

Creating Brand for CoreFinland Ltd

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<p>The research aims to build brand for a small-sized company namely CoreFinland Ltd. Herein, the main objective of this research is to create CoreFinland as a brand in b-to-b customers' context. This broader milestone is achieved by studying the case company's brand identity and brand image issues.</p> <p>The first part of this research makes a comparative study of varieties of relevant literature from different writers. The theories discuss b-to-b brand relevance and extend to the major study areas: brand identity and brand image. This is a qualitative research, carried out by using semi-structured interviews with the company personnel in order to find out the brand identity and with the business customers to reveal the current company image. The revealed image is contrasted with the identity and, finally, a suitable identity for the company is suggested.</p> <p>The study reveals that the company's brand image among the customers corresponds only moderately with the company's brand identity because of lack of brand communication, an insufficient product range and insufficient customer care. Further, the research suggests a suitable brand identity by considering customers' perceptions and the company objectives. The study reveals that CoreFinland's core identity needs to be related to its organizational associations of being healthy and environmentally friendly, and service associations of having professional and friendly customer care, and quick and effective delivery. In addition, its extended identity needs to be a young and dynamic Finnish company with healthy and luxurious products, passionate workers and having a good contact with retailers and wholesalers.</p> <p>The findings of this study allow CoreFinland to understand its current company image and provide valuable insights to the company to create a suitable brand identity.</p>	
<p>Keywords Brand identity, brand image, b-to-b branding, brand personality</p>	

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1 Introduction

Brand identity is one of the major issues in the businesses today. The need for impressive brand identity comes from the need to get a certain business known among existing and future markets by communicating distinguishing features of the business, products or services that the brand identity is composed of, so that it can sufficiently influence customers' buying decisions by building their trust and emotional attachment to the business, products or services. Building suitable brand identity helps a company to tell its customers what its business is all about, what its missions and visions are, what ways it is different from the competitors, what promises it can make and deliver, why the customers can depend on it, etc. In the present business scenario, customers are more attached to those brands which they have trust on, which have gained more popularity in the general market places, etc. Clearly, business customers do not necessarily buy just products, but they buy brands that guarantee profits. That is the most important reason why the following study embraces creating brand as a major area.

1.1 Background to the thesis

When establishing brand identity for a company, it needs to know primarily what ways it is different from the rest. These answers are often rooted in the reasons behind its existence. Creating a good brand identity demands the company to explore inside and precisely know itself, its purpose, and reasons to exist. (Aaker 2002, 135.)

Furthermore, the company should always be aware of the responses and reactions to its own efforts, and constantly adjust accordingly, meaning that company should establish identity by considering its core values and realizing customer's perception about those values.

It can be understood that brand identity is the most indispensable part of the brand, which when conceived and implemented correctly, can be an asset to firms and play role for gaining sustainable advantage (Aaker 2002, 201).

Earlier studies show that the superiority of corporate branding has been felt strongly over the product branding, especially in b-to-b context, whereby organizational buyers put more emphasis on selling organization, including its corporate brand, credibility and staff, rather than individual brands and their associated dimensions (Kuhn, Alpert & Pope 2008, 40).

The case company, for which this study is carried out, is more focused on product branding than company branding. The company has been in operation for more than four years, yet its effort in building company brand is considerably low, whereas, the importance of company brand is increasing now a days.

The case company has not done anything to create its own brand identity, or has not seen how its customers have evaluated it. The presumption is that there is already some sort of brand image of CoreFinland among its business customers. In this context, it is important to know the current company image among b-to-b customers, which could be referred to suggest suitable brand identity.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

The main objective of this study is to create brand identity for CoreFinland Ltd. Its company brand identity is not yet created, even though its only brand RIPS has been performing moderately in the market since the establishment of the company. Therefore, company requires finding out ways to establish company brand in order to gain more credibility and long-term relationship with business customers. In b-to-b branding, the need of organizational branding supersedes the importance of product branding (Kuhn et al. 2008, 40). The concept of company branding comes into play when the company reputation for business to business dealing exists as a major function.

In order to attain the aforementioned objective, this study has technically embraced the paths to developing brand identity by extracting its brand images from the imprint of its existing business customers. This study puts in a lot of efforts to rightly find out image about the company and takes them in consideration in order to create brand

identity. This milestone is achieved by obtaining answers to different research questions in b-to-b context. Herein, the study quests for finding out CoreFinland's current brand identity and image; and later, it makes comparative study to pin-point where the lacking of their (identity and image) equation exists. Furthermore, it suggests CoreFinland's suitable brand identity. Therefore, the main research question is **'How to create a brand for CoreFinland?'**

The main research question is further divided into following sub-questions:

- 1 What are the current brand identity and image of CoreFinland in b-to-b context?
- 2 How does the identity match with image?
- 3 What can be the suitable brand identity for CoreFinland?

The following questions are specifically designed to address the research questions:

1. What is CoreFinland's brand like?
2. What is the purpose of the organization? Why does the company exist and what it stands for, besides product and profit?
3. What are organizational values and culture of CoreFinland? Why are they important?
4. What is organization's brand personality?
5. How the business customers see CoreFinland?
6. What kind of customer care services do the business customers want from CoreFinland?

1.3 Research limitations

This study intends to create brand identity of CoreFinland by considering the perspectives of its business customers only. Hence, this study does not measure the perspectives of individual consumers. Since this study focuses only in identity creation; it is therefore, not to be misunderstood with identity development, positioning and communication. Furthermore, the data collection is limited to retailing business customers

of CoreFinland only even though wholesalers are also partially considered for reference purposes only.

1.4 CoreFinland Ltd (CFL)

CoreFinland is a small-sized company that concentrates on importing, marketing and sales of varieties of food and snack products to retail, wholesale and hotel, restaurants and catering (HORECA) sectors in Finland. The company owns 'RIPS RYE SNACK' brand since 2007 as its main food-snack brand. This brand is also claimed to be number 1 rye-snack brand in Finland. (CoreFinland 2010.)

CoreFinland is supplying already established brands such as – CurryTree, branded products of Fintia Ltd; Salty Dogs, branded products of Salty Towers; Sheriffi chewing gum, branded product of Enemy of Suck Ltd etc. Nevertheless, its major business is to supply/wholesale own brand RIPS to other retailers, wholesalers, etc.

CoreFinland provides marketing and sales services to both foreign and domestic companies through its long established channels, such as - wholesale, retail and HORECA sectors. In the service sector, the company is also providing services such as - Sinfos product information database entry and hosting, package designing and consultation, market entry planning, reporting of sales and marketing activities including competitors' activities, introducing products to retail chains, logistics in Finland, warehousing in Finland, CD-model warehousing services (labeling, collecting, etc.), sales material designing, translation services, brand management, nation-wise sales teams, product development (sampling & sensory research and analysis). (CoreFinland 2010.)

2 B-to-b branding

B-to-b branding is different from b-to-c branding in the sense that customers (buyers) do not make any emotional or subjective decisions in buying, rather they undergo objective decision making process like the features, functionality, benefit, price, services and qualities. Buyers choose to buy from the company which has good reputation, even though the products have the same features in reputed or non-reputed companies. The company reputation manifests in the ways it promises to the customers and fulfills the promises, such as – delivery, after sales services, etc. The question why the buyers would be reasonably satisfied with your services and products is because of the sets of values, reputation, beliefs that your company stands for, certain unspoken promises that your company can always be relied upon to a certain standard. (Pandey 2003.)

According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006, 20), the main difference between b-to-b and b-to-c branding can still lie in some major aspects as in the nature and complexity of industrial products and services, the nature and diversity of industrial demand, fewer customers, large volumes per customers, and closer and longer-lasting supplier-customer-relationships.

In b-to-b branding, the company establishes relationships with both customers and stakeholders such as investors, government, media, employees etc. Media looks about good companies for advertising, government receives good tax from good companies, customers like products from good company with good brands, etc. Thus, each of them has their own ways of approaching good company brand, for example customers may have interest in price and product quality, where as investors are interested in company's strategy and performance. All these internal and external elements of the company are to be taken into account in such a way that they all get what they want. But, giving them what they want should be based on real ground, it should not be false temptation or exaggeration; otherwise the company can lose ground dramatically. (Ind 2004, 25.)

Satisfying the needs of the stakeholders is a daunting task for the companies, but those successful in this issue, can cause the stakeholders to generate positive feelings towards them, and ultimately develop a positive image.

The image which the customers have perceived about a company is exclusively their subjective activities; nothing can control customers from making their image about company, but image is directly related to the identity, therefore, the identity should be strong.

The major factors affecting company image are widely acknowledged by several scholars to be employees, investors, customers, general public etc. Hence measuring company image is a complex phenomenon. (Ind 2004, 25.)

2.1 B-to-b brand relevance

Branding in b-to-b context has become as important as in b-to-c context. The industrial marketing environment is changing so rapidly that businesses, failing to adapt to these new circumstances will inevitably drop out of the race (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 34). Hence, it is relevant to put in efforts towards b-to-b branding aspects for the companies. This need is even more required due to the proliferation of similar products and services leading to increasingly interchangeable offerings and making it easier for the buyers to choose any substitutable products from the market, eased and accessible transportation and logistics networks across the globe, hyper-competition and high price pressure as branding can help differentiate, reduce risk and complexity of products, and compensate price pressures by offering additional value, etc. (Ibid. 34-45.)

2.2 Power of b-to-b branding

Successful brand cannot be created overnight. Successful industrial brands have long history, for example - Saint-Gobain (1665), Ernst & Young (1894), IMB (1925), etc. (Ibid. 50.) However, there are certain brands like Grainger, Intel, Google, Facebook,

etc., which have grown up to be in present situation in a short time. Nevertheless, products or services can become outdated or easily get imitated by competitors; a successful brand is timeless and unique. (Ibid. 51.) The power of b-to-b branding mentioned by Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006, 50-57) is described as follows:

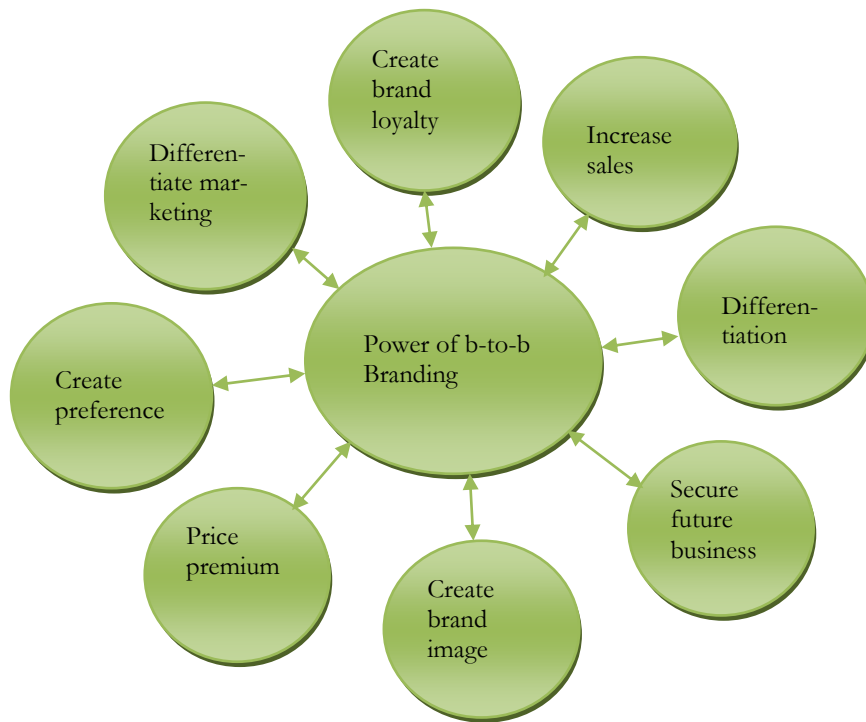


Figure 1. The role of b-to-b brands (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2006, 52)

– **Differentiation**

Creating brand for company helps customers differentiate one company from another. It helps them to identify their right product from the crowd of brands.

– **Secure future business**

Those companies that choose to brand their products have been able to survive better than those who have not put in any efforts to do so. Products with brands are timeless and immortal because they can withstand any kind of crisis or economic devastation in and around its market with the similar products categories.

– **Create brand loyalty**

Consistent delivery of the right brand promises to the customers over any adverse or favorable economic situations will imprint an everlasting impression in the customers' mind that they thereby chose to go for this particular brand.

– **Differentiate marketing efforts**

Product with no-name cannot do much towards communicating its values and benefits to the customers and this will create confusion among them while choosing their right product from the crowd of brands. But a brand will help them to reach their goal. Customers can easily find out their branded products amidst the crowd and thus, save their time, too.

– **Create preferences**

Why would users of Nokia phones reject other brands? This is because of their brand loyalty and preferences. They have valued the Nokia brand better than any other brands in the mobile-phone category. A strong brand will stop the users switching to other competitors' products.

– **Command price premium**

Why would customers like to buy Rolex and Bentley even though they are highly priced? This is because they believe the high price is bearer of good quality; it is a sign of self-worth and authenticates the buyers' success and status, etc.

