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Influence of Visuals in Digital Brand Identity

Case company: PIIK

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Bachelor's thesis
March 2017
International Business
Degree Programme in International Business

Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu
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Description

Author(s) Filkovskaia, Juliia	Type of publication Bachelor's thesis	Date 13.03.2017
	Number of pages 56	Language of publication: English
		Permission for web publication: x
Title of publication Influence of Visuals in Digital Brand Identity Case company: PIIK		
Degree programme International Business		
Supervisor(s) Luck, Heidi		
Assigned by PIIK		
<p>The study covers the field of branding and visuals usage in digital era. The main aim of the research was to analyze concepts and features that create a foundation for a strong brand image, to define how brand visuals affect the company's perception and how to achieve brand recognition in the Internet.</p> <p>The research was implemented in collaboration with PIIK company. PIIK company is online recruiting agency. It is the digital service where employees and employers can anonymously and in real-time find each other.</p> <p>To conduct the study, secondary information sources were utilized in order to provide a deeper understanding of branding in digital age as well as to cover general definitions required for fluency in this marketing area. Due to the nature of the research, qualitative approach was chosen, which was presented in forms of Q-method questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was distributed online to potential users of PIIK company. The author was able to receive 42 responses. The interview was conducted with one of the PIIK's founders who acts as brand architect in the company and has a complete understanding of company's decisions and insights.</p> <p>The study showed that design decisions of PIIK company are positively perceived by users. It was possible to distinguish four major factor groups that in turn represent four groups of users with slight differences in PIIK's brand perception. Nevertheless, all four groups had a positive attitude regarding PIIK's brand image and were able to understand company's design decisions. The study shown that the view of founders fully correlates with the brand image perceived by its users.</p>		
Keywords (subjects) Brand, Brand Image, Brand Identity, Digital Brand, Visuals		
Miscellaneous		

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1 Introduction

“The image is a mirror reflection (though perhaps inaccurate) of the brand personality or product being. It is what people believe about the brand – their thoughts, feelings, expectations.”

AMA (2007), brand image definition

The problem of development, creation and promotion of brands is relevant for many companies and enterprises. Nowadays there are many examples of successful brands, but there are still many issues and problems in the development and the process of promotion of brands on the market. Building a strong brand image is the crucial factor for the success of the company. In the world of competition this topic is becoming increasingly important. There is a question that arises even inside well-known enterprises: how to keep the market position and maintain efficiency.

Nowadays many experts are more inclined to the conclusion that one of the main factors of most businesses success is brand loyalty. In a row with brand loyalty stands brand image. Any product itself creates a certain impression with its appearance on the market - positive or negative, and the impression inevitably appears as soon as the consumer gains some information about the product. Brand image represents how consumers perceive the brand.

However, in the 21st century, with the development of digital media it is impossible to avoid the new ways of brand image building. The digital era has changed the relationships between brands and customers, due to the appeared possibility of two-way communication, when consumers are able to comment on any company's activities, discuss advantages and disadvantages, and, moreover, demand for interactivity.

In order to achieve a strong brand image, a great deal of attention should be paid to the creation of brand identity. It is significantly important to use a well thought-out set of visuals created for a particular brand. Visual content and usage of graphics are strong tools for brand development. Due to the specific ability of the human brain to perceive graphic information faster than letters, it is increasingly effective to use visual content that should be applied correctly and consistently. In addition, it should

also be original and reflect the brand's values. Visual storytelling that consists of visual elements is a helpful way in creating brand recognition and brand reputation, as well as a tool for attracting consumer attention.

Brand identity and brand image are the topics that attract scientific attention. For example, Alina Wheeler has been conducting research into it and written a whole book or even a guide about identity design. The book "Designing Brand Identity" has already been released in its fourth edition, with additional aspects such as design of applications that need to be taken into consideration in the rapidly changing world.

1.1. Reasons behind the research

PIIK company is a newly launched company that performs most of their activities on a special internet-based platform. Irrespective of whether an organization operate as an online company or a physically present business entity, it is essentially important to have a strong brand image. Brand image is especially crucial for online service or business since this kind of business has almost no representation in the physical form. The case company in this study was an internet-based service, and, thus, it is especially important to create and maintain a strong brand image as well as subliminal associations in the minds of their customers.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to analyze concepts and features that create a solid foundation for a comprehensive and strong brand image, to define how brand visuals affect the company's perception by its users and how to achieve brand recognition in the internet. After acquiring all of the needed theoretical information the main idea was to utilize this knowledge in terms of practical purposes for the PIIK company and create a number of helpful suggestions that in turn could be used for the successful development of the organization.

1.2. Case company: PIIK

PIIK is quite a new company that functions in the digital recruitment industry. PIIK is working in the digital platform, which means that they are using an algorithm to determine which employers and employees would fit together based on their profiles. It is a digital service where employees and employers can anonymously and in real-time find each other. PIIK's brand was created according to the following

principles. Their vision is to become the leading provider of new beginnings. The company's values represent hope, faith, daring and passion. PIIK's presence in the digital world consists of their web-site, Facebook and Instagram accounts, where the service's brand identity is actively used. The brand architect with the graphic designer has created set of visual elements that include PIIK's logo, special color palette, typography, shapes. The author's plan for the research was firstly, to analyze PIIK's brand identity, by paying attention to PIIK's visual elements, and, secondly, to gain information about the brand founders' decisions and expectations towards their brand identity, and, thirdly, to gain users' opinions on PIIK's brand and compare those thoughts with the founders' perceptions.

2 Literature review

The theoretical background consists of fundamental aspects that need to be highlighted in relation to the deep topic of brand. Starting from the definitions, it leads the readers to the inception of brands in history, and moves to the next part that is a closer look at the constituents and essence of a brand. After this, the topics about brand identity and brand visuals are considered. Then the aspects of digital branding and usage of visuals in digital branding are introduced.

2.1 Branding

The American Marketing Association (AMA 2007) defines a brand, as “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name”. However, the idea of a brand itself is deep and versatile, which is why there are multiple other definitions. For example, according to Aaker (2009, 18) a brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors.

There are variety of definitions, but in one way or another, they all boil down to the identification of goods or services by a consumer and his relation to/ or perception of them. A brand is intangible and exists only in the minds of consumers. It includes functional utility, as well as all sorts of promises, associations and the benefits that the audience connects with it (Sadykova et al. 2017). In today's rapidly changing world, a brand provides its owner with stability and consumer with confidence when choosing among a great variety of goods and services.

Wheeler (2009, 6) states that branding is a disciplined process used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty. Branding is the art of convincing customers to choose one brand over another.

Brands in history

According to Rowles (2014, 7), “the word *brand* is derived from the Old Norse word *brandr*, meaning ‘to burn’, and was used in reference to marking cattle by burning the owner’s brand onto them”. The inception of active branding refers to the Middle Ages, when the craft artisans and bakers labeled their products with a special stamp. However, branding started to flourish only in the second half of the twentieth century, due to the fact that a large number of similar goods appeared on the market.

In the old times, in order to create a successful business one should have a product of a good quality, and it was the key to success. It was not necessary to work on features, such as design or colors that would put one’s product above the competitors’, due to the limited choice of offers. However, over time with the growth of markets and increased variety of products and services, a need of a recognizable brand appeared: companies had to create ways to distinguish themselves. According to Arons (2011), “in the 1950s, consumer packaged goods companies like Procter and Gamble, General Foods and Unilever developed the discipline of brand management, or marketing as we know it today, when they noticed the quality levels of products being offered by competitors around them improve. A brand manager would be responsible for giving a product an identity that distinguished it from nearly indistinguishable competitors.” Companies understood that in order to successfully distinguish themselves from the competitors, they need to deeply understand the target customer, as well as to offer emotional value. With that need the idea of branding appeared.

After a brief overview of the brand concept, it seems reasonable to concentrate the literature review on the business related aspects of a brand, for example, the characteristics of a brand from the entities’ perspective. These constituents are further described in detail in order to understand the complexity of brand structure from a business perspective.

Brand Equity

According to Aaker (2009), brand equity can be defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers”. In other

words, brand equity is the art of influencing consumers' perception and affecting their decisions in a sense of preferring a particular product or service over the competitors.

Another definition that could help to provide a deeper understanding of the meaning of brand equity is "the tangible and intangible value that a brand provides positively or negatively to an organization, its products, its services, and its bottom-line derived from consumer knowledge, perceptions, and experiences with the brand" (Gunelius 2014).

As it can be seen from the definition above, brand equity can affect a company positively or negatively. Examples of positive influence can be success in the financial aspects of an organization such as an increase in sales and revenues, cost reductions as well the possibility of charging premium prices for one's products due to customers' acceptance and expectations towards premium brands. Another advantage of a positive brand equity is increased chances for long-term success due to the customers' loyalty and trust. Even if a company may have failed in some situations there will be consumers' forgiveness due to their emotional connection with the brand.

The components of brand equity include the following aspects: brand recognition, brand experience, brand preference and brand loyalty. Each of the components is described below.

- **Brand recognition** – is actually an ability of consumers to recognize the exact brand over others. It can be described as identification of a product's design elements such as logo, colors, slogan, shapes and other attributes related to a product. Brand recognition can be called successful if the customers are able to easily recognize one without making much effort. Great examples of brand recognition can be Apple, Nike or McDonald's: they can be recognized even without using their names, and only the logos, slogans, or colors can give the customers understanding of what this brand is.
- **Brand experience** – "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) as well as behavioral responses evoked by brand-related

stimuli that are part of a brand ' s design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Brakus et al. 2009).

- **Brand preference** can be defined as an index that shows the desire of consumers to choose a particular product even if there are equally priced and the same quality products available.
- **Brand loyalty** – Aaker (2009) defines brand loyalty as “a measure of the attachment that a customer has to brand. It reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features”. Brand loyalty can be measured only after a prior purchase and actual experience with a product or service.

