.07 out of 5) did however show willingness for purchasing a Chinese cars, their affordability and perceived innovation were valued. The results do however show apparent concerns for brand reputation, geopolitical and ethical issues.

In relation to Keller's Brand Equity Pyramid the results provide valuable insight into MG's brand equity in Finland:

- **Brand Identity:** Awareness of the MG brand was found to be strong, and most respondents were already familiar with the brand prior to the questionnaire (98.1%). The average rating of respondents' knowledge of the MG brand was 3.30 out of 5. 216 respondents had heard of MG via social media or online advertising. The brand was also known for its historical British roots.
- **Brand Meaning:** Perceptions of MG's quality and the brand's appeal in comparison to competitors were generally rated as average. Value for money and performance were seen more positively, whereas brand reliability, aesthetics, safety and innovativeness were rated more average.
- **Brand Response:** The reputation of MG was found to be slightly weaker than its competitors. Brand reliability was rated as average and the openness for purchasing an MG car was divided quite evenly (No: 41.3%, Yes: 41.8%). Scepticism was found to be primarily due to concerns related to Chinese manufacturing.
- **Brand Resonance:** The personal connections to MG owners were limited, brand recommendations were also infrequent. Many respondents had engaged with MG content online, but fewer had had deeper brands interactions such as visiting a dealership or participating in an event.

The research indicates that Chinese car brands, specifically MG are making progress within the Finnish market, but they still do face several challenges. These include overcoming lingering concerns among consumers concerning quality, brand reputation and geopolitical issues. Strengths such as competitive pricing, innovation and increasing brand visibility do however offer promise for growth. The findings of the research provide a strong foundation for further research and for strategic development related to Chinese car brands in Finland.

Based on the insights formed through the research and related marketing theory a marketing plan can be developed which addresses the identified challenges and focuses on MG's strengths. The proposed plan for Hedin MG Finland focuses on several key areas for brand strength which are enhancing brand reputation, communicating quality more effectively, addressing the geopolitical and ethical concerns, forming stronger emotional connections and expanding brand visibility through targeted digital engagement.

For strengthening MG's brand reputation in Finland, the British heritage of MG should be promoted. In comparison to the other Chinese car brands entering European markets MG has a significant advantage due to the ownership of a brand which already has an extensive past of operating in Europe. MG offers a 7-year warranty for all models which is very extensive, for example Kia has offered the same and actively promoted this during their European launch in early 2000s. This was a key factor for Kia's growth in Europe and surely aided in the brand's rapid growth in the market. MG's models have also been successful in Euro NCAP-tests which is the European New Car Assessment Programme. A five-star safety rating systems which helps consumers identify the safest choice for their needs. MG's current model offering in Finland consists of models which have all received a 4- or 5-star rating, this should be actively promoted in order to promote safety and for overcoming these concerns among Finnish consumers.

Concerns related to geopolitical issues and the ethicality of Chinese car brands were identified as purchase barriers for a large portion of respondents. For the mitigation of such concerns the global supply chain, production standards and ethical practices including environmental responsibility should be communicated openly about for example through the brand's website [mgmotor.eu](http://mgmotor.eu). He-  
din MG Finland could also independently engage in sustainability projects which support local initiatives thus positioning and improving the image of MG as a socially responsible and community-focused brand.

The results also indicated low levels of emotional engagement and personal connection with the MG brand. In order to foster stronger emotional ties community engagement is vital. Driving events, owner clubs, meet-ups or other gatherings should be organized to build a sense of belonging among MG owners and enthusiasts. These actions are extremely important in building a loyal customer base which also recommends the models of MG within their social groups. Current owners could also be encouraged to recommend MG by offering incentives such as services discounts or MG accessories.