– **Create brand image**

Through the brands, a company's value propositions are manifested in more emotive and compelling ways and also positive brand image attracts more stakeholders.

– **Increase sales**

Strong brands can always ensure not only higher margins but also higher sales, which are the major goals of companies, by one way or the other.

3 Brand identity

Successful brand-building always starts with the development of a strong and clear brand identity and generating awareness (Aaker 2002, 2). Identity of a person is any distinctly recognizable personality and characteristic an individual possesses that differentiate him/her from other individuals. Similarly, brand identity refers to distinct personality and characteristic a company or product possesses that differentiates itself from others; so brand identity is more than just the name of the brand.

Aaker (2002, 68) defines brand identity as a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. It also provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. That's why it should be central to a brand's strategic vision.

Basic concept of brand identity is that it is a set of characteristics that identifies a brand. The founder of the concept 'brand identity', Kapferer (2008, 171) states that it is the key vision that drives the creation of products and services under that brand name. So the brand identity is the key belief of the brand and its core values which is able to create advocates, a real cult and loyalty. The latter one relates to the ability of a brand identity to establish and sustain relationships. This concept is in coherence with Aaker (2002, 68), who argues that identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits.

De Chernatony (2002, in Bivainiene 2010, 411) argues that brand identity is the essence of brand individuality; and it strengthens the brand. That is why, brand identity is the basic and fundamental building block of whole brand building process; and a successful brand identity always ensures to build a successful brand.

Brand has to be unique, meaning that identity has to be unique. This uniqueness of brand identity can also be seen through Gad's brand code concept in which brand code equates business DNA that manifests unique set of characteristic to the brand (Gad 2001, 16). Hence, building brand identity demands the company to find its unique differentiation points, which could be used as a tool to express individuality and distinctiveness to all the stakeholders. As Aaker (2002, 68) mentions that the identity is also a promise, it can also be regarded as proposition made by the company to the customers regarding features, benefits, performances, service, support and the value.

An effective brand identity always resonates with customers, differentiates from competitors and represents what company can do and will do overtime (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000, 40). Brand identity has to reflect the benefit and consumer's expectation, which helps to respond to the changes efficiently and adequately (Bivainiene 2010, 412). Therefore, it can be inferred that brand identity should be created by realizing customers' expectations and perceptions about the brand - brand image, which Aaker (2002, 69) argues to provides useful and necessary background information when developing a brand identity.

3.1 Brand identity system by Aaker

Brand identity system by Aaker (2002, 68) consists of twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives, brand as: a product, an organization, a person, and a symbol (See Figure 2).

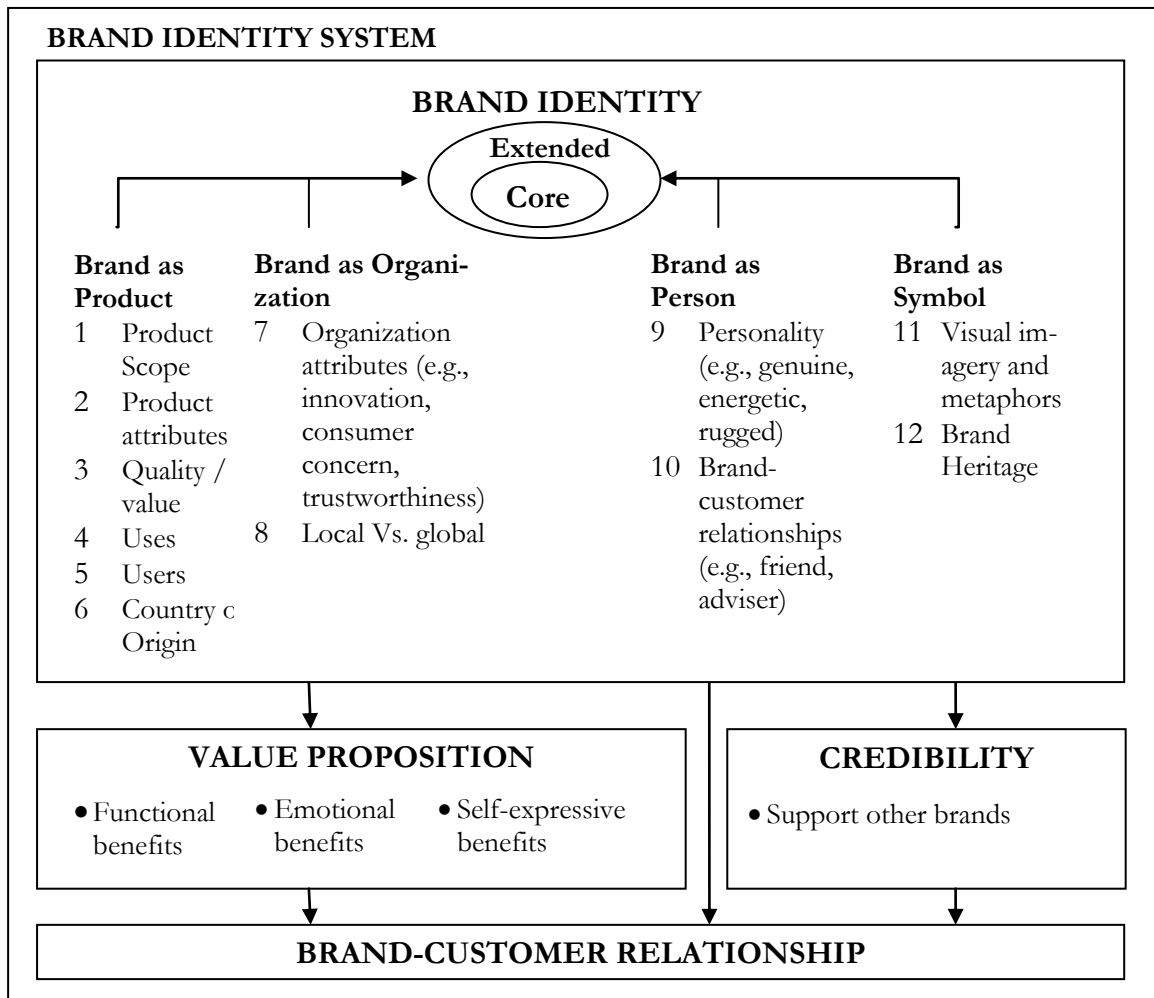


Figure 2. Brand identity system (Aaker 2002, 79)

According to Aaker (2002, 79), brand identity should help establish relationship between brand and the customer by generating value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits. That means the identity should be able to deliver the promise of benefits, and those benefits should be able to make customer – brand relationships. Identity should also support other brands under the same umbrella providing enough credibility (see Figure 2).

3.2 Brand identity perspectives

Creating a successful brand requires great consideration of different brand elements. A thorough understanding of these elements helps to clarify, enrich and differentiate an identity. These brand elements are grouped in four different perspectives by Aaker

(2002, 79) and he asserts that the firm should consider these perspectives of brand to bring depth and texture to the brand.

3.2.1 Brand as product

Brand as a product is an important brand dimension to consider while formulating a brand identity because it serves as a tool for brand choice decisions and use experience. Product is the primary influence of what consumers experience with a brand, what they hear about a brand, and what the firm can tell them about that brand in their communication. (Keller 2001, 10.) The brand should also have desirable and feasible associations with a product class. Building strong brand requires an association of the brand in customer's mind with specific product class or needs. (Keller 2001, 5.) The brand identity should be such that when the product class is mentioned, customers should be able to link that class with the brand. That means when portable media player is mentioned, it should link the customers to brands like Apple, Philips etc. However, when a firm comes to a cross road where product class needs to be expanded, key identity issues may arise, regarding how to link the extended product classes to the brand (Aaker 2002, 80).

Product attributes provide functional as well as emotional benefits to the customers due to its use and consequent experience and help the company to create value proposition by offering extra features or services, or simply by offering something better (Aaker 2002, 80). However, focusing only on product attributes tends to push the brand identity towards product-attribute fixation trap whereby product attributes themselves are thought to be brand identity (see Aaker 2002, 72-77). This significantly limits other aspects of brand identity related to organization, person, and symbol. However, this does not delimit the importance of product related attributes while building identity because addition of other dimensions on these core product-attributes helps differentiating and fulfilling same customer needs, and that makes a brand (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2008, 3).

Another product related attribute that can help build identity is quality. Quality is the essence of a product and creates value, and assurance to the customers. Starbucks' larger part of brand identity is based on quality: finest coffee in the world with integrity and consistency. With time, quality is embodied as a core identity of every single brand. (Aaker 2002, 81.)

Product can be associated to a brand based on its use and users. When mentioned virtualization platform for testing different operating systems, testers associate the product with brands like VirtualBox or VMware based on their use. Similarly, Weight Watchers is associated with those users who are interested in weight control and nutrition. User association may have significant value proposition and brand personality implication while creating brand identity. (Aaker 2002, 81-82.)

Lastly, linking country to one's brand is also common. Swatch is Swiss, Nokia as Finnish, and Champagne means France. This linking implies that these products can be best made only in these countries or regions, which assures the customers about the quality and provides credibility. (Ibid. 82.)

3.2.2 Brand as organization

Achieving enduring brand differentiation has become more difficult in present day market crowded with brands. Partly, the brands based on product attributes are easily imitable and partly there are too many brands to maintain and sustain under the same umbrella. This gave rise to a new perspective which uplifts the brand building to a whole new level of organizational associations. It bases the brand identity on the organization behind the brand. Organizational attributes of being innovative, quality provider, friendly, environmentally conscious etc. highly provide extra edge to brand differentiation and acceptance. These attributes are enduring and more likely to resist competition than product attributes; and less prone to imitation by competitors as they are qualitative, less tangible, and difficult to evaluate than product attributes. Organizational attributes spur from the people, culture, value, and programs of the organization and they contribute to a value proposition providing emotional as well as self-

expressive benefits based on admiration, respect or liking. Brand-as-organization highly provides credibility to other brand under the same umbrella. These positive associations help create and maintain ultimate, sustainable and profitable customer relationships. (Aaker 2002, 83.)

With change of time and technology, relevance of product as brand concept is slowly fading as they no longer are able to provide effective differentiation. Brand is lot more than a mere product, which opened the door to explore brand from non-tangible perspectives of brand as an organization. One of the concepts thus rose up was corporate brand. (See Aaker 2002, 83, 115.)

A strong corporate brand is no less or more than the face of the business strategy, portraying what the corporation aims at doing and what it wants to be known for in the market place. The corporate brand is the overall umbrella for the corporations' activities and encapsulates its vision, values, personality, positioning and image among many other dimensions (Roll 2004). Corporate brand that is applied over stretched product brands curtail the increased cost of promoting individual brands, however, poor performance of one brand can tarnish whole corporate brand (Aaker 2002, 117). Nevertheless, internally corporate brand signals message about the desired culture and externally it reduces information overload problems from line branding (De Chernatony 2006, 31). Corporate brands provide credibility for other product brands (Aaker 2002, 132, De Chernatony 2006, 31). Managing corporate branding needs different approach as it is about multiple stakeholders interacting with many staff from numerous functions and important objectives are ensuring a consistent message and uniform delivery across all stakeholder groups (De Chernatony 2006, 32). Hence, it becomes imperative to have internal focus while creating brand identity based on organization.

To create identity based on organizational associations, Aaker (2002, 111) asserts that company should focus both externally and internally. Externally, the company should focus on innovativeness, being successful, being socially responsible, and a good leader whom stakeholders feel pride to belong to. Internally, efforts should be aimed primarily towards current and prospective employees to make them feel pride in their firm

because of its values, purpose, past success, and future goals. This motivates the employee and stimulates them to bring the desired change. (Aaker 2002, 114.) Another important component of brand identity is the organization's culture, which influences the corporate brand's values (De Chernatony 1999, 158). Successful brand identity can only be created if employee's value, culture and behaviors are in line with the brand values which the company aspires.

Aaker (2002, 118) lists some of the most prevalent and useful organizational associations available for brand managers to focus on, which are described below.

– **Society/community orientation**

In this proposition, brand identity is tied up with the organizational associations of being “good citizen”, which is usually expressed being environmentally sensitive, sponsoring worthwhile causes and charities, showing interest and involvement in communities. There are many programs that company could involve in – human rights, pollution, climate change, environment, parks, trafficking etc. One of the latest trends is to go green, which shows that organization really cares for environment. The outcomes of the above mentioned associations are enhanced customer relationship and loyalty, respect, admiration and liking. (Ibid. 119-122.)

To benefit from these associations, Aaker (2002, 122) emphasizes that company's programs and actions must be translated into perceptions that help the organization to stand out from the crowd, which could only be obtained by focusing on any one core responsibility, being consistent on it overtime and linking the program to the brand. It is usually beneficial to be involved in programs that can be directly linked to your business and brand's value. If possible, the program itself could be branded to acquire crystallized meaning and enhance its impact. For example, Sony VAIO donated funds and also made VAIO Pink series special editions to fight against breast cancer. However, persistence on the program is expected overtime to fully associate any program with the brand.

