

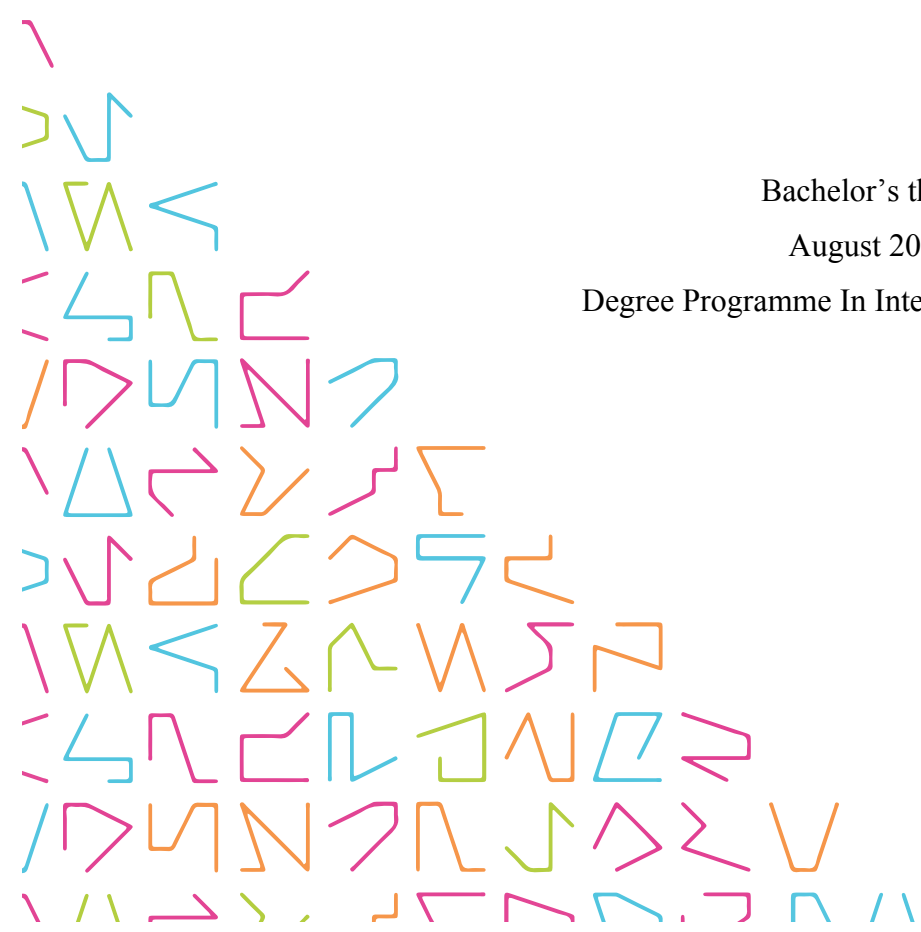
**BRAND RESEARCH: COMPARISON
BETWEEN THE BRAND IDENTITY
AND IMAGE OF R/H STUDIO**

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the thesis is to compare the way R/H Studio determines their own brand identity into the brand image that is being perceived by their customers. R/H Studio is a Finnish clothing label established in 2011 by its two designers Hanna Riiheläinen and Emilia Hernesniemi. Throughout their existence, the company has not yet conducted a research of any kind to survey whether the brand image they desire to portray is conceived the right way.

To determine the current state of R/H's brand image an online survey was conducted. The platform was chosen to get a good-sized sample of customers. With 1438 respondents, the sample size was remarkable enough to carry out a trustworthy comparison amongst the external brand image versus the internal identity. The brand identity definition was rounded up from personal employee interviews. Additionally, the purpose was to point out the similarities as well as differences between these two and thus come up with solutions to resolve likely misunderstandings.

The online survey was shared through author's and R/H Studio's own social media channels including Facebook and Instagram. In addition to this, the link was published on the author's blog and shared by other influencers close to the brand. Lastly the link was forwarded to key customers through R/H Studio's monthly newsletter. Distributing the survey through a mixture of various communication channels enabled the author to reach a diverse group of respondents and get a notable overview of the brand image perception. As the sample consisted of both regulars as well as people relatively new to the brand the outcome was not distorted by a too high level of intimacy with the brand.

The outcome was that image currently perceived by the customers was mostly intact and in line with the identity of R/H Studio. Thus, the findings suggest that the challenges the company currently faces are not brand image but rather product availability related.

Key words: brand, branding, brand image, brand identity, brand management, Finnish fashion

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the thesis is to research and evaluate the current state of R/H Studio's brand image. The research was done from a customer's point of view to clarify the current perception that they have, as the company itself has not yet officially defined the brand identity in any clear nor official form. Therefore, the thesis begun by defining R/H's brand identity and the values it is built upon based on qualitative employee interviews. The definition will then be compared to the conception of the customer that was found out through a quantitative online survey.

This case study was carried out in the light of the theoretical framework done preliminary to explain the common themes surrounding the subject of brands, branding, brand building, equity and its management. The importance of this frame is great as the foundation of branding needs to be understood to be able to comprehend the analysis and results presented in the end.

The findings of the strategically defined survey were analysed and broken down into themes and thereafter refined into graphs to ease the apprehension. The main areas of interest were: brand recognition, values and themes accessioned with the brand, positioning, customer engagement, buying behaviour and the comparison of answers between different age groups.

Finally, conclusions were drawn out of the replies to demonstrate the present state of the brand image. Based on the results, improvement propositions and noteworthy observations are presented for R/H Studio to enable them to unify the brand image with their identity. To be able to attain that goal, the company needs to alter their brand managerial actions accordingly.

2 THESIS PLAN

2.1 Thesis process

The commissioner of the thesis is a Finnish designer clothing brand called R/H Studio also known as R/H. The company has operated since the opening of their first boutique back in 2010. The brand was established by its two female designers Hanna Riiheläinen and Emilia Hernesniemi that met one another while studying fashion design in Aalto University in Helsinki. Since then, they have been known as the vanguards of the Finnish fashion scene and growing their business year by year alongside their playful, feminine and Nordic inspired clothing designs. (R/H Studio 2017.)

R/H Studio has a store situated in Punavuori Helsinki and the rest of the sales happen online, through various retailers situated both in Finland and abroad. In addition, pop-up shops are held regularly throughout Finland. (Halonen 2017.) Despite the broad actions the company staff is relatively small currently employing five people besides the designer duo.

At the moment R/H does not own any scientifically proven data of the way their customers perceive company's brand image and its values. R/H Studio describes themselves as a company that takes responsibility, values hard work and wants to have fun while doing it. The brand is all about being caring and easily relatable as its aim is to support both its employees as well as customers. (Halonen 2017.) From the employee's perspective, the identity concept is clear, but mirroring it back to the consumer in a desired manner is where the struggle lies. Finding out, whether these two perceptions differ from one another or not is what the research is all about.

The significance of the topic for the company is great. Knowing how the end customer perceives R/H's brand identity and what values are associated with it is vital for the overall success of the business. As the topic of brand definition has not been touched before, conducting a survey will produce highly beneficial and new light shedding information concerning the matter.

2.2 Thesis objective, purpose and research questions

The objective of the thesis is to evaluate the current state of R/H Studio's brand image and clarify how it's being perceived by their customers. The information is gathered to advance the brand managerial functions of the company. Ideally, there should not be a grand distinction between the company's identity based on their strategy and the image experienced externally by the consumers (Posner 2011, 128). This is the hypothesis where the topic of the thesis leads from.

As a young and relatively small sized company with a lot of work in their hands, R/H Studio has not previously been able to conduct a survey to look further survey the current state of their brand image. Currently, they do not possess definite information of the way their brand is perceived by consumers. According to R/H's production manager Sarianna Virtanen (2017), the decisions currently made are based on the experiences and trusted opinions of their employees, sales figures and the spontaneous feedback given by the customers themselves. To make sure the company takes full advantage out of their unique brand image the decisions concerning brand management should be fact based.

The brand has had a tense and loyal following from the start. Through innovative ways to collaborate with bloggers and heavy usage of social media as a marketing tool R/H's has been able to develop quickly and engage customers. The level of brand awareness has increased as a by-product of this growth, but as the company grows so does the customer group. The challenge of robust growth is to keep the brand restrained and well managed. To fix any of the possible misunderstandings concerning R/H's core values, the main research question of the thesis is "does the brand identity reflect the image perceived by the customer?".

2.3 Concepts and theory

Themes concerning the field of brand building and its management will work as a part of the theoretical framework for the upcoming thesis, as they are in the centre of the research question in hand. The frame consists of earlier studies and works made related to the subject brand building, customer relations and both of their management. Exploring these

themes before proceeding into the research itself is vital to understand the different aspects company's outer brand image and inner identity consist of. Also, realising how these two differ from one another is essential. To be able to give guidance and suggestions concerning these matters one must master the theory behind brand as each of them is a unique combination of both tangible as well as intangible elements (Posner 2011, 128).

The theory part of the thesis will be topped off with a view on the current state of the Finnish fashion industry and the definition of R/H Studio's brand identity. Sorting out the topical strong suits and soft spots of the domestic fashion and textile industry will give perception to the valuation of R/H Studio's current position in the market. The definition of the internal brand identity is based on qualitative interviews held with R/H staff during the thesis process.

Lastly, the topic of customer relationships and the aspects that create value for them is covered theoretically. Consumer behaviour and relationships are brought up due to their relevance to the topic of branding, as the bonding between the consumer and the brand is what branding fundamentally is all about (Posner 2011, 135).

2.4 Working methods and data

In the light of the previously conducted theoretical phase the thesis moves on to the research stage of the process. To further study the topic conducting a survey is necessary. A prudent way to define the current state of R/H Studio's brand image is through a research that was prepared and distributed together with the help of the company. The findings worked as a base for the image estimate and the comparison made with it and the brand identity.

The data is gathered through a quantitative online survey executed with Google Forms. In this case, it was the most efficient method for data collection as the research targeted R/H's domestic clientele nation-wide. Other benefits of using an online-based survey platform is its inexpensiveness and relatively higher response rates (Hayes 2008, 26). Also, taking under consideration the usual distribution channels used by the brand and the supposed lifestyle R/H's customers, conducting the survey online is the most efficient way.

The choice quantitative research method over qualitative was made based on the hypothesis that the amount replies is going to be relatively large due to the intense following that R/H Studio has. In case of a high level of participation, the amount of observations enables a detailed analysis to be made, despite the quantitative nature of the questions (Franses & Paap 2001, 1). Regardless of the relatively positive presumption the survey is crafted into a form that makes the responding as effortless as possible to further encourage participation.

The survey is sent out through R/H Studio's newsletter and various social media channels. In addition to this, the link to the survey will be shared on social media by the researcher and multiple bloggers that have agreed to collaborate in the making of the thesis. The researcher is going to be able to present trustable findings, as the sample will not be solely formed from R/H's key customers but a broader group of people aware of the brand. To get the big picture of how the brand image is perceived nation-wide, it is crucial to get an extensive number of respondents from different parts of the country to add diversity.

In addition, members of the R/H staff are interviewed qualitatively to get insight to R/H's internal identity perception that is later compared with the survey results that represent the clientele's perception.

The questions presented in the inquiry will be composed to target the area of brand image and value association to get a clear evaluation of R/H's brand's current state. The aim is to dig deeper into the subject of their brand by using a diligently crafted set of both open- and closed-end questions. A set of ready multiple-choice questions is used to make the replying process effortless and less time consuming. By using open-ended questions in addition to closed ones the researcher is preventing the omitting of possible not-listed options that would distort the result (Lavrakas 2008, 547). Also, by using open questions on the side, at least some valuable data for the analysis is assured in case there is a poorer bulk of respondents. Before publishing the survey is tested by a small sample of respondents to assure that the content is comprehended in the way intended.

After the data collection, the answers are analysed and converted into a set of conclusions displayed in the form of graphs and tabulations to illustrate the findings profoundly. Observations are made to certify where R/H's image stands in their customer's eyes in com-

parison to the identity they have built from the inside. Depending on the outcome, proposals are made to refine R/H Studio's brand image management. As the brand continues to grow the significance of brand management increases. Therefore, the newly found results provide valuable information that can be used in the further R/H's brand development.

3 CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Brands & branding

In today's highly competitive business environment where companies are rivalling over the same customers having a strong brand that sticks out is essential. In marketing the most effective way to differentiate a product or a service from the rest is by creating a distinctive brand around it. A brand has a set visual elements it can be recognised by such as: a name, term, sign, symbol, slogan, design, packaging or a combination of them (Batey 2016, chapter 1). Besides these mostly tangible matters brands are also unique combinations of intangible features that include values and associations people have concerning them (Keller & Lehmann 2006, 743).

The usage of brands as a marketing tool for companies has increased a lot throughout the years. Brands are well defined bundles of selected messages related to a company that intend to create additional value for the customer. The experienced worth of a brand goes beyond the physical attributes of a product. (Kotler & Amstrong, 2016, 263.) Each brand thrives to be original and ends up being so due to the mix meanings and symbols associated with it. These days' consumers act strongly based on meaning and just like companies use brands to build up their identities and to be distinguished (Batey 2016, chapter 1).

According to Posner a brand exists in the mind of a customer and is mostly an intangible element (2011, 128). A brand is a result of efforts and messages sent out by marketers which makes them abstract and often hard to measure. The way a brand is perceived can vary amongst different people. The impression is composed by the encounters we have had with it. Depending on encounters frequency and kind, consumers make up their minds concerning brand which leads to a certain level of commitment or rejection. That is how a brand image is made. Whether that image ends up being positive or negative can only be affected by the company to a certain extent. (Posner 2011, 128.) An ideal situation for a brand is to be the first that comes to consumers' minds when they confront a need in their field of specialty.

The process of creating a brand is called branding. It is a way to increase the value of a product or service and make it the one a consumer chooses amongst all the competing complementary options (Blythe 2017, 135). Branding emphasizes the differences between brands that operate within the same product category. The points of difference need to be distinct on a higher level beyond the features of the product or service itself. (Posner 2011, 128.)

These distinctions come from added value that can thrive from the brand name, its design, packaging or other matters that the customer prices (Riezebos 1994, 39). The aim is to make a brand name evoke certain feelings and create associations to desired values in the mind of the customer. A well-managed brand triggers positive emotions and trust within a consumer. Branding can ease the customers purchasing process as a certain reputation that works as a guarantee for a specific level of quality and price (Keller & Lehmann, 2006, 740). Using branding as a differentiation method in long-term leads to higher pricing which increases the profit margin. The rise in company's lucrativeness again contributes to the fabrication of an all-around strong brand. (Blythe 2017, 136.)

3.2 Brand identity

The relevance of brand identity as a marketing tool has gained recognition world-wide (Kapferer 2013, 149). Big corporations of today are slowly comprehending that they are brands with a reputation that needs to be managed properly (Moingeon & Soenen 2002, 175). Brand identity is a result of several managerial actions that determines its core values (Yastioglu 2014, 3). These values are the key words that capture the essential idea of a brand. They describe what is unique about the company and what it wants to be known for.