Brand strategy

Wheeler (2009) suggests that effective brand strategy “provides a central, unifying idea around which all behavior, actions, and communications are aligned. It works across products and services, and is effective over time”. Moreover, it is built on a vision and must be aligned with business strategy. Brand strategy must take its inception from a company’s value and culture, and to “reflect an in-depth understanding of the customer’s needs and perceptions” (12). Wheeler (2009, 13) states that according to Koval, “a well-defined, easy-to-articulate strategy makes everything intuitive. The expression, attitude and behavior of brand simply become second nature inside and outside the organization”.

Brand Identity

Brand identity precedes brand image and represents the basis of brand knowledge (Kapferrer, 2008). Wheeler (2009, 4) describes brand identity as “tangible and appealing to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, and watch it move. It fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meaning accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unifies them into whole systems”. According to Cheryl Rickman (2012, 206), brand identity “is the outward expression of your brand. It consists of the name, visual appearance (logo/typography/style); personality and the way of communicate all of this (slogan)”. In short, brand identity should be the answer to the question “Who are

you?” The most important and challenging part in creation of brand identity is to capture the essence of the business in the name, slogan or logo and create the understanding in customers’ mind who you are and what you stand for. The aim of brand identity is to represent a brand’s personality through visualization.

For creation of brand identity, it is significantly important to identify brand personality and values of the business, since these aspects should be received by customers through visualization by means of color schemes, logo, typography or slogan that a company will use. According to Wheeler (2009, 30) there are brand identity ideals exist. They are aspects that need to be taken into consideration for launching strong brand identity.

Brand identity ideals:



Figure 1. Figure illustrating brand identity ideals according to Wheeler (adapted from Wheeler 2009, 31)

Brand personality

Aaker (1997, 347) states that “brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”. In other words, brand personality symbolizes a brand if it was a human. Perception of human and brand personality are formed in different ways, even though they can share a similar conceptualization (Epstein 1997). Perception of human personality based on an individual’s behavior,

physical characteristics, attitudes and beliefs (Park et al. 1986), when perception of brand personality takes its inception from direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand (Plummer 1985). In 1997, Aaker developed the Brand Personality Dimensions operationalized in terms of human characteristics, that include following five factors: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness.

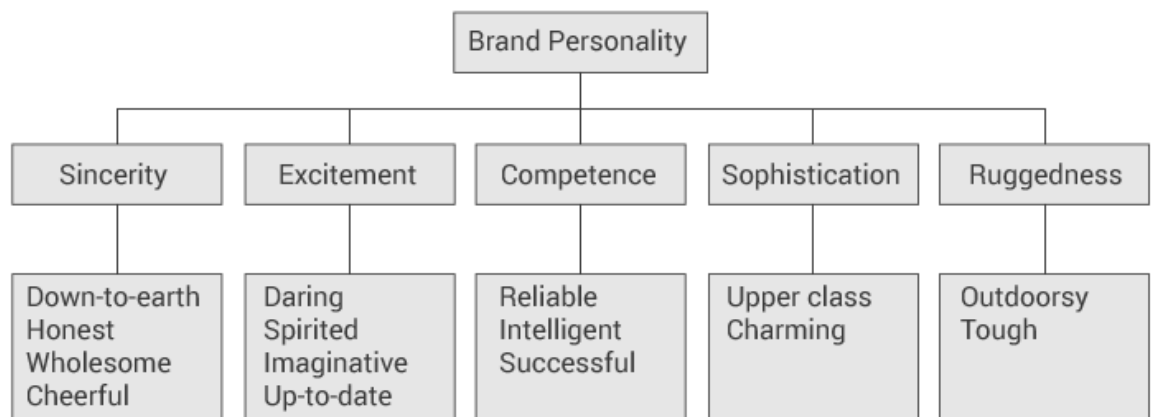


Figure 2. A brand personality framework (based on Aaker's Brand Personality Dimensions 1997, 352)

The roots of the brand concept should have been reviewed with the purpose to gain the solid and comprehensive understanding of the subject. With the knowledge of the core branding aspects, it is possible to move further to the main topic of the research. Thus, it seems reasonable to take the concept of digital branding into consideration and comprehensively investigate the phenomena.

2. 2 Branding in Digital Age

21st century changed the perception of what actually brand is and divided brand into the New and the Old Brand Worlds. Bedbury (2002, 15) suggests that one main difference between these worlds "is that in today's brand equation, the consumer to whom you are telling your story – the listener, the viewer, the customer – has more control than ever before". According to Bedbury (2002, 16), Prahalad and

Ramaswamy state that “a product is no more than artifact around which customers have experiences”

In the era of technology, new dimensions of brand appeared. Digital brand is “the experience and the experience is the brand <...> the promise, the design, and the economic model--together form the inseparable components of a successful Internet business, or what might be called a digital brand” (Dayal, Landesberg, and Zeisser 2000, 42)

Wheeler (2009, 6) states that digital branding includes following areas: web, social media, search engine optimization, driving commerce on the web. Rowles (2014, 3) suggests that in the 21st century the idea of branding itself changed, so now there is two-way communication exists between brands and consumers by means of social media. For understanding of what consumer feels towards a brand, it is possible just to check reviews that are so popular nowadays. Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor and many other platforms are the ways to see what it is inside people’s mind related to concrete product or service and ability to compare these reviews to what a company thinks it does. However, with the appeared ability for consumers to express their feelings towards a brand in social media, there is also increased importance of creation a brand that will be worth talking about. Herbst (2015, 13) states that “Digital branding is a part of brand management as a whole. It contributes to building the brand image by leveraging the attributes particular to digital media and digital technologies.” Rowles (2014) assumes that digital branding is the personality of the organization, service or product created by the sum of all experiences that an individual has with that brand. Additionally, it includes such factor as visual identity, however nowadays there are aspects exists that need to be taken into consideration in order to succeed in digital branding such as social media interactions and online reviews. (11)

According to Herbst (2015, 12) when branding in digital age, companies should take into consideration following points: it is not enough to take their classical advertising ideas and shift them to the internet without understanding of unique, digital attributes. However, at the same time, it is important not to push technologies to the limit, so that brand image does not correspond the original advertising channels.

To sum up thoughts about digital branding, it can be assumed that the core difference between classical and digital branding is in the appeared ability of communication with consumers and the core idea is to give customer valuable experience by all suitable means such as: finding the fine line between old and new ways of branding, adequate usage of technologies, involvement and interactions in social media.

Social media

The internet has upended how consumers engage with brands. It is transforming the economics of marketing and making obsolete many of the function's traditional strategies and structures (Edelman, 2010). With the growth of technologies, consumers started to use the Internet for larger amount of options. If back in the days, people mostly used the Internet for reading and watching content and buy products and services, now there are endless usages exist, for example content sharing sites, blogs, social networking, and wikis – with the ability for users to create, modify, share and discuss Internet content (Kietzmann 2011, 241). All these aspects lead to creation of social media phenomenon, that nowadays has increasingly important affect on businesses due to its impact on a company's reputation, sales and sometimes even survival.

"Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, cocreate, discuss, and modify user-generated content" (Kietzmann 2011, 242). It is impossible to ignore the fact, that most of newly launched companies create their profiles in social media channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, et cetera since the very beginning. Nowadays, all of the famous brands have their presence in social media channels. That is happening for following reasons: presence in social media gives businesses a chance to be closer to consumers, to communicate with them, to spread brand recognition. Additionally, it gives an advantage since through social media they can gain rich, unmediated customer insights, faster than ever before (Barwise, Meehan 2010). Furthermore, while traditional media has a stronger impact on brand awareness, social media communications strongly influence brand image (Bruhn 2012).

2.3 Visuals in Branding

Visuals are perceived by human brain faster than verbal information, scientists call this the pictorial superiority effect. According to Banse (2016, 4) effectively pairing words with pictures and video enhances attention, memory, recall, and believability.

According to Thomas (2015), visual branding is the *"total sum of everything the audience can see when they look at you. Together, all of those visual elements tell a story."* As it can be understood from definition above, visual branding helps to create perception in the customer's mind of what a business or service is doing, explains who they are and creates feelings towards it by means of using visual elements.

Fill (2013) states that there are four key elements of visual branding exist: corporate names, logos, typeface, colors and additionally, slogan, shapes and forms. There follows an explanation of these components.

Corporate name often is the first contact point between company and consumer. According to Wheeler (2009, 19), qualities of an effective name should consist of following aspects.

Meaningful

It communicates something about the essence of the brand. It supports the image that the company wants to convey.

Distinctive

It is unique, as well as easy to remember, pronounce, and spell. It is differentiated from the competition.

Future-oriented

It positions the company for growth, change, and success. It has sustainability and preserves possibilities. It has long legs.

Modular

It enables a company to build brand extensions with ease.

Protectable

It can be owned and trademarked. A domain is available.

Positive

It has positive connotations in the markets served. It has no strong negative connotations.

Visual

It lends itself well to graphic presentation in a logo, in text, and in brand architecture.

Figure 3. Qualities of an effective name (adapted from Wheeler 2009, 21)

Logos

Carter D.E. (1999, 199) defines logotype as the typical characteristic font and shape used to write the brand's name continuously. Additionally, it includes the decorative and design attribute of the typeface, where the color and the placement also get the importance as the typography. Successful logo also creates brand recognition and can be perceived and recognized even by using part of it, as for example famous M-arch of McDonald's does. Logo reflects company's values and personality and should promote clear meaning or message to offer to consumers. Logotype can be created differently, may it be typographical character or a symbol or combination of both. Girisken (2014) states that the difference between logotype and symbol (or emblem) is that the second one is a representation of a brand with shapes, color and design but without any typography.