– **Perceived quality**

Perceived Quality plays important role in consumer choice of products and the organization. It is gained by demonstrating, arguing and continuously discussing quality as part of firm's values, culture, people and program. That shows firms commitment to quality and enhances perceived quality. While making quality claims, however the focus should be on the firm rather than on the products. (Ibid. 123-124.)

– **Innovation**

Innovation cue is the most important to those firms competing in a product class in which customers value technology and innovation the most. Innovation cue associated with product may live short but the innovativeness if associated with a firm provides advantage that sustains longer. For example, even if certain products may not match-up the firm's performance promise, many people buy from Apple because they regard Apple to be an innovative and technologically advanced firm. To attain this association, firm should be able to bring breakthroughs in innovation which can live up with product claims and provide meaning to the customers. Keller and Aaker (see Aaker 2002, 134) in research of corporate image found that the innovative corporate image was a powerful asset as it was the only corporate image dimension to enhance the perceived fit of the corporate brand extension and the evaluation of the product attributes. (Ibid. 124-125.)

– **Concern for customer**

Firm should have customers first as a core value and communicate this philosophy to gain customer confidence and trust, which implies that when a firm can befriend with customers, the brand delivers what customer wants: honesty, caring, dependability and respect. (Ibid. 125-126.)

– **Presence and success**

Firms should be able to make people aware of its existence. Visibility and presence of the organization behind a brand can create image of company size and competence.

Visible success of the brand reassures prospective customers that other customers have selected the brand, which in turn increases their own confidence. Success brings prestige and credibility. Visibility requires constant presence, and presence can be acquired by different ways. Unique way is to sponsor events which help the firm to acquire exposure. (Ibid. 126-127.)

– **Local versus global**

One basic identity choice is to identify you either as a local or global firm. Identifying the firm as local requires analysis whether you are suitable to fit in these requirements. To be local, a firm should be able to blend into the local heritage that the customers admire or feel pride to be its part. One way to go local is to emphasize customers' regional heritage in promotions in order to create bond. Other way is to be a good local citizen by involving in local programs like: fighting pollution, diseases, helping schools etc. Going local means understanding local needs, this in turn can lead to product refinements and effective identity implementation efforts.

Going global means the brand is backed by a capable and successful organization which has larger audience and mission. It showcases its desire to brand's future, longevity and intent to invest in the brand. Going global means the firm has the ability to compete in different markets. To base your identity on whether you are local or global, it is hence, important to analyze and determine whether the firm has these resources and capabilities or not.

In short, brand-as-organization should help value positioning based on the association that customers make with the organization, which further should enhance customer relationships. Brand-as-organization should increase brand's credibility and also bring clarity inside organization, help form a brand/organizational culture and make employee buy into and live in that culture. (Ibid. 128-130.)

3.2.3 Brand as person

This perspective regards a brand to have human personality traits like fun, reliable, friendly, active, humorous, casual, formal, intellectual etc. This perspective is termed as brand personality, which is defined as the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand. This allows customers interact with brands as if they were people.

Brand personality is both distinctive and enduring and can help create self-expressive benefit that becomes a vehicle for the customer to express his or her own personality. Similar to human personality, brand personality affects the brand-customer relationships. It also helps company gain in-depth understanding of consumer perceptions and attitudes towards the brand. (Ibid. 141-142.)

Measuring brand personality is similar to human personality consisting of demographics (age, gender, social class and race), lifestyle (activities, interest, and opinions) or human personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, and dependability)

Brand Personality Scale (BPS) encompasses all the available personalities and lists them into Big Five – Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness. Each of the Big Fives can further be broken down into facets which provide texture and describes the brand with perfection. However, a single brand can have complex personality that might range across the Big Five. One or some of these personalities can also be regarded as firm's core identity, for example, genuineness. (Ibid. 142-143.)

3.2.4 Brand as symbol

Anything that represents a brand can be a brand symbol which includes visual imagery, metaphors, and the brand heritage that means a brand symbol must represent the brand concept (Aaker 2002, 84). Visual imagery could be anything visual, for instances, an employee or user representing the brand, design, logo etc. Symbols involving visual imagery can be memorable and powerful. Nonetheless, strong visual image should capture brand's identity and involve a metaphor representing benefits. Brand's strong heritage also represents the essence of the brand. Strong brand symbol provides cohesion and structure to an identity and makes it easier to gain recognition and recall (Aaker

2002, 84), which is also manifested by MacInnis, Shapiro and Mani (1999, 601-602) that while brand symbols might serve multiple communication objectives, perhaps the most significant is their impact on brand name awareness.

3.3 Identity structure

Brand identity suggested by Aaker consists of a core identity and an extended identity (Aaker 2002, 85). Brand elements should make enduring patterns of meaning around the core identity elements, so is important to recognize the core identity elements.

– Core identity

The timeless essence of the brand is its core identity, which is central to both the meaning and success of the brand. Core identity contains associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets and products. Aaker (2002, 86) asserts that core identity for a strong brand should be more resistant to change than elements of the extended identity and they should include elements that make the brand both unique and valuable, which would eventually contribute to value proposition and credibility.

– Extended identity

Extended identity includes elements that are organized around the core identity to provide meaning and completeness. Core identity alone usually does not possess enough detail to perform all of the functions of a brand identity (Aaker 2002, 87). Hence, extended identity elements add details to core identity to make a crystallized, meaningful brand identity.

4 Brand image

Consumers identify certain products of different brands in the ways they have come into their minds. It is a kind of imprint into their mind's eye which suggests different visualizations, product attributes, etc. While calling upon any brand, they idolize a certain figure, image in varieties of ways which needs to be studied by the company for brand identity creation. Consumers' images about the brands suggest their own associations and ways of understanding the brands. They gather experiences while using certain products. Their feelings, expectations, and knowledge or experience about the brands give them a kind of image about the brand. This is called brand image.

In brand building, brand awareness and brand image play significant roles because they are the constituent parts of brand knowledge which helps as a reminder or memory to the customers about a certain product or service or company, etc. Brand image is consumers' perception about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. Creating brand image is a marketing effort, such as- marketing campaigns/ programs will help create strong, favourable and unique associations about the brand into the customers' mind. Again, customers create brand image not only by means of marketing programs but also they rely considerably on direct experiences through information from other commercial or nonpartisan sources such as consumer reports or other media vehicles. They also depend on word of mouth and by assumptions or inferences consumers make about the brand itself, its name, and logo, identification with a company, country, and channel of distribution, person, place, or event. (Keller 2003, 70.)

The companies striving to obtain good brand image in the market should pay attention to its unique and distinguishing features which cannot be imitated. Obviously, brand image possessed by a company is the only such factor that cannot be imitated easily. Brand image concept can be approached from consumers' and company's perspective where consumers approach is based on consumers' attitude towards brand while company's approach is based on marketing activities. It is also approached in terms of mar-

keting concept while building brand equity, where managers try to affect consumers' perception of a product in order to get positive brand image.

Knowledge of the brand image (how customers and others perceive brand) provides useful and even necessary background information when developing a brand identity. So, brand image is a major, but not the only constituent, part of brand identity as Aaker (2002, 70) mentions 'Creating a brand identity is more than finding out what customers say they want (customers' brand image). It must also reflect the soul and vision of the brand, what it hopes to achieve. While identity is internal audit, brand image is external audit, that is, it endeavours to see how a certain brand can be appealing in the public face. (Aaker 2002 69-70.) It is not easy to establish a good brand image and more difficult to sustain it. There can be many effective factors in play every time in order to defame already established images. It needs for the company to be vigilant to all internal, external and also natural causes and try to secure image.

4.1 Corporate brand image

A corporate brand is a projection of the amalgamated values of a corporation that enables it to build coherent, trusted relationships with stakeholders. Besides unifying staff, a corporate brand signals expectations to staff about desired forms of behavior through a set of values that bind an organization (De Chernatony 2006, 31.)

A successful corporate brand flags to stakeholders a set of principles that the organization stands for and that add value to the on-going relationships. Corporate brands stand for something that is unique to each corporation and they inspire staff to treat their stakeholders in a consistently similar manner which leads to increased stakeholder confidence. He emphasizes that new branding model should involve value through employee's involvements in relationship-building. (De Chernatony 2006, 31.)

The customers' perception about the organization as a brand constructs corporate brand image. Incorporation of corporate image to the customers has effects on the

public belief, attitude, and behavioral intentions towards organization in a time of crisis for that organization. (Wan & Schell 2007, 33.)

There are several scholarly views about corporate image. Corporate image is purely a manipulation and imposition of messages by the organization to the public through the media image, while others incorporate audience perspectives and believe that it is not controlled by organization. Organizational image is also the impression that people perceive of an organization and is a synthesis of many impressions that result from the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, and perceptions about the organization. This idea of corporate image incorporates two-ways of communication process while the previous idea only tries to be rigid to organizational process.

Grunig (1993, in Wan & Schell 2007, 26) mentions that if the people's perception is the construct of corporate communication effort with its various public then this corporate-people relation is merely symbolic where the symbols means to give to public what they want where, by means of symbols, the organizations try to develop mutual understanding between public and organization. Image, thus, is viewed as 'a dual process' that interplays between organizations' projected image and people's consumption of that image.

4.2 Brand image formation

According to Doyle (1989, in Janonis & Virvilaitė 2007, 79), brand image is formed of many elements of brand identity itself, where advertising is one of the most important tool, as it informs consumers, and is inseparable from brand positioning within consumer minds. But many researchers oppose the idea of advertising, as it is waste of money, imposition of image into customers' mind, and one-sided (company's effort).

Keller (1993, 3) defines brand image as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations, made by consumers. He emphasizes on different types of brand association; favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand association. Out of these

associations customers make image. Again, in his model the types of associations are composed of attributes, benefit and attitudes (Figure 3).

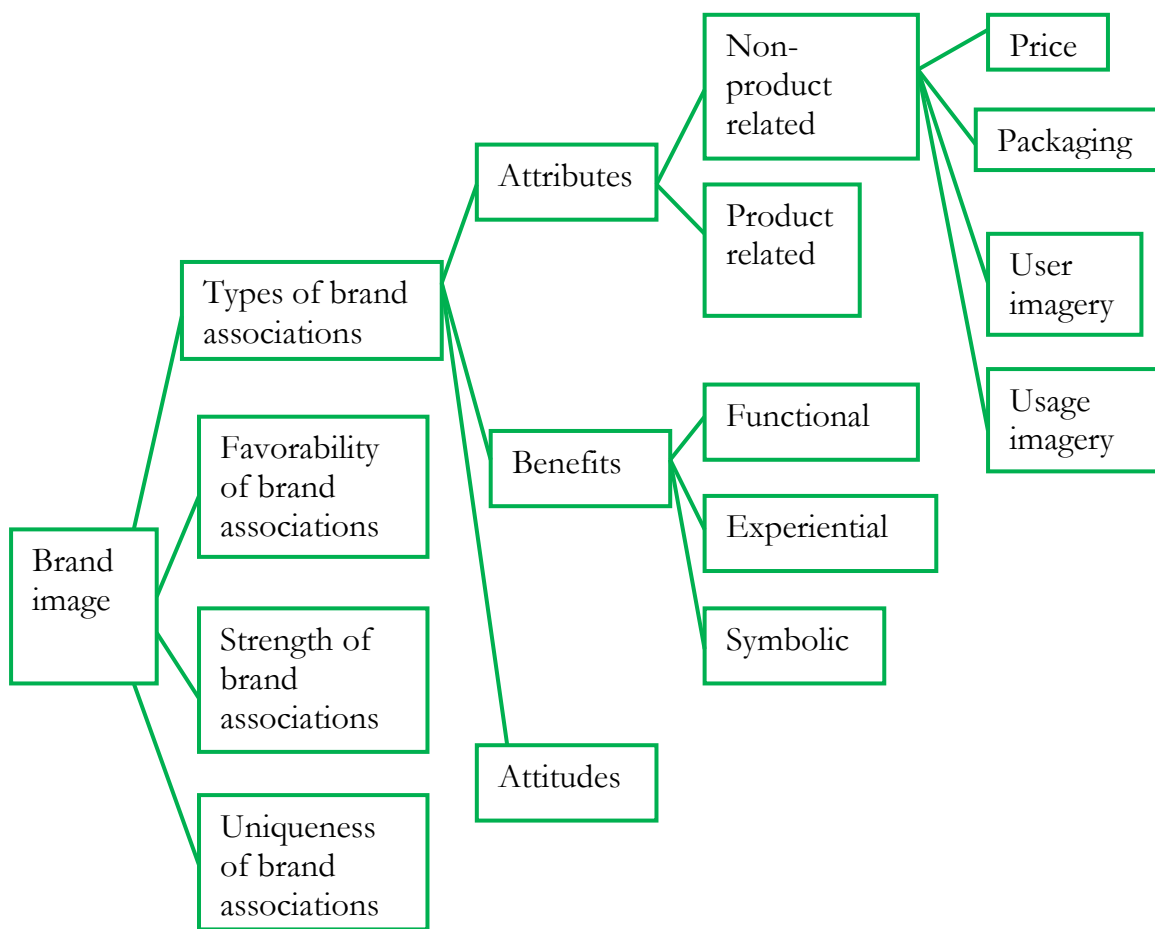


Figure 3. Dimension of brand knowledge (Keller 1993, 7)

– **Attribute**

Attribute is about product or services which are taken into consideration while making purchase decision. Further, they are categorized as –product-related attribute and non-product related attributes. According to Keller (1993, 4), product related attributes are defined as the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function sought by consumers. They are more like tangible aspects of products. Non-product related attributes are defined as external aspects of the product or service that relate to it purchase or consumption. Non-product related attributes are categorized as price information, packaging or product appearance information, user imagery and usage imagery. (Keller 1993, 4.)