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002, 43) a brand identity can be defined as a set of connections linked to the company that strategists seek to make and sustain. The qualities of the identity need to be chosen very carefully so that they truly reflect the self-image of the brand and highlight the things that make it one of a kind. Ideally the identity is long-lasting in nature that can be ensured by making it distinct what the brand represents value-wise (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009, 12). The parts of the identity that are to be preserved for the sake of authenticity need to be separated from the elements that

are to be modified to keep the brand current and developed if needed (Hampf 2011, 13). This separation contributes to the prolonged success of the brand. To engage with the customer and avoid being perceived as hollow, brands must have deeper qualities and beliefs attached to them. These characteristics enable the consumer to affiliate the brand and use it to reinforce their own identities. (Kapferer 2012, 159.) The identity that is designed specifies the vision and culture of the brand. Both are strongly linked to brand's positioning and personality (De Chernatony 1999, 166).

Comparing whether the brand identity that is conceived by the internal staff corresponds with the external views of the customer is something that also needs supervising. It is highly important particularly in the case of a brand that relies on a lot of emotion. (Hampf 2011, 9.) As the connection between a brand and customer identity is great, people are more probable to connect with brands that shares their ideals.

3.2.1 R/H Studio's brand identity & values

When defining the brand identity of R/H Studio, it can be clearly seen that it has been based on a sense of community, strong women, caring, being original and keeping things simple on the visual side at the same time (Halonen 2017). Currently employing seven people (picture 2.) R/H Studio is a relatively small sized company with a strong value-based identity.



PICTURE 2. R/H Studio's staff. Left to right: Salla, Hanna, Sarianna, Emilia, Neilikka and Amanda. Team member Annika is missing. (R/H Studio 2017.)

The best known visual elements that are associated with the brand are its logo and classic prints both made timeless by their design. The black and white logo stating the letter R and H thrives from the surnames of the two designers Riiheläinen and Hernesniemi. (R/H Studio 2017.) It is simple, catchy and has a story behind it. It has been a physical element used throughout the existence of the brand and displayed on the neck label that is attached to each sold piece.

Whereas from the garment design point of view it's the Mickey and Magic -prints that play the biggest part in R/H's brand self-definition. The minimalistic and wavy prints are original designs that are kept in the collections deliberately as they symbolize the core of R/H's visual identity (Virtanen 2017). The most common form the Magic -print is used in is in a sweater such as displayed in picture 3 below.



PICTURE 3. Classic Magic-print displayed in a sweater (R/H Studio 2017).

According to R/H's sales manager Amanda Halonen (2017), the characteristics of the brand have a lot to do with the feeling of community and sense of identifying yourself with the company. R/H emphasises that their products are made for real women by women which builds a sense of genuineness and trust (R/H Studio 2017). The service they provide for their customers is sincere and individual. The brand is all about positivity, caring, sharing, setting and reaching goals together. The employees work hard as a team but have fun while doing it. That is something they want to emphasize and channel

outwards to the customers as a part of their marketing. Showcasing that fashion can be fun is essential. (Halonen 2017.)

Since the early days R/H has set out to be an international fashion brand, even though the main market area currently is domestic (Halonen 2017). R/H is continuously gaining growth nationally through trade show events that they attend in Copenhagen and Paris. Also, growing their international retailer network is vital. Despite the eagerness to go global the brand states being Nordic by spirit and heart (R/H Studio 2017).

Besides these intangible elements and values, in the core of everything that R/H does is the product. That is the mind-set from which the designers Hanna and Emilia started the company from. Their goal is to be a brand that customers feel like supporting tells a lot about they build their relationships with their customers and manage the brand forward. Serving all women instead of a narrow niche is what R/H is all about. (Halonen 2017.) The cuts and design are seen ad feminine and playful at the same time merged together with bold captivating prints characteristic to the brand. Highlighting their ethical values in material and production sourcing is essential as from early the aspiration has been to bring fashion production closer. (R/H Studio 2017.)

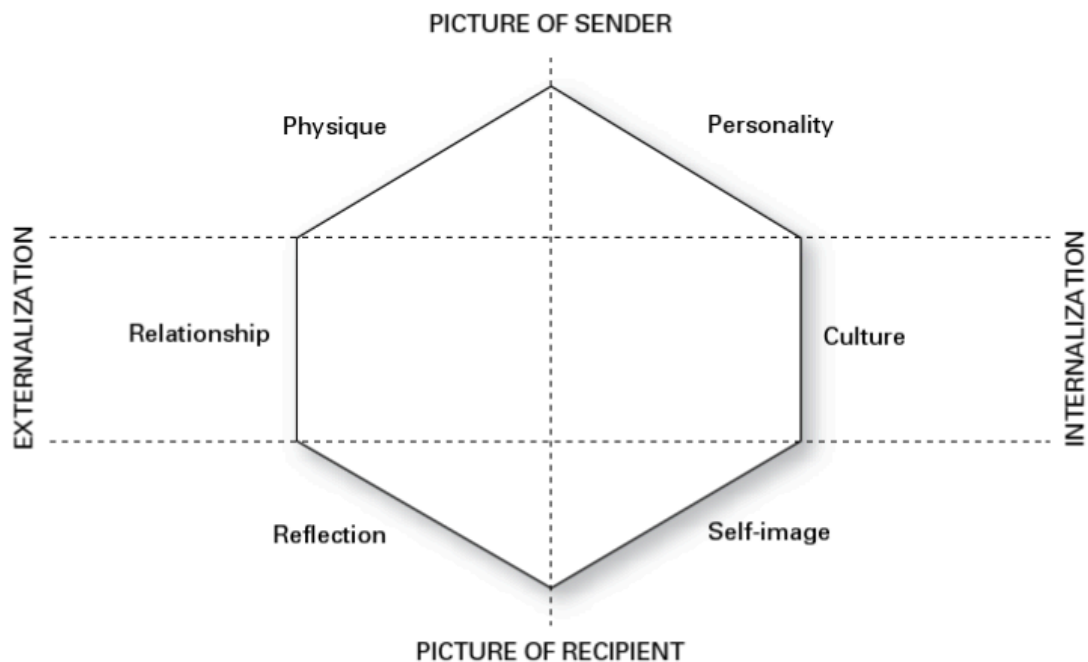
3.2.2 Kapferer's brand identity prism

A good way to thoroughly study the different elements of a brand is exploiting Kapferer's brand identity prism. The prism is tool that helps to assess the weak points and strengths of a company through its six different facets that are displayed below in picture 1. Those facets are:

1. Physique - Brands physical qualities such as looks and function that define what the product is concretely.
2. Personality – Brands identity characteristics that are built up through time. Gives the customer a possibility to connect with the brand.
3. Culture – The ideology behind the brand that makes it explicit identity-wise.
4. Relationship – The way for the brand to handle and build relationships between the company and its customers.
5. Reflection – The image the of the customers perceived over time.

6. Self-image – The inner relationship a customer has with a brand.

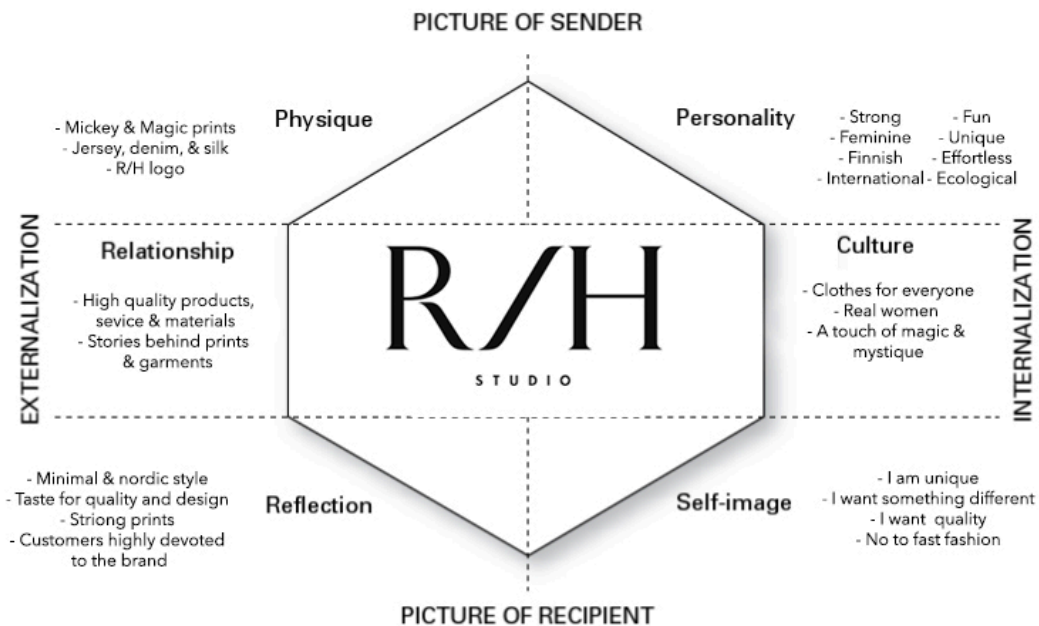
(Kapferer 2012,158–162)



PICTURE 1. Kapferer's brand identity prism (Kapferer 2012, 158).

The prism demonstrates that all the different parts that a brand consists of are related to one another and only when working together can it be successful. To grow and thrive the brand must communicate through these elements and not stay obsolete (Kapferer 2012, 163).

Physique, relationships and reflections are facets that encompass the social external image of the company whereas personality, culture and self-image form the internal perception of the brand itself (Yastioglu 2014, 5). Kapferer's prism also compares the two different perceptions the company and the customer have regarding the brand. The prism also emphasizes their differences. R/H Studio's brand facets can be studied from the filled-out prism below.



PICTURE 4. Kapferer's brand identity prism of R/H Studio (R/H Studio 2017).

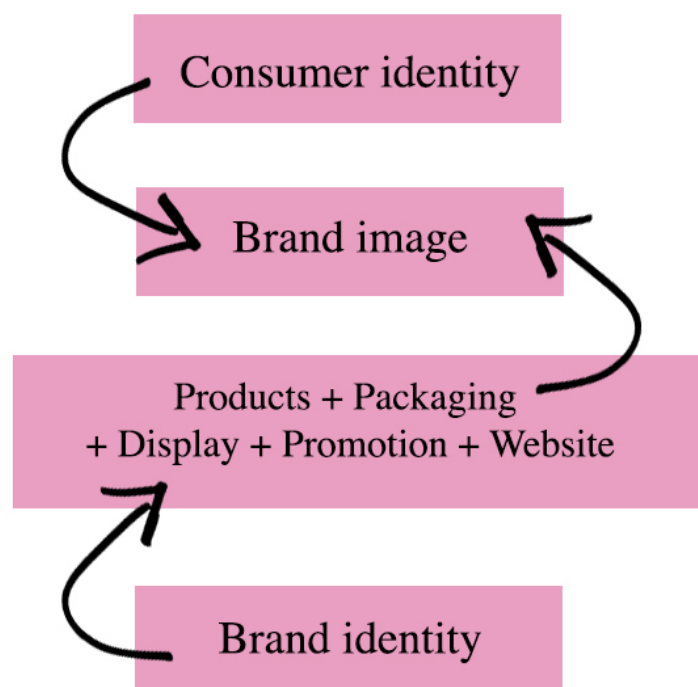
3.3 Brand image

Brand image is the customer's perception of the brand identity and positioning that have been defined by the company itself. Whereas the identity of a brand is created by the company the image is born in the minds of the customer (Zarantonello & Pauwels-De-lassu, 2015, 1.1). It is born out of a mixture of experiences, beliefs, attitudes, values and conceptions people have concerning brand. Companies work continuously towards making the image consumers have in their heads of the company a positive one (Heding al. 2008, 13). Yet in the end, the company does not have power over what the final image ends up being.

Brand image is something that is builds up over time. Each individual interaction with the brand strengthen the image perception the customer has. The type of these interactions can vary from close encounters to plain word to mouth and are either negative or positive in kind (Kapferer 2012, 22). Taking care of a brand image and not letting it slip out of hand can be challenging. There are enormous risks involved if the course of a brand image grows too far apart from the identity built from within. The power over the course that

the brand is heading should always be steered by the company and not the masses (Posner 2011, 137).

The real power of a brand is in the strong relationships built between them and their customers (picture 5). The perception of a brand that someone has depends a lot on who the receiver is. A loyal brand-user and a non-user could have formed totally opposite views cornering a certain brand. The customer with actual hands-on experience bases their opinion on the product or service that is received whereas a someone new to the brand can solely rely on others opinions and advertising (Posner 2011, 136).



PICTURE 5. The relationship between customer identity, brand identity and image (Posner 2011, 137).

Consumers are constantly on the look for brands that match their personality and other ideals and visuals. Some of the tools that a company can use to appeal to the consumer are logos, advertising, displays, packaging, a company website and other alternative ways (Posner 2011, 137). By using these messages that are originating from the choices made by the management concerning brand identity a solid brand image is born. The more unique and relatable these messages are, more incomparable the image of the brand is.

The goal for any company would be to be able to differentiate themselves from the competition based on their image (Kapferer 2012, 40).

3.4 Brand positioning

Whereas brand image comprehends the overall understanding of the brand its positioning emphasizes on the things that dissociate it from its competitors (Silveira, Lages & Simoes. 2010, 2). Despite the differing perspective, brand positioning stems from brand identity with several similarities in its qualities.

According to Keller, positioning's mission is to take over a distinct place value-wise in the mind of the customer as well as the market place in hand (2008, 38). It is said that a consumer can only receive and internalize commercial messages to a certain extent. This in mind, marketers are in a continuous battle for the space in their head. This combat is fought with the means of positioning. (Heding alt. 2009, 14.)

Positioning is about maximising the competitive advantages of the brand. This aim can be achieved through first drawing up the ideal version of the brand. After a set of correct managerial actions can be taken so that the brand can move forward towards the desired identity. The points-of-difference will work as the source of competitive advantage against the other substitutional operators in the market. The aim of positioning is to give the customers reasons why to buy a specific brand instead of another. (Keller 2008, 68.)

3.5 Brand management & equity

Creating a brand has become the single most significant intangible asset a company possesses. Despite of the large amount of power that a brand can have it need to be managed cautiously. (Kotler, Wong, Saunders & Armstrong 2005, 555.) Organizations no matter the field of business they are in have started to make branding and brand management a priority within the company. Brand building's meaning on the managerial side has increased because of studies made concerning the subject. As the awareness of the great positive impacts a well-managed brand can have on a business, more focus and resources are put into the building process. (Keller & Lehmann 2006, 754.)

In the heart of brand management is the continuous goal of remedying the image consumers have. The goal is to pursue an intense following that needs to be cherished when achieved as the value of a loyal customer is high. Amending and keeping up these precious relationships is one of the main aims of brand management (Kotler al. 2005, 558). Furthermore, a brand with a good reputation is more likely to be able to charge more for their products and services. This is a concrete example of how concrete value gets tied up into brand names appears in the form of increased equity. Often price is a signal of quality even though it is never a sole guarantee. The link between brand equity and price has been touched in theoretical literature but an insufficient amount of information concerning the link between the two has been established. (Swaif, Erdem, Louviere & Dubelaar, 1993, 24-25.)

When brand management is done strategically a set of marketing activities is designed to measure, build and manage the equity of the brand (Keller 2013, 58). The goal for the management is to stir and develop the brand and its reputation in the meant direction. According to Keller (2013), this process can be put into four main steps that are introduced in the picture below.



PICTURE 6. Strategic brand management process (Keller 2013, 59).

