

THE BRAND IMAGE OF ICE HOCKEY

Case: IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships 2012

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Bachelor's Thesis

May 2013

Degree Programme in Business Administration
Social sciences, business and administration





Tekijä(t) HARIMO, Anne LAINE, Karoliina	Julkaisun laji Opinnäytetyö	Päivämäärä 06.05.2013
	Sivumäärä 67	Julkaisun kieli Englanti
		Verkojulkaisulupa myönnetty (X)
Työn nimi JÄÄKIEKON BRÄNDI-IMAGO IIHF Jääkiekon MM-kisat 2012		
Koulutusohjelma Liiketalouden koulutusohjelma		
Työn ohjaaja(t) RASKU, Risto		
Toimeksiantaja(t) Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu		
<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Jääkiekon MM-kisoissa, Helsingissä, 2012 tehdyn tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää jääkiekon brändi-imagoa. Tavoitteena oli selvittää, mitä ominaisuuksia jääkiekkofanit liittävät jääkiekkoon. Tutkimusmenetelminä on käytetty sekä kvantitatiivista että kvalitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää. Kvantitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää on käytetty kysyttäessä jääkiekkoa kuvailevia adjektiiveja. Kvalitatiivista menetelmää on käytetty syvällisemmässä haastattelussa, jossa tutkimusmenetelmänä oli Means-end-chain-haastattelumalli. Nämä haastattelut toteutettiin Laddering-tekniikalla.</p> <p>Haastatteluista selvisi, että vastaajat liittivät vahvimmin jääkiekkoon seuraavat adjektiivit: kansainvälisyys, kunnianhimoisuus sekä jännittävyys. Laddering-haastattelujen tulosten mukaan kansainvälisyys jääkiekossa merkitsi faneille kansainvälisiä tapahtumia, hyvää tunnelmaa sekä ulkomaalaisten tapaamista jääkiekon parissa. Jääkiekon kansainvälisyydestä nousi myös esiin pelaajien mahdollisuus pelata eri maissa. Kunnianhimoisuus jääkiekossa merkitsi faneille menestystä ja halua voittoa. Pelien seuraamisen tekee jännittäväksi myös otteluiden mielenkiintoisuus, pelaajien yksilötaidot sekä otteluiden lopputulosten ennalta-arvaamattomuus. Tulosten perusteella esitetään työssä sovellus Jean-Noél Kapfererin identiteetti prismasta jääkiekkoa ajatellen. Kaikkiin prisman kuuteen näkökulmaan löytyi aineiston perusteella jääkiekkoa kuvaavia elementtejä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tuloksia vertailtiin lisäksi jalkapallon MM-kisojen aineistoon, joka oli kerätty samalla kysymyslomakkeella ja tutkimusmenetelmällä jalkapallon MM-kisoissa 2010. Verrattaessa jääkiekon brändiprofiilia jalkapallon vastaavaan profiiliin voitiin havaita, että kansainvälisyys ja jännittävyys ovat ominaisia molemmille lajeille.</p> <p>Tulevaisuudessa tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää esimerkiksi selvitetessä jääkiekon brändi-imagon muutoksia. Tutkimustuloksia voidaan käyttää hyväksi myös kehitettäessä kansainvälisiä tapahtumia. Tutkimus tarjoaa ajankohtaisen ja syvällisen näkökulman jääkiekon brändi-imagoon.</p>		
Avainsanat (asiasanat) Jääkiekko, brändi, brändi-imago, brändi-identiteetti, fanit, kuluttajakäyttäytyminen, Laddering		
Muut tiedot		



Author(s) HARIMO, Anne LAINE, Karoliina	Type of publication Bachelor's Thesis	Date 06052013
	Pages 67	Language English
		Permission for web publication (X)
Title THE BRAND IMAGE OF ICE HOCKEY Case: IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships 2012		
Degree Programme Business Administration		
Tutor(s) RASKU, Risto		
Assigned by JAMK University of Applied Sciences		
<p>Abstract</p> <p>The subject of this research was to discover the brand image of ice hockey. The study was made in IIHF World Championships 2012 in Helsinki. The purpose was to find out the attributes that fans relate most to ice hockey. Both, quantitative and qualitative research methods are used in the study. Quantitative research method was used asking the most related adjectives to ice hockey. Qualitative research method was used in in-depth interviews executed by Means-end-chain method and Laddering technique.</p> <p>The results revealed that the most related adjectives to ice hockey were international, ambitious and exciting. According to the Laddering interviews, international in ice hockey meant for fans "international events", "great atmosphere" and "opportunity to meet foreign people in events". The opportunity for players to play abroad stood out also from interviews. Ambitious meant success and willingness to win for the fans. Furthermore, according to respondents the excitement of the games and players' individual skills make ice hockey exciting. According to results the adaptation of Jean-Noël Kapferer's identity prism has been produced for ice hockey. For all six facets of the prism was found typical elements that figure out the ice hockey.</p> <p>In addition, the results of this study were compared with the material of the research made about football. This research was done in the FIFA World Cup 2010. Both researches were done with same questionnaire form and research method. When comparing the brand profiles of ice hockey and football, was noticed that adjectives international and exciting were related to both sports.</p> <p>In the future, the research results can be took advantage of for example, finding out the adjustments in the brand-image of ice hockey. Research results can be also useful developing international events. The following thesis provides deep and fresh viewpoint of ice hockey brand image in the minds of ice hockey fans.</p>		
Keywords Ice hockey, brand, brand imago, brand identity, fans, consumer behavior, Laddering		
Miscellaneous		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Inspiration for the thesis

IIHF World Championships 2012 was the seventh Championships tournament organized in Finland. Ice hockey is a very popular sport in Finland. (See Appendix 1.) The subject of brand image of ice hockey is not been investigated before. As we are studying sport business in JAMK University of Applied Sciences, we got a great opportunity to join the IIHF World Championships and study the brand image of ice hockey.

However, the background of this thesis leads back to the year 2010, when a group of sport marketing students from JAMK made a research in the FIFA World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa. The purpose of the study was to find out the fundamental values of an international football fan and what their basic profile is like. (Kuosmanen 2011, 4.) As we are also comparing the perceived brand image of ice hockey and football, this thesis will also be partly based on the thesis of Perceived Football Brand Image . Interpreted with brand model, written by Niklas Kuosmanen.

The thesis that Kuosmanen (2011) has made, is basing on the interview survey and the questionnaire of the football values in the Fan Fest area visitors in the city of Cape town in South Africa (Kuosmanen 2011, 4). The data from the survey of IIHF World Championships of 2012 was collected in a fan area called Hockey Garden that was situated next to the actual arena. 12 sport business students from JAMK University of Applied Sciences collected the data used for this thesis. The data was collected with a questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

The basic idea and the background of the thesis are explained in the introduction chapter. The second chapter illustrated the professional ice hockey, IIHF, history and World Championships. The third and fourth chapters, theoretical framework and Kapferer's identity prism, consists of the theory that is needed to fully understand the basic elements of this thesis, like brand theory, brand

image and sport consumers. The fifth chapter demonstrates the research implementation and methodology and evaluates reliability and validity of the research. After this the results are introduced and finally, in chapter seven, conclusions are made.

1.2 Demand and purpose of the thesis

Try to guess what Finland's national sport is. If you guessed ice hockey you are wrong (Beidler 2010). Finnish national sport is a Finnish baseball, pesäpallo. But ice hockey has a reputation of national sport in people's minds. There are about 200 000 ice hockey fanatics (Lajien harrastaja- ja lisenssimäärät n.d) and 69 000 licensed players (Bäckman 2012) in Finland and the national team is very popular in terms of support and fan ship. Many Finnish people, who are not interested in Finnish national league, are interested to follow national team's games and especially World Championship Tournaments. Internationally ice hockey is also a very popular sport and for example in IIHF World Championship 2012 games in Helsinki have 301 000 spectators. (Jääkiekon MM-kisat tuottivat 46 miljoonaa, lippuhinnoista kritiikkiä, 2013.)

The study was executed in the IIHF World Championships Hockey Garden - area in Helsinki. The target group was the ice hockey fans who apparently took part in the ice hockey event. The research method for the interviews was Means-end-chain-model which was executed with Laddering technique. The methods are introduced in the research implementation chapter. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

The purpose of the thesis was to produce material for the event organizers, sponsors and academic community. With the help of this material it is easier to understand ice hockey fans behavior and motives to participate in sport events. This thesis helps to understand the relationship between ice hockey and its fans. Organizers of ice hockey events can use the findings of the study developing and improving the quality of ice hockey events. The purpose was also study the similarities and differences between brand images of ice hock-

ey and football, as the similar research has been executed in football FIFA World Cup 2010.

1.3 Goal of the research

The aim of this study is to define the brand image of ice hockey amongst the fans that took part in IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships 2012 in Helsinki as spectators.

The objectives of the research can be defined in two research questions:

1. What is the perceived brand image of ice Hockey in the minds of ice hockey fans?
2. What are the differences and similarities between the brand image profiles of ice hockey and football in the minds of fans?

1.4 Constructs

This chapter introduces the basic and most important constructs and concepts of the thesis. This vocabulary you need to know to fully understand the study subject.

Brand equity: Brand equity means things that are linked to the brand's name or symbol and it adds the value provided by product/service to a customer. These things can be: brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. (Aaker 2002, 8.)

Brand image: Brand image means customer's perception about the brand. It is a set of beliefs and associations of the brand. (Brand Image n.d.)

Brand identity: Brand identity provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. (Aaker 2002, 68.)

Fan: An enthusiastic devotee (as of a sport or a performing art) usually as a spectator. (Webster Dictionary n.d.)

IIHF: International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) is the governing body of international ice hockey and in-line hockey for both men and women. (IIHF n.d.)

Kapferer's identity prism: It is a hexagonal prism that presents brand identity. It has six facets: physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection and self-image. All these facets present different characters that speak about the brand. Identity prism could be used as a tool in a communication theory. (Kapferer 2012, 159.)

Laddering: Laddering is an interview technique that helps to understand people's core values and beliefs. Laddering helps to elicit goals and underlie values of customers. (Hawley 2009.)

Means-end-chain: Means end chain is an interview method that helps to understand how consumers perceive the self-relevant outcomes of products. (The means end chain model n.d.)

Sport marketing: This means all the operations of marketing in the field of sports. Sport marketing meets the needs of sport consumers. (Sport Marketing Introduction n.d.)

Sport consumer: A person who consumes sport. Individual attends in the events or follow the match via media. Sport consumer might also participate in events being a competitor. (Oxford Dictionary of Sports Science & Medicine n.d.)

Stanley Cup: The trophy which is awarded annually to the winner of NHL (National Hockey League) playoffs. (Stanley Cup Notebook n.d.)

2 PROFESSIONAL ICE HOCKEY

Ice hockey is a popular team sport in Europe and Northern America. International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) is the worldwide governing organization for ice hockey and there are totally over 1,5 million professional players in the organization. IIHF has 72 official member countries. There are three levels of memberships. Full members have independent national hockey federations and they participate in the IIHF Championship Tournaments each year. Associate countries participate only in to limited IIHF Championship tournaments. Associate countries have not completely independent national hockey associations. The third section of the member countries participate in the IIHF roller hockey tournaments. IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships is the annual tournament where the winner is a world champion. IIHF's tournaments are also played in 1-, 2- and 3-divisions. (Szemberg & Podnicks 2011,198.)

The sport is popular in the countries with a climate that is sufficiently cold to provide natural ice cover - such as Canada, Russia, Sweden, Finland, the US, the Czech Republic and Germany. The game itself is played between two teams with six players, while one of the players in both teams is a goalkeeper. Five members of each team skate on the ice trying to take the puck and score a goal against the opposing team. (Arzhilovskiy & Priyatel 2012, 1-2.)

The society for International Hockey Research (SIHR) has created a simple definition for ice hockey:

Hockey is a game played on an ice rink in which two opposing teams of skaters, using curved sticks, trying to drive a small disc into or through the opposing goals.+

(The early beginnings, IIHF History n.d.)