– **Benefit**

Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes, i.e. what consumers think the product or service can do for them. Again, benefits are further categorized in three dimensions such as functional benefits, experiential benefits, and symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are more intrinsic and they are more related to product attributes, whereas symbolic benefits are more extrinsic and experiential benefits are also related to product-related attributes but here, the customers feelings about the product comes into play. (Keller 1993, 4.)

– **Attitude**

Brand attitude talks about consumer's evaluation of the brand from all aspects in general. It talks about consumers' belief about the product or service and evaluation of that belief as how good or how bad the brand is for them. (Keller 1993, 4.)

4.3 Image building process

Many companies undergo marketing activities (as discussed above), to achieve positioning and retaining positive brand image. Image building is a process that comes from brand identity and how it is positioned it in the market (see Figure 4).

Formulation of brand image is a painstaking task for a company because the company has to identify its brand image factors inherent in manifolds of the company's abstract issues, or intangible assets; these assets have to be managed and molded in the shapes desired, or expected by the customers. Most of the writers studied in this issue so far, have agreed that brand image is constructed out of customers' associations. Hankinson (2005, in Janonis & Virvilaitė 2007, 79) summarized different brand positioning of different authors in a table, where it shows that brand image building is a process in which positioning of a set of associations- functional, symbolic, experience, and brand attitude are taken into consideration. Functional association explains functional attributes where symbolic associations make up from symbolic dimensions, symbolic satisfaction and benefit, and so on.

Customers make brand image by observing how the brand identity is positioned. As discussed earlier in identity perspectives (see 3.2), identity constitutes of core and extended identities and four perspectives; product, person, organization and symbol.

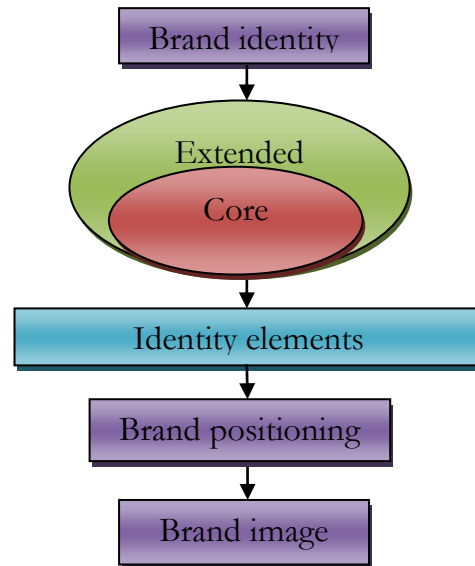


Figure 4. Brand image development process (Janonis & Virvilaitė 2007, 81)

In brand-as-product perspective, customers form brand image based on product attributes like quality, features etc. because of its use experience. In brand-as-organization perspective, the customers look into the company as a whole, such as the company features, novelty, customer services, reliability, and how local or global the company is. In brand-as-person perspective, customers see the brand as a person having friendly, sincere, cool etc. attitudes. And, in brand-as-symbol, the customers symbolize, visualize and absorb various brand metaphors to make various associations with the brand.

Thus, the brand image includes brand identity elements, which need to be positioned through various marketing and advertisement campaigns. The company has to position all the above elements in a balanced way so that customers can form a positive image about that particular brand (see Figure 4).

5 Summary of the theory

In this chapter, the multifarious literatures reviewed so far, will be looked into in a condense form. This chapter will not elaborate more on theories but lets us see what the most important issues are and how to apply them to this study.

In this study, the major emphasis is laid on how the company is trying to see the customers make images. The company is evaluated or perceived according to its attributes, benefits and attitudes. In b-to-b context, a company establishes or wants to establish relation with other business companies in accordance with functional, symbolic and experiential benefits of the company. Likewise, the company attributes are also the composite factors of product, person, organization and symbol. Company attitudes encompass both the attributes and company benefits, which are manifested in functional, experiential and symbolic demarcation. In this composition, the company identity as a product, person, organization and symbol are taken more into consideration in b-to-b branding context.

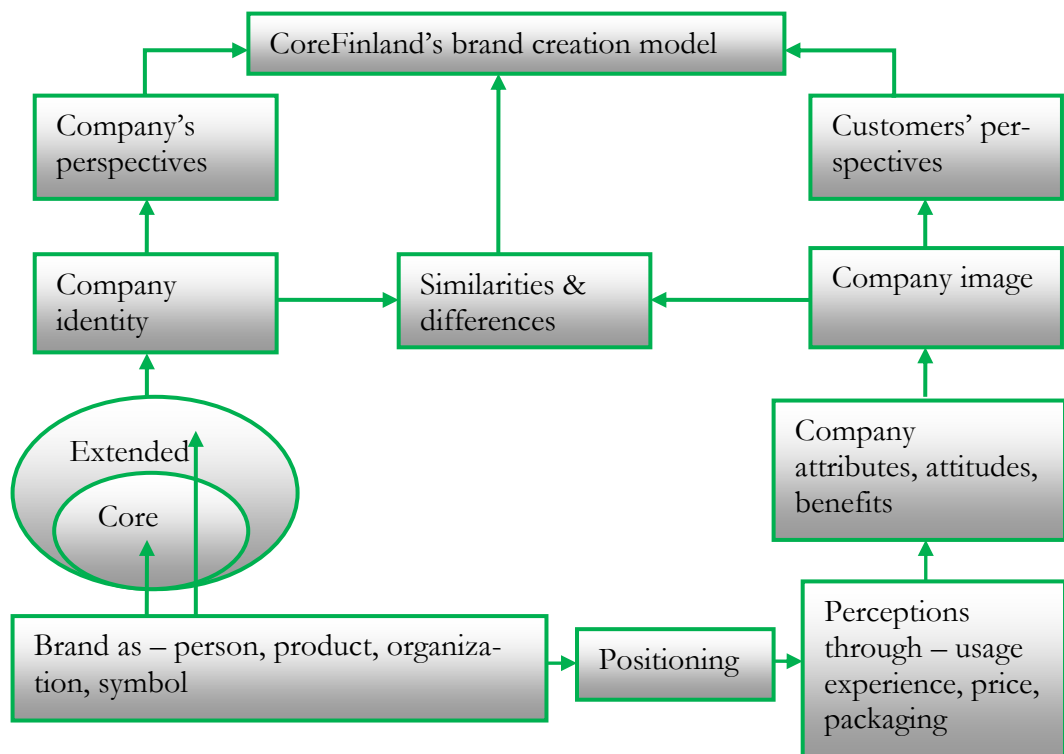


Figure 5. CoreFinland's brand creation model by the authors

The model (Figure 5) is the founding guideline for this study. It is devised according to the research questions, which gives a clear idea of CoreFinland's brand creation process. It manifests relationships between identity and image, where changes in the identity bring about changes in the image too.

'The company perspective' in this model explores important identity factors or dimensions that CoreFinland wants to disseminate among its business customers. These dimensions are identified through the study of core and extended identity elements based on brand as: product, person, organization and symbol. Customers, on the other hand, make image through the positioning of these identity elements.

Similarly, the 'customer perspective' in this model explores image dimensions that the business customers have made or can make about CoreFinland. These image dimensions are based on customers' perception through brand usage, experience, pricing, packaging etc. and through perception of company attributes, attitudes and how the company benefits them.

Finally, this model compares the brand image of CoreFinland with the identity. The comparison shows if the customers have perceived identity elements as they are or in different ways. Those points of differences and similarities are coined together to achieve a desired brand identity of CoreFinland.

6 Brand research on CoreFinland Ltd

6.1 Research method

Research methods refer to systematic, focused and orderly collection of data for the purpose of obtaining information to answer a particular research problem or question (Ghuri & Grønhaug 2005, 109). This research is considering on building brand identity and seeing brand image.

Research methodology suggests appropriate procedural framework, which is reliable and generates valid results while applied correctly for a specific topic to be researched. Researches can be categorized as qualitative and quantitative, where the former concentrates on words and observation to express reality and attempts to describe people in natural situations, while the later represents numbers that represents opinions and concepts (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar & Newton 2002, 19).

Since this study is not relevant to study in numerical formats; it is not about 'how often' and 'how much', it is or it could be about 'how to', 'in which ways', etc. Hence, the quantitative investigation cannot yield to the desired result, and cannot help hypothesis generation; rather it goes towards hypothesis testing only. Moreover, quantitative method creates too much of complications, delude the right information as the dependency on numbers does not tell anyone's history, feelings, ideas, emotions, etc, in the desired ways. Obviously, the qualitative investigation is the right method, here; it studies live situations, people's experiences, locates the meanings from events, processes and their lives. It talks about people's perception, assumptions, presuppositions and judgments and connect these meanings to social world around them. (Van Manen 1977, in Amaratunga et al. 2002, 22.)

This study is purely qualitative approach, which can help to deliver the in-depth subjective ideas, opinions, feelings, etc. of the managing director of CoreFinland, founders, business customers and employees. The general presumption being that CoreFinland is not well developed as a brand which is the major issue. This study is carried out deduc-

tively on brand identity and image theories. Reliable theoretical background enhances the validity of this study. This study needs data collection through intensive interviews. Its interpretative procedure needs to have explorative nature to understand deeper functionality in relation to the critical study of the obtained data.

For the empirical part, qualitative research method is used and the primary data is obtained. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005, 110) emphasizes qualitative method to be used if study demands understanding respondents' inside view and opinions. This study endeavors to have deeper understanding of the respondents in order to find out abstract issues such as relationships, meanings, images, identity, etc., which can be too complicated to have the finding of, if the quantitative method is applied. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative to apply qualitative method herein.

6.1.1 Interviews

Aligned with the research objectives, the empirical data was gathered mainly through in-depth interviews with the MD, ex-employees, existing employees of CoreFinland and its business customers as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Interviewee details

Group	Purpose	Interviewee	Position	Company	Date
A	Interviews for <i>brand identity</i>	Ms. Claudia Poikela and Ms. Marika Haapoja	Current employees	CoreFinland Ltd	22.12.2010, Wednesday
		Ms. Kati Salo	Ex-employee	CoreFinland Ltd	3.1.2011, Monday
		Mr. Joonas Turkama	Managing director	CoreFinland Ltd	15.1.2011, Saturday
B	Interviews for <i>brand image</i>	Mr. Martin Trang	Managing director	Delish Oy, Iso Roobertinkatu	17.1.2011, Monday
		Mr. Jyrki Isosomppi	Store Manager	K-market, Kotikontu	23.1.2011, Sunday
		Interviewee X	Employee	Pick-a-Deli, Lasipalatsi	28.1.2011, Friday

– Interview details for brand identity (Group A)

The MD of the case company Mr. Joonas Trukama, two existing employees and one ex-employee were interviewed in order to gather empirical data for the purpose of creating brand identity.

Interviews were carried out in different phases where each of them varied according to time, space and situations but by keeping in view of the research objective alive. With active participation of the two interviewers; one unfolding relevant questions and the other taking notes, most of the interviews were carried out over a period of one and a half months, from 22.12.2010 till 28.1.2011. Doing so not only saved out time for data collection but also helped ease the interviewees to express their deeper feelings, with less hesitation. The justification behind this interview period is being that we needed to be concentrated to finding the identity firstly, before moving onto finding the image by interviewing CoreFinland's business customers.

Preliminary interview was conducted with the MD (16.9.10) in order to establish a good foundation for the research, identify problem areas of the company, and draft interviewees' details. The aforementioned interviewees' were recommended by the MD himself. This interview was remarkably substantial to work further on this project which gave a clear picture of the present status of the company, the acute problem the company is facing, and in what way he (the MD) was interested to get us do the study. The preliminary meeting was important because it gave better understanding among the MD, the employees and us, and it also helped us to strengthen trust on what the following study was to deliver to the benefit of the company, and so on.

The second phase of interview with the MD was more focused and more in-depth. The interview was conducted on Saturday, 15.1.2011 in CoreFinland's office, which lasted for an hour. We also conducted informal interviews with him over phones and e-mails.