The process of managing a brand is never complete as the operations related to it evolve over time. Despite the inevitable change a brand always needs to sustain its core DNA. These processes include plans and actions concerning the positioning, value creation process, brand elements and performance monitoring as well as sustaining the brand equity. (Keller 2013, 58-60.)

To ensure that the managerial operations have the wanted affect and the company image performs as planned the equity of the brand needs to be measured. Brand equity stands for the value of the company's brand. It is a highly intangible indicator thus hard to measure accurately. The concept of brand equity came from businesses that wanted to create a meter that would justify the investments they make on branding. The return of investment and true benefits had to be proven in long-term before brand value became one of the biggest marketing tools of today (Hampf 2011, 6). Later, it is known that an increase in brand equity overall benefits the company in many areas such as brand loyalty and preference that are both strongly linked to growth.

Coming up with different ways to give true value estimates for brand names is something companies are constantly pondering over (Kotler al. 2009, 556). According to Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre, equity can be measured in two ways that differ by the perception of what brand capital consists of (2009, 11). The first definition is highly subjective and indicates that the equity consists of the consumers' perception of the company. The equity is the added value that the customer experiences as a by-product product or service in hand (2009, 11). The value transpires in the form of brand name awareness, perceived level of quality, brand loyalty and the associations made with the brand (Kotler al. 2009, 556).

The second understanding embodies the financial composition of brand equity. Its aim is to determine the brands worth money-wise to enable that brands value can be considered in financial statements (Heding al. 2009, 11). The reason behind why companies prefer to use the financial market value as a meter for brand equity is that it reflects and objectively predicts the company's future from a financial point of view (Hampf 2011, 7).

3.6 Consumer relationships & branding

As branding is essentially a marketing tool it has everything to do with creating and maintaining customer relationships. Studies have shown that consumers are actively engaging and recognising having relationships with brands. (Heding al. 2009, 152.) The way customer relationships became close in theory to branding happened in the 21st century as the concept of relational branding was first introduced (Hampf 2011, 12). Therefore, the theory of brand relationships is based on the idea that both sides take part to the value creation process called a ‘dyadic’ brand–consumer relationship portrayed below. In this process the brand value creation happens in cooperation between the two parties in an ongoing motion that develops through time. (Heding al. 2011, 154.)



PICTURE 6. ‘Dyadic’ brand-consumer relationship (Heding al. 2011, 154).

According to Grönroos, marketing is a process where relationships are built amongst customers and stakeholders in a way that profit from the transaction is gained on both sides (1997, 407). The mutual goals of benefitting from the interaction is essential for successful marketing. In a case where relationships are made amongst customers and brands the object on the other end constructs of symbols, attitudes, values and other of immaterial parts that are associated with the brand. (Hampf 2011, 8).

The type of relation between a brand and a customer is always individual and unique, as each person builds up the connection with the brand in their head. Through an individual thought process customers start to attach emotions onto brands that again leads to precious brand loyalty. (Hampf 2011, 8-9.)

Long lasting and lucrative relationships are built on trust, so promises made need to be kept to maintain the existing connections. The relationships tied within a market area encom-

pass a broad number of different type of relations varying from the ones made with distributors, suppliers and partners to the ones tied with the customers themselves (Grönroos 1999, 328). The theory of brand relationships is closely linked with brand loyalty, as a successful relationship leads to a will of staying true to someone. In the case of a relationship tied between a customer and a company this can be seen in the form of continuously favouring a specific brand over other competing ones. The buying decisions are made by the picking the brand that the consumer relates most with. (Heding al. 2011, 152-153.)

3.7 Marketing environment: Finnish fashion industry

Today, in the 20th century the Finnish fashion and textile industry is more global than ever. The emphasis has shifted towards having a high level of know-how in management, product development, design and other fields of expertise as the fabric and clothing production is slowly moving towards the East.

The biggest strong suit of the domestic market today is the ability offer flexible delivery times and terms especially with smaller orders. The reasons behind Finnish fashion brands assets can be seen from statistics. Most Finnish brands are small and middle sized with over 90% of them employing less than ten people. Consequently, the reaction time is short and flow of information rapid. (Tekstiiliteollisuuseumo 2006, 3.)

On the other hand, it can be clearly seen that currently the market is being dominated by a handful of big players. 9% of companies create almost 60% of the total revenue within the Finnish fashion industry (Suomen tekstiili & muoti 2017). So, despite the resilience that the smaller operators bring to the market the money is made by the big brands.

The biggest obstacles standing in the way of Finnish fashion and design lie in the field of funding and the fleeing of future talents. There is a common movement where the people in the industry with most ability tend to move abroad in the chase of better career opportunities. It has been proven that the market for Finnish everyday fashion is relatively low and producing high fashion is not profitable either (Tohijärvi 2015, 7). Despite the rather low demand, the way Finns consume fashion these days is becoming more diverse. This

means that people are buying from domestic designers and smaller labels in addition to the more general global clothing chains (Suomen tekstiili & muoti 2017).

As the current strengths in the Finnish market lie in both extreme ends of the value chain, the future of domestic fashion is depended on whether these brands can take advantage out of the global megatrends steering the overall industry (Tahvanainen & Pajarinen 2014, 114). The comparison amongst neighbouring countries avails that the lack of interest towards the Finnish fashion may be due to poor selling and marketing actions. This is one of the main reasons why Finland remains still today highly dependent on international trade (Tohijärvi 201, 7).

4 SURVEY

4.1 Methodology and sample

The quantitative research was designed to measure the current state of R/H Studio's brand image. The survey used Google Forms as an online platform on which 21-questions concerning the topic of brand awareness were based. The form was written in Finnish as the survey was targeting R/H Studio's current domestic customers. To get an as inclusive and versatile sample as possible the survey link was widely distributed with the help of R/H Studio, few social media influencers close to the brand including the researcher herself. The distribution channels used were Facebook, Instagram, R/H newsletter and the researcher's blog. A raffle with a R/H garment as the prize was organized to attract participants.

The data was collected during a one week long answering period from 10th till the 16th of June. As estimated earlier in the thesis plan, the survey gathered a rather remarkable sample of 1438 replies from which the following analysis will be derived from.

4.2 The online survey form

Consisting of four separate sections the survey form (appendix 1) was composed in a user-friendly manner to ease the responding process and that way maximise the number of participants. The first section of the survey basic data concerning the respondents age, email and whereabouts was gathered. These questions provided the researcher with variables that are later used in the analysis to perform cross tabulations to further examine relationships amongst two chosen variables. Respondents gender was not asked since R/H designs clothes for women only and therefore examining it was stated as irrelevant.

The following part was all about testing the state of respondent's brand awareness. Through multiple choice questions people were asked to determine whether they knew the brand and if so, when and through what did the first encounter with it happen? This was followed by a simple open-end question with the aim of mapping out words that people associated with R/H. By including a question like this the researcher assured that the survey did not steer nor modify the image the customer had in their mind. This could

have happened if only ready-made answers were given. Respondents were asked to define how closely would associate the adjectives with R/H Studio.

The third part of the survey addressed the efficiency of R/H's current marketing actions and how their staff is being perceived. As image is built over time by a combination of encounters between the brand and the customer, finding out how people receive new information concerning the brand is necessary. Examining the way R/H's current marketing works in the eyes of the customer provides new valuable knowledge to the company.

The fourth and final part of the survey studies the buying behavioural habits of the respondents. Asking questions related to the qualities R/H's consumers appreciate and pay attention to is essential. That knowledge can be further refined and considered while renewing their actions concerning brand management. When the things that bring the most added value for R/H's customer are known the information can be shared with the staff. This enables them to offer a better all-around buying experience for their customer in the future. In the end the concept of Net-promoter score is introduced. This is to get a reliable answer to the question whether the respondent feel like R/H Studio is a brand they would voluntarily recommend.

4.2.1 Data analysis

The data gathered through the survey was uploaded straight from Google Forms in the format of an Excel table. The convenience of this was one of the main reasons of the online survey platform was chosen in the first place. As both platforms were Microsoft Office based, it made the further analysis and refinement of the mainly quantitative data remarkably more effortless.

The data was developed into graphs, numbers and percentages that displayed the result of the respondent's current perception of R/H Studio. The analysis maintains a few cross tabulations that were made with the use of combination of R data manipulation software environment and Excel's Pivot table function. This was to further deepen the level of the analysis and get to the bottom of the significant findings.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Demographics

The two main demographical factors that survey examined were the age and locality of the respondents. As figure 1 demonstrates out of the 1438 respondents a clear majority of 63% were 21-30 year olds. The second largest age group was 31-40 year olds with the sample of 22% of the possible hundred.

The results indicated that R/H's average customer is 27,6 years by age which matches with the current perception of the staff. The surprising fact was that a lot more younger respondents than were aware of the brand than R/H had formerly thought. The eldest respondent of the survey being 67 and the youngest 13 of age the discovery strengthens R/H Studio's aim to be a brand that designs clothes to all women age and other demographics aside.

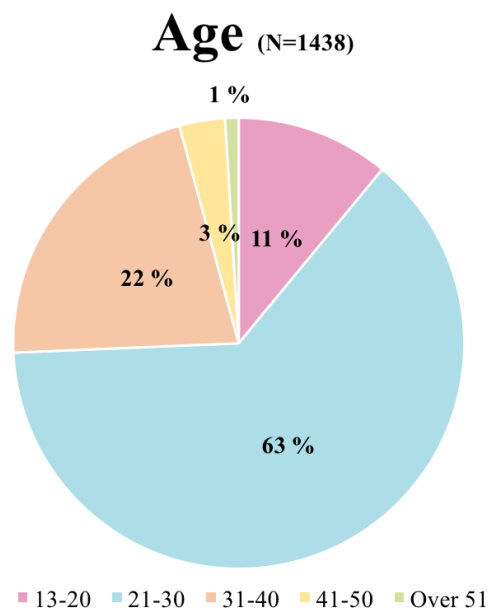


FIGURE 1. The age distribution of the respondents.

The second demographic measured being the locality of R/H Studio's customers. The six cities' that came up the most are demonstrated in figure 2 below including a percentage derived from the remaining cities combined. Helsinki being the most common place to be originated from with 34 % was followed by Oulu with 11 %. As R/H's only store is currently located in the capital and the two founders originate from Oulu the outcome was

no surprise. Tampere was third with 9% and Turku coming up on fourth place with 6% can be explained by the fact that they are the two most commonly visited pop up-locations for R/H. The relatively high level of brand awareness is due to the rise on brand a Rovaniemi pop-up shop visit made in the summer of 2016.

The rest 31 % of the 1438 survey respondents were dispersed somewhat evenly throughout the country. Thus, the singular numbers per city were low in comparison with the top six biggest ones, the combined quantity of them is great. This implies that brand has been acknowledged extensively throughout the country as the level of brand recognition amongst the participants was measured remarkably high.

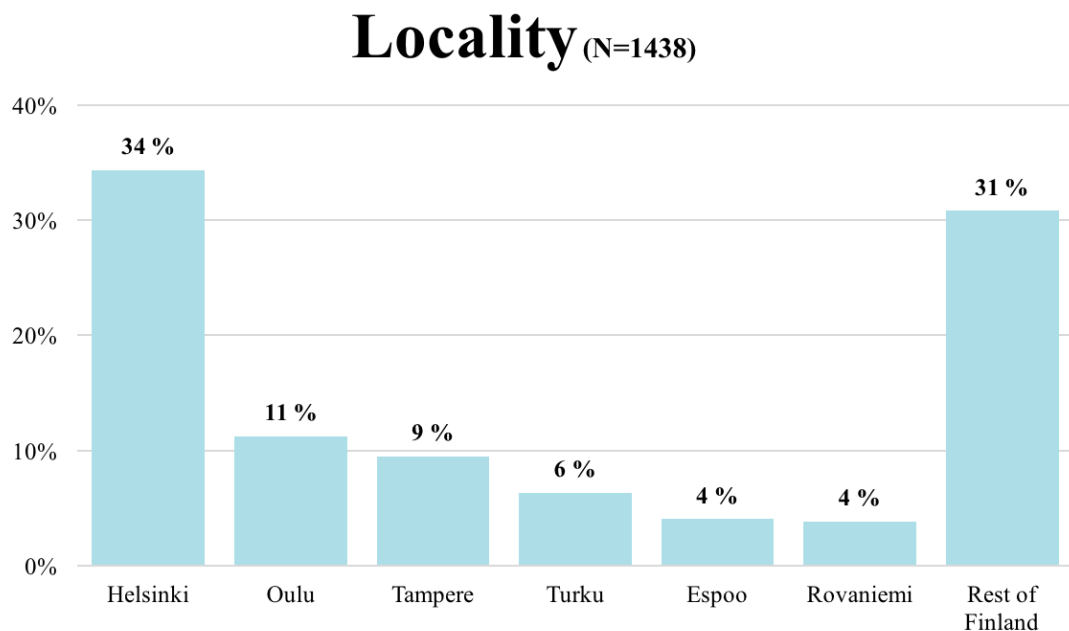


FIGURE 2. The locality of the respondents.

4.3.2 Brand recognition

The first question of the next section (figure 3) measuring the current level of respondent's brand recognition that received a nearly unilateral answer. 98% corresponding to 1406 people stated that they were familiar with R/H Studio. This shows that the survey reached out an audience that was highly aware of the brand and its existence. People that answered no were asked to move straight to question number 16, since the following parts of the survey could not be properly filled up in case the brand was not familiar.

Is R/H Studio familiar to you as a brand? (N=1438)

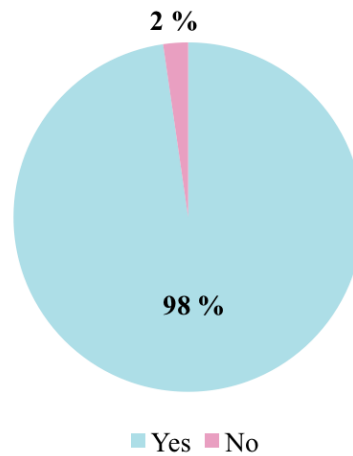


FIGURE 3. The level of brand awareness amongst the respondents.

When asked about the moment in time when the respondent first heard about R/H Studio most (43%) stated that they encountered with it within a timespan of 2-3 years ago. As figure 4 illustrates 22% said they had been aware of the brand's existence for more than four years which shows that a remarkable sample of long-term customers were reached. With 13% saying they only heard of the brand less than a year ago, the result implies that R/H is steadily reaching new customers while growing their recognisability.

When did you first hear about the brand? (N=1407)

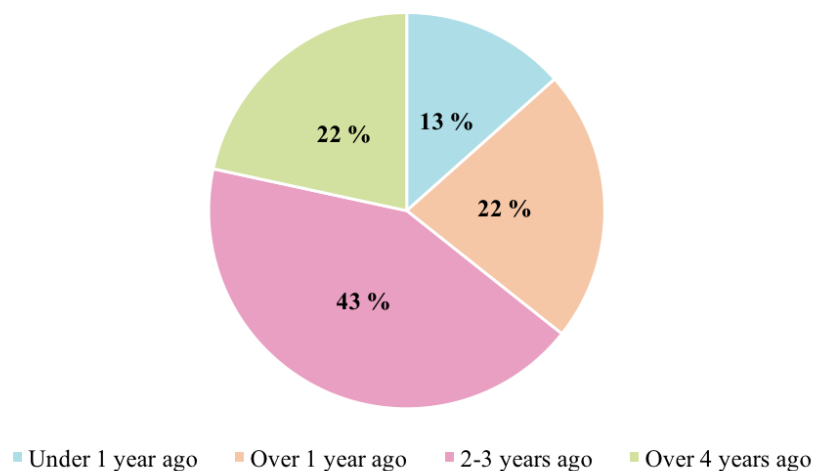


FIGURE 4. The duration of respondent's brand knowledge.