Ice hockey as a sport has experienced remarkable changes in its earliest days to these days. Today all the games are played in the arenas and ice hockey rinks. Also the rules of the game have changed in many ways. The rules may still change every year. But the changes nowadays are not radical. Equipment

has developed as the whole sport is developed. The game has become faster and faster. Equipment protects players better trying to avoid injuries. In the early days there was hardly any equipment. Today many pieces of equipment are mandatory to use. (Kivinen, Mesikämmen, Metsä-Tokila 2000, 64.)

Earlier ice hockey and the games were like a chain of individual performances. Nowadays the players are not only individuals; they are playing for the team. Teamwork and the playing strategy are playing the biggest role. Hard contacts and violence can be also connected to ice hockey. (Valkonen 1997, 17.) According to Valkonen (1997, 17) Ira Gitler has said that "aggressive behaviour distinguishes ice hockey from the other sports" Violence in some respects is allowed in ice hockey, and it is part of the sport. For some sport consumers the motive to come in ice hockey game is to see good fights. (Valkonen 1997, 17.)

2.1 History of ice hockey

In the year 1873 James Creighton created rules for a new winter game in Montreal, Canada. Later this game became known as ice hockey. Two years after the invention, the first official game was played in Montreal's Victoria Skating Rink, in March 1875. Ice hockey teams were organized by universities and the rules were based on field hockey rules. (International Hockey Timeline n.d.)

International ice hockey arose when Frenchman, Pierre Coubertin travelled in Canada and USA In the winter 1889. During the trip he became acquainted with different winter sports. Canadian ice hockey impressed him. It took time before ice hockey took root in Europe where ice ball was popular. Players who were interested in ice hockey were mainly skaters and ice ball players. The first ice hockey game in Europe was played In England in the year 1902. Ice hockey did not have common rules that would have been followed in every country. That led to the actions when Louis Magnus established independent federation (1908): La Ligue Internationale de Hockey sur Glace (LIHG) that was precursor of International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). Year after, official

rules were arranged. 1911 IHL accepted Canadian hockey rules. (Szemberg & Podnieks 2011, 2-7.)

It is said that ice hockey in Canada developed to be rough and straightforward game meanwhile in Europe ice hockey were fast game with players special individual skills. The differences between these cultures were obvious. (Kivinen etc. 2000, 13.) At the early 1900-century National teams in Europe played games against each other while in Canada University teams played games for the Stanley Cup in Canada. (International hockey timeline n.d.)

2.2 World championships tournaments

The very first official World Championships tournament was played in the year 1920 in Antwerp, Belgium. In the beginning, tournaments were played as an exhibition games before Olympic Games. Canada was an overwhelming ice hockey country and it won all the first six tournaments. In 1930 the World Championships were organized the first time as an individual event in Chamonix, Berlin and Vienna. Canada and USA dominated the trophy until year 1947 when Czechoslovakia became the first non-American country to win the Championships. Differences between other countries decreased while Canada was almost unbeatable. (Szemberg & Podnieks 2011, 12.)

In the year 1954 Soviet Union (present Russia) entered the World Championships. That was the beginning of the era when Soviet Union was one of the leading countries in ice hockey besides North American countries. In the eighties Soviet Union didn't lose any matches for many years and they dominated completely the field of ice hockey. (International Hockey Timeline n.d.)

The ninetieth century was a turning point in World Championships. Interest among people increased and tournaments were improved. One major change was also Finland's rise to the top of the ice hockey countries. (Raevuori 1997, 153.) In the last ten years the differences between national teams have been balanced (International Hockey Timeline n.d.)

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical framework is illustrated in Figure 1. The theoretical framework for the study formed from two parts. The first frame for the thesis was sport consumers and their behaviour. The second part covers branding in sport, including the concepts of brand image and brand identity. Also the theory of Kapferer's brand identity prism was introduced. This is the theory that was used to process the study data and finally create the ice hockey brand image.

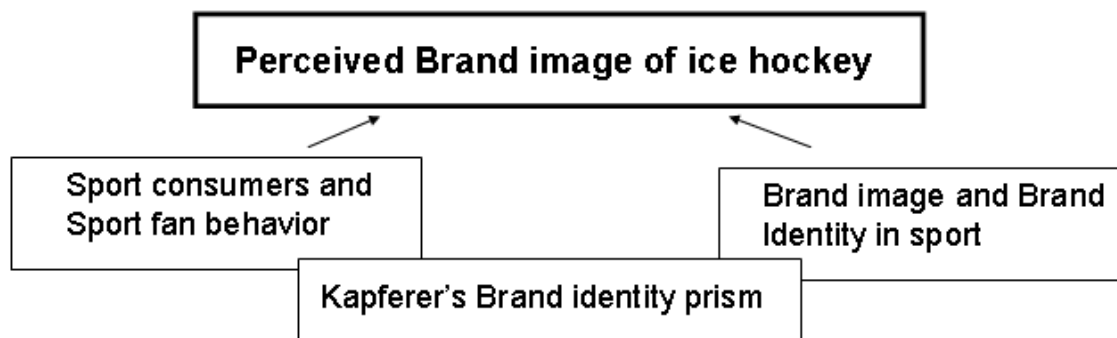


FIGURE 1. Theoretical Framework of the thesis

3.1 Sport consumers

The concept of sport consumers is not unambiguous. The idea of this chapter is to give overall picture of sport consumers who take part in sport events for example ice hockey World Championships. The knowledge of sport consumers helps to understand the motives that spectators have to participate in IIHF World Championships.

Sport consumers experience the sport in many different ways. Individuals attend sport events for many different reasons. All sport consumers are not passionate fans. Some fans attend the game on a regular basis while some consumers attend only on special occasions. Some consumers spend their time searching for information on the Internet and others display their fandom by watching games on TV. (Stewart 2003, 206.)

In general, it would be easy to sort out the sport consumers into two groups: participants and spectators. Participants take part in sport events being players, coaches or trainers etc. Spectators are present in the sport events. This kind of classification is generic in nature. According to Kearney (2003), inside these two groups there are many different segments where sport consumers could be divided to. The analysis of sport consumer segments reveals that sport consumers are definable to demographic, psychographic and attitudinal segments. There are also different categories inside the segments. Kearney (2003) research introduces six sport consumer categories and these will be displayed next.

Sport fanatics

Sport fanatics are sport consumers who have a continuous interest in sports and they actively participate in or attend sporting events. They follow sport news continuously and have a significant knowledge about sports and team statistics. Sport fanatics get their knowledge through television, newspaper, radio and nowadays also from social media and Internet. They spent a lot of money to buy merchandise and related products. Fanatics tend to be the most loyal fans of the team and its brand. Often sport fanatics put aside money to make it possible to take part in the sport events like Ice hockey World Championships. Championships in fans' own country could be the dream come true to those fanatic fans who are not able to travel abroad to events. (Kearney 2003, 3).

Club and team loyalists

Club and team loyalist is the group that tends to attend sporting events. Generally they don't play the sport but they enjoy looking for information and analysis about their team. When talking about ice hockey, these fans are those who are loyal fans for their local team. In the World Championships they cheer for their national team. This group also spends money to buy team-related products and services. (Kearney 2003, 3)

Star-struck spectators

Star-struck spectators follow a superstars rather than team sports. Star-struck spectators also use to participate in online fantasy sports. In ice hockey the example of fantasy sport could be the NHL, National Hockey League, console game. By playing a game it is simple to identify with the favorite player. The superstars capture the hearts of these fans and transfer it to a team or sport before the player/athlete retires or moves on to another team. (Kearney 2003, 3.)

Social viewers

Social viewers are like social butterflies. They use sport for their own social interaction and they participate in the events not only for the game but also to meet friends. They might also go to watch the game in friendsqhouse. This group also concludes the corporate consumers who use sport events to invite business friends and clients to watch the game. This kind of actions are common in the World Championships when companies buy corporate suites and invite business friends to follow the match and at the same time they confirm their relationship in the business world. (Kearney 2003, 3.)

Opportunistic viewers

Opportunistic viewers attend sport event when some of their friends asked they to come. These consumers might not attend in the big sport events like the World Championships. Traditionally they consume sports trough television. They don't search the information about sports but they obtain their information when they get change to go to a game. Opportunistic viewers don't spend their money to buy products and the sport is only one entertainment among everything else. (Kearney 2003, 3.)

Sport indifferent

Sport indifferent is the group of people who might not be interested in sport but they want to attend mega events, such as Olympics, and they want to read about big sport events. These consumers love to breathe the air of big sport

events and the atmosphere of the event itself is more important than the specific sport. (Kearney 2003, 3.)

Sport consumer behavior

The factors that have an influence on consumer behavior are introduced in this chapter. Consumer behavior can be defined as the decision process and physical activity that individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or removing goods and services. The consumption process consists of all actions taken before, during and after the purchase of the product. All of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and goals have an effect to the ultimate decision to whether purchase the given product/good/service . or not. There are numerous theories about values and beliefs that lead the consumer. The factors that have an influence on consumer behavior can be characterized as either environmental or individual. Environmental factors include cultural and social norms: general circumstances, social class and connections to races, significant people around and market behavior in firms in sport industry. Individual factors include attitudes, perceptions, learning influences and motivations. (Lee 2000, 37.)

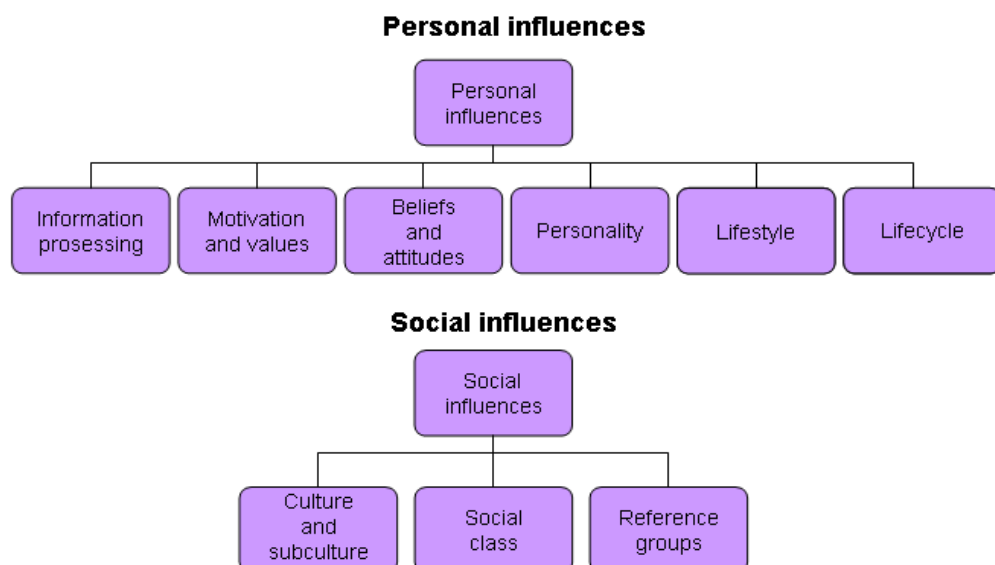


FIGURE 2. Personal and social influences on consumer behavior (See the original picture: Fahy & Jobber 2012, 66.)

Consumer behavior influences in many aspects. Figure 2. Shows how influences can be divided in two sections %personal influences+and %social influences+. Personal influences relate to the individual and the social influences take into consideration the drivers that are represented in the contexts of everyday life and the living conditions. There are six personal influences on consumer behavior: information processing, motivation, beliefs and attitudes, personality, lifestyle and life cycle. Social influences are culture and subculture, social class and reference groups. (Fahy & Jobber 2012, 67.)

When talking about participating in sport event the personal influences plays role in consumer behavior. Personality reveals the inner psychological characteristics and they reflect in one's behavior and consumption choices. (Fahy etc. 2012, 71.) In this study it could mean consumer's willingness to participate in the event. Motivation section can be explained with the theory of needs and wants. What the consumer really wants versus what consumer really needs? (mts. 70.) Consumer's motivation attending to the event might be, for example, a favorite team or a friend playing in the game. Beliefs and attitudes control one's everyday life and brands could convey consumer's identity. Participating in sport event can convey consumer's love for some specific sport. (mts. 70.)