The interview with CoreFinland's existing employees, namely Ms. Claudia Poikela and Ms. Marika Haapoja was conducted at CoreFinland's premise. Ms. Maria Haapoja is working as Marketing and Logistics Manager and Ms. Claudia Poikela is responsible for Marketing & Sales. The interview, carried out in a group by both of the authors, lasted for 50 minutes.

Ms. Kati Salo, the ex-employee of CoreFinland Ltd, who knew the company very well, was a key person for this interview and was recommended by the MD himself. Interview was conducted at her home in Vantaa. She was working in the capacity of HR manager. The interview lasted for 45 minutes.

– Interview details for brand image (Group B)

As mentioned earlier, CoreFinland has very few business customers, out of which three main companies were recommended for interviews.

The MD of Delish Oy, Mr. Martin Trang was interviewed at his own office located in Iso Roobertinkatu 2, Helsinki. The interview lasted for one and a half hours. He owns a retail shop that has the assortment of unique and new products mostly. He has been running his business as the MD since its establishment in 2007. His active participation and enthusiasm in the in-depth interview helped to gain enough information required.

The Store Manager of K-Market Kotikontu, Mr. Jyrki Isosomppi was interviewed through email as he felt more comfortable to respond through email than through face-to-face interview because of his hectic schedule and language problem for communication. Moreover, this interview was only little important to change the finding as his acquaintance with CoreFinland was minimum compared to its product RIPS. This is because K-Market orders these products directly from the wholesaler KESKO. However, this interview was necessary to understand K-market's general attitude towards SME's like CoreFinland.

The interview with the Employee of Pick-a-Deli, Interviewee X, was conducted at Pick-a-Deli store, Lasipalatsi. The interview lasted for 60 minutes.

6.1.2 Data analysis method

As a part of method mentioned in the methodology, data was organized in order to compare the research components, themes, issues on the basis of devised model.

First, the responses of all the respondents related to identity and image were summarized separately. From those summaries, keywords were selected and then tabulated separately for identity and image. After that, the analysis of identity and image was carried out, and then the themes were tabulated according to the model. Identity and image findings were then compared, contrasted to identify the similarities and differences. Finally, a clear identity of CoreFinland was identified and suggested further.

6.1.3 Challenges in data collection

Being a small company, CoreFinland does not have many individual customers. Finding them out from the entire Finnish market was firstly a challenging task. However, with the cooperation of the company, we could locate them.

The other major limitation was scheduling meeting appointment with those companies (CoreFinland's direct customers). As this study was carried out from the third week of December till the last week of January, there were many festivals like - Christmas, New Year etc. Therefore, the respondents were not quite free to give time for interviews, etc. It was also experienced that the respondents were out of the city on the day of scheduled day because either they came across important business trip or their family members had falling health, etc.

Responses from K-Markets posed a little impact only for this research because all the K-Chain Stores rather get CoreFinland's products directly through KESKO than from the case company. That is the reason why the responses from one of the respondents

from K-Market Kotikontu, Helsinki were partly taken into consideration, however, general information related to quality of good suppliers were considered more.

KESKO being one of the biggest buyers of CoreFinland, it was really important to have an interview with any personnel from there. Contacts with them were attempted with all available means; however, due to their tight schedule it was almost impossible to get the right person, from the right department, at the right time. But, finally, it was decided to opt out KESKO from the respondents' list because its response would not significantly have added up new insights and hence, the findings would still remain the same. Therefore, the responses obtained from CoreFinland's direct customers were enough for the study.

6.2 Validity and reliability

When the research is carried out, it is of utmost important to prove that it is true, genuine and should confirm that the readers or the user of the research findings can rely entirely on it. Thus, the confirmation comes grossly from what the research is about, to what degree its findings are on right direction, what the appropriate sources are, what the appropriate methods are, how transparent the analysis and data collection methods are, how errors and biasness are minimized, how consistent result comes in every such measurement, etc. (see Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007.) The research validity and reliability are measured according to the following theoretical backgrounds.

6.2.1 Validity

– Content validity

Content validity refers to the extent to which the measurement device provides adequate coverage of the investigative questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007, 366). Theoretical validity refers to the adequacy of our suggested 'theory' on investigation (Gauri & Grønhaug 2005, 218). Both of these theories demand adequacy of theory coverage of the investigative question. To accomplish content validity, the research questions for investigation were designed carefully and in detail through focused litera-

ture reviews. Since, the research was about ‘creating brand identity’ of the case company by taking into consideration of brand image, the most relevant and detailed theory was extracted from Aaker’s Identity System. Every identity element from Aaker’s identity system was carefully discussed and analyzed so as to provide adequacy to the theory under investigation. Furthermore, to remain consistent with the identity section, theories and relevant models related to brand image were also extracted from the same author, as well as others. Since the desired and adequate coverage is attained, the content validity in this research is justified.

– **Construct validity**

Construct validity refers to the extent to which your measurement questions actually measure the presence of those constructs you intended them to measure (Saunders et al. 2007, 367). To attain this, the theories were accurately and precisely divided into different themes as suggested by Aaker and the questions were devised based on those themes. Hence, construct validity is also assured in this research as each question addressed and measured the presence of those themes.

– **Generalizable validity**

It refers to what extent the findings from a study can be generalized to other settings (Gauri & Grønhaug 2005, 218). To some extent, the findings can be generalized, however, it cannot hold true to every setting because of the nature of the research being a case study of a particular company.

6.2.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings (Saunders et al. 2007, 149). Reliability is assessed by posing following three questions (Easterby-Smith et al. in Saunders et al. 2007, 149):

- Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?
- Will similar observations be reached by other observers?

- Is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

These three questions are assessed herein in order to justify that the research is reliable. Data was collected based on CoreFinland's Brand Creation Model (see Figure 5) in order to go along with the research problem. The collected data were summarized in tabular presentation and further processed. Hence, data collection and analysis both were simultaneously interrelated. Since, the analysis was carried out by two persons; there was consistency in the results also.

If the same method and the same questionnaires are administrated to the same respondents in immediate future, the responses remain consistent and hence the findings. The entire research was organized in such a way that its measurement would yield the same result in different occasions and similar observation could be reached by other observers as well. This research reflects the reality of present time; however, as Marshall and Rossman (in Saunders et al. 2007, 319) mentions that with time, situation and reality might change which makes the study not necessarily repeatable. This study may also lead to inconsistent results if repeated in other time and situations with different realities.

The data collection along with its analysis is completely transparent. To obtain transparency in sense making from the raw data, the interviewers separately made preliminary analysis and tabulated the key findings prior to the actual analysis. The actual analysis was carried out only after the consistency and transparency in preliminary analysis was attained. The biasness in the interviews was avoided by strictly sticking to the interview questionnaire.

Proven and tested data collection method was used to collect the primary data. The sources of data were reliable and relevant as those were desired and recommended by the commissioning party itself. Since the data were collected and analyzed strictly based on the theory and related theme, it measured exactly what it supposed to measure and provided real and desirable findings.

The groupings of related issues were done in order to get the consistency in the responses. Other sources leading to respondent discomfort were carefully analyzed and omitted, and the questionnaire was tested and adjusted before actually administering to the respondents. The biasing factors and possible threats while collecting data were minimized by being neutral. Some of the respondents sounded to be more faithful to the case company, nevertheless, those biases were minimized by carefully administering every possible inferring, probing questions etc. Moreover, interviewers' bias could not take place as there were two interviewers, each controlling the situation in turn when needed.

7 Findings

In this chapter, the data gathered through interviews are sequentially ordered and logically discussed under relevant themes for the analytical finding of brand identity and image.

7.1 CoreFinland's brand identity

In the following chapters, CoreFinland's brand identity is discussed and findings are derived based on identity structure (see chapter 3.3) and identity perspectives (see chapter 3.2).

7.1.1 Core identity

It was found that CoreFinland's core identity concentrates around service-product attributes and organizational associations. Based on service-product attributes, its core identity was found to be quick and flexible in providing healthy food products with professional and friendly customer care. Based on organizational association, its core identity was to handle core business of companies in Finland and bring novelty in food culture by being healthy and environmentally friendly.

When asked what CoreFinland provides to the customer, all of the respondents of Group A (see appendix 2) asserted that it provides mainly services of importing, package designing, marketing, and sales to the customers; however, Turkama also mentioned that CoreFinland provides goods too. When asked what product or service CoreFinland is associated with, majority of respondents mentioned healthy products (snacks) with flexible services. During the interviews, it was mentioned repeatedly that CoreFinland deals with healthy products only, which suggests that the healthy attribute of the product also has considerable association with the brand. Therefore, the core identity of CoreFinland is the amalgamation of both the service and the product.

It was found that the core identity of being quick and flexible was because of CoreFinland's ability to react very fast according to the market situations. Two respondents

asserted that the smaller size of the company with fewer customers allowed them to be dynamic and flexible to cater customer needs and provide enough after-sales services quickly.

Professional and friendly customer care is the result of professional and highly motivated employees who, according to Turkama, take very good care of customer's brands. CoreFinland also has strong commitment to the product that it works with and is committed for long-term success. To attain that success, it was stated that CoreFinland provides friendly customer service by constantly staying in touch with the customer and getting involved to knowing its product's situation in customer's premise in case any promotion program is needed.

The reason behind the country name (Finland) in company name (CoreFinland) was found to provide significant meaning to its core identity. According to Turkama, the name 'CoreFinland' depicts the idea that 'CoreFinland is the company that handles the core businesses of related companies (customers) in Finland' which is why the company exists. For that, CoreFinland helps companies to bring their products to Finland and make them popular brands by leveraging its professional and well-experienced marketing team and well-established distribution channel. Similarly, two respondents (Group A) also mentioned that CoreFinland aims at bringing new healthy snacking culture in Finland. It was also repeatedly mentioned that the company is environmentally friendly, which is shown by making packaging harmless to environment and saving energy by printing less and working online more.

To sum up, it can be stated that these service-product attributes and organizational associations provide meaning to the brand by providing reasons for its existence and are most likely to endure to any changes. It can also be inferred from the findings that CoreFinland provides companies a unique opportunity to make their brands popular by letting it handle its core business.

7.1.2 CoreFinland's brand identity perspectives

CoreFinland as a product/service

Product or service related associations were found to be very important to CoreFinland's brand identity. Some of product-service related attributes were even found to be core identity of CoreFinland and other were found to add texture and depth to that core identity. The perspective of CoreFinland brand-as-a product or service is discussed and analyzed below under different themes as mentioned in figure. 2.

– **The product-service scope**

The brand was found to be associated both with services and the products. Both the service and product elements were mentioned repeatedly during the interviews. Respondents asserted that as a service provider, the company is focused on providing importing, selling, marketing and promoting services to the customers with flexibility and dynamism with commitment to long-term success. CoreFinland provides mainly professional and friendly services to the customers, however the product association was also mentioned when asked what product or services the brand was associated with. All of the respondents (Group A) also easily linked CoreFinland with one of its product brands, RIPS RYE SNACK. The reason for this could be that CoreFinland owns brand RIPS RYE SNACK; and it was intensely marketed and communicated in its initial years of operation. From the interviews, the product association was found to be desirable and feasible and no evidence of confusion was found that the brand is the amalgamation of both product and services.

– **Product-service attributes**

Product-service attributes were found so important that these attributes gave the brand its core identity (see core identity). Product attributes of being healthy was mentioned by all of the respondents. Amidst the snack products in Finland, respondents claimed that its product brand RIPS is a healthy alternative that rightly corresponds to healthy food culture in Finland. From this, it can be stated that CoreFinland provides snack products, which are healthier. Regarding services, respondents mentioned that it pro-

vides quick, flexible and cost-effective services with utmost professional and friendly customer care. It was also stated that it provides in-store promotion services free-of-charge for companies in case it is needed.

Uniqueness of the product was also mentioned during the interviews. It was stated that CoreFinland strives to find new and unique products and make them strong brands in Finland. One of the respondents also emphasized that the products have attractive and environmentally friendly packaging.

Moreover, one of the respondents mentioned that being a small-sized company focusing on few products, CoreFinland can easily make sure retailers get specific orders and after-sales services in time. This signifies that the company has the ability to cater individual customer care services in case needed which are often offered as free-of-charge in-store promotions.

All of the respondents were equivocal regarding CoreFinland's product-service attributes without disparity and confusion. This justifies that respondents were aware about the services and able to mention precisely when asked about the service attributes, which signifies that these product-service attributes were strong and effective enough to provide CoreFinland one of its core identities.

– **Customer benefits**

It was found that CoreFinland offers majorly two kinds of customer benefits: functional and emotional. One of the respondents stated that customers get functional benefits such as getting several different products from one distributor; the other mentioned that the company reacts very fast according to market situation and provides quick service; and customers get unique, healthy snack with attractive packaging. On-demand attractive packaging was stated as being other functional advantage that the customers get.

It was mentioned that customers get emotional benefits from its environmentally friendliness, trust through constant touch with customers, and Finnish quality. Being a Finnish company having luxurious and healthy products was also mentioned to have emotional attachment for Finnish customers with the company.