After the point of brand recognition was made clear, the respondents were asked to specify the source they learned the information from. A set of ready set alternatives was given with the possibility of speak freely, in case a suitable option was not provided. The alternative of choosing from the multiple choice was given to ease the answering, as for many the familiarization happened several year ago. 1406 people gave altogether 2829 responses.

The major part (48%) of the respondents specified that they first hear about the brand through bloggers or other social media influencers. This was something quite predictable, as the distribution of the survey happened with the help of a group of bloggers and influencers. Additionally, continuous usage of bloggers as a marketing tool has had had effect on the outcome. Coming up next almost equal in size were the number of people that got to know R/H Studio through friends and family (38%) and Instagram (35%). It can be clearly seen that the brand gains recognisability via grapevine and recommendations made by existing customers.

Despite the relatively positive response received in terms of brand identification the actual engagement with the brand proved to be lower than expected as figure 5 indicates. When asked, whether the respondents had purchased any of R/H Studio's products before a majority of 52% stated they had not. The acknowledgement was that over half of the 1406 people sharing their experiences had never bought a garment from the brand despite the likely fact that they knew about its existence. Revealing this information through the survey was one of the major finding that were against R/H's current impression of the matter.

Have you ever bought R/H Studio's products? (N=1406)

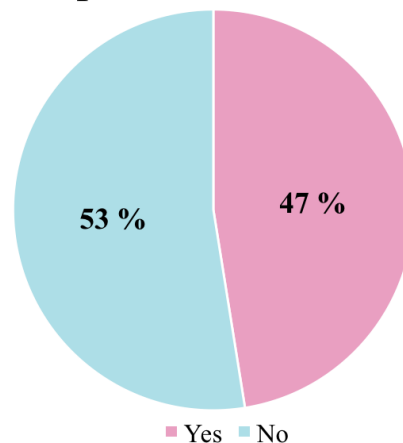


FIGURE 5. The percentage of buying customers.

To look further into the reasons behind the lack of purchase a cross tabulation (figure 6) was conducted to see which age groups were the ones currently buying from the brand. The largest number of both currently buying customer as well as the ones yet without a purchase were placed in the age group of 21-30-year-olds. A highly profitable customer group was the 31-40-year-olds as the ratio between the two answers proved to be remarkably towards the positive. Well over half of the people in that specific age category had bought a product. Respondents buying proportionately the least were the ones in their twenties or under.

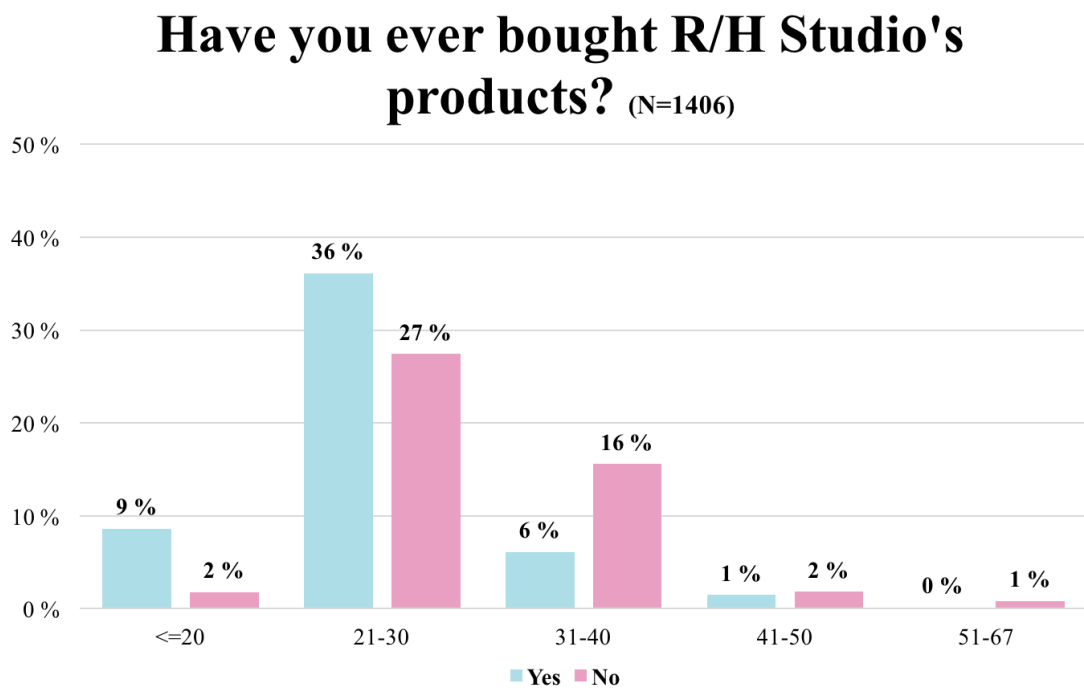


FIGURE 6. Cross tabulations demonstrating the correlation between respondents age and consumption.

4.3.3 Brand image

When the respondents were asked to determine how well they felt they knew what R/H Studio's brand was about the level of apprehension was quite inferior. As figure 7 shows, number of people saying they knew the brand either slightly or moderately was 85% combined, leaving 11% as the minority that claimed to know it extremely well. The lack of knowledge can be partially explained by the lack of purchase. Without a buying experience understanding what the brand is fully about can be rather challenging.

**On a scale 1-4, how familiar are you with
R/H Studio's brand? (N=1405)**

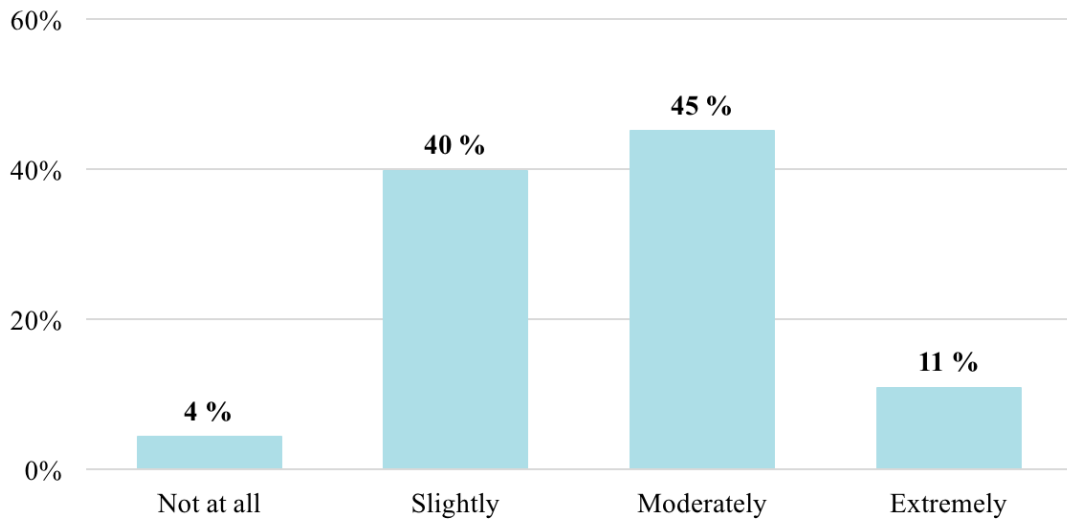


FIGURE 7. The level of respondent's familiarity with R/H's brand.

Despite the mainly quantitative nature of the survey a few open-ended questions were included to complement the content and authenticate the results. This way the respondents had an unrestricted way to speak up their minds concerning specific questions.

The first part where open-ended questions were used was when people were asked to explain their current perception of the brand. This question was strategically placed prior to the following one which included a ready set selection of words describing R/H Studio's image. The aim of this was to give people a chance to freely express their minds concerning the things they associate with R/H Studio rather than leading them into conclusion with adjectives set beforehand.

Altogether 1438 open-ended answers were received amongst which a set of common themes could be detected. R/H Studio and its current way to operate perceived as highly positive, inside and out. People described the brand to be feminine and strongly domestic. R/H Studio was clearly distinguished by their high-quality products that were conceived unique and original by their design. Garments themselves were perceived as versatile and suitable for a large range or different body types. Also, the playfulness of the brand, strong usage of prints and colour were brought up.

Many of these repeatedly mentioned qualities were strongly in-line with the core values of R/H Studio's brand identity. This is something that implies the brand image R/H Studio has pursued to create has been comprehended correctly in the receiving end

Question number eight consisted of a set of sixteen adjectives representing some of the core values of R/H Studio. These values were drawn from the interviews held with the staff earlier. A grading scale from one to four was given to measure how well the following words corresponded with the existing image in the minds of the customer. The overall the correlation between the words and R/H's brand was rather positive. As seen below from figure 8, the words that seemed to be describing the image brand the most were: interesting, high quality, domestic, positive and authentic.

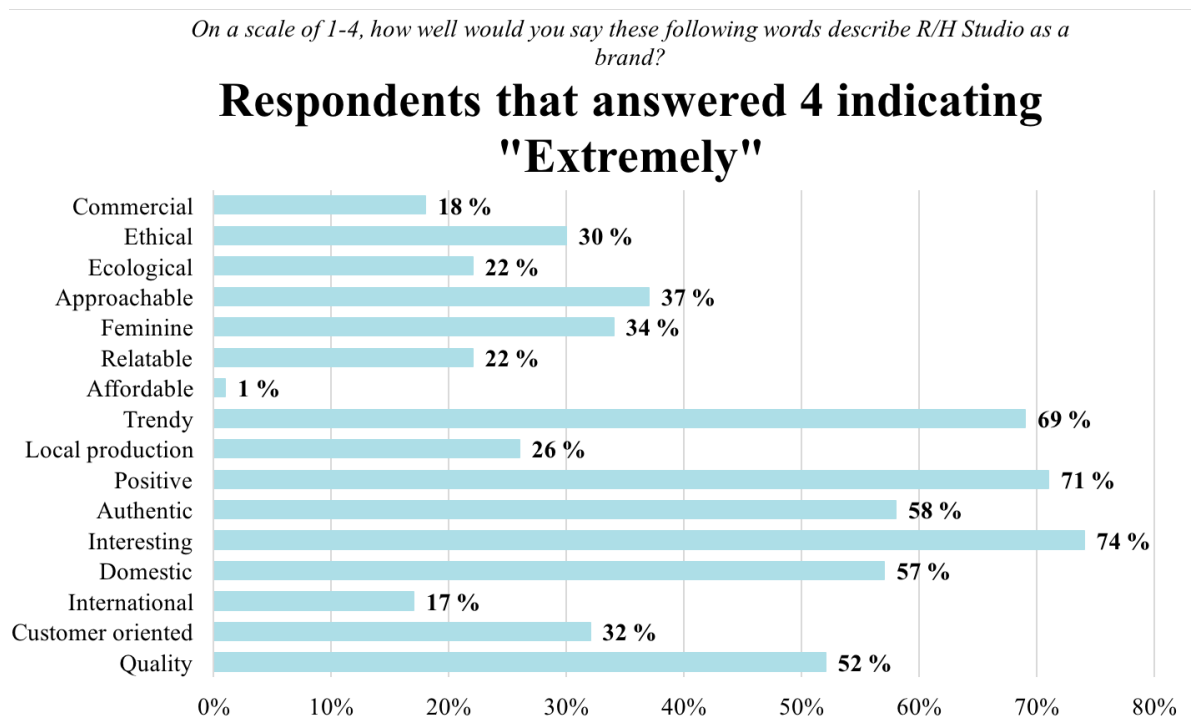


FIGURE 8. The percentage of respondents that answered "Extremely" on each individual adjective.

The level of interest respondents had towards the brand was extremely high (figure 9). 74% of the 1402 people said that they find R/H Studio's brand extremely interesting. This note clarifies reasons behind the large number of participants that took part in the survey.

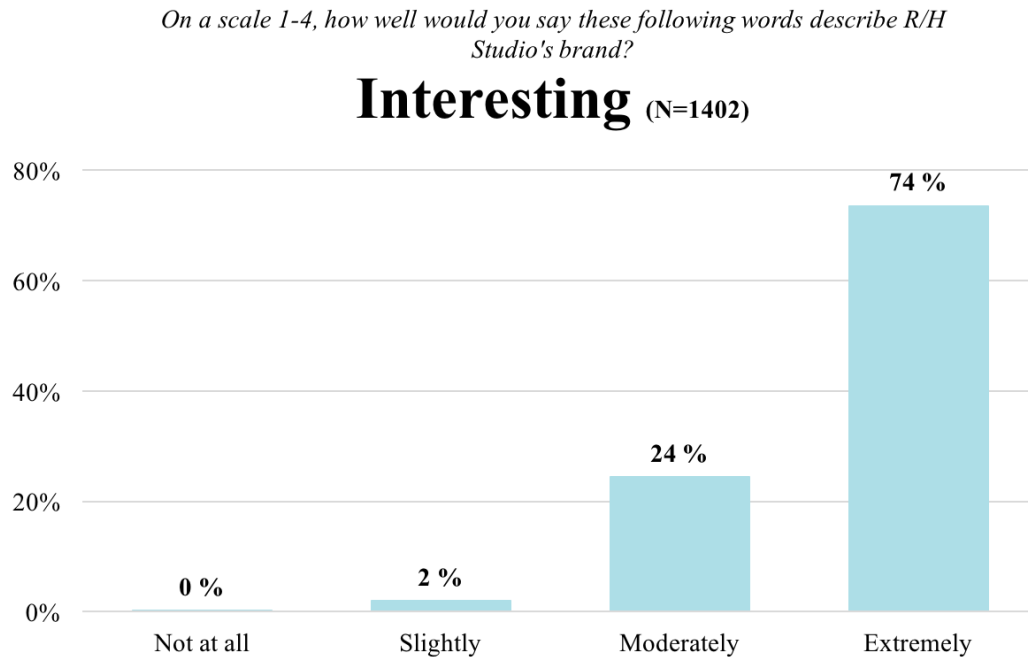


FIGURE 9. Respondent's perception of how the word "interesting" describes R/H.

A clear majority of 734 of 1402 said that high quality is something they associate closely with R/H Studio. As the second most popular answer was moderately voted by 45% of the respondents, only 2% experienced that the words "high quality" only slightly characterised the brand. As figure 10 addresses this was an extremely desirable result, as R/H has always put emphasis on producing garments with the best possible standards.