The research identified moderate engagement levels especially among younger audiences who are highly active online. Presence on social media should be boosted by investing in localized Finnish content that is fun, relatable and value driven. Promoting customer experiences which showcase actual customers and their positive experiences with MG would also promote personal connections to the brand. They could be used to form a sense among consumers that MG is a reliable and noteworthy brand overcoming the perception as just some Chinese car brand. The use of influencers such as bloggers, YouTubers, TikTokers or other well-known individuals should not be overlooked. These collaborations can be effectively used to create authentic and trust-building content that often resonates well with the targeted consumer groups.

The Finnish car market has become increasingly competitive and globalized. It is even more essential for a brand like MG to differentiate from competitors not only by offering competitive pricing and features, but also through meaningful and authentic brand-building. For a new company the marketing budget is surely limited, it's thus important to optimize the efforts and costs for reaching optimal results. The findings of the research can be used to offer valuable guidance for elevating the MG brand's strength in the Finnish market. The careful implementation of the presented actions has potential to significantly impact the brand's strength and market presence. Still hesitant consumers can be converted into loyal customers which ultimately supports the growth of the brand and business success of Hedin MG Finland Oy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The Survey



## Kuluttajatutkimus // Kiinalaiset automerkit & MG

Hei,

Suoritan YAMK-opinnäytetyöhön liittyvää kuluttajatutkimusta kiinalaisista automerkeistä, erityisesti MG:stä.

Tutkimus toteutetaan yhteistyössä Hedin MG Finland Oy:n kanssa. Vastaukset kerätään anonymisti, eikä niissä käsitellä henkilötietoja, lukuun ottamatta yleisiä taustatietoja, kuten ikä, asuinpaikka ja sukupuoli. Tutkimuksen tulokset sekä opinnäytetyö julkaistaan Theseus-tietokannassa.

Vastaaminen kestää noin 5 minuuttia.

Kysely koostuu pääasiassa monivalintakysymyksistä, yhteensä noin 25 kappaleen verran. Kirjoitusta vaativat kysymykset eivät ole pakollisia, mutta niihin vastaaminen on tärkeää tutkimuksen kannalta.

Kiitos paljon osallistumisestasi! 😊

Ystävällisin terveisin,  
Janne Lehtinen  
YAMK-opiskelija  
Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu

\* Pakollinen kysymys

Sukupuoli? \*

- Mies
- Nainen
- Muu
- En halua kertoa

Mihin ikäryhmään kuulut? \*

- 18-24 vuotta
- 25-35 vuotta
- 35-44 vuotta
- 45-54 vuotta
- 55-64 vuotta
- 65+ vuotta

Missä päin Suomea asut? \*

- 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

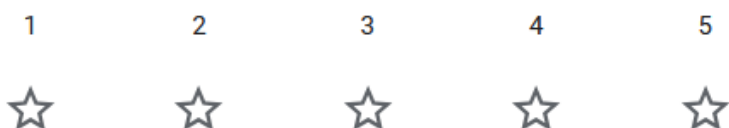
Omistatko auton tällä hetkellä? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei

Kuinka hyväksi koet yleisen tietämyksesi autoista ja automerkeistä? (1: erittäin heikko, 5: erittäin hyvä) \*



Kun pohdit uuden auton ostoa kuinka tärkeä kriteeri automerkki on? (1: ei tärkeä, 5: erittäin tärkeä) \*



### Kiinalaiset automerkit

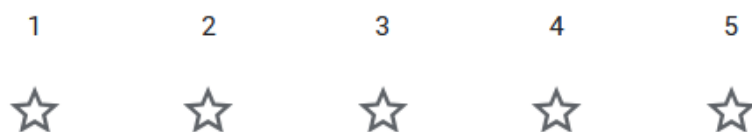
Oletko koskaan ajanut tai omistanut kiinalaista autoa? \*

- Kyllä, olen omistanut tai omistan tällä hetkellä.
- Kyllä, olen ajanut.
- En ole koskaan ajanut tai omistanut.