Therefore, it can be stated that functional benefits of CoreFinland majorly come from its ability to provide different *unique and healthy* products with *attractive packaging*. *Quick service* according to changing market situation was found to be another functional benefit. CoreFinland hoped to provide emotional benefits mainly from the company being *environmentally friendly* and *trustworthy* Finnish company having luxurious products.

– **Association with users and use occasions**

Since this study was focused on finding associations in b-to-b context, use and user associations are not so relevant from customers' perspective because the customers are either dealers or retailers who buy products from CoreFinland in order to sell them again. However, from brand as product perspective, it was found that the brand is mostly associated with youths who have active, busy and healthy lifestyle. One of the respondents mentioned that the use occasions of CoreFinland's products suit to hectic working days whereby products from CoreFinland supplement as healthy food alternative; and parties whereby the products act as snacks.

– **Country of origin**

It was found that the appearance of country name, Finland; in company name, CoreFinland, was only because of the owner's idea that the company handles the core business of customers in Finland. Turkama, the owner, clarified that the name was random and did not mean to associate with Finnish image of being innovative and clean Nordic country with people having healthier lifestyle. Despite this fact, rest of the respondents stated that company name 'CoreFinland' signals that the company is based in Finland and might represent the Finnish image of country having clean environment and health conscious people.

CoreFinland brand as organization

– Purpose and aim of organization

It was found that the respondents knew the purpose of the organization and its aim, though some differences in responses were noted.

Turkama, the owner, stated that the main purpose of the organization is to ‘handle core business of related companies in Finland’. Other respondents stated that the organization’s purpose is to help abroad companies to introduce their products in the Finnish market and make them popular with their marketing services and sales through their well-established distribution channel. There seems to be disparity in the wordings though all of them meant the same purpose. This could be because CoreFinland has not yet enlisted their purposes concretely in written form and communicated internally so that every employee is aware of them.

All of the respondents (Group A), however, were aware of the main aim of the organization and mentioned that the main aim of the organization is to revolutionize the food culture in Finland and bring novelty.

‘Handling core business of related companies in Finland’ seems to be more apt to CoreFinland as it corresponds to the company name as well. It also clarifies that its purpose is not only to introduce products in the market and make them popular, but also handle all core businesses.

– Organizational values

The owner mentioned that CoreFinland’s values are professional and friendly services to the customers, dealing with first class products only and ability to provide unique and healthy snacks to the public. The other respondent stated that the company values customers, consumers and employees and believed that employees could bring good changes inside the organization. The remaining respondent, the ex-employee did not exactly know what company’s values were. Major inconsistencies were observed

among the responses. It was even stated that the company is small and the values are not yet crystallized.

The fact that the owner could state the values of the company and current employees grasped some of them proves that the company values are not yet totally crystallized and well communicated internally. However, some consistency was found in their responses as both of them pointed out that company values customers as core value. So what CoreFinland could do is enlist the company values around customer in written form and communicate this philosophy internally to employees and externally to customers to gain customer confidence and trust so that the brand can deliver honesty, dependability and respect.

– **Organizational attributes**

When asked what the company is good at doing, variations in the responses were found. Two of the respondents stated that CoreFinland is good at finding right product and making them popular in Finland. It was also mentioned that it is good at dealing with customer and providing quick and flexible delivery. Other mentioned that though it is small, it is very good at achieving company goals with minimum cost.

The reason behind these variations could be because of the area of the work the respondents were responsible for. The employee in sales might find the company very good at achieving company goals with minimum cost, employee at purchasing might find it very good at finding right product across the globe and employee in logistics find it good at quick and flexible delivery.

When asked about the most important competencies of CoreFinland that business customers like to rely upon, all of the respondents pointed out reliable deliveries as one of the competencies. Majority of respondents also pointed out that CoreFinland's ability to find and supply the customers with unique products as another competency. Affordable price, enough marketing and promotion for the customer's products, well-

experienced marketing team and well-established distribution channel were also mentioned during the interviews.

Therefore it can be stated that the most important competency of CoreFinland is reliable deliveries through its well-established distribution channel. Second to the delivery is its ability to find unique products.

– **Organizational associations**

CoreFinland was found to associate itself as a socially responsible organization. It was found that CoreFinland mainly wants to associate itself as an *environmentally friendly* and *health conscious* organization. Two of the respondents stated that CoreFinland is very conscious about environment and shows its concerns by using environmentally friendly products and packaging. For instance, it was also mentioned that they save energy by avoiding unnecessarily printing and only in grey-scale if necessary. However, when asked their opinion about CoreFinland's value and involvement towards environment and health-related issues, three out of four respondents stated that they were unaware of company's involvement. Turkama, owner of the company, mentioned that the company has not formed any concrete opinion about these issues so far as the company is still too small to think about any other issues than sales today. However, he also mentioned that if the company would be financially balance, these values would be important and well-thought.

It shows that the company has strong commitment towards saving energy, good environment and good public health. Employee involvement in saving energy by printing less indicates that they aspire to company's commitment. These commitments should be showcased externally by involving in programs related to these issues to gain respect and admiration from stakeholders if CoreFinland really wants to associate itself as environmentally friendly and health conscious organization.

– **Concern for employees**

When asked what kinds of programs CoreFinland wishes to bring in for employee motivation, and commitment, three of the respondents wished to have programs that would provide opportunity for their career development. One of the respondents disclosed that the company has many part time and temporary workers and suggested that it should have more permanent work places to motivate employees. One of the respondents mentioned that she was motivated to work in CoreFinland as it gave her opportunity to develop herself by giving chances to participate in professional meetings, purchasing, sales, seminars, fairs etc. The owner, however, stated that the company does not have any specific employee motivation programs yet but wishes to have in the future.

It can be stated that even without any specific motivational program, the employees seemed still motivated as they felt that they got opportunity to develop themselves. This could be because of the smaller size of the company which leads a single employee to hold more than one responsibility and have experiences in many fields. On the long run, the same employee might feel stressed and burnt-out because of multi tasks. Careful task division should be done. CoreFinland should also consider having more permanent work-places, which provides job security and motivates employees. Any other employee motivational programs in monetary value, rewards, employee benefits etc. could add up to current level of motivation.

– **Presence and success**

It was found that the event participation and in-store promotions were good ways for CoreFinland to make people aware of its existence. When asked whether they have organized events for brand enhancement, all of the respondents agreed to have participated in events and promotions to promote the brand and company, for instance, Ankkarock festival, in-store promotions in KESKO etc. One of the respondents mentioned that online presence was achieved by involving people in competitions in Co-

reFinland's webpage whereby people were asked to provide suggestion for product or company improvements and the best suggestion was rewarded.

It can be stated that the ways CoreFinland is using for showing their presence so far are among the best what it could do. Right kind of in-event promotions as in Ankkarock, where CoreFinland and its product could truly represent fun loving, partying audience, would allow them to have more exposure and hence the visibility. In-store promotion was another good way to be in touch with both the business customers and the consumers.

– **Customer concerns**

CoreFinland values its customer as core values. Business customers get different kinds of benefits. Unique products, faster delivery and free samples during the launch of new products were mentioned as advantages that the business customers get while doing business with CoreFinland. One of the respondents mentioned that KESKO recommends CoreFinland and its products to its retail chains.

KESKO's recommendation guarantees the product, package quality which other retailers can easily rely upon.

– **Local versus global**

It was found that the company operates with a motto of "think globally, act locally". All of the respondents agreed that the company is local because the company is concentrating and selling only in Finnish market so far according to Finnish taste. However, it was also mentioned that most of its products are manufactured abroad and it imports and sells them in Finland. Respondents also pointed out its intention to go global by stating 'CoreFinland is open-minded and thinks internationally.'

It can be concluded that the company is local so far as it understands and satisfies the local needs only. Though it imports most of its products from other countries, the tar-

get is still Finnish market. Its product association of being healthy snack brand also corresponds only to the local taste and market rather than diverse global market though healthier food culture is gaining popularity around the globe. From the interviews, it is evident that the company has not yet acquired enough capabilities to go global in terms of investment, capital, infrastructure, employees etc. Therefore it can be said that though there is international aspect in CoreFinland's business, the brand is still a local brand.

CoreFinland as person

CoreFinland was found to be *young* and *dynamic* person. Respondents personified the brand with personality traits like young, dynamic, active, friendly, open-minded, open in many directions, risk taker and flexible, however, young and dynamic personality were mentioned repeatedly. In fact, three out of four respondents pointed out CoreFinland to be young and dynamic person.

Being young here signifies two aspects. One aspect reflects that the company is young and the other aspect reflects that the products are more attached to the youths. When asked which customer age CoreFinland is more attached to, all of the respondents asserted that it is more attached to young people, and hence, can be asserted that the CoreFinland is young person. Young person also reflects active and dynamic personalities. Flexibility on the other hand reflects its ability to provide services with flexibility, meaning that it can be flexible in most important business terms like cost, quantity, delivery, etc. It can also be said that CoreFinland wants to be a good and trustworthy friend to the customers as during the interviews, respondents repeatedly mentioned these personifying attributes of CoreFinland while making service quality claims.

Open-minded and risk taking personalities justify the fact that CoreFinland constantly seeks for totally new and unique products and takes risks to develop them into strong brands.

When asked what social class CoreFinland represents, majority of respondents stated that it represents every social class, however, Salo also mentioned that it represents middle and working class. Here again, this result was largely influenced by user class to which CoreFinland's products are targeted.

Regarding life-style, CoreFinland was found to represent healthy life-style. Young, fresh, active, busy, snacking and partying life-styles were also mentioned but healthy life-style was pointed out by all of the respondents and many times during the interviews. This could be because of the healthier products CoreFinland provides to the consumers.

Three of the respondents stated that CoreFinland's personality has been communicated mostly through promotions in events; however, they also mentioned that the promotions were mostly focused on product brands rather than the company. When asked if brand logo tells anything about the personality of the brand, majority of respondents ascertained that logo is silent and does not tell anything about CoreFinland's brand personality. Nevertheless, Poikela and Haapoja stated that the logo represents CoreFinland as a modern and fresh person.

The rationale behind the responses about logo remaining silent largely comes from the fact that none of the CoreFinland's products carry company logo. Products only carry company name, hence, totally lack the ability to communicate personality through logos. If the company wants to communicate personality through logo, it is highly advisable to include company logo in every product it owns.

CoreFinland as symbol

All the respondents confirmed that the branded name for the company is 'CoreFinland'. However, it was also mentioned that the abbreviated name CFL is used for internal purpose only to communicate among the employees. Though CFL sounds short and easy to communicate inside, however, duality of brand name might create incon-

sistency among the employees while communicating with companies outside. It is highly advisable that the company use CoreFinland instead of CFL also within the organization as CoreFinland truly represents brand meaning and purpose too.

All of the respondents also mentioned that all of the imported products carry company name only, but not logo. Despite the fact that the company has its own logo, it is not communicated through its products. Hence, the logo does not deliver company's brand message to customers through products.

7.2 CoreFinland's brand image

In this chapter, the image is analyzed based on the results obtained from the interviews with Group B respondents. Analysis was done under different themes corresponding to brand identity in order to make the comparison between identity and image clearer as depicted in Table 2.

7.2.1 General brand image

From the interview with Group B (see appendix 3), it was identified that the business customers of CoreFinland have well-established suppliers with famous brands; however, they also have smaller individual suppliers who have new and unique products. Since CoreFinland is also a small company with unique products, it is in business with these companies; however, it can be inferred that CoreFinland should have even more unique product ranges and should find more business customers.

It was found out that CoreFinland's business customers wanted to do business with those suppliers who are flexible, understanding, and have reliable delivery. In addition to these features, if their suppliers want to establish long-term relationship, they need to guarantee deficit, arrange profitable campaigns with customers, agree with good contract terms and should be easily accessible.

In general, CoreFinland's business customers have experienced challenges among all suppliers in the issues like minimum quantity requirements, incorrect amount and prices, delivery and product expiry dates. This information suggests that CoreFinland, being one of their suppliers, has to consider the above mentioned issues to overcome challenges and continue doing business with them. While looking for more individual suppliers, according to the Group B, the suppliers should come up with strategy of offering free samples during launch as the new business customers want to see how the new products sell.

7.2.2 CoreFinland's brand image perspectives

Brand as service/product

There was variation among direct customers whether CoreFinland is product-oriented or service-oriented; however, they liked the fact about the company that it has wide range of innovative products. Since their business with CoreFinland was more related to products, so they concluded that it was more product oriented company and somehow service oriented, too. It signifies that CoreFinland has to clearly exhibit its brand as product or service oriented, or the both.

– Product associations

The overall product appearance of CoreFinland's products was found to be good. Most importantly, its price corresponded to the product well in the personal experiences of the respondents. Since, some of the respondents from Group B mentioned the pricing as appropriate, as they needed high-priced products, meaning best products, while others viewed it comparatively high-priced. Therefore, CoreFinland needs to be very effective decision maker to price its products.