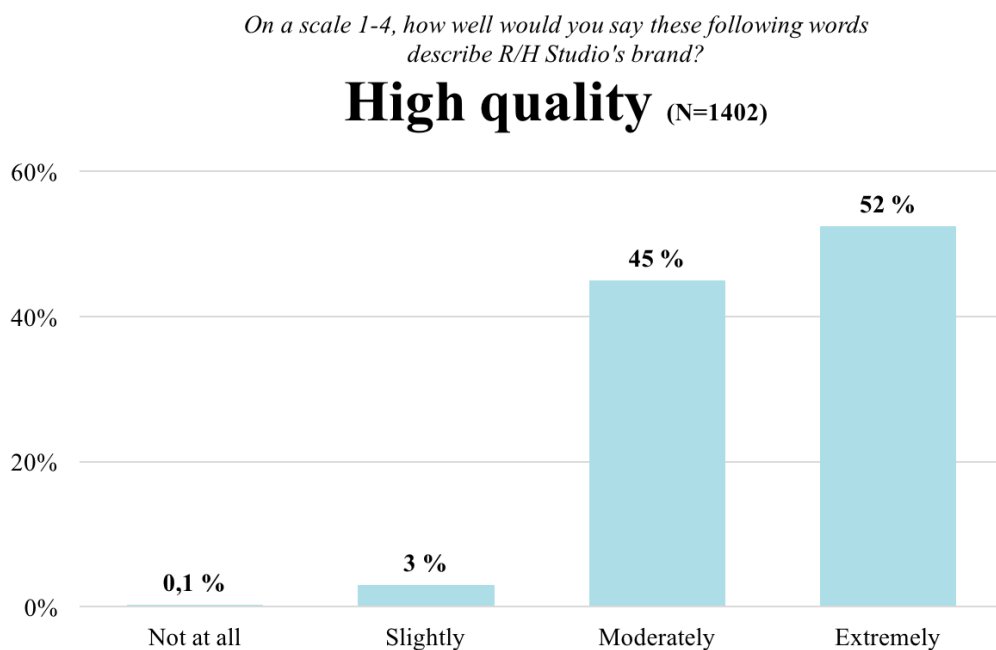


FIGURE 10. Respondent's perception of how the words "high quality" describe R/H.

The result concerning how domestic the respondents perceived R/H's brand as strengthened the impression received earlier in the open-end section. 57% felt that R/H Studio was an extremely domestic brand whereas the same number for "international" was only 6%. Figure 11 shows that image-wise R/H is seen as a strongly domestic brand over being perceived as international.

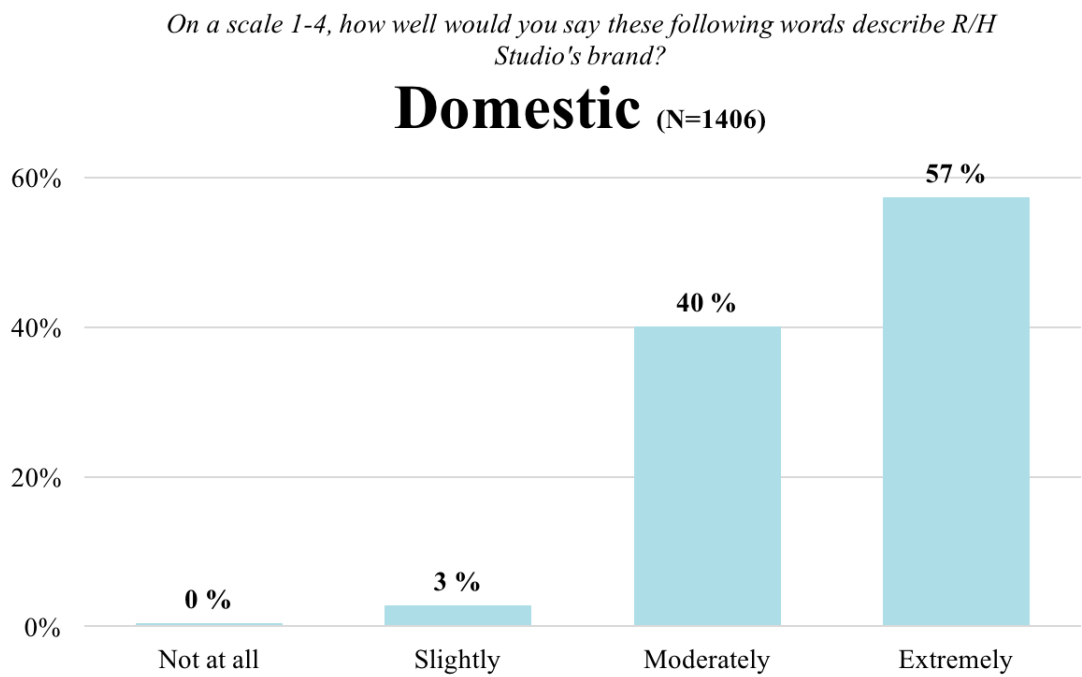


FIGURE 11. Respondent's perception of how the word "domestic" describes R/H.

Most (71%) of the 1406 respondents that gave an answer felt R/H Studio's brand is extremely positive. The option "moderately" coming up second with 28% left only 1% with the answer "slightly". No-one thought that the brand was at all positive. This proves that R/H's aim of reflecting their internal positive attitude outwards to the customer has been a success.

87% of the respondents answered they felt R/H's brand was either extremely or moderately authentic (figure 12). For a brand this result is an extremely desirable, as the key objective of each brand is to be unique in the eyes of the customer. Being authentic and building a brand identity that endures time adds up to the added value a customer gains (Silveira, Larges & Simoes 2011, 2).

In a scale 1-4, how well would you say these words following describe R/H Studio's brand?

Authentic (N=1397)

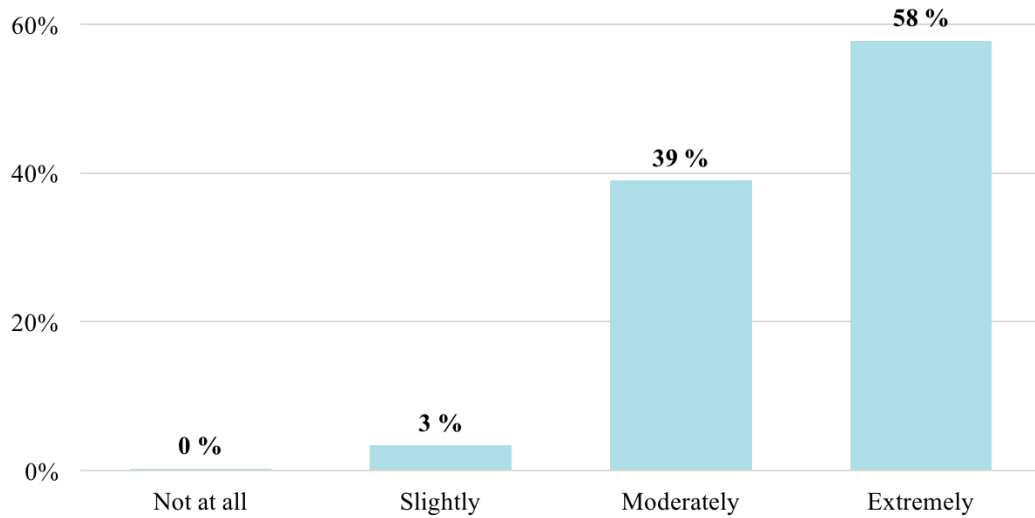


FIGURE 12. Respondent's perception of how the word "authentic" describes R/H.

The given adjectives were followed by a question concerning the nature of R/H's customers. The aim was to get customers insight into the fact whether they felt like R/H Studio was a brand intended for only a certain type of people or did they think it's for everybody. 69% of the 1404 respondents thought that the brand was well fit for a broader audience whereas the rest of the votes between options "no" and "I don't know" almost tied. As 14% did not know what to say a certain level of confusion can be detected amongst the respondents concerning the concept R/H's customer. This is out of line the brands internal identity as R/H Studio's aim is so design garments that can make a woman feel confident regardless of age and size.

66% of the responses were positive when people were asked whether they felt like R/H Studio's brand is something that creates added value for them. Only 6% converting to 90 people said that they did not think R/H Studio's brand added any value for them. A surprisingly large amount of 27% answered "I don't know" which might imply that they did not understand what was meant with the question or simply had no opinion concerning the matter.

4.3.4 Marketing and communication

When measuring the current level efficiency of R/H Studio's marketing activities the respondents were asked to assess their impression on a scale of 1-4 (figure 13). The overall result to the question was trending towards the positive. The majority with 57% answered three, implying that R/H's marketing is currently performing moderately well. 20% thought that their marketing was performing extremely effectively leaving 22% with the answer number two signifying the current performance was on a slightly effective level.

On a scale 1-4, how effective would you say R/H Studio's marketing actions are? (N=1398)

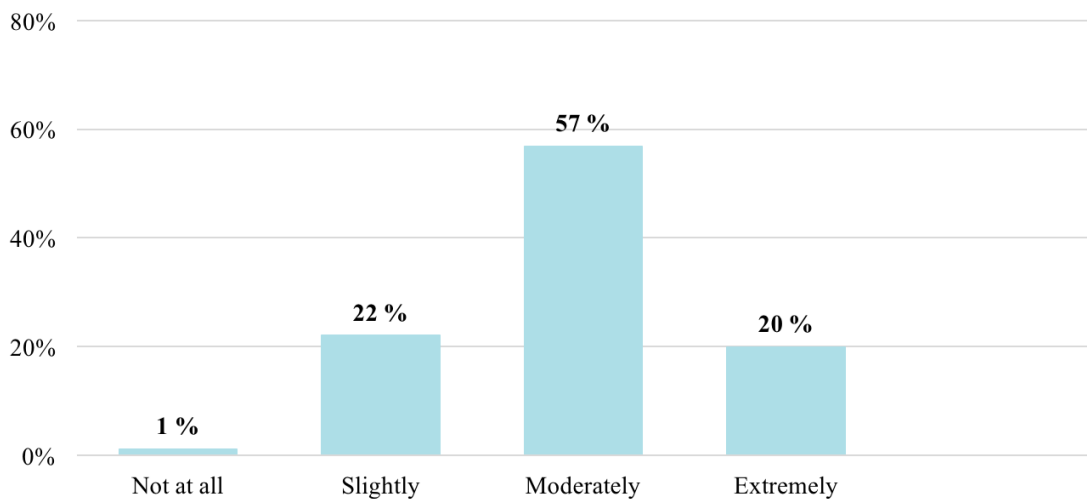


FIGURE 13. The effectiveness of R/H's marketing actions.

The respondents were asked to determine the sources through which they currently received new information concerning R/H Studio. A set of ready-made alternatives were given with the possibility to give an open-end answer in case a suitable option was lacking. With the option to choose multiple alternatives a total of 1405 people chose to give an answer or multiple ones. The total amount of answers received was 3130.

As seen from figure 14, three alternatives were significantly more popular in comparison to the rest of the lot. Instagram being the most used source for information with 79%, blogger and influencers coming up next with 58% and Facebook being the third with 38%. Based on the results the observation be made that social media in its entirety is R/H

Studio's primary communication channel. Other alternatives gathering a noteworthy amount of responses were R/H's staff, website and weekly newsletter.

The open-end option was chosen by 4% of the respondents correlating to 56 people in total. Amongst these answers information sources such as friends, family members, fashion magazines and R/H Studio's retailers were brought forward.

Where do you receive new information concerning R/H Studio? (N=1405)

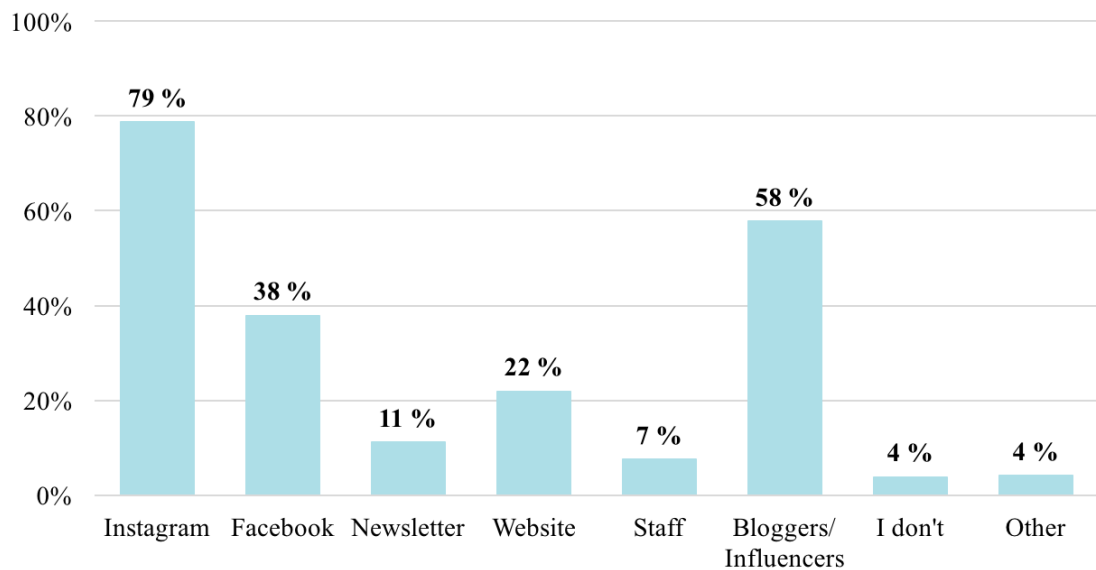


FIGURE 14. The ways people receive new information concerning R/H.

In terms of brands visual identity and marketing almost all (89%) of the 1401 people that gave a response felt that R/H Studio's current material is in line with their image perception. Only 1% answered no and the rest (10%) said they did not know. This percentage of the respondents may belong to the respondent group that previously said they did not receive any information about R/H Studio. This could be the reason behind the lack a perception of what R/H's brand image is like.

4.3.5 Buying behaviour

In the beginning of the section the respondents were asked to openly determine how they felt about R/H Studio's customer service. Altogether 1059 answers were received. Many people stated they did not know how to describe the experience or had no simply had none. Some of the reasons behind the result are R/H Store's challenging location and the overall lack of purchase amongst the respondents. The outcome explains some of the previous findings of the survey. Other responses that stood out the most were highly positive ones. The ones that has been served by R/H staff described it mostly as kind, friendly, personal and customer oriented.

The respondents were asked whether the buying experience itself adds to the value they receive and the result was rather surprising. 549 people (39%) said that they did not know which matches with the previous result. 54% saying yes leaving 7% with the answer no, the second most popular answer was indicating that people did not either understand the concept of added value creation or the question may have been formed poorly. A conclusion can be made that the question should have been redefined to connive the apprehension of the respondents feel that the buying experience is peripheral.

Next, people were asked to determine their level of brand loyalty (figure 15). This was to research the general rate of attachment respondents feel towards brands of any kind. Almost half (48%) of the 1436 people classified themselves to be moderately brand loyal consumers. Second largest group (32%) felt like they were slightly loyal and 12% categorised as extremely devoted consumers. It can be said that the average of the respondents felt brand loyal as consumers to a certain extent.