Typeface

Successfully chosen typeface and font play crucial role in creating visual identity. It is increasingly important to choose those elements complementary to the overall visual brand style and in the way to reflect the same message as other components of brand identity do. Font style creates feeling toward it, that is why it should reflect values of a company and be suitable depending on the concept of identity. For example, too serious font style will not fit the concept of goods for children or oppositely, playful font cannot create needed feeling for company that is selling cars.

Color

Colors help to create associations towards brand, they reflect mood and feelings and affect overall perception of a brand. Hardy (2012) states, that they influence our emotions and help us distinguish between competing brands. For example, there is no doubt that red color associates with Coca-Cola brand or blue color reminds us about NIVEA.

Slogan

Slogan or tagline "is a short phrase that captures a company's brand essence, personality, and positioning, and distinguishes the company from its competitors" (Wheeler 2009) Slogan should be catchy, memorable and reflect clear message.

Shapes and forms

Human brain perceives shapes faster than letters that is why successfully chosen shapes and forms can help to achieve desirable brand image. Additionally, shapes can create subconscious associations and reactions about particular logo. For example, symmetrical, geometric shapes perceived by consumers' as stable, organizational, discipline; organic shapes remind of comfort, pleasure. Circles reflect following aspects: complete, security, movement, attention, community. Rectangles and squares represent stability, trust, strength, power. Triangles shows movement, speed, energy, tension (Wilde 2017).

Advertisement works more effective when visuals stand out and reflect clear and relevant message. Tsiakis (2015, 187) states that right visuals can attract the consumer's attention and increase the possibility that the viewer will buy the product or service.

2. 4 Visuals in Digital Branding

Digital visuals enhance the attraction and "enchantment" of human-computer interactions (McCarthy, et al. 2006, 373). Most visual design principles in digital branding are the same as in traditional branding, however there are unique challenges that call for more specific visual design rules to achieve maximum engagement and brand recall (AMBA 2015). Those rules are explained further.

Typography is significantly important when creating design for digital audience. The core principles that need to be taken into consideration for successful digital design are readability, uniqueness, recognition and context. Readability affects overall design due to the fact that users will never read some content if the font is too complex or fancy. Uniqueness of the font answers the question "How distinctive is the font?" Recognition means that chosen font or typeface can represent and visualize the brand. Context reflects implementation of the font: where and how it will be used (AMBA 2015).

Consistency with photo editing and filters is another helpful tool for creating strong digital brand. When it comes to branding in social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook, usage of recognizable photo editing style would create consistency of

the brand. Moreover, with the help of filters or other photo editing tools it is possible to create special atmosphere and make users associate emotional values with brand's images.

Website

Modern consumer is becoming more and more demanding. When it comes to website, customer can change his feeling towards brand based on his experience online. Development of successful web-design consists of multiple aspects such as suitable color scheme, layout, images, culture, that should be taken into consideration to achieve loyal customer.

Color scheme

"Color is one of the most important cultural factors that can facilitate the interface design", Chen (1999) stated. Wheeler (2009, 128) suggests that "In the sequence of visual perception, the brain reads color after it registers a shape and before it reads content", that is why it is crucially important to choose it wisely and according to the purposes of the web site. Colors appeal to the right side of the human's brain, that is defined as creative side, which also leads to the emotions appearing while one perceives a color. Color scheme should be helpful in a sense of emphasizing concrete parts of a web page that need to take viewer's attention. Another purpose is to symbolize brand colors to the customer and to create right associations in his/her mind. Wheeler (2009, 128) states that Towey suggests "Color creates emotion, triggers memory, and gives sensation".

Layout

Equally important factor for successful implementation of web design as color palette is layout of a homepage. Correctly designed layout helps users to navigate on website without any effort, in other words it shows where to look at, what to click next, etc. Cocoran (2007, 50) suggests that the most successful layouts are "those that are in tune with the brand, complementary to the color scheme, and have enough information scent available on the homepage to suggest that navigation is a breeze".

Images

Pictures are the crucial component when it comes to enhancement of brand value. According to Herbst (2015), "83% of what we perceive of our surroundings is visual. The visual impression of a brand heavily determines its brand image". Cocoran (2007, 23) suggests that "when used correctly [images], they can ignite the desired emotions within potential customers' minds by activating the subconscious triggers that subsequently result in the positive impression of the brand". As it can be concluded from the statements above, there is a significant need of proper images' usage exists. When pictures are used incorrectly, it leads to the wrong associations and perception appearance of the brand in customers' minds.

Culture

Web culture is significantly important aspect. When users visit the homepage of a company, perception towards the company itself appears in their minds. Usage of colors, images and layouts on webpage creates the feelings that the business represents. Will it be a childish webpage with bright colors and a purpose to sell toys and interact children or will it be some professional website that represents lawyer services? All aspects that were described above are the tools for creation exact needed perception that one's website should represent. Cocoran (2007, 54) warns that "whatever content is displayed on a company's homepage, inclusive of its images, layout, color scheme, language, and terminology, it will have an instantaneous effect on whoever is exposed to it – for better or for worse"

3 Research method

The aim of the research is to analyze concepts and features that create a solid foundation for a comprehensive and strong brand image, to define how brand visuals affect the company's perception by its users and how to achieve brand recognition in the internet. Additionally, the aim is to gain information about PIIK's brand image perception by users and compare these results with the founders' desirable brand image. After the analysis, it is possible to create a number of suggestions for PIIK's development. Based on a literature review, a solid background for the creation of the research questions was formed.

Research questions

- 1) How to create a unique and long lasting brand image for a digital service?
- 2) Do the brand visuals reflect the values and attitudes of PIIK's brand?
- 3) How does PIIK's brand identity perceived by users?

3.1 Data collection

Both primary and secondary data were utilized in order to implement the study. First, the secondary data was studied by the author due to the need of gaining an in depth understanding of the phenomena. Then, the primary data was collected by using an interview and a questionnaire. The combination of data collection methods provides a solid comprehension of the research topic.

For gaining valuable information based on the emotions and thoughts of the interviewees, a qualitative research method supported by quantitative data was chosen. As one of the aims of the research was to identify the perception of the PIIK brand from both sides: the founders and users, qualitative method appeared to be the best way to gain the needed data, since it is based on *"understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it"* (Corbin and Srauss, 2008). Questions like "how", "what", "why" can be answered by the application of qualitative research. (Myers 2013, 6) However, in order to gain numerical statistics and to develop a wider understanding of the users' experience, a need of quantitative data appeared.

In order to understand the desirable brand image and to gain information about the brand itself from the perspective of the PIIK Company, a semi-structured interview was conducted with one of the founders. An interview is considered the most common qualitative data collection method (Kananen 2011, 48). However, due to the physical location issues, the interview was conducted via the Internet. Morgan and Symon (2004) use the term electronic interviews to refer to interviews held both in real time using the Internet and organizations' intranets as well as those that are, in effect, undertaken off-line. Using the Internet or an organization's intranet has significant advantages respondents are geographically dispersed. (Saunders, et al. 350). For the acquisition of the needed information, open-ended questions were asked and the answers were recorded. Afterwards, the interview was transcribed into text format and analyzed.

The next part of the research was gaining quantitative data, since there was a need to compare the results from the founder's interview to the users'. Based on the interview answers and theoretical background, online questionnaires were created. The questionnaire is one of the most widely used data collection techniques within the survey strategy. Because each person (respondent) is asked to respond to the same set of questions, it provides an efficient way of collecting responses from a large sample prior to a quantitative analysis (Saunders, et al. 361) There are different types of questionnaires, but in the present study, Internet-mediated questionnaires were used, because of the physical location of the target audience (respondents), and reasons of accessibility. The survey with the questionnaire was conducted by using the Q method. Shinebourne (2009) states that in the Q method the participants are asked to sort a set of statements representing a broad diversity of opinions and perspectives on the phenomenon being investigated.

3.2 Implementation

Interview

For the semi-structured interview, one informant was chosen. Heidi Luck is one of the founders of the PIIK company as well as a brand architect, which gave the author an opportunity to find significantly important data for the research. Heidi has branding experience and she participated in the creation of PIIK's brand, which was

why her thoughts and ideas were increasingly valuable for understanding the concept behind the company.

The interview was divided into two main parts: the first one was about the PIIK company in general, and the focus was on how the business was launched, what the main trigger for creating the company was, and what the main ideas behind the service were. The second part was created in order to gain data about the branding of PIIK, including such aspects as brand identity, brand visuals, the desirable brand image, and other brand-related issues. The interview was conducted via Skype and transcribed into text form for further analysis.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted using Q Method. 30 statements were created, 10 positive, 10 negative and 10 neutral. All of the questions were placed in a random order into The Google Forms. Google Forms were used due to their advantages of easy sharing, answering and saving the needed data. The survey was published in the author's social media accounts: Facebook, Vkontakte. According to the interview, PIIK's target audience was quite big which gave the author a possibility to apply simple random sampling.

3.3 Data analysis

Interview analysis

In order to conduct the interview analysis more efficiently, the transcript was converted into the table format, reflecting the most valuable insights.