– Service associations

The direct customers were found to be satisfied with the product quality, logistics, the employees and the company being proactive. They also liked the company being very

flexible with minimum quantity requirements; however, they regarded the company as an average company while compared to other suppliers because CoreFinland was not found to be paying more attention to them (small retailers), and also that it did not have enough varieties of products to fit into their shops. This information clearly shows that CoreFinland needs to pay more attention to every smaller retailer also.

The customer care, CoreFinland has offered so far, was not sufficient to the direct customers even though it exhibited some sorts of customer caring activities, like in-store promotions, free sample distribution during the launch of its products, etc. Special customer care services were limited only to the bigger chains for instance, in-store promotion in K-markets, while the smaller direct customers should also be offered such services if CoreFinland wanted to cater them. However, none of the respondents demanded such offers as they said they were happy with the current state of services the company was offering.

Brand as organization

The respondents believed CoreFinland to be health-oriented company and environmentally friendly; however they regarded it as an average company compared to other competing suppliers, according to their experience with the company personnel. One of the respondents from Group B regarded the product also as an average because of positive feedbacks from their customers. Therefore, it is clear that CoreFinland has been standing as an average company amidst its business customers. The company has still to go a long way in order to appear in better position for them.

There was no coherent opinion among the direct customers about how they had seen the growth of the company; they did not have close understanding about the company. The assertion, denial and uncertain views about the company's RIPS brand being the first rye snack in the Finnish market were also found quite confusing. In order to clarify this confusion, the company needs to reconsider this idea and needs to aware its business customers about it.

– Experiences

The majority of the business customers (Group B) could not recall RIPS brand when rye snack was mentioned even though only one respondent asserted it to be the only brand of CoreFinland in rye snack category; however, that knowledge about the brand came only after starting business with CoreFinland, which means that the company has not communicated about its RIPS brand yet in order to make business customers aware that it is first rye snacks. Again, from the fact that only one of the respondents recalled Linkosuo, a competing brand as rye snack brand, it can be inferred that the business customers are not aware about CoreFinland's own brand. This signifies that the company needs more brand awareness programs and activities.

Moreover, the majority of business customers knew about the company, rather than its brand, through various other means, other than company efforts only. This signifies that company efforts on making CoreFinland familiar among the customers are not enough. One of the respondents got to know about the company through sales agent, which implies that the sales agents could also be a good mean in this respect.

The overall experience of the Group B respondents about CoreFinland, was found to be good so they expressed their wishes to do more business with the company in the future also. For that, the company needed to add up even more product ranges. Some direct customers preferred to buy the products, which address the 20-40 years age groups. Again, CoreFinland should also consider direct customers' demand about what kind of products and for which age groups, while bringing new products.

However, the company impression is found to be positive among the direct customers because of product quality and remarkable customer dealing.

– Advantages

The advantages of doing business with CoreFinland have been repeatedly mentioned by the respondents (Group B) to be good dealings, impressive sales personnel, good customer care, fast and reliable logistics.

– Employees

When asked about CoreFinland's employee behavior to them, respondents found the employees to be very proactive, impressive and passionate about their work. One of the respondents even mentioned that he had very good experience in doing business with CoreFinland totally based on CoreFinland's MD's pro-activeness in customer dealings. The respondent seemed impressed with how the MD of CoreFinland showed customer care by repeated calling, understanding product situation and updating him about new products. The other respondent regarded CoreFinland's employee as passionate about the sales and would deliver the product immediately even the quantity ordered was too less.

Brand as a person

The direct customers variedly personified the company to be flexible, youthful, motivated, proactive, dedicated, laborious, positive, passionate etc. Those responses were highly influenced by the way CoreFinland's employee dealt with them. In fact, it was evident that they personified CoreFinland totally based on the personality of employee with whom they dealt in their business activities. For instance, one of the respondents personified CoreFinland as proactive person as he found CoreFinland's MD a proactive and impressive person. This signifies that CoreFinland's employees who deal with customers have been media to exhibit its brand personality; however, the risk could be that the employees' personality, behavior, attitude if not aligned with brand personality during customer dealing might signal different and undesirable brand personalities.

Brand as symbol

When asked about the product packaging to find possible linkage of brand symbol, the respondents though thought that the packaging was attractive, denied that the products possess any symbol that would link with the brand. Given the fact that the products do not carry company logo or any other symbols rather than company name in very small font size, one of the respondents suggested CoreFinland to increase at least text size to make it more readable. During the interview, it was noted that business customers take CoreFinland as a branded name for the company as they referred the company as “CoreFinland” rather than CFL whenever they needed company name to be mentioned.

The comparison table below gives the ultimate main ideas of the entire finding so far. It portrays factual information and suggests the present state of case company’s identity and image. Further, it rightly helps to address the main research objectives by providing answers to how the identity matches with the image, what can the suitable brand identity of the case company be, etc. These answers are justified in points as follows.

Table 2. CoreFinland's brand identity and image comparison

Company perspectives	Customer perspectives
<p>Brand as product</p> <p><i>Product/service scope</i> – Brand is majorly a service but also a product <i>Product association</i> – Healthy snacks, first rye snack, luxurious <i>Service association</i> – Flexible and quick delivery, experienced marketer, importation, marketing, sales and promotion, customer care <i>Name Association</i> – Handles core business of related companies, clean, healthy and high quality product provider <i>Functional benefits</i> – Ability to provide different unique, healthy, luxurious products with attractive packaging, quick and flexible service <i>Differentiation from competitors</i> – Unique and healthiest products, cost-effectiveness, quick response</p> <p>Brand as organization</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> – Handle core business of related companies, help abroad companies bringing their products and marketing in Finland, bringing novelty in food and snacking culture <i>Values</i> – Customers, professional and friendly service, first class service, novelty in snack culture <i>Employees</i> – Motivated, committed to company values with right attitude, but no official training <i>Programs</i> – Some customer involving programs <i>Advantages</i> – Unique RIPS, good customer care, free sample <i>Competencies</i> – Reliable, quick and flexible delivery, ability to find unique and healthy products, experienced marketing team, <i>Local/ Global</i> – Basically local</p> <p>Brand as Person</p> <p><i>Personality</i>: Dynamic and flexible <i>Social class</i>: Every social class <i>Age/ sex</i>: Youth and adult of both sexes <i>Lifestyle</i>: Busy, healthy snacking, partying</p> <p>Brand as symbol</p> <p><i>Branded name</i>: CoreFinland <i>Logo association</i>: Silent logo, not communicated</p>	<p>Brand as product</p> <p><i>Product/service scope</i> – Brand as both service and product <i>Product association</i> – Low with company's brand, wide range of innovative products, satisfactory product quality <i>service association</i> –Flexible, quick, reliable logistics, service to smaller retailers needed, insufficient customer care</p> <p><i>Benefits</i> – Good customer care, and good logistics</p> <p><i>Differentiation from competitors</i> – Average, high price, luxurious products</p> <p>Brand as organization</p> <p>Average company, not known, good dealings <i>Organizational association</i> – Health orientation and environmental care. <i>Experiences</i> – Positive <i>Employees</i> – Good, proactive, impressive</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> – Good dealings, impressive sales personnel, good customer care, fast and reliable logistics</p> <p>Brand as person</p> <p><i>Personality</i> – Flexible, youthful, motivated, laborious, positive</p> <p>Brand as symbol</p> <p><i>Branded name</i>: CoreFinland <i>Logo association</i>: No association, Unaware</p>

7.3 CoreFinland's identity versus image

CoreFinland wants to identify itself majorly as a service oriented company but its direct customers have no clear ideas whether it is only service oriented or product. Customer's view about CoreFinland being product oriented comes entirely from the products they have been dealing with rather than the services they have received. On the contrary, CoreFinland should also focus on highly communicating its organizational purpose to be service oriented.

The customers have associated CoreFinland's products just the ways that the company wanted and the service association is also similar, however, it has to consider providing more services even to the smaller retailers because small retailers would like to have more attention from the company.

The company has associated its name with the company purpose. The purpose is to handle core business of related companies in Finland, and also to help abroad companies to bring their products and market them in Finland. Ultimately, it aims at bringing novelty in food and snacking culture. The company name is also associated with the Finnish nature like- clean, healthy and high quality products. Nevertheless, this purpose is not made aware among its direct customers clearly.

CoreFinland's employees are motivated and committed with right attitude to the culture and value while dealing with the customers despite any official training but guided by the management in their day to day business activities. Its customers have also evaluated employees positively and found them good, proactive and impressive. This signifies that the employee association of identity matches with the perceived image of employees.

Based on CoreFinland's business customers' perception through usage, experience, price and packaging, they regard the company as an average company. They have rated this company that way because of customer dealings, customer care activities, and the price being enough good, packaging like luxurious product etc. Nevertheless, the com-

pany has a different view about it. It wants to exhibit its company, product and service features in the top scale. Hence, there is not much match between identity and image.

The advantages the business customers mentioned to have received from CoreFinland were good dealings, impressive sales personnel, good customer care, fast and reliable logistics. CoreFinland on the other hand, mentions that good customer care and free sample for product launching are the advantage that the customers receive while doing business with it. Hence, it can be ascertained that good customer care is the most important advantage that the business customers receive from CoreFinland. Therefore, CoreFinland should pay more attention to providing more customer care.

CoreFinland likes to identify itself as a dynamic and flexible person and the customers also have received the same personality. Hence, the company should focus on the same personality identity in the future as well.

CoreFinland wants to be associated with every social class along with youth and adult of both sexes, who have busy and healthy snacking lifestyle. However, this has not been known so much to the direct customers. But this is one of the most important elements in company's identity as it tells a lot to the customers about the company and its product and services, so that the business customers can understand whether the company and its products match the end consumers or not.

The company differentiates itself from the competitors with its unique and healthiest products, cost-effectiveness, and quick response to the customers. However, its differentiation is not felt the same way in some areas like product range and pricing. The direct customers think that the company does not still have wider product range compared to their other suppliers (CoreFinland's competitors). The competitors (their other suppliers) pay more attention to them while the direct customers have not felt so from CoreFinland. Also pricing of the product is felt little higher compared to competing product, which some customers appreciated while the others want it to reconsider to lower the price.

Therefore, the company has to maintain price consistency by considering competing product pricing, add up more product range and should care more to smaller retailers also.

8 Summary

The brand identity of CoreFinland is based on its product-service and organizational associations. Study revealed that these associations give core identity to CoreFinland. Based on product-service association and customer's perceptions, the core identity of CoreFinland can be stated as a *quick and flexible* company, which provides *healthy food products* with *professional and friendly* customer care. Organizational association primarily comes from its purpose of existence, which is *to handle core business of companies in Finland* and *bring novelty in food culture* by being *healthy and environmentally friendly* company. Other identity elements provide depth and texture to this core identity.

CoreFinland's functional benefits include its ability to provide different and unique healthy products with attractive packaging. Quick service is the major functional benefit that the company provides to the customers; and customers also regard quick service as benefit that they receive from CoreFinland. Emotional benefits come from its environment friendliness and trustworthiness.

The study revealed that the attachment of the country name in company name 'CoreFinland' is purposeful, which means that the company handles the core business of related companies in Finland but there is also slight name association with Finnish features of clean environment and healthy lifestyle. The company aims at bringing novelty in food and snacking culture in Finland through its new and unique products.

Study also revealed that CoreFinland values the customers as core values. Although this message has been somehow understood among the employees, it should be crystallized in manuals and communicated internally and externally. Employees are very important asset to CoreFinland as they were found to be good media to exhibit CoreFinland's brand personality, however, study also revealed that there is still need of employee motivating programs.

CoreFinland's identity reflection among the business customers is partial; some aspects of its identity are rightly and accurately observed by the business customers, while others are not yet communicated precisely, or not even experienced by customers. Never-

theless, this study has analyzed identity and image elements and successfully balanced them for suitable identity creation.

The entire study is based on the devised model (see Figure 5) and the brand identity system (see Chapter 3.1), where the company perspectives are tallied with the customer perspective and desired identity is created (see chapter 8.1). Finally, the research is able to accomplish all the objectives as set forth in Chapter 1.2.

8.1 Suggestions for CoreFinland

CoreFinland's suitable brand identity has been derived with scrutiny, truthful and logical analysis about its current state of identity and image. Finally, a suitable brand identity is suggested as follows:

Core identity:

Organizational associations: Healthy & environmentally friendly.

Service attributes- Professional and friendly customer care, effective & quick delivery

Company purpose: Handling core business of companies in Finland with well-established marketing teams

Aim: Bringing novelty in food & snacking culture in Finland.

Extended identity:

Personality: Young & dynamic.

Product attributes- Healthy, luxurious

Local/ Global: Finnish company, thinking global but acting local.

Service scope: Good contact with retail and wholesale chains in Finland

Relationships: Friendly, trustworthy, motivated employees

Committed employees: Passionate, hard-working, with right attitude to work with true spirit of company's culture and values

Company passion: Passion to find unique products & building their good brands.

Value proposition

Functional Benefits: Unique, healthy, luxurious products from a single distributor with quick & flexible delivery.