On a scale 1-4, how brand loyal of a consumer are you? (N=1436)

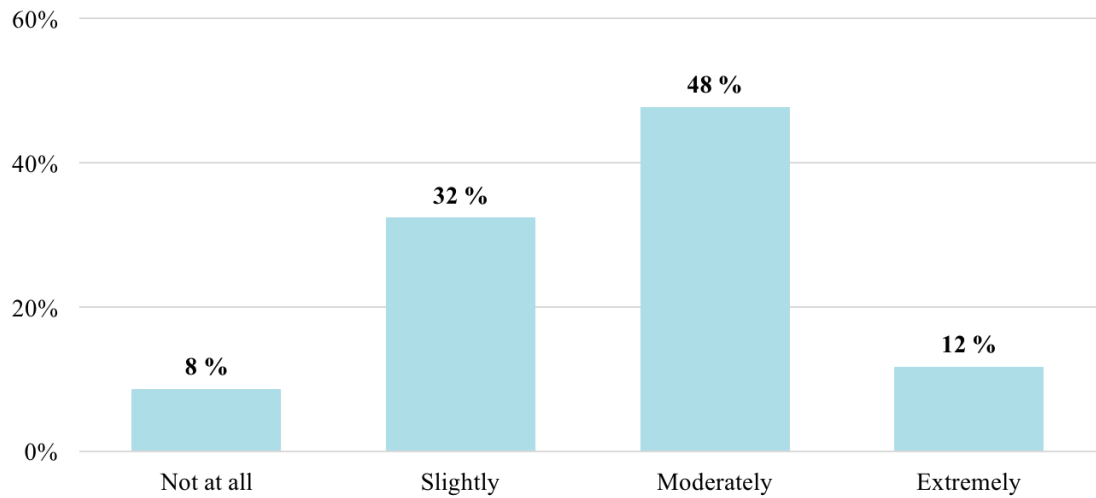


FIGURE 15. The level of brand loyalty amongst the respondents.

Going deeper into the subject of the respondents buying behaviour and consumption was up next. Once again, the evaluation was made on a scale 1-4 as figure 16 below shows. The general amount of Finnish fashion or design that people consumed tuned out to be quite moderate. The respondents were almost evenly split in-between two alternatives saying people consumed domestic products either to some extent (50%) or that their consumption was small but existent (45%). Only 4% of the 1435 respondents said that their level of consumption was currently on a high level. So, despite the earlier discovered fact that 52% of the respondents had never bought a R/H Studio's garments, most respondents were admitting to consume similar products.

How much Finnish fashion/ design do you consume in general? (N=1435)

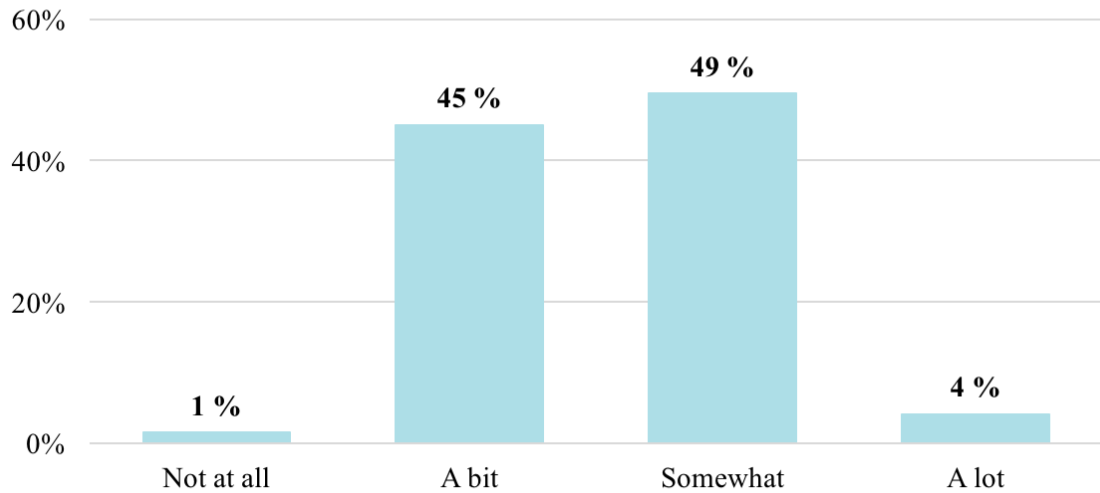


FIGURE 16. The consumption of Finnish fashion/ design in general.

To further analyse the overall buying behaviour a cross tabulations was conducted to compare the correlation between the frequency of people's consumption and age (figure 17). The results indicated that the most active age group purchase-wise was the 21-30 followed by the 31-40-year-olds. The numbers got lower as the age groups got older. This can be due to the lesser quantity of elderly respondents taking part in the survey.

How much Finnish fashion/ design do you consume in general? (N=1436)

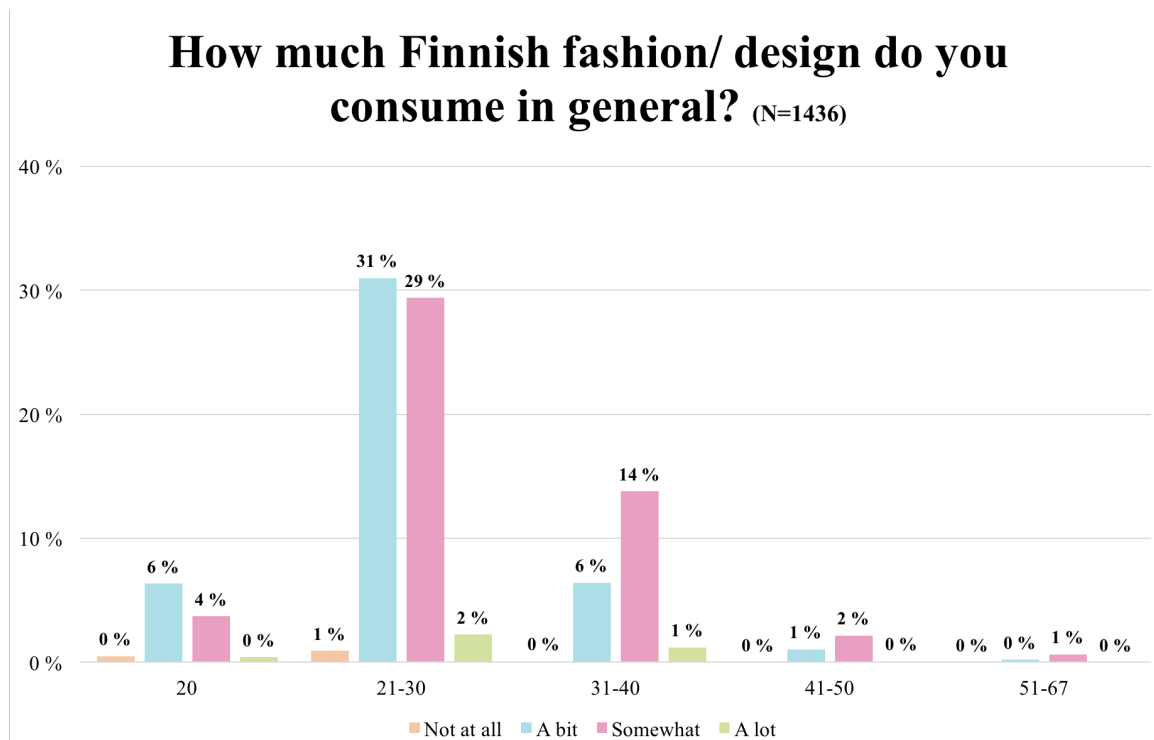


FIGURE 17. Cross tabulation demonstrating the correlation between respondents age and consumption.

Another question framed in a general manner was about the things respondents felt had an impact on the purchasing decisions they make. A set of alternatives were given with an option to give an open-end answer. People could choose multiple answers. 1437 people responded to the question with 10 173 answers.

The answers were spread relatively evenly between the options given. Four qualities that stood out with an over ten percent share of the total were design (78%), quality (90%), choice of material (76%) and the pricing (78%). It could be seen that respondents put most value on attributes related to the tangible product instead of buying experience. This is something that could also be seen from the previous results. Amongst the open-end answers that 25% of the respondents gave, qualities such as marketing actions, timelessness, fit and durability of the garments were brought up. The price proved to clearly be an obstacle for some respondents. Despite the high level of value people have towards the brand on an emotional level, many lack the resources to buy the products.

Even though in the theory of branding pricing is a principle made irrelevant by the value that a brand equity creates the alternative to choose it was given, since the result created valuable data for the company.

4.3.6 Competitors

Next up was an open-end question concerning the fact whether the respondents felt like R/H Studio had competitors. In case the answer was affirmative they were asked to specify who they thought those competitors were. The question got the lowest response rate of the survey with only 745 people of the possible 1438 giving an answer. Answering the question was not compulsory. A great deal of these responses indicated that they did not feel like R/H Studio had any noteworthy competitors. They felt that the brand R/H has built along the years is strong and unique enough not to be substituted by any other brand or product.

Then again many respondents named numerous clothing brands, both domestic and international that they felt like were currently competing with R/H Studio. The ones that arose amongst the names the most were Finnish brands such as Marimekko and Nanso and from the smaller and newer domestic companies such as Samuji, Uhana Design, Ivana Helsinki

and Minna Parikka. Besides these rather predictable brands bigger global brands such as Ache Studio and Monki owned by H&M Group were mentioned several times. It could be clearly seen from the results that the domestic brands were seen as a bigger threat than the international ones.

After the plausible competitors had been defined the factors that distinguish R/H Studio from them were surveyed through a multiple-choice question. R/H Studio's biggest assets in term of differentiation from other competing brands were their overall originality with 71% and design with 74% of the respondents voting for them. R/H's strong visual identity is where their strength lies in terms of making their brand unique. This makes other operators irrelevant in the eyes of their current loyal customer. Based on lower scores the things that R/H has potential in developing in terms of positioning are adding product availability (8%), production methods (9%) and materials (15%).

4.3.7 Net-Promoter Score

In the end of the survey the level of customer loyalty was examined through Net-Promoter Score also known as NPS. NPS is a model that strives to measure the level of loyalty through asking whether the respondents would be willing to recommend the brand to others. It uses a 1-10 scale that allows the respondent to give a precise answer. The method examines the customer's willingness to put their own reputation on the line by making statement on the company's behalf. (Reichheld, 2003, 1.) When customers communicate positively forward about the company they promote it which add to its growth rate and success.

According to the theory of NPS the customers whose answers are below 6 are called detractors. In the case of R/H Studio the current NPS proved to be trending towards the positive as majority of the votes were placed on either the passive or promoter part of the scale. Ones with a score of seven or eight are passives and everyone above that is a promoter. With 1421 received answers the R/H's rating turned out to be 39. The number is received subtracting the amount of detractors from the promoters. According to Reichheld brands that accumulate a score of 75-80 or more can be ranked as having a world-class level of loyalty (2003, 1).

Net Promoter Score - On a scale 1-10, how likely would you recommend R/H Studio to a friend? (N=1421)

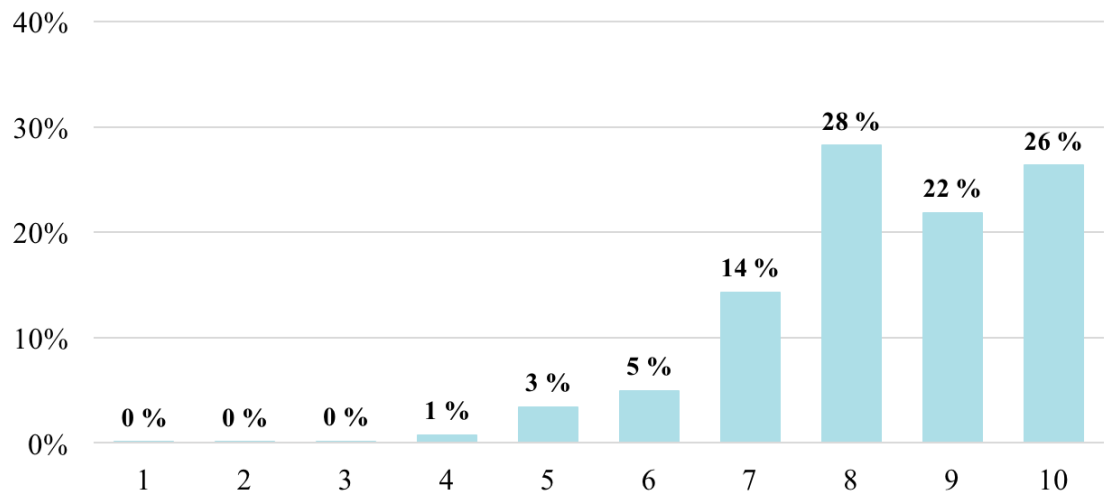


FIGURE 18. Net Promoter Score of R/H Studio.

5 CONCLUSION

Answer to the question whether the brand identity and image were in coherence with one another turned out to be positive. The overall perception people currently had about R/H Studio showed remarkable resemblance to the image they have aspired to portray outwards. The verification of this matter is significant as a severe disparity amongst the two would have required pervasive alterations within the brand's current management operations.

The survey examined different parts of brand varying from its recognition and visual elements to their current market position and values. The level of unity amongst the responses was high but some variation between the image and identity could be detected. Not all elements of the brand were intact and they will be addressed later. Generally, people stated strongly that felt like they knew the brand and agreed with the core values originally set by R/H Studio's managerial staff.

Going deeper into the results, a series of individual relevant observations could be made. When it came to the recognisability of R/H Studio's the outcome was almost entirely unanimous as 98% of the respondents claimed to know the brand. The statement was later backed up by numbers representing the length of time that these people have been aware of R/H's existence. As both long-term customers as well as ones that had just recently discovered the brand came up, the result indicates that R/H Studio has an intense and steadily growing clientele. One of the reasons behind their reputation is their original and easily identifiable visual identity. Less than a percent of the respondents said that they did not know any visual cues to recognise the brand by. The rest 99% had either one or more elements to identify the them by such as their logo, prints or designs of other kind. These finding indicate of the success of R/H's previous branding actions.

According to the survey the greatest assets of R/H Studio's brand are strongly related to their products. The things that stood out the most were the originality the brand and how that could be seen as the uniqueness in their designs. As R/H's aspiration is to differentiate themselves through by being altogether original with what they do and how they operate the associations customers currently have with the brand are ideal. Furthermore, a strong mental image of quality was brought up. Thus, R/H's objective to communicate about the

level effort put into their material choices and product development had succeeded in the eyes of the consumer.

Despite the great measures taken by R/H Studio to pursue excellence in the field of ethicalness in production and its transparency did not seem to be recognised by the respondents. The survey pointed out that things such as production methods, country of origin or the ethicality were not among the things that they thought distinguished R/H from its competitors. However, on a previous question people stated to put a great deal of value to such things while doing purchasing decisions making the inequality even more severe. Based on the data a suggestion is made to put more emphasis on communicating relating production operations and the origin of the garments as the brand is taking care of these fields responsibly. R/H's message to bring fashion closer should be more powerfully communicated. Informing the customer about the effort currently made would be highly beneficial and further develop brand image closer to the intended identity.

One of the most unpredictable and remarkable findings of the survey were the numbers concerning the state of brand engagement consumption-wise. When the respondents were asked whether they have bought R/H Studio's products the result was evenly tied between the two options. The fact that little more than 50% had not yet made a purchase despite the near absolute brand recognition rate deflected with the presumptions of both the researcher and the brand. When examining the result more closely it could be seen that the biggest amount of dead potential could be found amongst the younger clientele varying from the age of 21-30. Whereas when the same group was asked about their general consumption concerning Finnish fashion and design they came up on top. So, the data indicates that despite the lack of purchases made at R/H the respondents are regularly investing money in complementary products.