Table 1. The main aspects of the interview

PIIK in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new company, which functions in the digital recruitment industry • a service, which matches employees and employers • connects people and matches people and jobs in real time
Values and mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • faith, hope, daring and passion • combined mission and vision • the vision is to become a leading provider of new beginnings
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIIK comes from the English word "peek" • domain PIIK.it

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very short, snappy, easy to remember
Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it all started with thinking of “who are we?”, “what kind of people are we?”, “how do we want to be seen in the future?”
Logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • typography based and with a red element
Font	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OpenSans, Montserrat, Lato • light, but it is also quite strong, slightly rounded • extra font in the future
Color palette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • red, white, light-grey • red is passionate, reflects values, recognizable, different • extra color in the future
Shapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • red circle
Brand personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young, smart, intelligent, professional, entertaining, passionate
Social media channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, Instagram • In future: Spotify (sound branding), Snapchat

As can be extracted from interview PIIK uses an algorithm that automatically matches employers and employees in a real time and anonymously. This process differentiates the service from well-known LinkedIn and other recruitment services. Faith, hope, daring and passion represent the company’s core values. The main idea of company’s mission is that it is always possible to find new beginnings and develop yourself. Being energized and passionate is a milestone to the success. PIIK sees itself as a provider of new beginning to people. During formation of the company founders realized that PIIK has to be different, bold, big and make a difference in the sphere of online recruiting. The color choice being red is due to the core values and thus, associations and visual comprehension that needed to be achieved. One of the interviewee concerns was that PIIK’s color palette needs additional color, yet still staying minimalistic. However, the team did not have final opinion regarding this matter yet. The company was not afraid to try red color and being different from common social media and professional platforms due to the fact that red color in this particular design decision creates a combination with white and light-grey as well as adds freshness and energy, and represents PIIK’s values. As it was mentioned above, Hardy (2012) admitted colors’ influence on emotions and their ability to help in distinguishing between competing brands, that in turn leads the author to the

suggestion that the color choice of PIIK's brand identity is designed according to stated rules. Red color is the way to distinguish the brand between other social media platforms, and additionally, it causes strong emotional message and associations.

PIIK's brand should be associated with a lifestyle in digital recruiting, the interaction between users and company should go lightly and pleasantly, as according to interviewee. In addition, the idea is to make the job-matching moment more personal and valuable. Brand creators are aiming to promote core values as a lifestyle and build the world around PIIK's brand.

The PIIK comes from English word 'peek'. According to the interviewee, the name was chosen due to its characteristics such as: "very short, snappy, easy to remember". The author compared those aspects with qualities of an effective name based on Wheeler (Figure 3. A brand personality framework). As the result, it is possible to notice alignment there, for example interviewee's characteristic "easy to remember" is the part of qualities of an effective name, it reflects "Distinctive" characteristics. Moreover, name PIIK can also be in category "Protectable", due to the fact that it meets main values of this group: protectable means that it can be owned and trademarked and domain is available, which exactly can be seen in PIIK's case. According to the brand architect, PIIK's domain [piik.it] was chosen with additional purpose. Firstly, domain ending with '.com' was not available; secondly, domain ending with '.it' describes what company does and creates emotional touch. Name is "Meaningful", because it symbolizes the essence of the brand. Moreover, it meets the requirements of "Visual" characteristic; it lends itself to graphic presentation in a logo and fits overall brand architecture. As it can be concluded, name of the brand meets most of effective name requirements.

According to the interviewee, typography was chosen in a way to fit into the overall concept, additionally it should be representable in a way to create a good combination with the color palette and style. The fonts that were chosen for PIIK can be described as clear, readable, light, but at the same time strong. Mentioned characteristics gives the author possibility to suppose that the brand's typography meets the requirements of digital branding.

Red circle as a part of the logo and as a shape in a set of brand visuals was expected to be a good branding decision according to brand architect and graphic designer of PIIK's brand identity. According to Wilde (2017), circles associate with "complete, security, movement, attention, community". It makes the author to suggest that the chosen visual element successfully reflects the PIIK's values and core ideas. The interviewee mentioned that the brand image should represent core values, for example, passionate people are those who do not afraid of changes and always want to develop themselves. This description is aligned with circle's ability to represent movement. Circle associates with attention and community, that can be considered as important factor for digital recruitment platform.

At the moment, PIIK's presence in social media platforms consists of profile pages in Facebook and Instagram, and also promotes in founders' LinkedIn personal accounts. The interviewee mentioned about possible expanding of PIIK in social media channels in a way of becoming a part of Spotify and Snapchat. Social media plays significant role in digital branding, that is why it is important to be actively present in social media platforms, in order to create communication with consumers, promote brand recognition, develop lifestyle around the brand.

Mentioned alignment between PIIK's brand identity elements and experts' opinions on how to build the strong digital brand lead the author to the conclusion that the brand creators developed design according to essential rules of digital branding.

Q METHOD

Q methodology offers an innovative approach to qualitative analysis through a 'quantification of patterned subjectivities' (Shemmings, 2006). In the case of the author's specific topic and objectives a Q-Methodology was used as a tool for quantitative approach. In 1930s William Stephenson designed and developed Q-methodology technique. In general, Q methodology is designed to study people's subjectivity and their viewpoint. Q studies explore correlations between persons or whole aspects of persons. Participants are asked to decide what is meaningful and significant from their perspective. They do this through what is known as a Q-sort. From this process an essentially relative set of evaluations is produced. The data

from several people are then factorially analyzed; this reveals groups of individuals who have ranked characteristics in the same order.

The author decided to conduct research in a form of questionnaire. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009), the term 'questionnaire' is used as a general term to describe a data collection method in which each individual is participating in order to fill up the same set of questions in a predetermined order. It is generally accepted to distinguish various forms of questionnaires, while in our case Internet-mediated questionnaires are used (surveys distributed electronically via internet). It is the most appropriate form of questionnaire for this particular research considering time period and accessibility of participants.

With regard to Q-methodology, there are five main criteria that determine the quality of the list:

Relevance. The statement should refer to the tested concept.

Clarity. Statements should be intuitive.

Independence. Similar statements should be grouped into new one.

Range. Statements should cover a wide range of opinions on the subject studied.

Format. All statements must be in the same grammatical form.

Final list consists of 30 statements, table 2. It is called the Q-set. Selection from groups has an equal number of positive, negative and neutral statements (10 statements).

Type of Q sample is unstructured Q sample. The participant can place on any point of scale any numbers of statements. The Q sample consisted of 30 statements, 10 positive, 10 negative and 10 neutral.

ANALYSIS

Interpretation and analysis of data obtained via questionnaire are conducted in this part. The main idea of this analysis is to determine specific tendencies and commonly appeared similarities within statements of particular target group.

As was previously mentioned in the research approach part, Q sample consisted of 30 statements evenly distributed between positive, neutral and negative. The table below contain statements that were distributed for research purposes.

Table 2. Q sample

Positive	Neutral	Negative
1 I like color design decisions of PIIK	2 PIIK company associates with millennial generation mostly	3 I don't understand core branding decisions
4 I like PIIK's logo	5 PIIK associates with hope, daring, passion, faith	6 I don't associate myself with PIIK's style
7 I like PIIK's typography	8 PIIK's website is modern, easy to use	9 Red color is aggressive
10 I like that red color is different from other social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	11 Red color is fresh, passionate, entertaining	12 I don't like PIIK's typography
13 I like red circle as brand element	14 Red circle makes design decision look cohesive	15 I think that red circle is not a good decision for brand element
16 PIIK as a person is young, smart, ethical, entertaining, professional, passionate	17 I feel that sound branding will be an additional benefit for existing brand identity	18 PIIK as a person is aggressive
19 PIIK's brand identity is fresh, future oriented, recognizable, modern	20 I feel there is a need in extra color for PIIK's brand identity	21 PIIK's brand identity does not represent faith, passion, daring and hope

22 I like combination of different fonts in PIIK's Instagram images	23 I think that PIIK's website image is correspondent with Instagram's image	24 I don't like combination of different fonts in PIIK's Instagram images
25 I like that presence in different social media platforms makes PIIK brand look cohesive	26 I think that PIIK has minimalist approach in brand identity	27 I don't like minimalist approach in PIIK's design
28 I like minimalist approach in PIIK's design	29 PIIK's website seems user-friendly	30 PIIK's website doesn't seem to represent strong brand

Statistica 7 software was utilized in order to analyze the data provided by the e-survey directed to the public. Upon conduction of the analysis, the author found several factor loadings that were consecutively seized to the four main factor groups by use of eigenvalue factor analysis in Statistica 7 software. The four factor loadings are examined in details regarding PIIK's company branding decisions and overall brand perception in order to provide viable insights for each of those factor loadings.

4 Results

Q method results

The following part is aimed to show the results gained by using Statistica 7 software and to analyze the four main factor groups.

GROUP 1

The following factors were obtained for the representation of the first group:



Figure 4. Q method results – Group 1

Interpretation of factors

It is possible to assume that this group comprehend digital media through visuals and directly associate colors and shapes with emotion, feelings, etc. It is interesting to observe that no statements regarding font usage are presented in this group.

Therefore, it is possible to assume that Group 1 receive brand's message through color and shapes and their representation of specific emotions. Daring, passion, fresh, recognizable are adjectives that describe PIIK's image from 1st group point of

view. Colors and shapes are the most important tools of visualization for this group. Another important highlight is information regarding PIIK's website. Statements 15 and 30 reads that respondents find PIIK's website as modern and user-friendly.

This group suggest sound branding as a tool to enhance brand recognition of the company. Another important highlight is information regarding PIIK's website. Statements 15 and 30 reads that respondents find PIIK's website modern and user-friendly.