Culture is one of the three social influences and it refers to the traditions, values and basic attitudes that might have been learned example from childhood. Consumer might have grown up to become a fanatic sport consumer. Grouping in social classes differs in different countries. Prosperity can have an influence in consumer's behavior. A reference group means people that have an influence on individual's attitude or behavior. This group can consist of family, friends or work colleagues. These people are often important to the individual and their opinions are significant consuming behavior drivers. (Fahy etc. 2012, 73-75.)

Sport consumers spent increasing amount of money in sport industry. True fans might choose to spend holidays participating in sport events like IIHF World Championships. They will come to enjoy and support their favorite team and spend a huge sum of money in the event. In addition they buy the prod-

ucts of the events as souvenirs. The more consumers identify with the team or sport the more time or money they are able to spend to support the team or only raise their experience. (Carlson, Donovan, Cumiskey 2009, 381.) In sport events the spin-offs can be a significant part of the experience. When a consumer buys something, it can be a memento. These little things can create great memories where every little thing matters.

Fans and fandom

Being a fan is a passionate way to consume sport. The difference between a fan and a spectator seems to be in their passion. The hypothesis is that a fan has a deep knowledge about teams, players and games. Fans are active and they participate in sport events whenever it is possible. A fan can be interested in some sport in general, specific team/league or even an athlete. Fans tend to identify with the sport or team. Fans are anxious to attend sport events, purchasing season tickets and buying products of the team. For fans, some sport as a brand can convey their personal identity. Fans might not even be conscious about the price of being a fan. Tickets and events and additional activities are expensive. Most valuable for fans are the experiences. Fans express the unconditional love for their favourite team or sport by being present. (Agas, Georgakarakou, Mylonakis, Arsenos 2012; Edwards & Day 2005, 51.)

Pedro, Leal & Moutinho (2008) argued that fandom allows a fan to be a part of the game without any special skills. To an individual, fandom offers social benefits as friendships, community and solidarity. At the same time fandom enhances social prestige and self-esteem. (Mts. 2008.)

Fans can be segmented into special groups. Agas et al. (2012) have classified fans into five groups: temporary fans, local fans, devoted fans, fanatical fans and dysfunctional fans. The divider in these groups was motivation and fan-like behaviour. Temporary fans do not use the sport for self-identification. Temporary fans' motivation is time-constrained and situational. It means, for example, that these fans go to the events only on sunny weather or they only support a specific team when they have won some victory. Local fans are lim-

ited geographically. This fandom stems from ones identification to local area, city or town. This kind of fandom is also temporary and it can decrease if the person moves out from the area. Contrary to these two categories the devoted fan is motivated and keeps following his/her favourite team or sport whether is winning season or losing season. For the devoted fan the team is part of him/her. The joy, satisfaction, disappointments and pain, that the fan experiences, can rival the emotions experienced by the players. The fanatic fan is the category where the fans are even deeper committed. They are like devoted fans but the sport or team is like a part of the fans family. The fan knows everything about the team and fandom could be compared to be like religion. The last category is dysfunctional fans. These fans might prioritize the team or sport over family, friends or job and the games are inseparably linked with his/her existence. The dysfunctional fan is strongly identified with the team. The fan experiences wide scale of emotions and might also lose self-control. (mts. 2012.)

3.2 Branding in sport

In this chapter the concepts of brand, brand image and brand identity are introduced. Furthermore, the integrated sport marketing communication is explained. Overall, this chapter illustrates the importance of branding in sport business.

The role of brands

According to American Marketing Association, a brand is %a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors+(Kotler & Keller 2009, 276). In other words, a brand is a product or service that is designed to satisfy the same needs as competitors's product but is still a different, a unique product. Its dimensions differentiate it in some way from other similar products. These differences may be functional, rational, symbolic or emotional. (mts. 276.) Visualizing ice hockey as a brand and a visitor of an ice hockey tournament as a consumer, a football tourna-

ment would be a good example of a competitor's product. Competitors could be also a theatre or a cinema when categorizing ice hockey in a wider context . in an entertainment.

Furthermore, a brand has other roles, too - like differentiating the product from those of competitors. Brands also identify the manufacturer of a product. This allows consumers to show responsibility or loyalty to a particular producer - especially when the brand signals a certain level of quality. Brand loyalty provides predictability and security of demand for the company. It makes also more difficult to other companies to enter the same market. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 277.)

Brands have become integral components in the culture of modern consumers. Like culture brands, also sport brand attempt to build a strong bridge between the product, media, and cultural performances. (Danesi 2006, 91.) In the field of sport, the product is what the sport organization offers for its customers. The customers purchase not only a concrete product, but also concrete solutions for their own needs - for example a ticket for sports event. (Alaja 2001, 17.) Ice hockey as a brand includes not only the fast and exciting game, but also all that happens around the game. Fans, atmosphere, the whole culture of ice hockey, players and their behavior, sponsorships and fan products . all of these have an influence on the brand image of ice hockey.

Brand Image in sport

Brand image is the picture that is formed from the customer's subjective perception of the company, its products and its external communication. (Vuokko 2003, 102). It is the way that the receiver of the communication sees the company. There are also things that have an influence to the brand image of company that are coming outside of the company. These are for example actions of the competitors, development of the technology and changes in the society. (Lindberg-Repo 2005, 67-68.)

The company can't decide of which elements the brand image of the company is formed. The brand image can be formed for example from information, be-

liefs, attitudes, values, prejudice, experience and rumors. (See figure 3.) In the left side of the figure, with yellow background, are the elements that the company can affect directly. (Vuokko 2003, 111.) These are values, attitudes, prejudice, rumors and beliefs. Especially prejudice and beliefs can be very hard to change. Not only the communication is enough to change these impressions . also experiences are needed. In the figure 3, with blue background, are the factors that the company can affect directly. These are the information, knowledge and experiences about the company and its products. (Vuokko 2002, 111-112.)

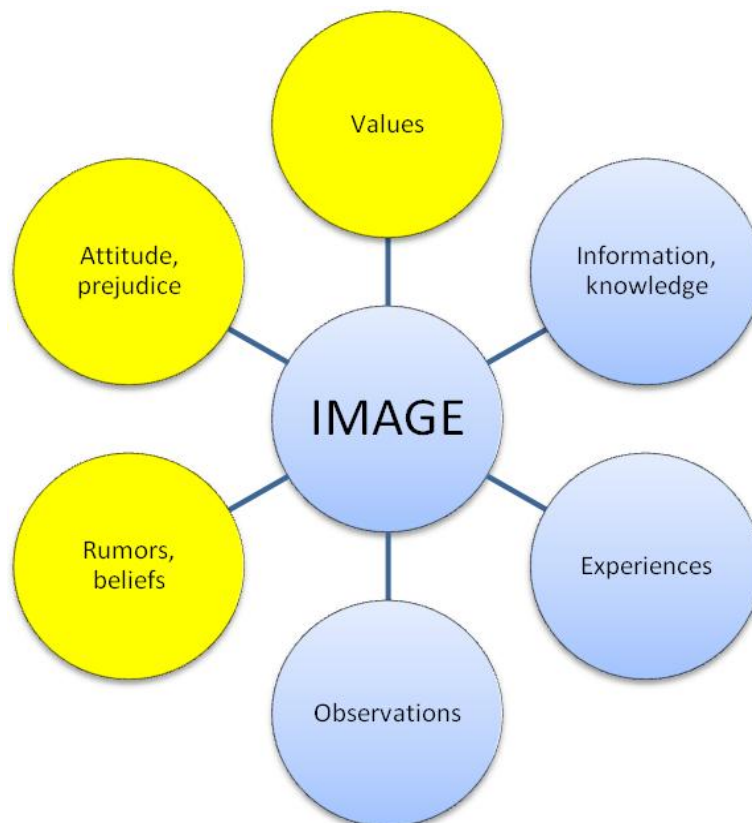


FIGURE 3. Elements of the image. (Vuokko 2003, 112.)

Image has also different layers. For example, if someone has a negative attitude towards one particular ice hockey player, it might have an influence on the impression of the whole ice hockey team or ice hockey generally. Alterna-

tively, this goes for the other direction as well; attitude towards ice hockey may have an influence on the attitude towards one particular ice hockey player. (Vuokko 2002, 105.)

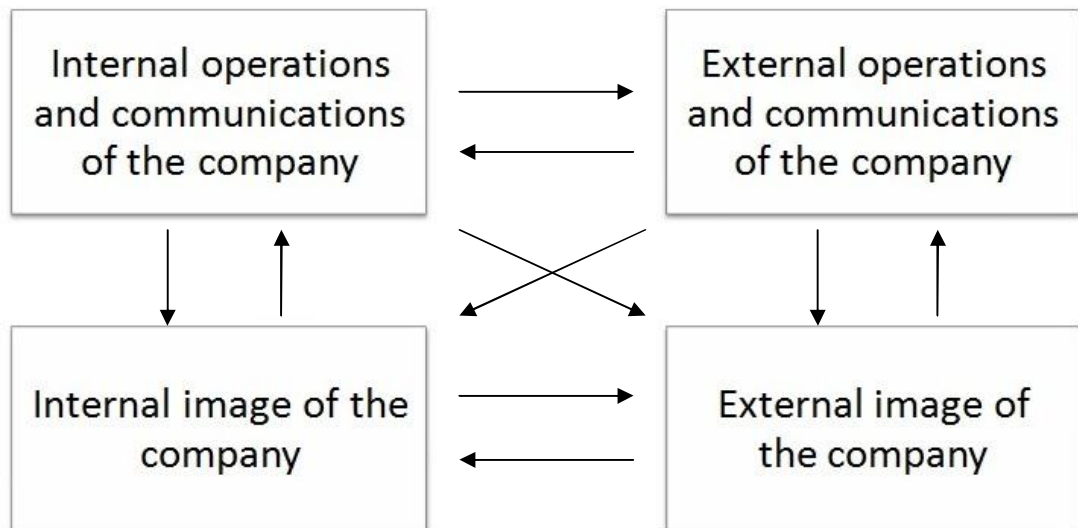


FIGURE 4. The relationship between the internal and external image of a company (Vuokko 2003, 112.)

The external image of a company cannot be talked about without taking into consideration the internal image of the company. They have a definite connection with each other. (See figure 4.) Also the internal communication and external communication have connections with the image. For example, during the IIHF World Championships in 2011, Mikael Granlund made a memorable and impressive performance, a lacrosse style goal, that was known in Finland as *luovaveivi*. Through the external communication of IIHF World Championships this act has a huge, positive impact on the image of Finnish ice hockey. It was the opening goal of the 3-0 victory in Bratislava when the 19-year-old forward lifted the puck on his stick behind the net to shovel it past a surprised Russian goalkeeper, Konstantin Barulin. (Merk 2011.) This act led Finland to the gold medal game, which it won against Sweden. It was Finland's second world title after 1995. Granlund's goal was so remarkable

that Itella Posti, Finland's national mail company, depicted the goal on a stamp. (mts. 2011.) It was only the second time in the Itella's history that it published a stamp outside of the annual stamp publication program. Granlund's goal and the world title were reasons good enough to do that. (mts. 2011.) With this act, Itella Posti immortalized the world title and *maailmanmestaruus* in Finnish history and still approved the external image of the ice hockey.

Brand Identity in sport

Brand identity provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. It is said that brand identity helps brand to establish a relationship to the consumer by generating a value which contains different benefits such as functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. (Aaker 2002, 68.)

Brand identity stems from the company. The company is responsible to creating the brand with unique features. Companies often use marketing strategy as a trick of communicating the identity and value to the customer. In some cases brand identity is also examined in terms of brand concept. The brand concept concentrates on consumer need that the brand can satisfy. (Nandan 2005.)