One reason behind the result can be the brands relatively high pricing, despite its irrelevance to the topic of brand equity. The data showed that pricing is a major priority the respondents while making purchasing decisions. The people within that age group (21-30 years-old) are young and most probably students or in the beginning of their careers. This explains the lack of finance leading to the absence of purchasing power. Another matter behind the scarcity of buyers is the shortage in product availability. As R/H Studio's only store and biggest retailers are all situated in Helsinki the possibility to try on the garments and fully experience the brand is rather limited. Despite the regularly held

pop-up shops and a fully functioning online store only 111 people thought that availability was an asset for R/H although 465 people said it was something that had an influence on their purchasing decision. As the level of R/H's brand awareness is relatively high availability needs to be upgraded to match it. Based on the survey majority of respondents originated from outside the metropolitan area which points out a great deal of potential in further developing the online store and seeking out alternative ways to increasing availability.

As mentioned in the survey result, R/H Studio's Net-promoter score of 39 proved to be good. The collected data shows that the brand has established a group of keen promoters eager to speak up share their experiences concerning it. The score is backed up by other data derived from the survey as 38% of the respondents had heard about the brand through a friend or a family member. This proves the existence of these advocates. Furthermore, when measuring the level of people's general brand loyalty 60% counted themselves to be either moderately or extremely loyal when it came to it.

Throughout the years R/H has managed grow their business by simultaneously engaging people into relationships tied between the brand and the customer. These relations are unique and valued on both ends. All this leads to added value that is the core of what helps a brand position themselves amongst others players in the same field. 66% of the respondents stating that R/H Studio's brand gives them added value is proof of how well managed the brand currently is. From early on creating a brand that customers feel like supporting has been a goal of R/H's. In the light of the research completed that target can be attested as achieved.

To deepen the analysis and go further into the correlation between purchasing habits and brand perception a series of advanced cross tabulations would need to be made. The encompassing survey data has a lot of potential and could be worked forth with the help of a skilled researcher. By the means of analysis, the matters that currently cause confusion amongst R/H Studio's brand identity and image could be pondered on to derive specific data concerning different customer groups based on their age, buying behaviour, locality and values. The following research questions could be; who are the customers that currently have a false image of R/H's internal brand identity and how could these people be further engaged?

5.1 Validity

Based on the sample of 1438 respondents the survey as well as the overall research can be pronounced to be accurate. This sample size is statistically significant enough to generalise the findings to represent people's current prevalent perception. The findings of this survey can be reliably exploited in the making of future decisions based on R/H Studio's brand management. The original versions of the graphs presenting the survey results and form can be observed in the appendixes below.

While further examining the result it their source needs to be taken under consideration. As the survey was distributed by the company itself with the help of bloggers and influencers known for being closely in collaboration with R/H Studio it reached a crowd that was highly likely to know the brand. This can be seen in the form of high scores concerning brand awareness and in the results regarding the ways people receive new information concerning the brand.

Also, in few of the questions a level of misunderstanding could be detected. These answers might have distorted the result to some extent but not enough to destabilize the overall findings of the survey. The confusion might originate either from poor question formation or the lack of understanding regarding the subject matter on respondent's end.

Due to the large amount of data the analysis phase of the survey turned out to be relatively laborious. The responses could have been worked further and the analysis taken deeper with the means of cross tabulation if the necessary resources and know-how had been available.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Online survey form

1/4 Vastaajan tiedot/ Respondents information

Sähköposti (mikäli haluat osallistua arvontaan) / Email (if you want to attend the lottery)

Ikä/ Age

Paikkakunta/ Locality

2/4 Brändituntemus / Brand awareness

1. Onko R/H Studio brändinä sinulle entuudestaan tuttu? / Is R/H Studio familiar to you as a brand?
 - a. Kyllä/ Yes
 - b. Ei/ No

2. Milloin tutustuit brändiin? / When did you first hear about the brand?
 - a. Alle vuosi sitten/ Under a year ago
 - b. 1 vuosi sitten/ 1 year ago
 - c. 2-3 vuotta sitten/ 2-3 years ago
 - d. yli 4 vuotta sitten/ Over 4 years ago

3. Mitä kautta kuulit R/H Studiosta? Voit valita useita vastauksia. / Where did you first hear about R/H Studio? You can choose multiple answers.
 - a. R/H Store/ R/H Store
 - b. Pop-up kauppa/ Pop-up shop
 - c. Nettikauppa/ Online shop
 - d. Instagram-tili/ Instagram account
 - e. Facebook/ Facebook
 - f. Blogit & Somevaikuttajat/ Bloggers and social media influencers
 - g. TV, lehdet & radio/ TV, magazines & radio
 - h. Ystävät/ Friends
 - i. Sokos/ Sokos
 - j. Muut jälleenmyyjä/ Other retailers
 - k. Ei muista/ Can't remember

1. Muu, mikä? / Other, what?

4. Oletko ostanut R/H Studion tuotteita? Have you ever bought R/H Studio's products?
 - a. Kyllä/ Yes
 - b. En/ No

5. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka hyvin koet tuntevasi R/H:n brändin? On a scale 1-4, how familiar are you with R/H's brand?
6. Miten kuvailisit käsitystäsi R/H:sta ja sen toiminnasta muutamalla adjektiivilla? How would you describe your perception of R/H and its actions with few adjectives?
7. Mistä tunnistat R/H Studion brändin? Voit valita useita vastauksia. / How do you recognise R/H Studio's brand. You can choose multiple answers.
 - a. Logosta/ Logo
 - b. Printeistä/ Prints
 - c. Muotokielestä/ Designs
 - d. Materiaaleista/ Materials
 - e. En mistään yllä mainituista / None of the above
 - f. Muu, mikä? / Other, what?

8. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka paljon seuraavat sanat mielestäsi kuvaavat R/H Studion brändiä? On a scale 1-4, how well would you say these following words describe R/H Studio's brand?
 - a. Laadukas/ High quality
 - b. Asiakaslähtöinen/ Customer oriented
 - c. Kotimainen/ Domestic
 - d. Kansainvälinen/ International
 - e. Kiinnostava/ Interesting
 - f. Lähituotanko/ Local production
 - g. Trendikäs/ Trendy
 - h. Edullinen/ Affordable
 - i. Samaistuttava/ Easy to identify with
 - j. Positiivinen/ Positive

- k. Naisellinen/ Feminine
 - l. Helposti lähestyttävä/ Easily approachable
 - m. Ekologinen/ Environmentally friendly
 - n. Eettinen/ Ethical
 - o. Kaupallinen/ Commercial
 - p. Aito/ Authentic
9. Koetko R/H Studion olevan brändi, joka suunnittelee vaatteita kaikenlaisille naisille? Do you think R/H Studio is a brand that designs clothes to all kinds of women?
- a. Kyllä/ Yes
 - b. Ei/ No
 - c. En osaa sanoa/ I don't know
10. Luoko R/H Studion brändi sinulle kuluttajana lisäarvoa? Does R/H Studio bring you added value as a consumer?
- a. Kyllä/ Yes
 - b. Ei/ No
 - c. En osaa sanoa/ I don't know

3/4 Markkinointi & Henkilökunta / Marketing & Staff

11. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka tehokkaaksi koet R/H Studion nykyisen markkinoinnin? On a scale 1-4, how affective do you feel R/H's current marketing is?
12. Mitä kautta vastaanotat tällä hetkellä uutta tietoa R/H:sta? Voi valita useita vastauksia. / Where do you currently receive new information concerning R/H Studio? You can choose multiple answers.
- a. Instagram/ Instagram
 - b. Facebook/ Facebook
 - c. Henkilökunta/ Staff
 - d. Nettisivu/ Online shop
 - e. Uutiskirje/ Newsletter
 - f. Bloggaajat & sosiaalisen median vaikuttajat/ Bloggers and other social media influencers
 - g. En saa uutta tietoa/ I do not receive new information

h. Muu, mikä? / Other, what?

13. Koetko että R/H:n nykyinen markkinointi ja visuaalinen ilme ovat brändin näköisiä? / Do you feel that R/H's current marketing and visual material resemble the brand?

- a. Kyllä/ Yes
- b. Ei/ No
- c. En osaa sanoa/ I don't know

14. Kerro muutamalla sanalla, millaiseksi koet R/H:n asiakaspalvelun. / Describe R/H's customer service by using a few words.

15. Koetko ostokokemuksen luovan sinulle kuluttajana lisäarvoa? / Do you feel that the buying experience gives you added value as a consumer?

- a. Kyllä/ Yes
- b. Ei/ No
- c. En osaa sanoa/ I don't know

4/4 Ostokäyttäytyminen & Kilpailijat / Buying behaviour & Competitors

16. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka brändisukollinen kuluttaja koet olevasi? On a scale 1-4, how brand loyal of a consumer do you feel you are?

17. Ostatko yleisesti ottaen suomalaista muotia/ designia? Asteikko 1-4. / In general how often do you consume Finnish fashion/ design? On a scale 1-4.

18. Minkäläisten ominaisuuksien koet vaikuttavan vaateostopäätökseesi? Voit valita useita vastauksia. / What kind of qualities would you say influence your buying decision? You can choose multiple options.

- a. Asiakaspalvelu/ Customer service
- b. Design/ Design
- c. Hinnoittelu/ Pricing
- d. Eettisyys/ Ethicality
- e. Laatu/ Quality
- f. Kotimaisuus/ Domesticity
- g. Materiaalit/ Materials

- h. Merkki/ Brand
- i. Omaperäisyys/ Originality
- j. Tuotantotapa & -maa/ Production method & country
- k. Trendikkyys/ Trendiness
- l. Saatavuus/ Product availability
- m. Markkinointi/ Marketing
- n. Muu, mikä? Other, what?

19. Koetko R/H Studiolla olevan kilpailijoita? Jos näin on, ketä? / Do you feel R/H Studio has competitors? If so, who?

20. Mitkä ovat asioita, jotka mielestäsi erottavat R/H Studion kilpailijoistaan? Voit valita useita vastauksia. / What are the things you feel separate R/H Studio from its competitors? You can choose multiple options.

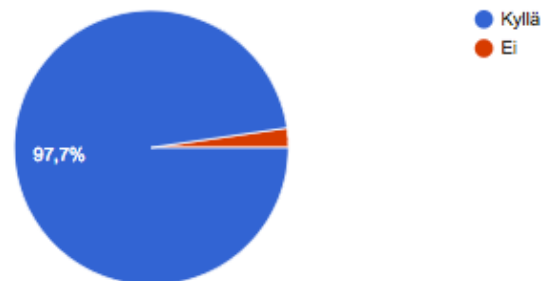
- a. Asiakaspalvelu/ Customer service
- b. Design/ Design
- c. Hinnoittelu/ Pricing
- d. Eettisyys/ Ethicality
- e. Laatu/ Quality
- f. Kotimaisuus/ Domesticity
- g. Materiaalit/ Materials
- h. Merkki/ Brand
- i. Omaperäisyys/ Originality
- j. Tuotantotapa & -maa/ Production method & country
- k. Trendikkyys/ Trendiness
- l. Saatavuus/ Product availability
- m. Markkinointi/ Marketing
- n. Muu, mikä? Other, what?

21. Asteikolla 1-10, kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelisit R/H: ta tutullesi? / On a scale 1-10, how likely would you recommend R/H Studio to a friend?

Appendix 2. Graphs and survey results as presented in Google Forms

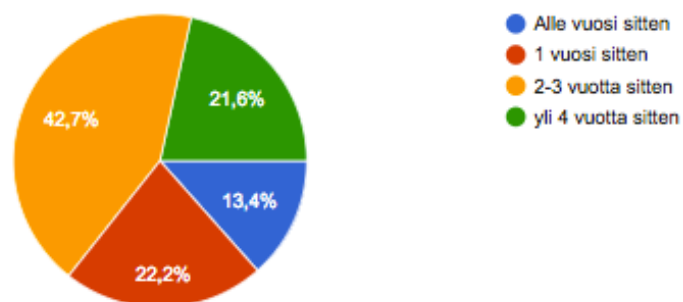
1. Onko R/H Studio brändinä sinulle entuudestaan tuttu? Jos ei, siirry kysymykseen 16.

1 438 vastausta



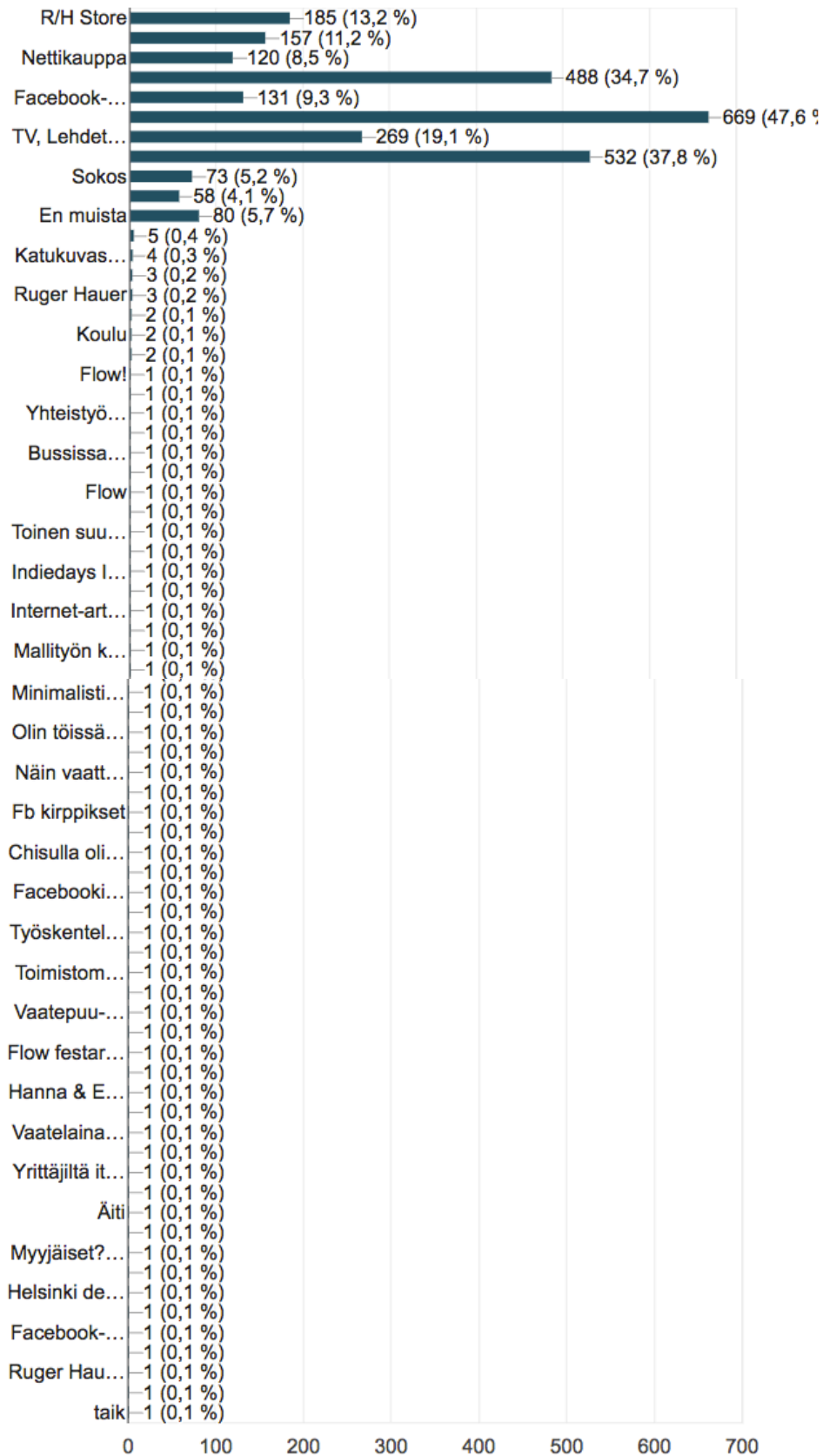
2. Milloin tutustuit brändiin?