GROUP 2

The following figure include statements that represent Group 2:

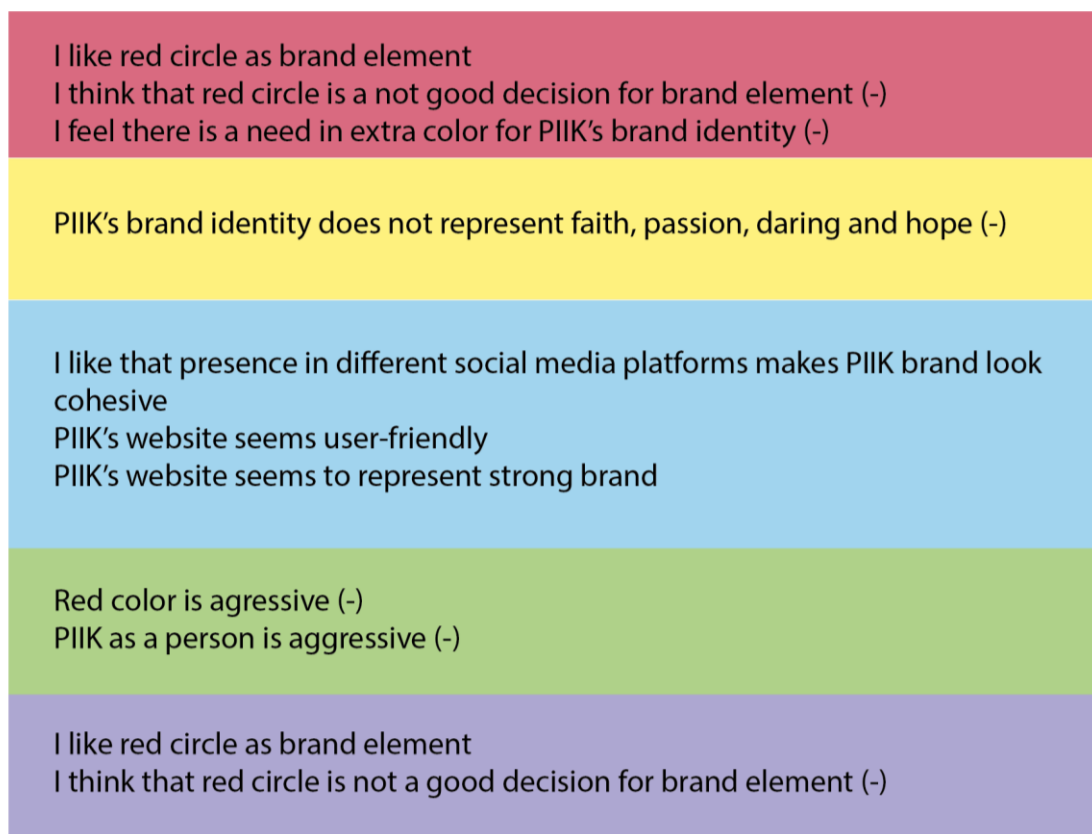


Figure 5. Q method results – Group 2

Interpretation of factors

The second group thinks that red circle is a well thought design decision for PIIK. Both shape and color create a synergetic effect on user's comprehension. It is possible to assume that this group finds red color decision as fresh, passionate,

daring yet not aggressive. The overall design combined with user-friendliness of the platform seems to provide a cohesive impression. The presence in different social media platforms creates a solid foundation for brand.

To assume, this group might represent millennial generation who value functionality and are actively involved into interaction on different social media platforms. Well managed branding and presence of unique visual brand elements seem interesting for this group of respondents. Red circle in PIIK's case have a significant impact as a decision on a positive comprehension of second group of respondents.

GROUP 3

The statements represent Group 3:

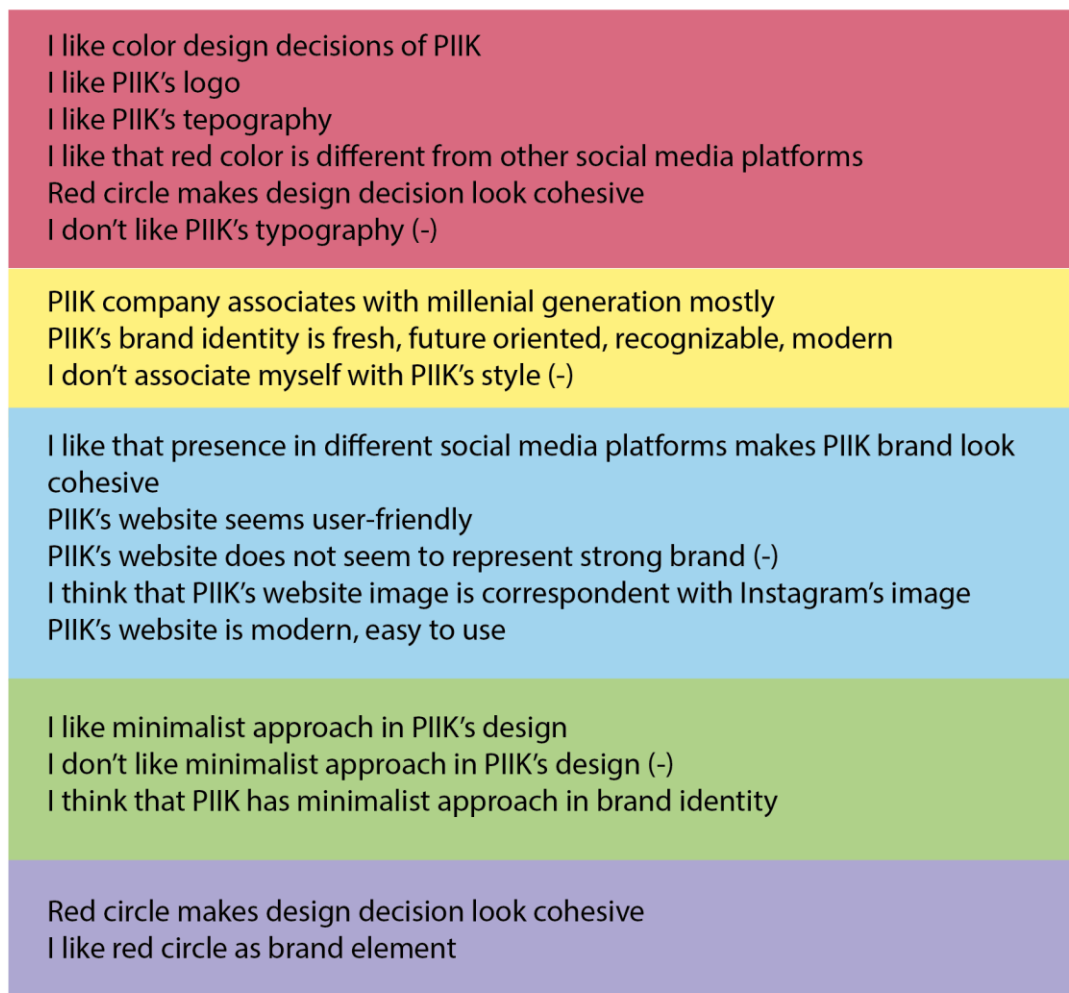


Figure 5. Q method results – Group 3

Interpretation of factors

The third group approves PIIK's brand visual web-representation as a well thought concept. All of the design elements are presented in these statements: typography and red circle regarding visual representation, fresh and future oriented regarding associations and emotions. Respondents in this group also highlighted that PIIK's web-site image is corresponded with Instagram's image and they enjoy this fact. Hence, it is possible to state that Group 3 is fully empathized to PIIK's brand image. Suggestion from statements 2 and 18(-) could be that this group represent millennial generation who associate themselves with PIIK's image e.g. fresh, modern, etc. This group see PIIK's brand as a well-designed system with overall positive attitude towards it. The correlation is present between vital comprehension elements such as typography, color, associations, cohesiveness, shapes and elements.

GROUP 4

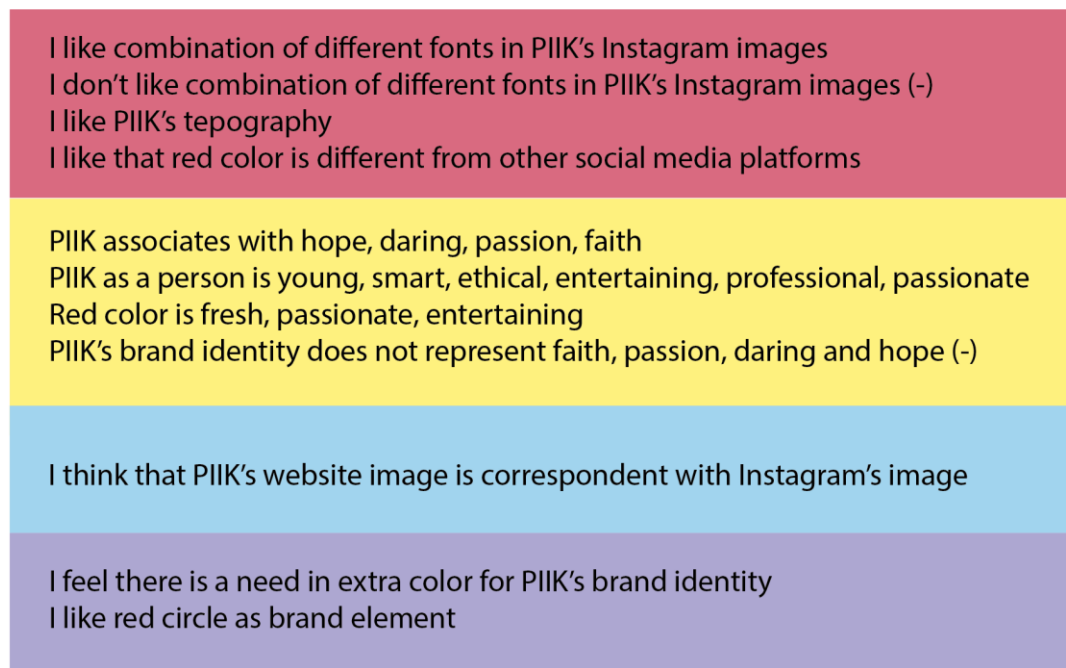


Figure 6. Q method results – Group 4

Interpretation of factors

This group comprehend PIIK's brand image and thus, decisions in color, typography and shapes as an association with hope, passion and faith, as well as smart and professional if consider PIIK's brand representation as a character. This group refers to the highest amount of statements regarding PIIK's typography and color decisions.

Red color and shape choice seems to work increasingly well in delivering PIIK's style for this group of respondents.