Kuinka luotettavaksi koet valmistumaa tai maanosa-kohtaisesti autojen laadun? \*

	Erittäin epäluotettava	Melko epäluotettava	Kohtalaisen luotettava	Melko luotettava	Erittäin luotettava
Eurooppa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Etelä-Korea	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Japani	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kiina	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yhdysvallat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Kuinka hyvin koet tuntevasi kiinalaisia automerkkejä? (1: en lainkaan, 5: erittäin hyvin) \*



Mitä seuraavista kiinalaisista automerkeistä tunnistat? \*

- BYD
- Chery
- Dongfeng
- Geely
- Great Wall Motors
- Hongqi
- IM Motors
- JAC
- Maxus
- MG
- NIO
- Polestar
- Roewe
- Voyah
- XPENG
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

Kuinka todennäköisesti harkitsisit kiinalaisen auton ostamista? (1: erittäin epätodennäköisesti, 5: erittäin todennäköisesti)



Miten suhtaudut kyseisiin väittämiin kiinalaisista automerkeistä ja niiden tuotteista? \*

En ole samaa mieltä    Olen samaa mieltä    En osaa sanoa

Ne ovat edullisia

Niissä on hyvä hinta-  
laatusuhde

Niillä on hyvä maine

Ne ovat innovatiivisia

Geopoliittiset asiat  
ovat hankintaeste

Niiden tukeminen on  
epäeettistä

**MG // Brand Identity**

Oletko ennen kuullut automerkistä MG? (ennen tätä kyselyä) \*

- Kyllä
- Ei

Miten arvioisit tietämyksesi MG-automerkistä? (1: erittäin heikko, 5: erittäin hyvä) \*



Kuinka kuulit ensimmäisen kerran MG:stä? \*

- Sosiaalinen media tai online-mainonta
- Tutulta (ystävät/perhe)
- TV tai Radio-mainos
- Jälleenmyyjältä
- Näin liikenteessä MG-auton
- Tämän kyselyn kautta
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

## MG // Brand Meaning

MG on kiinalainen automerkki, mikä on oletama tai näkemyksesi sen laadusta? \*

- Hyvä
- Keskierto
- Huono
- En osaa sanoa

Mitä mieltä olet MG-brändin vetovoimasta kilpailijoihin verrattuna? \*

- Hyvä
- Keskierto
- Huono
- En osaa sanoa

Miten arvioisit MG:tä seuraavien ominaisuuksien perusteella? \*

	Huono	Keskierto	Hyvä	En osaa sanoa
Luotettavuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vastinetta rahalle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Suorituskyky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Esteettisyys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Turvallisuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovatiivisuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**MG // Brand Response**

Miten arvioisit MG:n mainetta Suomessa? \*

- Hyvä
- Keskiverto
- Huono
- En osaa sanoa

Miten luotettavaksi koet MG:n automerkkinä? \*

- Hyvä
- Keskiverto
- Huono
- En osaa sanoa

Harkitsisitko MG-ajoneuvon ostamista nyt tai tulevaisuudessa? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei
- En osaa sanoa

Jos et, mitkä ovat tärkeimmät syyt, jotka estävät sinua ostamasta MG:tä?

Oma vastauksesi

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**MG // Brand Resonance**

Tunnetko henkilökohtaisesti ketään, joka omistaa MG:n? \*

- Kyllä
- Ei

Kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelisit MG:tä ystävällesi tai kollegallesi? \*

- Todennäköisesti
- Ehkä
- Epätodennäköisesti
- En osaa sanoa

Oletko ollut tekemisissä MG-brändin kanssa sosiaalisessa mediassa, foorumeilla \* tai tapahtumissa?

- Seurannut MG:tä sosiaalisessa mediassa
- Katselin MG:hen liittyvää sisältöä (arvostelut, koeajot, mainokset)
- Osallistunut MG-tapahtumaan tai vierailut MG-jälleenmyyntiliikkeessä
- Ei mikään yllä olevista
- Muu: \_\_\_\_\_

Miten MG voisi mielestäsi vahvistaa brändiasemaansa Suomessa?

Oma vastauksesi

\_\_\_\_\_