Emotional Benefits: Trust through constant touch with customers, friendly, Finnish company & healthy way of life

8.2 Further research

The main aim of this study was to create the brand identity for CoreFinland by taking business customer's views into consideration. Though CoreFinland also operates being in constant contact with the end consumers, this study does not yet cover them because it embraces the business customers only for the objective mentioned earlier. Therefore, further research can be done in order to cover the end consumers also, which can make a complete study for brand creation.

During analysis, it was strongly felt that the business customers were not quite aware of CoreFinland as there were not enough communication programs in place from CoreFinland for the purpose of bringing to light about its business competencies, aims and purposes, etc among the customers. Since, this study focused to creating identity only, it did not explore much into communication issues. Given the fact that the company has limited resources and capabilities, further research needs to be done in order to find out effective communication tools for the positioning of the suggested brand identity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaires for semi-structured interviews

Interview questions for brand identity to the employees of CoreFinland

Brand as product

1. What does CoreFinland provide to the customers?
2. With what product/service is CoreFinland associated? In your opinion, do you think the customers will associate these associations to CoreFinland?
3. What are the functional and emotional benefits do you think the customers get, when they purchase and use from CoreFinland?
4. What do you think are the attributes that best describe CoreFinland as a service or product?
5. What ways do you think CoreFinland is different from the competitors?
6. Why did you put the country name in your company name? Do you want to associate your company as Finnish Company? Why? What are Finnish features of CoreFinland?

Brand as organization

7. What is the purpose of the organization? Why does the company exist and what it stands for besides product and profit?
8. What do you think are the organizational values and culture of CoreFinland? Why are they important?
9. What do you think the organization is good at doing?
10. What kinds of programs do you wish to bring in your company so that the entire staffs can work towards organizational missions?
11. If your employees are encountered by customers, are they seen committed to the values and culture of CoreFinland?

12. What kinds of programs can CoreFinland give towards customer care, environmental concerns, and technological commitments?
13. What kinds of customer-involving programs does your company offer? If not are there any future plans to do so? What kind of?
14. What is your opinion about your company's values in education, organizing health related programs, water and life programs, pollution reduction programs etc.?
15. Your company should feel pride at the point that it is the first company to introduce rye snacks in the market, have you organized communication programs to enhance your company reputation in this regard?
16. In your opinion what are the advantages that your business retailers, wholesalers can have doing business with you?
17. What are the most important competencies of CoreFinland that the business partners would like to rely upon?
18. Do you like to say your company is local or global? Why? What are the advantages of your company being local or global? Do you think, you can cater international or national customers with local flavor?

Brand as person

19. If CoreFinland were a person, what kind of person would it be? What kind of personal traits would you like to mention?
20. Which social class is CoreFinland more attached to?
21. Which customer age & sex is CoreFinland more attached to?
22. What kind of lifestyle (activities, interest, and opinion) is CoreFinland representative of?
23. Have you organized events for enhancing CoreFinland brands to communicate CoreFinland's brand personality?
24. Do you think CoreFinland logo can tell customers about your company personality?

Brand as symbol

25. When you deal with customers, how would you address your company as CoreFinland, or CFL? Which one is branded name for your company?
26. Are your products carrying the company logos or symbols? What messages does your brand symbol deliver to customers?

Interview questions for brand image to the CoreFinland's business customers

1. What kind of suppliers would be beneficial for you to have a long term business relationships? Could you please mention some of the characteristics of your best suppliers?
2. What kind of challenges have you faced so far doing business with present suppliers? In your opinion, what could the suppliers do to minimize those challenges?
3. Among your suppliers, CoreFinland is also one of them. How do you know about CoreFinland Ltd?
4. How do you like the CoreFinland?
5. What kind of impression do you get when CoreFinland is mentioned?
6. In your understanding, what kind of organization is CoreFinland?
7. Have you experienced CoreFinland as a service oriented or product oriented company? Why?
8. Do you think CoreFinland a slowly growing or rapidly growing company?
9. If you have to mention some advantages you get from doing business with CoreFinland (beside the mere RIPS products), what things would you like to mention?
10. How do you see CoreFinland while compared to others of your business partners in the same product areas?
11. Do you think, it is health oriented, environmentally friendly, charitable, profit oriented organization, or if any? Why?
12. When talked about CoreFinland, what do you think about its price, packaging, product appearance?
13. What kind of customer care services have you received from CoreFinland?

14. What kind of personality traits would you like to give to CoreFinland? Is it like 'youthful', 'colorful', 'gentle', aggressive, or any?
15. What kinds of experiences have you gained while doing business with CoreFinland?
16. Would you like to do business with CoreFinland in the future also, what areas do you think it has to improve? Under what conditions would CoreFinland be a good long-term business partner with in the future too?

Appendix 2. Interview responses for brand identity (Group A)

Identity perspectives	Identity elements	Mr. Joonas Turkama	Ms. Kati Salo	Ms. Claudia Poikela and Ms. Marikka Haapoja
Brand as product	<i>Good/ service provider</i>	Service/Product	Mainly service	Service
	<i>CoreFinland product/ service association</i>	Flexible	Importer but not producer, distributor, marketer	Fast and healthy snack providing company
	<i>Benefits: functional/ emotional</i>	Flexible <i>Emotional: X</i>	<i>Functional:</i> different products from the CoreFinland <i>Emotional: X</i>	<i>Functional:</i> Healthy & unique snacks, quick and flexible service <i>Emotional:</i> Attractive packaging, environmentally friendly, trust through constant touch with customers, Finnish quality
	<i>Attributes of being product or service</i>	Mainly products, dynamic and flexible service	Mainly service	Mainly service, CoreFinland provides importing, selling, marketing and promoting services to the customers
	<i>Different from competitors</i>	Different products, dynamic, cost-effective, strong brand builder, special care for client brands	specific products, quick delivery to retailers, after-sales-service	quick and flexible delivery, correspondence, healthiest snacks provider
	<i>Country name in company name/</i>	CoreFinland can handle core business of related companies in Finland. For this idea the name came up randomly	International nature, international identification	Signals that company is based in Finland but no Finnish nature, but rather more international
	<i>name</i>	No association.	Possible Finnish	Healthy product

	<i>association/Finnish features</i>		image association	association
Brand as organization	<i>Purpose of existence, meaning</i>	Brining healthy products in Finland, making them popular through marketing and sales, handle core business	to offer unique and new products, to introduce new food and snack culture in Finland	to introduce unique and healthy products and make them strong brands
	<i>Organizational values/ culture</i>	Dealing with first class products only, providing unique & healthy snacks in the market, revolutionizing food and snacks culture in Finland		Yet to be developed/new company, but still good team spirit and value stakeholders
	<i>Good at doing?</i>	dealing with customers, finding right products across the globe which has potential to grow strong/popular brand in Finland	hard work to achieving company goals with minimum cost	Good at finding new and different products than competitors, maintaining good customer relationships
	<i>Programs</i>	not specific programs yet but maybe in the future	More permanent workers needed. More internal communication needed, career developing programs	Career developing programs like seminars, workshops, professional meetings, learning to be entrepreneur and decision making independently.
	<i>Employee's commitment to values and culture in communication</i>	Weekly meetings to guide employees to remain committed to CoreFinland's values& culture, picnic to motivate employees to..,	yes, the employee who encounters with customers shows right attitude, value in correct way	authorized employees are guided to remain committed, but not official trainings
	<i>Customer care, environmental concerns, technological commitments</i>	Packaging, printing materials. Regular visits to customers, product update info, in-store promotions	regular visit by sales representatives	product update information and regular visits, environmentally friendly

		quickest delivery as demanded by customers.		
	<i>Customer involving program</i>	Testing, timely meetings with business customers (company's representatives etc.)	internet competition rewarding web page visitors	promotions in supermarkets, free sample tasting
	<i>Communication programs</i>	Not yet, but in the future through blog and forums	X	X
	<i>Advantages doing business with CoreFinland</i>	Business customers get fastest, effective product delivery, free sample products for launching in new stores (e.g. Delish)	several different products from a single distributor, recommended by KESKO	They get RIPS only from CoreFinland
	<i>Important competencies of CoreFinland's partners like to rely upon</i>	they can rely on our timely delivery, well-experienced marketing team, we deal in healthy and unique products only	Reliable deliveries, affordable price, enough marketing and promotion	ability to find new different innovative products, reliable delivery
	<i>Local/global?</i>	until now local but planning for market extension as far as North Germany, Russia, and many Baltic countries, Recently, we have started to sell our products in Japan, too. We import products from abroad, somehow, we are global and local both	local, but global in the future, but requires product development and adjustments according to taste and culture	local but open minded and think internationally
Brand as person	<i>Brand personality</i>	dynamic and flexible	Young person, busy life-style, snack-loving person	Young, dynamic, friendly, open-minded, open in many directions, risk takers
	<i>Social class</i>	every social class	middle class, working class	every social class
	<i>Age and sex</i>	youth & adult	young adult, male or female	Teenager to old, not narrow age and sex

	<i>What kind of lifestyle?</i>	luxurious, healthy snacking lifestyle,	busy lifestyle, partying/ festivities	fresh, young, active life, represents healthy and luxurious lifestyle
	<i>Promotions to enhance brand personality?</i>	Through festival events, so far.	Only product promotion, not Company brand personality	Festival promotions, Ankkarock etc., but mostly about products
	<i>Personalities through Logo?</i>	Silent	Hard to say	Yes, represents modern, freshness, represents company name, but not much communicated
Brand as symbol	<i>Branded name: CFL or CoreFinland?</i>	CoreFinland	CoreFinland	CoreFinland, CFL for internal use only.
	<i>Products carry logo?</i>	not logo but Company name only, for (e.g.- Importer CoreFinland Oy)	NO, but company is mentioned as importer	CoreFinland is silent but company is mentioned as importer in imported products

Appendix 3. Interview responses for brand image (Group B)

	Martin Trang Delish Oy	Jyrki Isosomppi K-market Kotikontu	Interviewee X Pick-a-Deli
<i>1 Brand recall in rye snacks?</i>	RIPS from CoreFinland	Linkosuo	Taffel, Estrella
<i>2 How do you know about CoreFinland?</i>	From students during the launching of RIPS. Through contact of MD	Not familiar but we have its product from KES-KO	Sales agent through phone
<i>3 Rank of RIPS and company behind it?</i>	2/5, because of the MD being very good and reminding us about its products regularly	Not familiar	sales wise 2, but good feedback from the users about the product

4. <i>Idea/ opinion about CoreFinland?</i>	CoreFinland has innovative and wide range of products, overall average company	Not familiar	No in-depth knowledge, only know little through dealing
5. <i>CoreFinland's product quality, transaction relation, logistic issues, employees' behavior?</i>	Product-good quality logistics-good employees- the MD is proactive	Not familiar	Product - good, different, varieties, new. Logistics-effective logistic, quick delivery in any quantity sales agent- seems positive
6. <i>Impression about CoreFinland?</i>	remarkable customer dealing, positive impression		I pay more attention to product quality than company name, I know company through dealing only
7. <i>CoreFinland a service oriented or product?</i>	service oriented now but product oriented in its startup		I have not received special services, I say it is product oriented
8. <i>CoreFinland slowly growing or rapidly?</i>	rapidly because they add varieties of new and unique products continuously		I guess, slowly
9. <i>CoreFinland first company in rye snacks category?</i>	Definitely first so far I know		No clear idea
10. <i>Advantages of doing business with CoreFinland?</i>	easy to do business with because of good dealings, impressive MD, proactive company, good customer care, good logistics		really quick delivery, flexible in product quantity ordered, impressive sales person
11. <i>CoreFinland vs. others of your suppliers? Lacking?</i>	CoreFinland comes in average. Needs even more product ranges		should pay attention to small retailers also, should have wider product ranges, now price is little higher
12. <i>CoreFinland health oriented or environment, profit, charity or?</i>	completely health oriented, always seeks healthy and unique products, of course profit is at the root always		I think packaging is environmentally friendly; products sounds good for health, profit is always more reason.
13. <i>What you think CoreFinland's price, packaging, product appearance?</i>	Price is not really low, we like high priced products, packaging and appearance is good		I liked this product appearance, shiny, luxurious packaging of 'Salty Dog' but still, texts should have been little bigger.
14. <i>What kinds of customer care, services you got from CoreFinland?</i>	Not any special but regular visit of the MD, informing about new products, etc. We were happy with what we received		not special but we are happy with what we received

<i>15. Personality of CoreFinland</i>	flexible, growing, youthful, motivated, proactive		Dedicated, laborious, happy, positive, passionate according to my experience about personality
<i>16. What kind of experience doing business with CoreFinland?</i>	Joonas, the MD keep me informed of new products, I was happy.		Nothing negative. Yet, we would like to buy its products from Heino Tukku in future
<i>17. Doing business with CoreFinland in future? Conditions for long-term relation?</i>	Sure, it is always adding more new and unique products which is the core of Delis Oy's business, more products they come up with more business we would like to do in the future, too		Certainly, our customer age range is 20-40, if CoreFinland comes up with products to fit this group, we would like to do more business in future.