Based on the information provided by Statistica 7 software it is possible to make certain assumptions regarding this particular target group. Respondents might not associate themselves with PIIK's style and brand, however they fully understand the message that PIIK is trying to deliver to its users. Red color is a solid decision in representation of the brand. Combination of different fonts in Instagram contributes to the overall brand image. Thus, daring and passionate color combined with right shapes can be seen as a solid foundation for PIIK visualization, while combination of different fonts, well-managed Instagram presence and its correspondence with brand image of a company makes the whole design decision look cohesive.

5 Discussion

Theoretical background, the information gained by means of the interview and the online survey altogether created a solid foundation for discussion part. Based on users' preferences that are precisely described earlier, the author makes following assumptions.

According to the results gained by means of online survey and statistical software, there are four groups of users' preferences were created. Based on this data it is possible to evaluate brand image of the PIIK company from users' side and compare it with the founders' desirable vision. Each group of factors represent specific groups of users further.

The first group emphasized an importance of color and shapes in brand identity, due to their ability to represent emotions reflected in brand values by means of visualization. This group of users recognizes PIIK's values in the color palette and the choice of shapes. Additionally, mentioned group finds PIIK's website modern and user-friendly, and believes that sound branding would be a valuable benefit for development of brand recognition. Based on these factors, it is possible to assume that people who better perceive visual message by means of colors and shapes are also can be emotionally involved to the brand if sound branding will be applied as a part of brand identity. Interesting, that the font and typeface characteristics of brand identity do not seem important to the 1st group users. It can be suggested, that the fact of perceiving visual information faster than letters by the group and human brain in generally, reflects on the positive feedback towards PIIK's website. It in turn leads to the assumption that the website design decisions succeeded in a way of attracting customers.

The second group expressed interest towards the PIIK's website, mentioning its overall usability and design decisions. The red circle appeared to be a good visual element based on the opinion of the group. Additionally, presence in social media platforms seems to be important to these users. It can be assumed, that the second group can be involved in interaction with the PIIK brand, if the company will maintain and develop smart digital branding decisions in social media channels. Moreover, it is

possible to suggest, that this group will positively react on involvement of Snapchat and Spotify applications in PIIK's branding activities and overall development.

The third group's opinion leads the author to the assumption, that there are groups of users exist who are fully receiving the brand's message and who find all of the branding decisions appealing. Overall, the desirable brand image can be described as successfully achieved according to the perception of the designed group. It can be assumed, that the users from this group belong to millennial generation, which in turn should be taken as advantage for expanding PIIK's presence according to demand of the target audience. Millennial generation consists of active Internet users, they are constantly involved in communication by means of social media platforms, which in turn leads the author to the suggestion of creating PIIK's mobile application. According to Dogtiev (2015), "Age 18-24 is the age group that spends the greatest amount of time on mobile apps. It goes to show you how important are mobile apps for people when they live a really active social life". This age group represents Millennials' active participation as mobile app users, which can be interpreted as an area of growth for the PIIK's brand. The author assumes that creation of PIIK's mobile application would positively affect overall brand image.

The last group does not fully associate itself with the PIIK's brand, however at the same time core branding decisions seem to be attractive to the users. The respondents perceived the brand personality in a way that the PIIK's founders expected. The fourth group interpreted visuals meaning correctly, it means that visual elements were developed in a right way to represent the brand's message. Moreover, this group of users paid special attention to typography design, admitting a good choice of the fonts and additionally they highlighted an interest towards the font combinations created by brand architect.

Based on the overall perception towards the PIIK brand, it can be concluded that the brand image in consumers' minds reflects core values of the service and accepted positively by majority of the respondents. The founders' decision to use red color and differentiate themselves from existing social media platforms seemed to be a reasonable choice, according to the users' feedback. Absolute majority of the respondents perceived red color as a good choice for the PIIK's brand identity.

The author admits the importance of using visual elements when creating brand identity. Based on the users' opinions and statistical interpretation, it is impossible to underestimate the role of visuals and their influence on brand image. The research showed that colors and shapes could be seen as valuable tools of sending brand's message. The respondents who liked PIIK's typography also expressed positive feedback towards the website, which can lead to suggestions that the chosen fonts are meet the qualities of typography choice for digital service. Additionally, it should be mentioned that presence in social media is important factor for millennials. The results present that respondents who associated themselves with millennial generation, see PIIK's presence in social media platforms as a positive factor and believe that it makes the brand look cohesive. These aspects lead the author to the conclusion that PIIK should maintain and develop its social media presence by means of Spotify and Snapchat applications.

5.1 Answers to the research questions

Answering the first question developed for the research "How to create unique and long lasting brand image for digital service?" the following conclusions were made. Based on theoretical background considering ways of strong brand image creation and according to the results gained by the interview and the survey, it can be suggested that strong brand image in digital service must meet following requirements:

- The website should be user-friendly. When it comes to website design decisions, smart color choice should be seen as a significantly important factor. The results revealed the influence of color palette on the overall perception of brand image. Moreover, typography is another aspect that needs to be considered as highly important. Fonts should be readable, clear and suitable for particular brand identity. In order to achieve brand recognition, design of the website and pages in social media platforms should be consistent, it must reflect values of the company in form of visuals and overall brand identity. Additionally, digital branding requires interactivity, experience and communication with the customer. Emotional involvement to the brand is the key for strong brand image

building. With the help of visuals and their ability to create emotional connections with users, it is possible to achieve the uniqueness of brand image.

The second research question was “Do the brand visuals reflect the values and attitudes of PIIK’s brand?” The following conclusions are made during analysis of the users’ perception towards PIIK’s brand image.

- Based on the quantitative data gained with the help of statistical software, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents perceived and recognized PIIK’s values by means of visual elements. According to the research, the color palette in combination with the typography and recognizable brand shape appeared to be a well thought out design decision and was successfully implemented. The respondents identified the ability of red color to represent faith, passion, daring and hope, which was originally the founders’ vision of desirable brand image.

The third question is “How does PIIK’s brand identity perceived by users?” can be answered as follows.

- The overall perception towards the brand identity can be described as positive due to the several reasons. First of all, the respondents identified the brand’s message in the brand identity. They were able to recognize PIIK’s values: faith, hope, daring and passion by perceiving it through the brand visual elements. Additionally, absolute majority of the respondents accepted the color choice positively. The founders of PIIK wanted to differentiate themselves from other social media platforms by means of using red color, and as the research revealed, users positively accepted this decision. The respondents admitted minimalistic design to be appealing.

Moreover, the author gained information about four groups of users’ preferences and opinions towards PIIK’s brand by means of the quantitative data analysis. Generally, all of the groups have positive attitude towards the brand identity. However, depending on the factors that influence users’ perception towards PIIK brand, four factor groups were designed. Some users were mostly influenced by the color choice, when others paid more attention to the typography. Some groups admitted the importance of PIIK’s presence in social media.

5.2 Limitations and further suggestions

The research exploration and analysis of the results lead the author to the thoughts of further possible development of the research. There are topics arised during study that might be suggested for further investigation since the findings can present more in-depth insight of the topic. First of all, the author finds it important to describe appeared limitations.

Limitations regarding the qulitative research reveal the factor that could have had an impact on the interview insights. Due to the authors' geographical location, it was decided to conduct the interview via Skype, which means that the author could not fully percieve all the aspects that personal interview can provide. For instance, the author and the interviewee did not have an eye contact, that theoretically could have an impact on the overall interview. Body language of the interviewee and the eye contact could have reveal additional information that can not be achieved by means of Internet mediated interviews with no video record. According to (Harrell et al. 2009, 95) recorded information on nonverbal behaviors and body language of participants should be included as a part of formal notes when capturing the result.

The author admits that there are areas of improvement exists when it comes to evaluation of online survey. There are questions that could have been asked appeared. First of all, the question identifying the participants' age was missed. The author believes that data about the user's age could reveal deeper insights on the research topic. Moreover, in order to be more precise in identification of participants', the questions about the participants' sex could have been included into the survey. It leads to the conclusion, that these questions could have made the questionnaire more accurate and could have helped to investigate research deeper. Furthermore, the users' opinion on usage of extra color for the brand identity could have been asked in a form of open-ended question. For example, it could be "What extra color would you add to PIIK's color palette?" It could have been used as a base for further development of PIIK's color scheme and reflect the respondents' preferences. However, the author's decision to use the particular questions was based on the fact of using Q method, which requires to use 30 statements that need to be evaluated by respondents using scale from 1 to 7 representing their level of

agreement. The author decided that combination of open-ended questions with statements needed for analysis might confuse the respondents. However, as a suggestions for further research, the author feels the need to conclude the missing questions in order to gain deeper analysis and evaluation.

Moreover, it should be mentioned that the survey was opened for a week. The author developed the first analysis in Statistica 7 software when there were 30 respondednts. When the number of respondents increased up to 42 respondents, the decision was made to create analysis one more time. The results appeared to be with no significant difference. However, the author assumes that with the significantly higher number of respondents the outcomes might be slightly different.

5.3 Credibility

The credibility of this research was gained by accurate choice of the research implementation and data gathering and analysis methods. It can be mentioned that the author's decision to use the qualitative approach in the study gave accurate information for further analysis. The interviewee's involvement in the organization and direct participation in creation of the PIK brand as well as her interest in the research implemetation, makes the author to evaluate the interview's results as reliable data.

The questionnaire for quantitative data collection was created based on the results of the interview and according to the theoretical foundation. The survey was delivered to the respondents via Internet and the questions were placed in the Google Forms. This method allowed the autor to gain needed number of responses in a short period of time and not to be dependent on geographical location. Moreover, anonymity of the survey can be seen as valuable factor for gaining honest answers.