All in all, identity is how a company seeks to identify itself and the image is how the consumers perceive the brand. There is always a gap between the identification and perception and those elements that create the gap have to be minimized or eliminated. (Nandan S. 2005.) Figure 5. illustrates the relationship between brand identity and brand image.

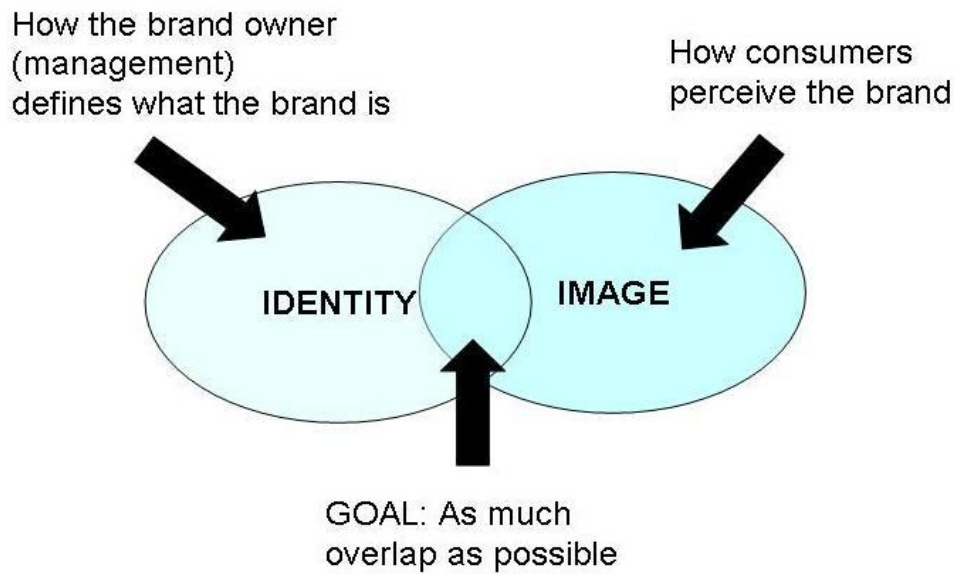


FIGURE 5. Brand identity and brand image

Integrated sport marketing communication

Integrated marketing communication, IMC, means that all the different marketing channels or models of marketing communication that communicates about one particular product or service, are connected with each other. All the messages that the company sends about its product are designed to support each other and create an uniform impact . even though all the messages are send via different communication channels. The figure 6. expresses an example of a successful communication chain. (Vuokko 2003, 323-324.) There are eight major models of marketing communication: advertising, sales promotion, events and experiences, public relations and publicity, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing and personal selling. The company can use only one or several of these models at the same time. (Kotler & Keller 2009, 512.)



FIGURE 6. Integrated marketing communication. (Vuokko 2003, 324.)

Product

The product is the basis of all marketing. When the selling product is ice hockey, the customers purchase not only a concrete product, but also concrete solutions for their own needs . for example a ticket for ice hockey game. A sports product has other special characteristics as well that need to take into consideration when planning the integrated marketing communication. Firstly, a sports consumer experiences the sport subjectively from his or her own premises. Sport is always an own, individual experience . whether it is playing golf or watching a basketball game. Consuming sport appeals emotional factors and it is always more or less experiential to experience the sport. Secondly, sports products will never be fulfilled identical. Even though the players, spectators, referees and ice rink were precisely same in two consecutive matches, the events as products would be still different. Sport is surprising and filled with different variables (the weather, reactions of audience, actions of referees, injuries, etc.) that have an influence, trough the final score of the game, on the stage of satisfaction of the audience. Furthermore, sport consumers are not only consumers but also producers. At the same time they enjoy and consume the sport they also create it. With their own behave they have a huge impact on the atmosphere and experience of a sport event. This is also a one reason why sport products can be uncontrollable. Also the teams, schedules and competition calendars cannot be decided by the marketer. (Alaja 2000, 28-39.)

Price

Peter Taylor (2011, 412) states that "Price is an important signal to both consumers and producers in the market system". For some customers, price is a signal or indicator of quality. Low price may signal low quality while high prices may suggest exclusivity and high quality. For producers price also matters. It has many valuable functions, like raising revenue, rationing demand and discriminating certain types of customers in favor of providers. Often the price is not that important when the demand is dominated by customers and there is no socio-economic disadvantage, for example, in art forms like theatre and music concerts. Nevertheless, when there is a strong competition between alternative products, like in markets, demand is more price sensitive. (mts. 412-413.)

Place

"Place, or distribution, is the final contact with the customer, after other marketing decisions, such as product, price and promotion has been taken." (Taylor 2011, 414.) Once customers have purchased a sport product, they usually need to travel somewhere from their home and attend a facility like sports centre or park, to consume or redeem it. Place decision should be based on the market research about customers, their home and work locations and transportation. Place is, in these circumstances, the key product decision because facility location can be changed only in a long run, not in weeks or months. Accessibility can be improved also with different signs, maps, creating a welcoming entrance and lighting the walkways. (mts. 414-415.)

Promotion

Promotion is used in two purposes: to creating awareness of the product and attracting customers to purchase the particular product. Promotional activities are done to communicate with customers and familiarizing and creating favourable images and attitudes towards the brand and its products. They can also correct the restricted impressions or preconceptions and motivate anyone

in the purchase stage. According to Taylor (2011, 416) the functions of promotion are typically presented with the acronym AIDA.

Attention . drawing the customer's attention to the product;

Interest . creating interest in the product, through promotion of its benefits;

Desire . stimulating a desire to purchase the product;

Action . purchase and consumption of the product.

The promotion communication process can be complex because it involves also some noise+- external distractions, between the organization and customer. This noise+has to be minimized so that the messages the organization sends will be decoded by the potential customers with the required interpretation. (Taylor 2011, 416.)

A promotional strategy should take account of the target markets, benefits of the products to customers, information and messages, the media and promotional methods to be used and offers and inducements. Promotions consist of one or more of the following components: personal selling, advertising, incentives and publicity. (Taylor 2011, 416-417.)

4 KAPFERER'S IDENTITY PRISM

Jean-Noël Kapferer (2012) argues that a brand must have character, own beliefs. As a result, the brand should help consumers in their life. Brand identity's key point is to have a deep inner inspiration. (p. 153.) Kapferer created the brand identity prism to gauge the identity of brands. Brand identity prism helps to provide answers to different questions about the brand. For example "what kind of person would the brand be?" (Garg 2008.)

According to Kapferer's brand management process starts with a strategy and logical vision. In brand management process brand identity is essential, not brand image. Brand identity must be clearly defined and derived. Kapferer's identity prism mainly focuses on communicating what the brand means and what it stands for. With brand prism it is easy to illustrate brand identity. There are six different areas in brand prism: brand characteristics, personality, culture, customer relations, a reflection and brands own image. (Lindberg-Repo 2005, 73.)

The bottom idea of Kapferer's identity prism is that brand communicates. There are sender and recipient. Specific relationships and communication has build between them as a six facets of the identity prism. (See Figure 7.) Since brands speak about the product, services and satisfactions, communication theory is more than suitable to describe the prism. The communication theory goes: "One communicates, one builds representation of who speaks, of who is the addressee and what specific relationship the communication builds between them." (Kapferer 2012, 158.)

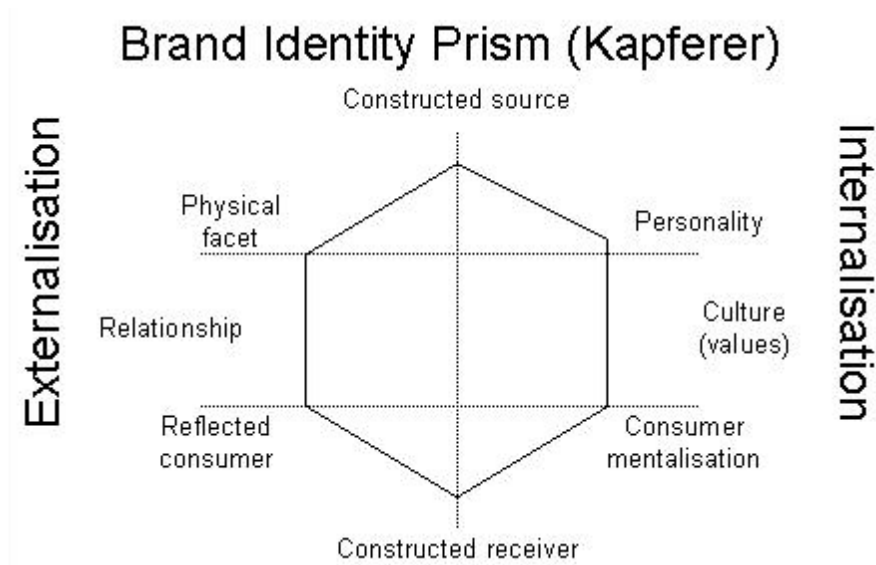


FIGURE 7. Brand Identity Prism by Jean-Noël Kapferer (See the original picture: Brand Identity prism, n.d.)

4.1 Externalisation side

Facets are divided in two dimensions. Externalisation side is the other dimension that contains facets physique, relationship and reflection. These facets are brands social aspects and they define brands external expressions. (Kapferer & Brand-Identity Prism model, n.d.)

1. Physique: A brand is physique. It tells about what the brand is. What values does it bring to the customer and what does the brand do. Physique contains physical specificities and qualities. The physique is combination of notable objective features or emerging ones. Brands physical aspect is important but alone it is not enough. Despite that the first step in developing brands is to define its physique. There might be problems with physical facet if the brands functional added value is weak. (Kapferer 2012, 153-154.)

2. Relationship: A brand is a relationship. This facet defines the methods that identify the brand. The relationship aspect is true in service sector brands. But brands can symbolize some relationship between people. The brand needs to

express the relationship in their operations. The relationship element "defines the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand" (Kapferer 2012, 162.) For example love or friendliness is that kind of mode. Between users and brands the trust is the most important mode when building a strong customer relationship and strong brand.

3. Reflection: A brand is a customer reflection. It is a portrayal of the ideal receiver. A brand tends to build a reflection or an image of the customer/user. Reflection and the target often get mixed up. This facet shows how the customer imagines her/himself while consuming the brand. This facet is important for the customer because it's obvious that consumers use the brands to build their own identity. (Kapferer 2012, 162.)

4.2 Internalisation side

Internalisation side incorporated the facets which arise from the brand itself. Internalisation side includes personality, culture and self-image.

1. Personality: A brand has a personality. Through communicating a brand builds up its character and brand can answer the question what kind of person would it be if it was human being? This section personalizes the brand. Brand personality is shown in the tone and style of advertising. Brand personality also fulfils the brand identity's psychological function. (Kapferer 2012, 159.)

2. Culture: A brand is a culture. In other words for which values the brand stands for? Strong brand means much more than just being personality or benefits that consumer get. Brand can be such as ideology. Significant brands are not culture driven. Brands often lead their cultures. Brands culture is the ideological glue that ties everything together and the relationship is usual a long-term. People use to gather around causes, ideas, ideals and values and that is what the brand culture is all about. This section talks about the brands culture and what are the values that the brand stands for. (Kapferer 2012, 159-160.)

3.Consumer mentalisation (self-image): A brand speaks to our self image. Self-image is the target's own internal mirror (feel + am +). Consumers have an attitude towards brands and between them develop a certain type of relationship. For example when consumer buys a Porsche, he/she wants to prove themselves that they have ability to buy that brand, that car. (Kapferer 2012, 162.)

Brand identity prism demonstrates these six facets and they define the identity of the brand. A brand can also change and develop within these facets. Facets are so called boundaries of the brand. Kapferer (2012) argues that brands have a gift of speech and that is the output of the identity prism. Brands exist by communicating. If we contemplate the identity prism, there can be seen that physique and personality helps define the sender. Reflection and self-image defines the recipient thus the recipient belongs to the brand identity. Facets relationship and culture is the bridge between sender and recipient. (mts. 163.)