6 Conclusion

The era of technology changed users perception towards branding. Creation of successful brand image for digital service requires more from brand creators than back in the days. When designing a brand in the digital age, it is important to create clear communication between companies and consumers, represent values of a company by means of brand identity, and give customers valuable experience. Essential part of brand identity is its visual elements. By means of visuals, a customer perceives brand's message, in other words if done correctly visual elements represent brand values.

It is impossible to ignore the fact of social media presence in our lives. Nowadays, when creating a digital brand, it is significantly important to spread brand's recognition and communicate with consumers. It can be achieved by becoming a member of social media platforms. However, there are special requirements exist for successful implementation of mentioned factors. First of all, a brand identity should reflect values and attitudes of a company, it should be unique, appealing and recognizable. Moreover, it must be correspondent with the overall style, in other words it must be spread using the same design principles when it comes to brand's social media presence. Design should be cohesive and user-friendly.

Nowadays, for successful development of a brand image, companies need to be aware of digital branding principles. Special attention should be paid to creation of brand visuals. Based on the results of this research, it can be noticed that visual elements have significant influence on consumers' perception towards a brand. As the study revealed, the users who were able to identify the brand's message by means of visual elements, expressed highly positive perception towards overall brand.

Based on the results of the research, it is possible to conclude that PIIK's brand identity was created according to the essential rules of digital brand building. It was positively evaluated by the majority of the respondents and was following the requirements of digital brand design. Final suggestion for further PIIK's brand development is to expand and maintain their social media presence: involvement of

Snapchat and Spotify would be additional benefit for gaining consumer's attention and interest, as well as creation of mobile application.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview transcript

-Could you please tell me in general about PIIK company?

- I'm very happy to. PIIK is quite new company, which functions in a digital recruitment industry. We started this company last May, after that we have been building it up, and in December 2016 we launched the service, which matches employees and employers. We are working in the digital platform, which means that we're using an algorithm to find out which employers and employees would fit together based on their profiles and what they write in their profiles.

-What was the main trigger for creation of the company, because for example LinkedIn is already existed and it works also as a tool for job recruitment?

-The thing was that our CEO Mareena reside from her previous job and started to look for a new one. She was working as a CEO on data company and she found out that it's really difficult to actually fit into the boxes that normally used in the recruitment like what kind of business you want to find a job or what is your education. She just didn't fit into the boxes and she thought that it must be a better way of applying for job. Also she was quite frustrated that you have to apply to every single job again and again, that there are no such a system that would be more clever, be more using automated processes and she started to think and also then create PIIK. She went to 60 companies and asked from them what do they think about the recruitment and is there something they would like to improve and she also asked them if they have a magic wand what would be the one thing they would change in the recruitment processes. And she collected the information and found out that companies would like to have something that is clever, automated and also a platform or maybe even network where you could all the time be surrounded by the others: like employers would be able to sniff a little bit the air what kind of professionals there are available and which job posts they would fit. It's like change from one-time recruitment to the network. You mentioned LinkedIn and yes it functions in the same area but what makes us different is that in our system employers and employees they are first anonymously and they will write freely what

kind of job they would like to do, what is their professional knowledge, and where would they like to be. And the companies are describing that what kind of people they would need, what culture they have, and their future plans and goals. So according to these factors we connect people and match people and jobs in real time – and that is something for example what LinkedIn doesn't do. So rather than being just a CV bank, we actively are bringing new beginnings all the time to the both parties.

-Can you tell me about your values and mission?

-Our values are faith, hope, daring and passion. And we really believe that you need to have faith and hope that you will find new beginning and you want to develop yourself and that you want to go forward, and you will never stop being curious and also you need to be daring to be able to even think of moving onward and taking chances and getting out of your comfort zone, look for something new. And the passion is something that everyone needs in terms of to be successful in something. Passionate people are often quite successful because they love what they do and they love developing themselves. And these four describe not only what we want from the people, but it also what we want to be as a company. And we want to encourage people to think as well that how to kinda live their lives. And we want to live according to these values ourselves as well. And about our mission: we're kind of combined our mission and vision together cause we really think that if we're a digital service which offers new beginnings to people, and we decide that our mission drives us onwards, and shows us the way that vision is to become a leading provider of new beginning. We don't know if it is the one and the only thing that we offer to people, but also we might offer some other new beginnings for people in the future. So this is our vision and we really want to live according to that.

-How did you come up with the name of the company?

-Well, PIIK comes from the English word "peek". PIIK means peeking and also we wanted to include the domain so that is PIIK.it which describes a little bit more in detail what do we do and what we want our customers to do. So we decided to use the 'it' as domain ending in our service.

-Could you tell me about the brand and brand identity, how did you come up with whole style?

-If we talk about brand identity as such, it's quite often mixed with the fact that it's only about visuals. We want to think that brand identity is much deeper process than just the visuals that people see. Of course, visuals are important part of the brand identity, but we also like to think that brand identity is how we sound, what kind of tone are we're having and that's why we see that brand identity needs to be created also around the values and around the vision.

It started from the discussion that we want to be a great customer service that works so seamlessly that people love to use it, the usability needs to be great, how the actual user experience and user interface created and how they communicated inside the system. We had lots of things that we want to have and after we created tagline, which can be seen as our vision statement, that was like future oriented and we didn't want to do anything small, we wanted to do bold, great, functional brand that is much more than just a service. It's like the world built around it and we wanted to be a little bit entertaining but not too much, being easy to use, so people would like to go there many times a day, want to be around it. We started from the values and then we started to think about the name, what can it be, we had discussions with various people, and then we decided that PIIK is very short, snappy, easy to remember, and I suppose it all started with thinking of "who we are?", "what kind of people we are?", "how do we want to be seen in the future?". And then came brand statements and taglines.

Then I started to think about the logo, and the previous version was only typography based. We used Montserrat font to write PIIK. And it was a red dot at the end of the name. And the red dot came from idea of color being also representing our values, be daring and passion. So then after deciding the logo we started to test it with the different settings and we wanted there to be PIIK-new beginnings, and actually with the dot it seemed to be impossible to integrate the dot into the image so that looked centered and it's like one whole. In the end after long discussions me and graphic designer with whom we worked decided to use big circle around the PIIK, instead of using red dot at the end of the PIIK. So at the moment we have two types of logo – just typography based and second with red circle element around the PIIK name.

And from that idea we started to think about color palette, that we have this red dot. We wanted the service to be extremely simple, if not even minimalist approach with the icons and the colors, and we wanted it to be absolutely fresh, and simple, and the content is getting the most attention, when people are using the system. White and red was quite clear to us to use, and then the question appeared that we needed the third color to balance the white. So we decided that light-grey would balance red-white combination nicely. And also it's not so monotonous, the whole image of that. And it worked quite nicely. We also thought about black color, but it also very harsh, so the grey gives better combination. At the moment we think that we need one more extra color, that would balance nicely for example story telling and images. But at this stage it is quite difficult to decide what can it be. We'll test different color combinations and options, and then decide it. At the moment it's not necessary to have it. But one more color is something that we want to have.

And other elements that we used like icons, we wanted them to be as well very minimalist and descriptive what we are trying to communicate to our customers, it has not been an easy way to do not so serious but also like something so funny that people think it's not a professional. So it is combination of that, it was not the easiest thing to decide.

-You already told me about colors, why did you choose red one, but as you know most of the social media platforms use blue color because of its purposes.. so weren't you afraid of using such a bright and aggressive color?

-Absolutely! We had long discussions with our graphic designer, we tested it as well, we did A-B testing, and we also wanted to stand out from that blue and greenish services, we felt that there is no absolute point to go exactly to that, because it would be one blue extra color in the palette and the services.. we felt that we needed to do something different. We thought if we have faith, daring, hope and passion, I don't think that green or blue will ever have represent those values and that was the reason why we chose red. And our investors loved it, our team loved it, and most of the people that we did A-B testing also loved it. I think it is because our service has a lot of white and grey as well, so the red is accent color in there, so it's not like it all red. Also as at first we were thinking of PIIK as a "dating company" – dating in professional environment, so it also supported the idea of choosing red

color. And as I said there is one more extra color that we're going to add. So at the end red color was chosen and it's being great, our customers are also commenting that it is fresh and a little bit different. And that is exactly what we wanted to be.

- Did you come up with PIIK's brand personality?

-Brand personality.. it also goes to passionate and willing to learn more, PIIK as a person is not afraid of change, it actually drives toward change, it lives its life as it teaches so that it would be about hope, help our customers to find new beginnings, we also want to find new beginnings every day as well.

Also we want to build a world around the PIIK, so it's like a lifestyle in digital recruitment service, so that our customers feel nice when we post something. We have some plans to bring Spotify or fashion in some sense, but first we need to communicate with our customers of who we are and we can start broaden our communication with customers.

We want to be approachable; we also want to be a little bit exciting. When you get the match is the same thing if you get a contact from one guy last night from the bar, and you're like "Oh my God! He really send me the message!" But also we want to be ethical and competent. We want to live by our values and be the place where people come and they know we do our very best to offer them the new beginnings.

-Great. Do you think if we will imaging literally brand personality, if it was a person, could it be a young guy, who is professional in his field but still he is entertaining, he is really friendly and has lots of friends, also he is smart and intelligent? Do you think that this description is correct?

-Yes, I believe so. Of course, it might be difficult to use brand personality in the way that we function business to consumer and b2b environment, so basically if we use only one it describes very narrow maybe way of brand personality, but all those things that you said, we definitely are.

-Would it be true if I say that your desirable brand image is the same that your brand personality that you described?

-Definitely! And I hope that in the nearest future, as I said, we can broaden it and bring everything out. At the moment we have had to strategically bring out the

messages and build the brand around it. If you bring out everything immediately, it can make core messages a little bit blurry. People maybe don't understand who you are and what do you do, so we are at that stage right now.

-So can it be described as a part of strategy of brand image creation?

-Absolutely!