In this study the prism is used to illustrate the perceived brand image of ice hockey. This theory was chosen to open the brand image of ice hockey more clearly. The brand of ice hockey is easier to understand as the aspects of identity prism were explained. Adjectives which interviewees were evaluated in the questionnaire presents the characters of the brand and they were placed in the different facets where their strength will surface. Results of this study refer to the adapted prism that has been created and introduced in result chapter.

5 RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

In this chapter the study process is explained in practice and the different research methods used in the study are introduced. At the end of the chapter the validity and reliability of the research are evaluated.

5.1 Constitution of the research

The data was collected at the specific fan area where the ice hockey fans were assembled before, before and during the game on a match day. The aim was to contact people who apparently were taking part in the ice hockey event and therefore were able to be considered as ice hockey consumers or ice hockey fans.

There were two different criteria of qualification for the interviewees; the respondents had to be at least 18 years of age and they had to accept the request to be interviewed freely and were capable of conducting a focused research interview. The sampling method of the research constitutes that every 10th person confronted is included in the data sample. If the person refuses to take part in the study the interviewer confronts the next available person in scene. The respondents has a right to stop the interview at any point as well as the interviewer is entitled to stop the interview if the respondent is not capable of proper responding.

5.2 Research methods

The study material for the thesis was gathered in IIHF World Championships in Helsinki in spring 2012. The interviews took place in the fan area called Hockey Garden, locating next to the ice hockey arena. Total of 311 interviews were done in three days. Interviewers formed two groups of people and focused on separate aspects of data collection. The other group was collecting data for quantitative research while the other group was collecting data for qualitative research.

Quantitative method and data collected

A research can be either quantitative or qualitative according to the investigated phenomenon. Quantitative research presumes knowing the investigated phenomenon in advance and knowing the factors that have an influence on the phenomenon. It is the prerequisite of a quantitative research to know the factors because if the measured phenomenon is unknown, measuring it is impossible. Quantitative research measures factors or variables, calculates the interaction between the relationships or different variables and calculates the quantities of occurrence of the variables. (Kananen 2011, 12.)

Quantitative interviews were collected using iPads. This methodology made it possible to monitor the collected data in real time and also analyze the collected material easier. The questionnaire was formed from three different sections. In the first part the respondents graded several attributes on a scale one to seven according to how they perceive ice hockey. (See appendix 2.) The second part covered the human values of the respondent. In the end, respondents were asked to write down the motives to participate in the event.

Qualitative method and data collected

If the investigated phenomenon is new and there are no previous research materials or theories about the phenomenon, the qualitative research method is used. It is used also creating new theories and hypothesis and creating an in-depth perception about the phenomenon. Qualitative research investigates the phenomenon, the factors behind the phenomenon and how the different factors affect each other. (Kananen 2011, 12-16.)

Qualitative interviews were collected using paper and a pencil. All the interviews included the same questionnaire as quantitative interviews but also an in-depth, verbal section. This section was executed by using Means-end-chain-model with Laddering technique. The duration of one qualitative interview varied between 15-30 minutes.

Means-End-Chain-model

The Means-end-chain and Laddering technique are often used together because they are based on the same idea to find out humans deep thoughts. Laddering is used for eliciting means and chains. (Means-End Chain Approach (MEC) and Laddering Interviews n.d.) The basic idea of Means-end-chain-method is to explore the connections between consumers' minds and one's values. In practise, the model operates through the construction of a simple associative network between attributes and consequences and values. Means-end-chain is linking a product (in this study: ice hockey) and the customer. (MECanalyst . The Means-end chain model n.d.)

The Laddering technique

The Laddering technique refers to an in-depth, one-on-one interviewing. It is used to develop understanding of how consumers translate the attributes into meaningful associations with respect to self. (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988.)

Laddering technique has a tailored interviewing format. In this study the product is ice hockey and attributes were asked in questionnaire, page 1. The Laddering technique is intended to figure out how the respondent link attributes to more abstract consequences and values. With Laddering it is easy to learn more when more detailed questions are asked. (MECanalyst - The laddering technique n.d.)

Laddering interview starts with eliciting the attributes that are significant to the interviewee. Respondent has options to choose from attributes which she/he has evaluated to be most related to ice hockey. Three most significant attributes were chosen. Laddering identifies the connections that aim to explain consumer choices through the links among attributes, functional consequences, psychosocial consequences and, ultimately, values. (MECanalyst . The laddering technique n.d.)

Figure 8 presents the example of the Laddering interview where the attribute is strong.

Interviewer: %Why ice hockey is strong?+
 Respondent: %Because players are strong+
 Interviewer: %Why it is important that players are strong?+
 Respondent: %It brings intensiveness+
 Interviewer: %Why intensiveness in ice hockey is important?+
 Respondent: %Atmosphere is strong and it show also in team spirit+
 Interviewer: %Why atmosphere and team spirit are important+
 Respondent: %They make the team to have a common goal. Having a common goal, for example, winning the victory is the most important thing in ice hockey+.

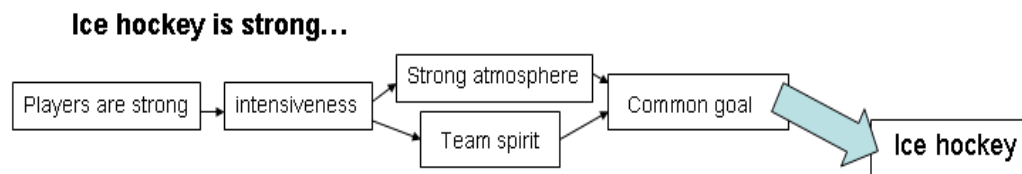


FIGURE 8. Example of a laddering interview

5.3 The interview process

First the respondents were asked a permission to be interviewed. They were either given an iPad or interviewed verbally. In the first page of the questionnaire the respondents had to rate adjectives on the scale 1-7, how well the adjectives related to ice hockey in their own opinion. (1=not related to ice hockey at all, 7=very much related to ice hockey). Also the nationality, gender and age of the respondents were asked. The second page of the questionnaire allowed creating the basic profile of ice hockey fan. There were different statements about human values and the respondents had to react to the statements according to %How much is this person like you?+At the end of the second page respondents were asked to write down the three main reasons/motives for them to visit the Hockey Garden -area. This was the quantitative data collection part of the study. In this thesis only the first page of the questionnaire was used.

The qualitative data collection started after the questionnaire form was filled. It continued with a Means-end chain survey. Respondents were asked to circle

three most important adjectives which were highly related to ice hockey. These three adjectives were written down in the sketch of the interview. These adjectives were presenting the brand elements. The interviewer asked about links and features: %why these adjectives were related to ice hockey?+These answers were the consequences and they were written down. That way the chain between the adjective and ice hockey was built.

5.4 The process basis

In the beginning there were 311 interviews that were in an electric form. That was the basis of quantitative study. The results of the quantitative study were analyzed. The survey and analysis software, Webropol, was used in analyzing the results. The most related and least related attributes were picked up from the results.

Next step was to go through all the Means-end-chain interviews which included at least one of these attributes. The adjectives for the identity prism were selected from the results of the research. Adjectives were mainly the ones which were most related to ice hockey. The Means-end-chain-interviews that contained these adjectives were calculated and observed. The idea was to get a deep analysis why these adjectives are related to ice hockey. Finally, identity prism of ice hockey was adapted from the results of this study.

5.5 Reliability and validity of the research

The aim of the research is to get as trustworthy and objective information as possible. Evaluating the trustworthiness of the research is done with the concepts of reliability and validity that both means trustworthy. Validity means researching and measuring the right things relative to the research problem and reliability means stability of research results. (Kananen 2011, 118.)

Scientific study must be objective. There are several variables in the research frame: investigated phenomenon or the target of the study, researcher and the

research methods. There are no objective observations because the constructs, methods, research frame and methodological knowing changes between researchers. Methods are chosen by the researcher and the chosen methods have always an influence on the results of the research. Prejudices, appreciations and beliefs and selections do have an influence on the data based study. Objectivity increases when becoming conscious of subjectivity. (Kananen 2008, 121.)

According to Kananen (2008, 124) validity cannot necessarily be applied to qualitative research because interpretations of research material varies between different researchers. However, the external validity and internal validity of the research can be observed. External validity means that the research results can be generalized. (Kananen 2008, 123-124.) This can be compared to the concept of transferability and more about the topic can be read below in the chapter Transferability. Internal validity means accuracy of interpretation and concepts. (Kananen 2008, 123.) The use of a foreign language (English) may have caused some minor errors to the research; some answers may have been misunderstood by the interviewers or some questions by the respondents. Every researcher has their own style of writing down the notes so it is possible that some of the interviews have been also misread.

Evaluation of trustworthiness of a qualitative study is done by observing four concepts of reliability: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. (Kananen 2008, 125-127.)

Credibility

The concept of credibility is based on the communication between respondents and researcher. Only the respondents are valid to evaluate the credibility of the research results and that is the reason why the researcher should always get approval for responses or research results from the respondents. (Kananen 2008, 126.) The credibility of the thesis was ensured during the interview sessions. The respondents were able to read and follow the interview questions and their own answers from a paper during the interviews. The respondents were advised to correct if something that the researcher wrote

down was not right according to their answers of if there was something that the respondent was not mentioned. The interviews were done face-to-face so the respondents were able to ask define questions during the interviews. Also at the end of the interview, all the answers were gone through with the respondents and they had a possibility to correct if some of their answers were still not right. All the researchers got very similar answers from the respondents which also approves the credibility of the study.

Transferability

The concept of transferability can be compared to the concept of extrapolation of a quantitative study. Transferability means that the research results should be able to generalize. By a detailed documentation, especially about the starting point for a study and hypotheses, transferability can be approved.

(Kananen 2008, 126.) The study of the thesis is transformed from the study of perceived brand profile of football in FIFA World Cup 2010. All the interviews were done using the same questionnaire form and with the same pattern; first the questionnaire was filled and after that the interview was done (Kuusmanen 2011, 45). The research has demonstrated in practice that this kind of study can be transformed in other sports, too. There is already a good documentation base about a sports brand profile study that has used a Means-end-chain -interview model executed by Laddering-technique. The study of the thesis operates as a good addition of documentation in case of transferring the study methods and research form in other sports. However, the study results can't be generalized when transferring the study structure in other sports . should be rather talked about generalization of study methods.

Dependability

Dependability means that if the research is renewed the results are still the same. Like transferability, dependability can be also approved with a detailed documentation. (Kananen 2008, 126.) Research situations and conditions always have an impact on the respondents and their responses. If the research were to be renewed, the research results wouldn't be absolutely the same because the results are bound to certain time period and place . in Hockey Gar-

den area, Helsinki, in the spring 2012. The dependability of the study can be demonstrated according to the findings and observations from FIFA World Cup 2010 (Kuosmanen 2011, 46).

Confirmability

A research is confirmed if it can be validated by other researchers. Different researchers can have different interpretations of the same research material. Confirmability means how unanimous are the other researchers on the research results . otherwise, do they end in the same results. (Kananen 2008, 127.)

6 THE RESULTS

In this chapter the results are introduced. Attributes, that the respondents stated most related to ice hockey, are introduced. The consequences behind these attributes are demonstrated. After that also the adjectives that least related to ice hockey are presented. After these findings, the identity prism of ice hockey is created and finally the brand images of ice hockey and football are demonstrated and compared to each other.

6.1 Ice Hockey brand characteristics

The strongest ice hockey related attributes were international, ambitious, exciting and strong. International was the most popular attribute that came out in 48,9 % of the forms. Ambitious stood out from 47,3 % of the questionnaires. The adjective exciting was found in 43,4 % and strong in 42,4 % of the answers during the research. Other major adjective rating can be seen below in the table 1. (See all the adjectives and their rank from the appendix 4.)

These findings and percentages were collected from the quantitative results . from the responses of questionnaires. The three most related attributes to ice hockey, international, ambitious and exciting, were chosen to introduce the qualitative results. The in-depth Laddering interviews that included these attributes were observed and counted. Consequences between attributes and ice hockey were investigated. The Laddering interviews are the qualitative part of this study.

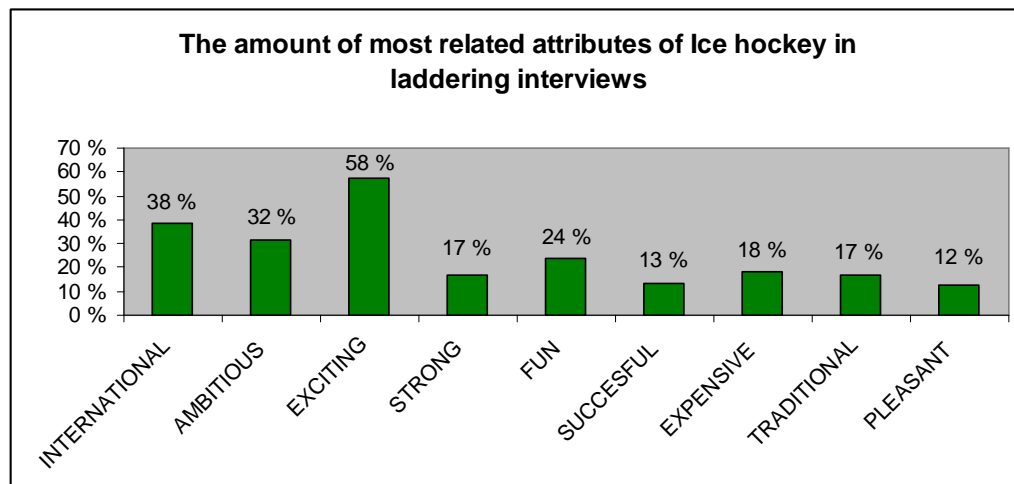
TABLE 1. The Ice Hockey brand characteristics with the most strong relations to ice hockey (rated as 7 on the scale of the questionnaire)

RANK	THE MOST STRONG RELATIONS TO ICE HOCKEY	QUANTITY	%
1th	International	152	48,9
2th	Ambitious	147	47,3
3th	Exciting	135	43,4
4th	Strong	132	42,4
5th	Fun	116	37,3
6th	Successful	105	33,8
7th	Expensive	104	33,4
8th	Traditional	102	32,8
9th	Pleasant	98	31,5
10th	Tempting	71	22,8

Table 2. presents the amounts of attributes in the Laddering interviews. In total, there were 130 laddering interviews. Respondents chose the three most important attributes that they were evaluated to be related to ice hockey. This is significant issue in the results because it shows which aspects are important to the target group - the participants of Ice hockey World Championships.

The consequences behind the most related attributes to ice hockey are introduced below. All of these three previous adjectives describe the perceived image of ice hockey.

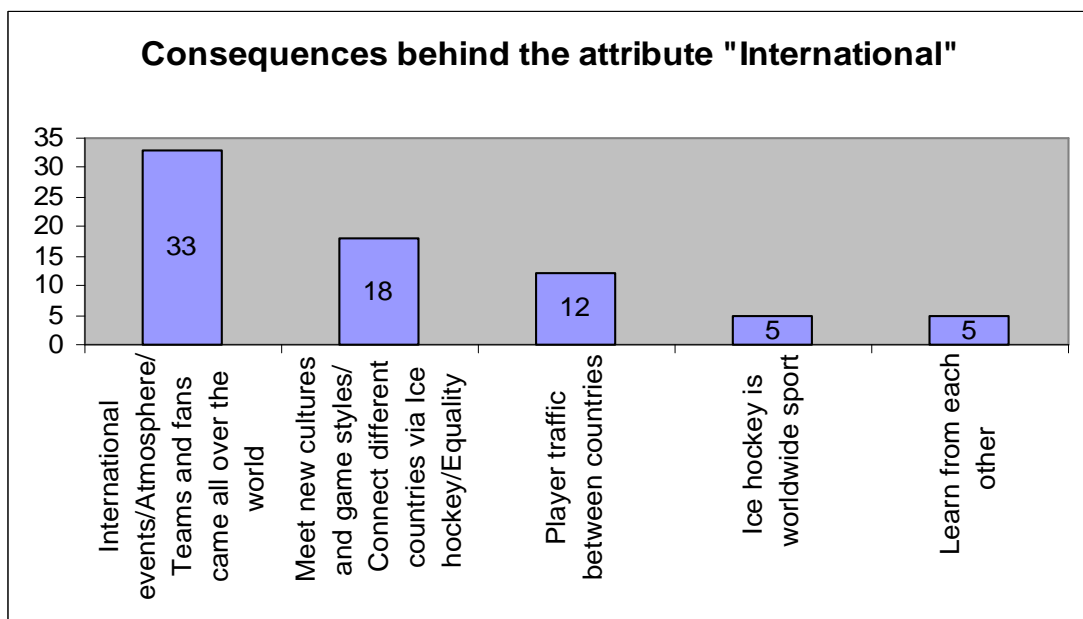
TABLE 2. The amount of most related attributes of ice hockey in Laddering interviews



International

The most related adjective to ice hockey was international. Almost 50% of interviewees rated international seventh on scale in the quantitative interview. Attribute **international** was found 38% of the Laddering interviews. There were nine consequences that revealed from the Laddering interviews. Some of them were linked together in the Table 3. because they represent same things. The most popular consequences from the attribute of international was **international events/atmosphere/teams and fans came all over the world**.

TABLE 3. Consequences behind the attribute "international"



Section that includes **Meet new cultures and styles**, **Connections between countries via Ice hockey** and **Equality** was found 18 from the interviews. Fans from different nationalism usual gathers together and cheer for playing teams when own national team is not playing. Ice hockey connects fans in World Championships event even they are from different parts of the world.

Internationalism in ice hockey means also players opportunity to go abroad to play ice hockey. Player traffic between countries was mentioned in 12 interviews. Players can go abroad almost everywhere. There are many professional leagues in the world where the best players play with big salaries; the most significant examples are NHL and KHL (Kontinental Hockey League). In addition, in many countries there are national leagues where players can go to play the game they love. Leagues might found also in exotic countries, where player do not have to be a professional player. The opportunity to learn from other players was mentioned five times. Players might have coached in different style in different countries. These kinds of events are the opportunity to benchmark other players and team.

Figure 9. shows the sample of the Means-end-chain interview that was picked up from the interviews.

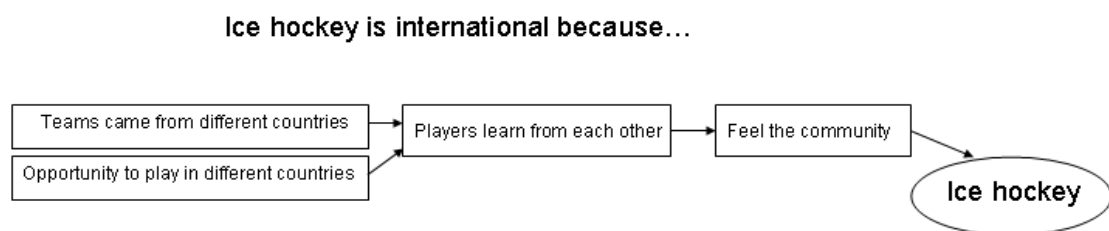
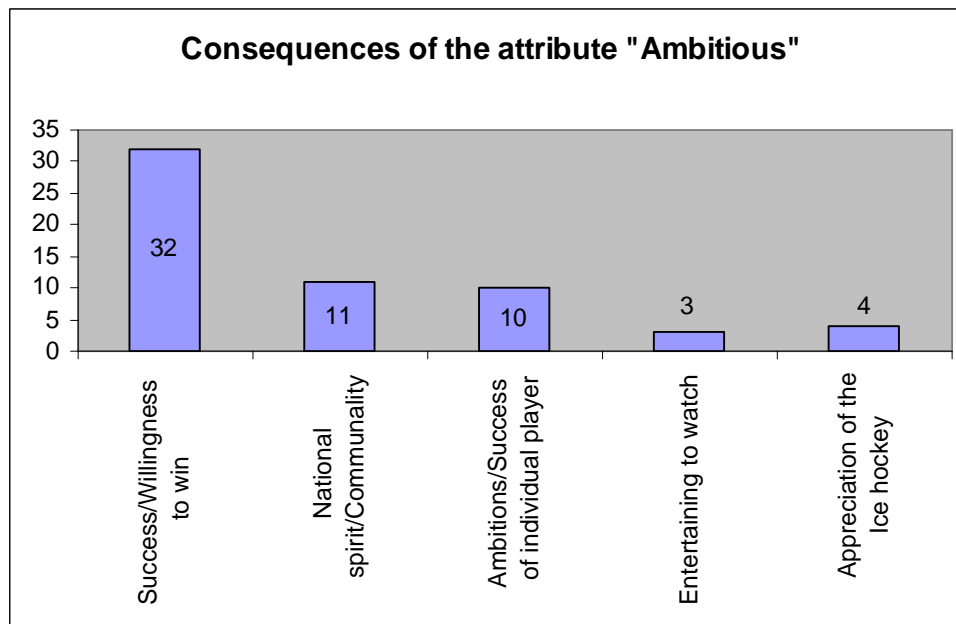


FIGURE 9. A sample of the attribute international

Ambitious

About 48 % of respondents perceived ice hockey to be ambitious. In the table of most related attributes to ice hockey, ambitious was second best in the results. 32% of the Laddering interviews included ambitious which was 41 times. The Laddering interviews revealed clearly that there were two main thoughts behind the ambitiousness, success and willingness. Together they were mentioned 32 times. (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4. Consequences of the attribute "Ambitious"



Ambitious present also the passion for the game and for the team. National spirit and communality was turned up 11 times. For example in Finland the people are very ambitious. %Ambitious+in ice hockey means also the success of individual player. This topic was mentioned 10 times from the interviews. Ambitiousness is said to give motivation to practise but other comment was that the ambitiousness might give a benefit or it might be offending. But without ambitious, it is difficult to succeed.

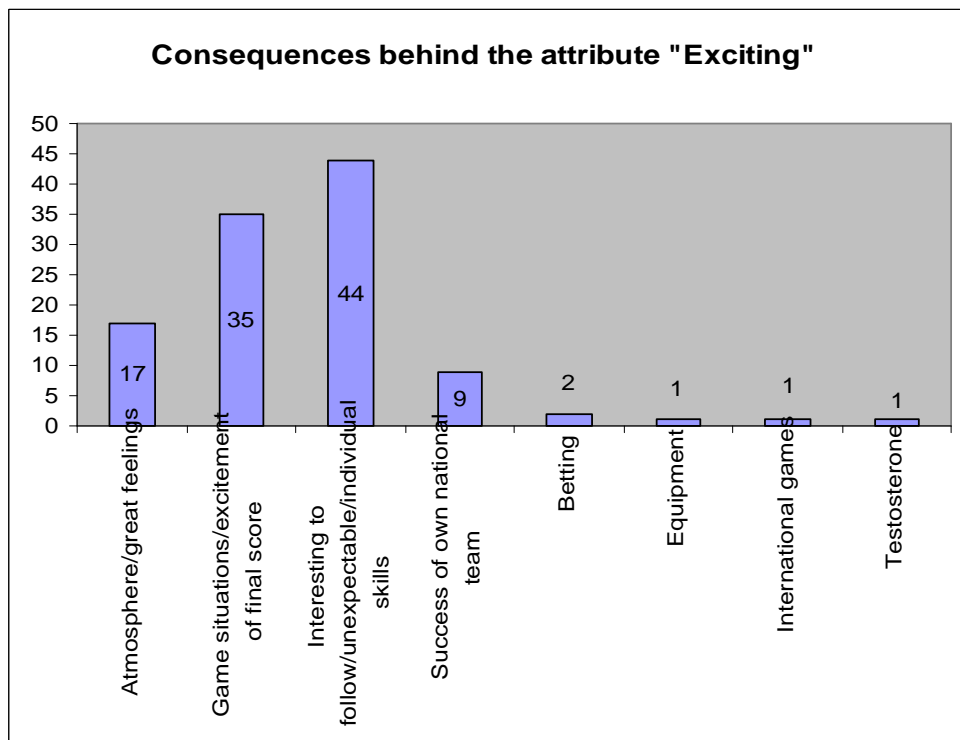
It is simple to say that the ambitiousness is part of whole sport because the entertainment arises from the feeling of ambitiousness. Games are very intensive and entertaining when players have the ambitiousness and they give 100% in the games. %Entertaining to watch+was mentioned three times.