-Could you tell me about PIIK's typography? How did you come up with fonts and their combinations?

-We wanted to also communicate with our customers with the font or typography that is very clean. And we started to look for Sans Serif fonts that we could use and we ended up using Lato. Proxima Nova was what I really liked as a font, but it's use is quite expensive at this moment when we're small company - we decided that Lato is something that we can use in various forms in our marketing, so that's why Lato was decided to be the main font. It's light, but it's also quite strong, it's a little bit rounded which means that because of the colors that we decided it brings it down a bit and creates a good combination with the colors and with the icons. Our logo's font is Montserrat as I said, and that we are not using on the website anywhere else but in the logo. We decided not to because we wanted it to be recognizable as a logo and not just as a part of the text. We have Open Sans font as well, but have not been using it a lot. So far we have been coping well just with the Lato. Also we might bring other font to our official channels at some point. Although at Instagram or Facebook when I have been creating some images, I have not been using only those fonts, I've been quite font free. I think because our color scheme is so narrow, I thought that we could use fonts to bring it alive and also understand that the images need to be quite tightly red, white or black and white, and grey. If we've been only using one font, it might have been difficult to bring out some feelings or emotions because of our color scheme. So it has been deliberately decision of using various fonts in there.

We might bring out other visuals in the future, but so far I'm really happy with the result. Maybe we will bring one accent color might be good, one extra font might be good, but as long as we will cope with the Lato, I don't think that we will change it.

-Could you please tell me about role of social media for your company? What channels you rely on and why?

-In social media at the moment we're using Facebook and Instagram. And at personal level we use LinkedIn, we basically all post things about our development to our own audience. And we want to bring Spotify at some point, it's a little bit different social media platform maybe than normally people using, but as I said before we want to build the world around this and I think that music is very-very important and strong emotional attachment to the brand. Well, Facebook I think it's quite obvious, our target group is mostly in Facebook. It is also very good communication channel, I would like to think of Facebook as a great communication tool, helps keeping your customers informed and also be engaged with them. We can get the feedback from there, they can tell us what they need and do they need help. It's a communication channel. Facebook is where we're sharing information about PIIK, also our blog posts, which are the ones that we're building the world around PIIK, we're providing some information about working life in general and the changes of that, of course sharing some links that are important to our customers. So it's like multi-communicational channel. Also we can use our visuals in there, with the message quite strong, I think. We chose Instagram to be our channel because of again world building around it, we also think that it targets to a little bit different kind of audience than Facebook, and therefore we would like to be sharing the information about our lives as entrepreneurs and how we built up this service. So far it has been great to see, that even though we're not sharing lots of images in there, but the storytelling is quite recognizable, and I hope that we can maintain good flow in there. It is a great channel also to remind that we're exist, and also provide some information about PIIK. As I mentioned Spotify, we'll bring out some Spotify playlists in the future for different occasions, for example if you have failed in a job hunting – please listen to this playlist or if the recruitment is too heavy- listen to this. And also sound branding is completely something that we would like to test at some point, but this is one part of it and also to build up the PIIK world around the service. It's not really widely used, but we want to be the first ones. We actually have the sound designer working with us. We are testing how to brand with sound. But at LinkedIn we decided not to have PIIK's profile yet, at least because all we have rather big audience and contacts there, so we thought that personal sound might be better than a company sound, and we decided to be there with our own profiles.

-As we started to talk about social media, what is your target audience?

-We have been segmenting three different customer profiles, starting from 20 up to 55 years old. Although in our service there are no discriminated issues like age for example, so basically whomever can possibly join the service. But we have 3 different types of target groups. Basically there are young people who are planning their first moves or millennials, generation Y, there are other people who probably understands very well the whole point of the service, because there are might be people who don't want permanent job, they want to be two years there, two years here and they want to move and to travel – they are looking for new beginnings all the time. Then we have a little bit older ones, who maybe having a family, maybe moving to the different city or they still want to feel kind of “Ok I still can make the move and I could still develop myself”- that's the second target group. And then there are a little bit older ones, who think they have the freedom to go anywhere they want, they are really great professionals, they don't maybe have small children anymore, so the appeal to different kind of companies and jobs in general. And also about social media channels: Instagram is clearly for the first one, second target group is targeting in Facebook, and also the third one as well. We're thinking about of Snapchat, but since the lack of resources we decided that we keep it at the moment like this. Snap might be the one that we will take over in the near future. But we're still strategically thinking, and I think that it's better to have less channels if you don't have the massive amount of resources to actually do it. Better to do few of them well, than many of them and crash completely, because you don't have many time to update them.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire

Q-Method

Questionnaire

1. I like color design decisions of PIIK
2. PIIK company associates with millennial generation mostly
3. I like PIIK's logo
4. I don't understand core branding decisions
5. PIIK associates with hope, daring, passion, faith
6. Red color is aggressive
7. PIIK as a person is young, smart, ethical, entertaining, professional, passionate
8. Red color is fresh, passionate, entertaining
9. I feel that sound branding will be an additional benefit for existing brand identity
10. I like PIIK's typography
11. I think that red circle is not a good decision for brand element
12. I think that PIIK has minimalist approach in brand identity
13. I like combination of different fonts in PIIK's Instagram images
14. PIIK as a person is aggressive
15. PIIK's website seems user-friendly
16. I like that red color is different from other social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)
17. I don't like combination of different fonts in PIIK's Instagram images
18. I don't associate myself with PIIK's style
19. I like red circle as brand element
20. I feel there is a need in extra color for PIIK's brand identity
21. I like that presence in different social media platforms makes PIIK brand look cohesive
22. PIIK's brand identity does not represent faith, passion, daring and hope
23. I like minimalist approach in PIIK's design
24. I don't like PIIK's typography
25. PIIK's brand identity is fresh, future oriented, recognizable, modern

26. I don't like minimalist approach in PIIK's design
27. PIIK's website doesn't seem to represent strong brand
28. Red circle makes design decision look cohesive
29. I think that PIIK's website image is correspondent with Instagram's image
30. PIIK's website is modern, easy to use

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Ne
	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8	Var9	Var10	NewVar1	NewVar2	NewVar3	NewVar4	NewVar5	NewVar6	NewVar7	Ne
1	6	5	6	4	6	6	7	7	3	6	1	7	7	4	7	6	1	
2	7	6	5	1	5	6	7	6	3	6	1	7	5	2	5	6	2	
3	5	4	4	3	5	3	6	6	6	5	3	6	5	2	6	2	2	
4	7	2	7	5	7	3	6	7	7	7	1	3	7	2	7	6	1	
5	1	2	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	5	
6	3	5	4	5	3	5	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	
7	7	6	7	2	5	2	7	7	4	6	1	5	4	1	7	7	4	
8	6	6	5	4	4	3	6	6	5	6	2	4	5	3	6	7	4	
9	6	6	7	2	6	3	6	5	6	7	2	7	7	2	7	7	2	
10	6	5	6	5	5	2	5	7	6	4	2	2	5	3	4	5	3	
11	5	4	4	5	6	3	6	6	4	4	3	4	5	3	3	4	5	
12	1	1	1	4	4	1	4	7	4	4	1	4	4	4	5	4	4	
13	4	6	6	3	4	7	6	5	6	6	3	6	4	6	4	3	5	
14	5	7	6	1	3	5	5	4	3	7	2	7	7	5	5	6	1	
15	4	5	2	5	4	6	3	4	6	3	6	7	2	6	4	3	5	
16	6	6	6	1	6	1	6	7	5	7	3	7	5	2	7	6	1	
17	7	6	7	2	7	1	7	6	7	7	1	1	7	1	7	7	1	
18	5	6	6	3	6	3	6	5	4	6	2	6	7	4	5	6	2	
19	4	5	6	3	2	1	5	4	5	5	3	6	4	3	6	6	5	

Figure 7. Q method variables

File Edit View Insert Format Statistics Graphs Tools Data Workbook Window Help

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Factor Loadings (Varimax normalized) (Data_insects)
Extraction: Principal components
(Marked loadings are >.400000)

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Var1	0.584715	0.277397	0.571114	0.161392
Var2	0.226258	-0.383736	0.595931	0.231217
Var3	0.264735	0.051776	0.722107	0.390918
Var4	0.472045	-0.158969	-0.563603	0.012173
Var5	0.702467	0.318483	0.162715	0.401534
Var6	-0.165246	-0.764361	0.066384	-0.122526
Var7	0.372586	-0.122398	0.242789	0.634048
Var8	0.608180	0.378559	0.058656	0.459916
Var9	0.777160	0.007020	0.071489	0.007720
Var10	0.391140	0.161549	0.544544	0.574262
NewVar1	-0.025460	-0.790431	-0.130124	-0.027292
NewVar2	-0.004706	-0.237762	0.521787	0.258021
NewVar3	0.188961	0.046294	0.307467	0.830900
NewVar4	-0.386400	-0.661598	-0.248210	0.140789
NewVar5	0.506045	0.495846	0.409466	0.283525
NewVar6	0.072991	0.207243	0.532949	0.570139
NewVar7	-0.073315	-0.136761	-0.118300	-0.800572
NewVar8	-0.472145	-0.333268	-0.497005	-0.345330
NewVar9	0.323100	0.473076	0.487035	0.442808
NewVar10	0.092614	-0.577059	-0.121681	-0.602500
NewVar11	0.052255	0.459812	0.677219	0.236068
NewVar12	-0.270483	-0.497402	-0.184696	-0.485959
NewVar13	0.338582	0.123227	0.796204	0.281375
NewVar14	-0.031257	-0.339315	-0.653449	-0.017062
NewVar15	0.544224	0.172088	0.705011	0.246400
NewVar16	-0.083824	-0.187967	-0.872896	-0.103352
NewVar17	-0.161453	-0.473149	-0.526235	-0.290458

Figure 8. Q method results