Exciting

Ice hockey is a fast and physical sport in which situations vary all the time. Because of this ice hockey is entertaining to watch. Due to this, "exciting" was rated third high. 43,4% of interviewers where rated exciting as a 7 on scale. 58% of the laddering interviews included the attribute %exciting+

There were 12 different consequences behind the attribute. Subjects has categorized in the sections that means almost the same things. (See Table 5.) %Interesting to follow+%unexpected+and %individual skills+were mentioned altogether 44 times. Situations of the game and the excitement of the final score are the spices of the game and they were mentioned 35 times. %Betting+got two hits but it is possible that many people like to bet games and have an extra excitement to the game and it shows to the result of %excitement of the final score+(see appendix 3). The atmosphere and the great feelings that are possible to experience in ice hockey games mentioned 17 times. All the consequences can be seen in appendix 3.

TABLE 5. Consequences behind the attribute "exciting"



Adjectives least related to ice Hockey

The questionnaire included also adjectives which were completely opposite than the most related adjectives. Contrary adjectives were mixed in the ques-

tionnaire in a way that gives possibility to see if interviewee will not give reliable answers. For example if there has been an answer %even+in both %exciting+and %boring+.

Table 6. introduces the characteristics with the least strong relations to ice hockey. According to the respondents, attributes weak, routine and inefficient are not related to ice hockey.

TABLE 6. The Ice Hockey brand characteristics with the least strong relations to ice hockey (rated as 7 on the scale of the questionnaire)

RANK	THE LEAST STRONG RELATIONS TO ICE HOCKEY	QUANTITY	%
1th	Weak	3	1,0
2th	Routine	4	1,3
3th	Inefficient	4	1,3
4th	Formal	5	1,6
5th	Boring	5	1,6
6th	Cheap	7	2,3
7th	Adult	9	2,9
8th	Conservative	9	2,9
9th	Obedient	11	3,5
10th	Emphatic	13	4,2

6.2 Ice hockey brand identity prism

Ice hockey has a long tradition of sport. Based on the result of this study, the brand identity prism has been done for ice hockey. When creating brand identity, there is not one right model or way to built it. The Identity prism according to Jean-Noël Kapferer was chosen to represent the brand identity model. (See Figure 10.) The prism helps to identify the brand identity and it is important to understand how consumers, spectators and fans feel about ice hockey. Although the ice hockey is a sport, the appreciation and peoples opinions about ice hockey might change occasionally.

Brand identity prism of ice hockey

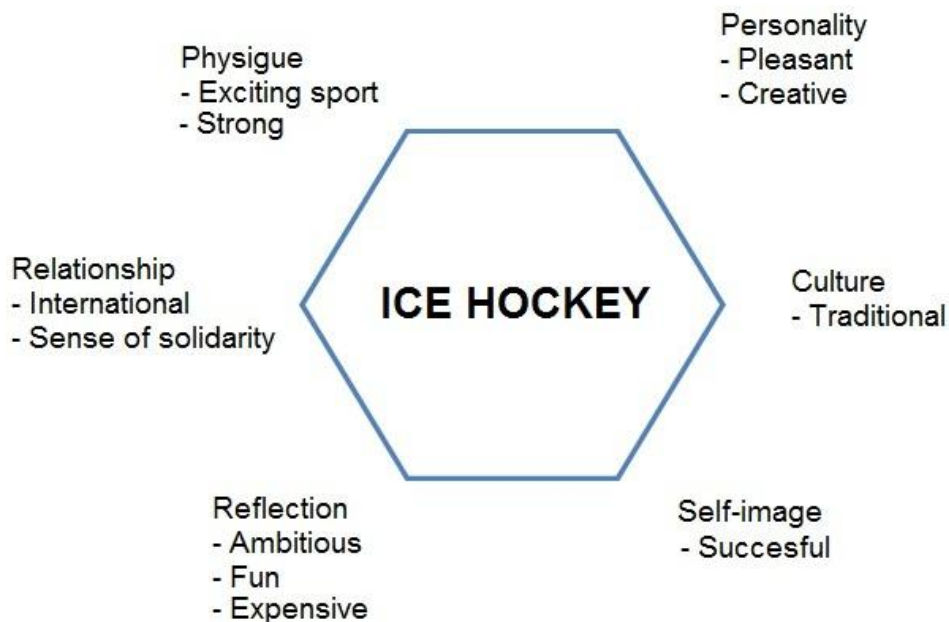


FIGURE 10. Brand Identity prism of ice Hockey

Physique

Physique is brands backbone and it speaks what brand really is. Ice hockey is perceived as an exciting and strong sport. The results reveal things which are behind these associations. Excitement is explained with fast and rapidly changes in the game. Also the atmosphere during the game and support of the favourite team makes the whole situation very exciting. It is said that %the brand is a flower, the physique is a stem.+ (Kapferer 2012, 158.) According to this metaphor %exciting+ is the spice of ice hockey. Attribute %strong+ is also physique. Behind the value of strong is the ideology of ice hockey being a hard game. Players need to be in a good physical condition and also strong mental capacity is required.

Personality

Personality shows what kind of person ice hockey would be if it was a person. In the study, pleasant, creative and expensive were the most suitable attributes to describe the personality of ice hockey. Creativeness shows the tactical side of ice hockey. For the players, ice hockey is about self-fulfilment in the games. These individuals skills play role in attribute of %efficient+.

Relationship

A brand can symbolize relationships between players and teams. This aspect of relationship is important at least service brand. (Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism model n.d.) Being a brand, ice hockey could be figured out as a service to the spectators. Internationalism was selected to present the relationship. Laddering survey revealed that internationalism in ice hockey meant a lot for the ice hockey fans. In particular, the IIHF World Championships fascinated, as fans came in the event to support their own national teams. The love for ice hockey connects fans of different countries and this made them feel the sense of solidarity. By implication, the atmosphere is high and the players will play better when spectators cheer them loud. In the World Championships it is possible to see a variety of tactics played.

Culture

The cultural facet is like a brand's ideology. It is said to be the most important facet of the brand identity and it is said to be the direct link between the organisation and the brand. (Kapferer 2012, 159.) The attribute %traditional+ was chosen in the culture section. %traditional+ is explained especially with ice hockey's long traditions in Finnish sport field and the position which ice hockey have in Finland. Although the Finnish fans were given these answers Ice hockey has a long traditions also in the countries it is popular.

Reflection

This section of reflection means especially the reflection of the consumer. In other words, this aspect presents what kind of person would be the traditional

user of the brand? The values *%ambitious+*, *%fun+* and *%expensive+* are the most suitable choices in reflection. Ice hockey player or spectator use to be funny and ambitious. Ambition can be explained by the passion for ice hockey, as well as the fact that people among ice hockey are very committed to the sport. Behind these things is willingness to success. *%fun+* arises from the fact that the game is entertaining. An interview revealed the point of view which considered that ice hockey as a game must be fun because it is so popular. Players have fun playing the game. They make nice goals and tricks which are fun to watch. *%expensive+* is not a positive attribute, but it belongs to reflection. Consumers perceive ice hockey to be expensive. Unfortunately, it is part of the image of ice hockey. Expensive was selected in 18% of Laddering interviews and the consequences behind expensive were that the ice hockey equipments are expensive and the ticket prices for the games are high.

Self-image

The self-image is like a target groups internal mirror. It will answer question: *%Who am I?+* the answer: *%I am successful+*. Successful as a value of "Success" is said to come from the fact that people are interested in the ice hockey. Many people admires ice hockey players. Also in Finland the success of Finnish national team increases the national self-esteem. The growth of the hobbyists is often the consequence from the success.

6.3 Comparison between ice hockey and football

According to this study, most related attributes to ice hockey are international, ambitious and exciting. In proportion, same study made from football (Kuosmanen, 2011) reveals that most related attributed to football are international, fun and exciting. Table 7. shows the most related adjectives in both sports.

Table 7. introduces the ten most related adjectives to ice hockey and football. All the circled adjectives below ice hockey are not strongly related to football,

and vice versa. The circled adjectives could say to be distinctive factors between the brand image of ice hockey and football.

TABLE 7. The most strong relations to ice hockey and football

RANK	ICE HOCKEY	%	FOOTBALL	%
1th	International	48,9	International	78,0
2th	Ambitious	47,3	Fun	61,3
3th	Exciting	43,4	Exciting	55,3
4th	Strong	42,4	Colourful	54,0
5th	Fun	37,3	Successful	47,5
6th	Successful	33,8	Youthful	45,8
7th	Expensive	33,4	Healthy	44,0
8th	Traditional	32,8	Wealthy	40,5
9th	Pleasant	31,5	Traditional	37,8
10th	Tempting	22,8	Ambitious	37,5

International is most related to both sports. In Laddering interviews the consequence %bringing people and countries together+ can be found in both studies. In this study it was mentioned 20 times (see appendix 3.) and in football research it was mentioned 53 times. Ice hockey and football connects people around the world and that aspect is also very important to people among these sports. According to football fans, football is a popular and big sport and its understood and played everywhere around the world. Football also builds bridges between people and works as a connecting language which provides understanding and learning from each other. (Kuosmanen 2011, 48-50.)

Learning from each other was also mentioned by the ice hockey fans and they also mentioned that ice hockey is international because of the player traffic between countries. According to these observations could be said that football fans in World Cup 2010 experience the internationalism more from the perspective of a spectator or a fan while ice hockey fans in World Championship 2012 experience it from the perspective of an ice hockey player or the sport.

Second adjective that was highly related in both studies was %exciting+. According to the study of ice hockey the game situations and interest to follow

exciting games was the most important thing for respondents when dealing with aspect of excitement. For football fans the %exciting+means emotions (mentioned 35 times) that varies in football event. In proportion the %atmosphere+in this study has mentioned in 14 times. Things that are mentioned to reveal the excitement in both sports are unexpected results and game situations. According to these observations exciting is related to football and ice hockey for the same reasons.

The consequences behind the attributes international and exciting were almost identical. According to ice hockey fans, the consequences behind attribute ambitious were success and willingness to win, national spirit and success of an individual player. Ambitious was rated relatively high according to football fans, too. It was the 10th most related attribute to football. According to football fans, the consequences behind attribute fun were meeting other people, social interaction and sharing experiences.

Table 8. introduced the least strong related adjectives to ice hockey and football. The findings are almost identical. Table 8. illustrated the fact that ice hockey and football are not weak, routine, inefficient and boring. Adjectives that stand for only other sport top ten are for ice hockey %cheap+and %emphatic+. In other words ice hockey is not cheap and emphatic. In proportion football is not honest and polite. The football and ice hockey fans were almost unanimous in what the both sports don't represent.

TABLE 8. The least strong relations to ice hockey and football

RANK	ICE HOCKEY	%	FOOTBALL	%
1th	Weak	1,0	Weak	2,0
2th	Routine	1,3	Boring	3,3
3th	Inefficient	1,3	Routine	3,7
4th	Formal	1,6	Inefficient	4,8
5th	Boring	1,6	Formal	6,6
6th	Cheap	2,3	Conservative	7,8
7th	Adult	2,9	Honest	9,1
8th	Conservative	2,9	Obedient	9,9
9th	Obedient	3,5	Polite	10,0
10th	Emphatic	4,2	Adult	11,2

To football it is representative that it brings people together and creates unity. This aspect has been mentioned behind every adjectives that are most related to football. Ice hockey does not have common comprehensive idea behind most related adjectives. Nonetheless, it can be said that the most typical thing for ice hockey is the exciting game situations and the desire to success seems to be remarkably important to the ice hockey.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The study of the thesis was executed in the IIHF World Championships Hockey Garden -area in Helsinki. The target group was the ice hockey fans who took part in the World Championships. The research method for the interviews was Means-end-chain-model executed by Laddering technique. In the study both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

The purpose of the thesis was to produce material for the event organizers, sponsors and academic community. The aim was also to understand the relationship between ice hockey and its fans and study the similarities and differences between brand images of ice hockey and football. There were two research questions to define the main objectives of the study:

1. What is the perceived brand image of ice hockey in the minds of ice hockey fans?
2. What are the differences and similarities between the brand image profiles of ice hockey and football in the minds of fans?

The brand identity of ice hockey was formed from the responses of the respondents. There was a sufficiency of responses considering the reliability and validity of the research. According to that, findings of the research can be said to be trustworthy. There were more Finnish respondents than foreign respondents but it certainly does not reduce the significance of the results. The next two chapters summarize the answers for the research questions.

7.1 Brand image of ice hockey

According to the theoretical framework, ice hockey is a very popular team sport that is played all over the world. Ice hockey has 1,5 million professional players and the International Ice Hockey Federation, IIHF, has as much as 72 official member countries. Ice hockey has changed a lot from the very beginning. The equipments and rules have developed a lot. According to the re-

search, there is considerable sense of solidarity among the players and the spectators or fans. Ice hockey is played and watched together. According to the ice hockey fans, the adjectives international, exciting and ambitious were the most related adjectives to ice hockey. The willingness of success has occurred several times during the interviews. All the players, teams and even fans are very ambitious.

The Identity prism according to Jean-Noël Kapferer was chosen to represent the brand identity model. The adaptation of Kapferer's identity prism was created from brilliant findings from the interviews of respondents. Ice hockey is a traditional game played by strong players. For fans the games are exciting and internationalism reasserts the sense of solidarity in ice hockey. The common reflection about ice hockey is that ice hockey is fun to play and ambitious is needed. The expensiveness is a negative aspect but that aspect is not changeable.

In 2012 IIHF World Championships one big topic in the media was the cost of the game tickets. For example, cheapest tickets for the Finland's matches paid 155 euros. (Rämänen 2013.) The high costs were also reflected in the results of the study, where the adjective "expensive" was rated the sixth highest of all the adjectives most related to ice hockey. Many Finnish ice hockey spectators have been waited for this change to take part in ice hockey World Championships, especially when Finland won the trophy a year before. But the ticket prices were too high for many spectators who would have like to participate. The discussion of ice hockey's expensiveness has been huge but still the fact is that many other sports reach the same level when comparing the costs.

In the future, content of the identity prism of ice hockey can change in pursuance of ice hockey's brand image changes. Groundbreaking changes might not come, but current views still has effect on the image of ice hockey.

7.2 Ice hockey versus football

When comparing the findings from IIHF Ice Hockey World Championships 2012 and football FIFA World Cup 2010, the perceptions of fans seem to have very much in common. For example excitement of the games and internationalism arise from the results. The important thing for both sports is that the sports bring people together. For football, the unity is said to be the main thing that connect adjectives.

The strongest relations to ice hockey and football

According to this study, most related attributes to ice hockey are international, ambitious and exciting. In proportion, same study made from football (Kuosmanen, 2011) reveals that the most related attributed to football are international, fun and exciting. This means that according to sport fans the both sports represent the same main things. Football is international because it brings people and countries together. Same thing was mentioned also in the ice hockey interviews. According to the respondents, both sports are popular and big. According to the observations made from the both studies could be said that football fans in World Cup 2010 experience the internationalism more from the perspective of a spectator or a fan while ice hockey fans in World Championship 2012 experience it from the perspective of an ice hockey player or the sport.

Second adjective that was highly related in both studies was %exciting+. According to this study the game situations and interest to follow exciting games was the most important thing for respondents when dealing with aspect of excitement. For football fans the %exciting+ means emotions (mentioned 35 times) that varies in football event. In proportion the %atmosphere+ in this study has mentioned in 14 times. Things that are mentioned to reveal the excitement in both sports are unexpected results and game situations. According to these observations exciting is related to football and ice hockey for the same reasons.

The least strong relations to ice hockey and football

The findings illustrates that ice hockey and football are not weak, routine, inefficient and boring. Adjectives that stand for only other sport top ten are for ice hockey %cheap+and %emphatic+. In other words ice hockey is not cheap and emphatic. In proportion football is not honest and polite. The football and ice hockey fans were almost unanimous in what the both sports don't represent.

To football it is representative that it brings people together and creates unity. This aspect has been mentioned behind every adjectives that are most related to football. Ice hockey does not have common comprehensive idea behind most related adjectives. Nonetheless, it can be said that the most typical thing for ice hockey is the exciting game situations and the desire to success seems to be remarkably important to the ice hockey.

7.3 Future research

This study is the first of its kind that has been made of ice hockey. Previously, the same study has been done considering to football and rally. The survey gave an excellent knowledge how fans in the World Championships of 2012 perceive ice hockey and what is the current brand image of the ice hockey. At least in Finland ice hockey has a strong foothold.

The results of the study will help people around ice hockey to understand the things that have an influence on sport consumers. What are the things that motivate people to come to watch games and fulfill the arenas? It is important to understand that there are lots of different kind sport consumers. Consumers are individuals and behave in different ways. Sport consumers have many different motivation factors to come to the ice hockey events. In the future, it is important to event organizer to have the knowledge of consumersq wants and needs.

In future studies the same interview form would be easy to use and it might be interesting to see how the brand image of ice hockey changes over time. The

brand image of the ice hockey can change over time because current things around ice hockey have an influence on the sport. For example, in the future, violence in the games might have an influence on public. It might be represented in decreased amount audience in the games or reduce of licensed players. In proportion, success in World Championships can increase the amount of viewers of ice hockey. Young players have idols in the national team and children wants to become ice hockey players as they grow up.

In the future, if the study was to be renewed, there are a few things that should be done in a different way. For example, the timing for interviews was not perfect. There were not as many people in the Hockey Garden -area as we expected beforehand. Perhaps a slightly later time would have been better relative to the amount of potential respondents. Furthermore, as an interview method, the laddering-interviews were very laborious to execute. Interviews were so long-lasting that the respondents focus did not stand in the interview whole time. Interviewers needed to encourage the respondents to get truthful answers. The method itself is good and gives valuable information about the relationship of causes and effects. For respondents it is more challenging and they could, for example, been encouraged by interviewers with some kind of reward.

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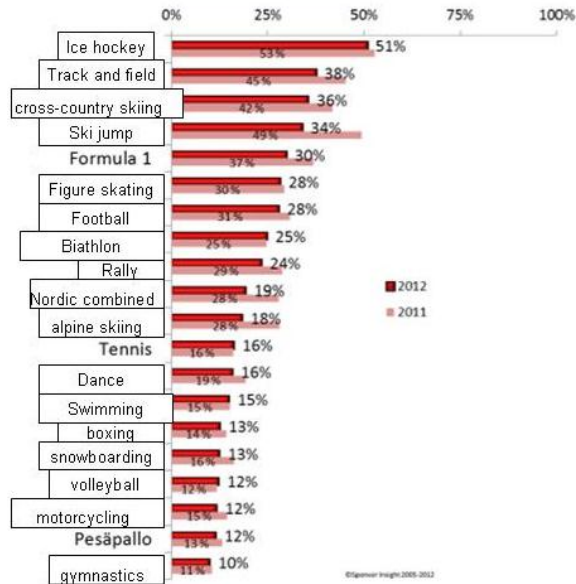
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Popular sports in Finland



Väestö 15+ 2012 N= 2113
2011 N= 2114

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Mistä urheilulajeista olet kiinnostunut?
"kiinnostuneella" tarkoitetaan esimerkiksi
että seuraat urheilutapahtumia paikan
päällä tai seuraat urheilua TV:stä, lehdistä
tai muista medioista.



Translation:
"Which sports are you interested in?
For example,
Do you participate in sport events?
or follow sport via TV,
Newspaper or other media."

Sports

2012 – Top 20

People

15+

Appendix 2. Ice hockey image profile questionnaire form

We are conducting a survey important for future of international sport events. The aim here is to collect data related to ice hockey brand and values behind ice hockey.

Your answers are very important to us! Please note that all the answers will be kept confidential and presented anonymously and scientifically. The survey is organized and conducted by Sport Business School Finland.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!



Nationality: _____

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

In your opinion, how strongly the following characteristics relate to ice hockey as a sport?
(1= No relation to ice hockey at all , 7= Strong relation to ice hockey)

	No relation to ice hockey at all				Strong relation to ice hockey		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Exciting							
Honest							
Broad-minded							
Nature-protective							
Free							
Creative							
Emphatic							
Innovative							
Pleasant							
Successful							
Ambitious							
Strong							
Wealthy							
Healthy							
Safe							
Polite							
Obedient							
Traditional							
Loyal							
Individual							
Trendy							
Fun							
Cheap							
International							
Efficient							
Changeable							
Tempting							
Fashionable							
Colourful							
Youthful							
Conservative							
Serious							
Expensive							
Inefficient							
Adult							
Weak							
Boring							
Routine							
Formal							

Appendix 3. Consequences behind different attributes in laddering interviews

INTRENATIONAL 50 interviews

Consequences that revealed from the laddering interviews:

Teams and fans all over the world	20 hits
Meet new cultures and game styles	13 hits
Player traffic between countries	12 hits
International events	11 hits
Ice hockey is worldwide sport	5 hits
Learn from each other	5 hits
Connect different countries via Ice hockey	3 hits
Equality	2 hits
Atmosphere	2 hits

AMBITIOUS 41 interviews

Consequences that revealed from the laddering interviews:

Willingness to win	18 hits
Success	14 hits
Communality	6 hits
National spirit	5 hits
Ambitions	5 hits
Success of individual player	5 hits
Appreciation of the Ice hockey	4 hits
Entertaining to watch	3 hits

EXCITING 75 interviews

Consequences that revealed from the laddering interviews:

Game situations	29 hits
Interesting to follow	25 hits
Atmosphere	14 hits
Unexpectedable	11 hits
Success of own national team	9 hits
Individual skills	8 hits
Excitement of final score	6 hits
Great feelings	3 hits
Betting	2 hits
Equipment	1 hits
International games	1 hit
Testosterone	1 hit

EXPENSIVE

in 24 interviews

Thoughts from the laddering interviews:

- expensive to exercise Ice hockey 16 hits
- Tickets are expensive 9 hits
- Disappointment
- When you don't have money to buy tickets
- Salaries of the players
- Adults don't have opportunity to pay children's hobby
- The joy disappears when all you can think is money
- Ice hockey has a reputation being expensive hobby

Appendix 4. The ice hockey brand characteristics

RATE	ATTRIBUTE	QUANTITY	%
1 th	International	152	48,9
2 th	Ambitious	147	47,3
3 th	Exciting	135	43,4
4 th	Strong	132	42,4
5 th	Fun	116	37,3
6 th	Successful	105	33,8
7 th	Expensive	104	33,4
8 th	Traditional	102	32,8
9 th	Pleasant	98	31,5
10 th	Tempting	71	22,8
11 th	Creative	63	20,3
12 th	Efficient	62	19,9
13 th	Colourful	59	19,0
14 th	Trendy	58	18,6
15 th	Loyal	55	17,7
16 th	Wealthy	52	16,7
17 th	Youthful	48	15,4
18 th	Healthy	37	11,9
19 th	Fashionable	37	11,9
20 th	Free	34	10,9
21 th	Honest	30	9,6
22 th	Innovative	30	9,6
23 th	Changeable	30	9,6
24 th	Individual	27	8,7
25 th	Serious	27	8,7
26 th	Safe	24	7,7
27 th	Polite	21	6,8
28 th	Broadminded	17	5,5
29 th	Natureprotective	16	5,1
30 th	Weak	13	4,2
31 th	Routine	11	3,5
32 th	Inefficient	9	2,9
33 th	Formal	9	2,9
34 th	Boring	7	2,3
35 th	Cheap	5	1,6
36 th	Adult	5	1,6
37 th	Conservative	4	1,3
38 th	Obedient	4	1,3
39 th	Emphatic	3	1,0