1 407 vastausta



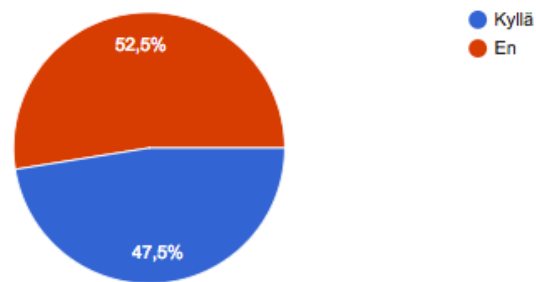
3. Mitä kautta kuulit R/H Studiosta? Voit valita useita vastauksia.

1 406 vastausta



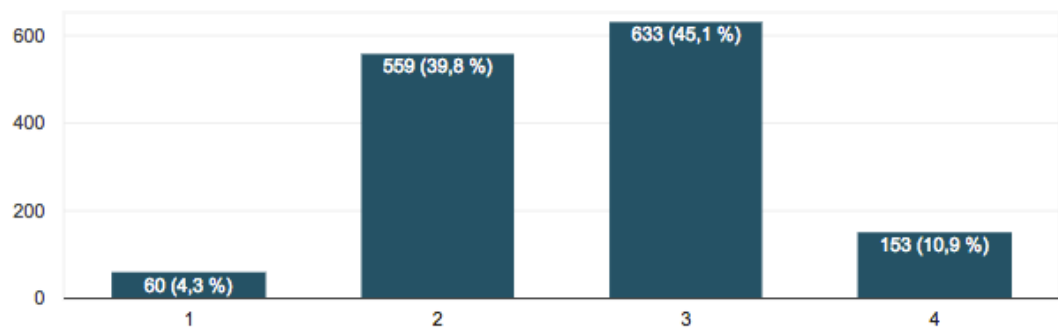
4. Oletko ostanut R/H Studion tuotteita?

1 405 vastausta



5. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka hyvin koet tuntevasi R/H:n brändin?

1 405 vastausta



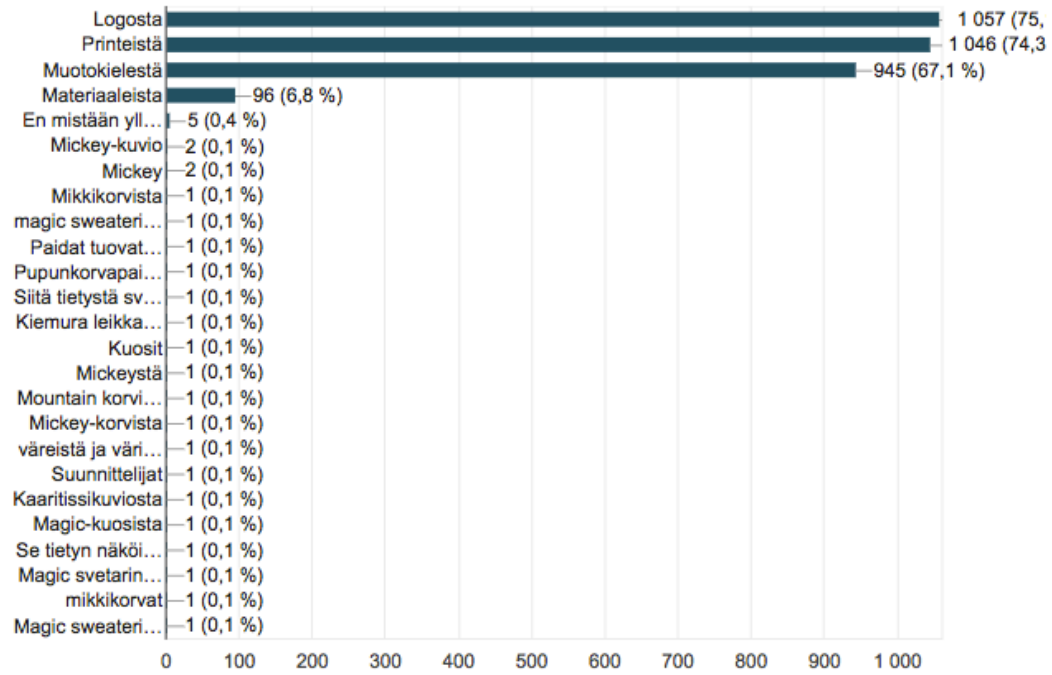
6. Miten kuvailisit käsitystäsi R/H:sta ja sen toiminnasta muutamalla adjektiivilla?

1 438 vastausta

Kotimainen, laadukas (12)
Laadukas (10)
- (8)
Suomalainen (7)
Kotimainen (7)
Vastuullinen (6)
Suomalainen, laadukas (5)
Tyylikäs (5)
Suomalainen, trendikäs (4)
Mielenkiintoinen (4)
Laadukas, kotimainen, tyylikäs (4)
Omaperäinen, laadukas (3)

7. Mistä tunnistat R/H Studion brändin? Voit valita useita vastauksia.

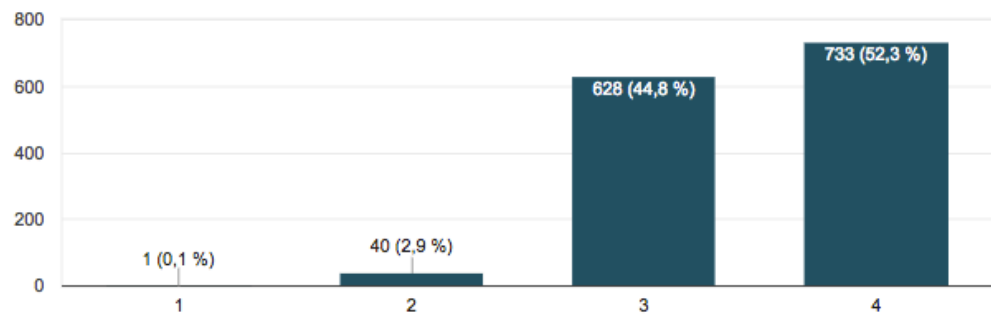
1 408 vastausta



8. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka paljon seuraavat sanat mielestäsi kuvaavat R/H Studion brändiä?

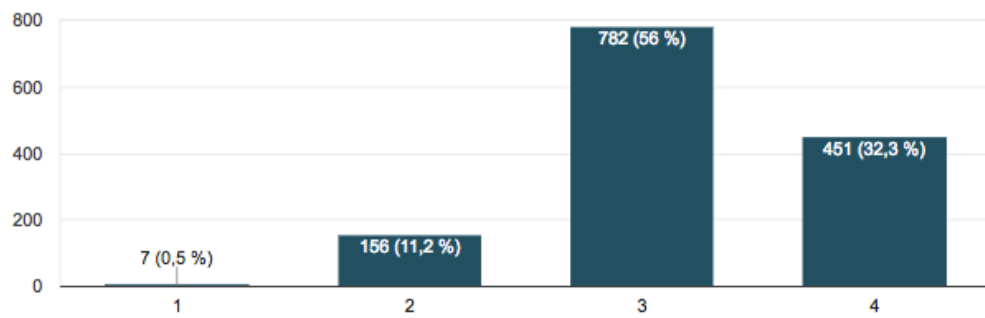
Laadukas

1 402 vastausta



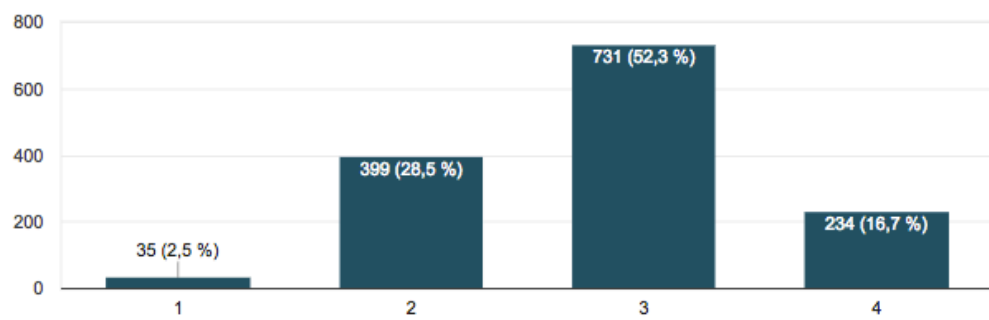
Asiakaslähtöinen

1 396 vastausta



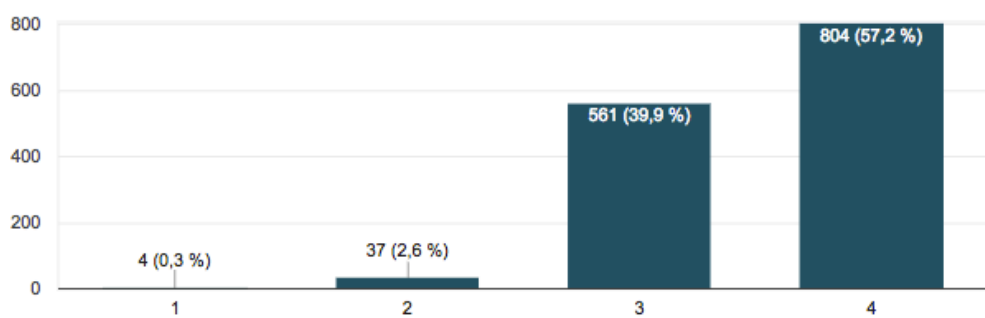
Kansainvälinen

1 399 vastausta



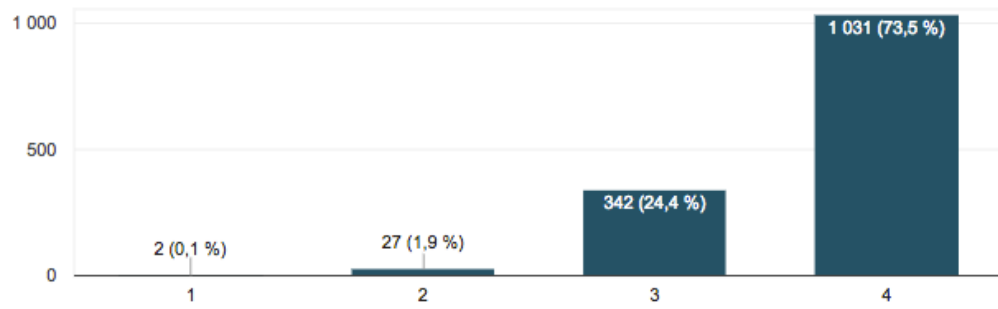
Kotimainen

1 406 vastausta



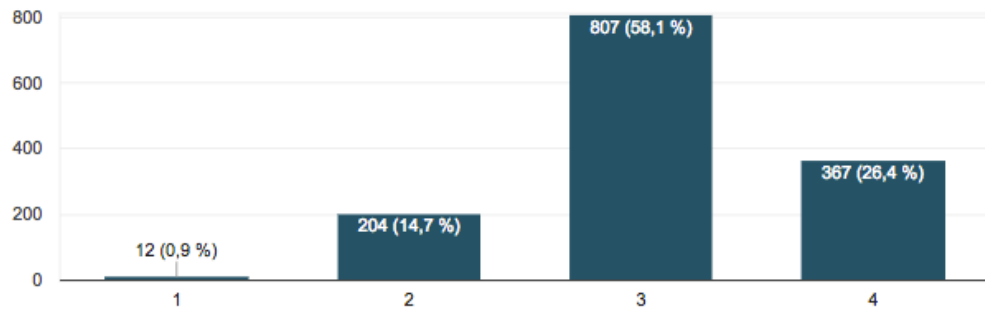
Kiinnostava

1 402 vastausta



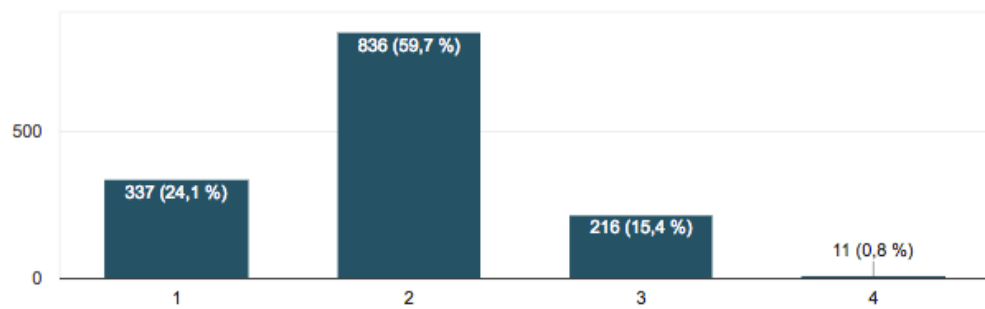
Lähtutuotanto

1 390 vastausta



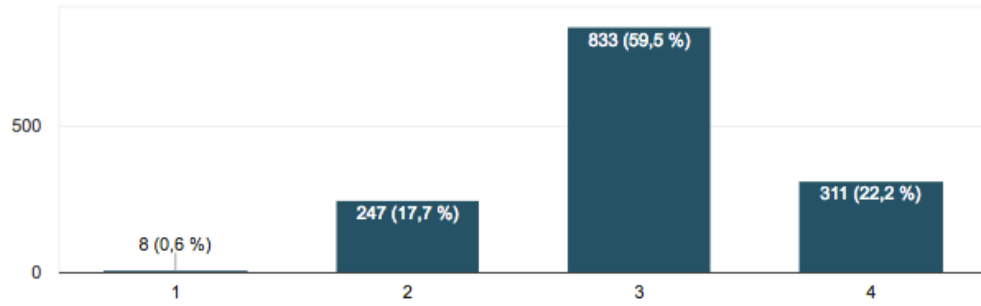
Edullinen

1 400 vastausta



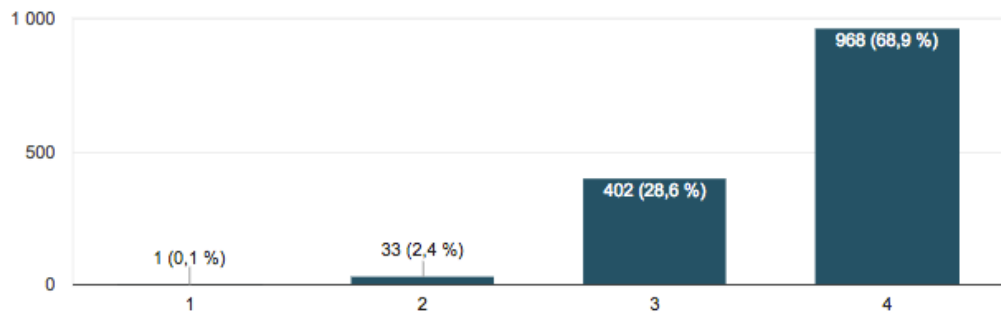
Samaistuttava

1 399 vastausta



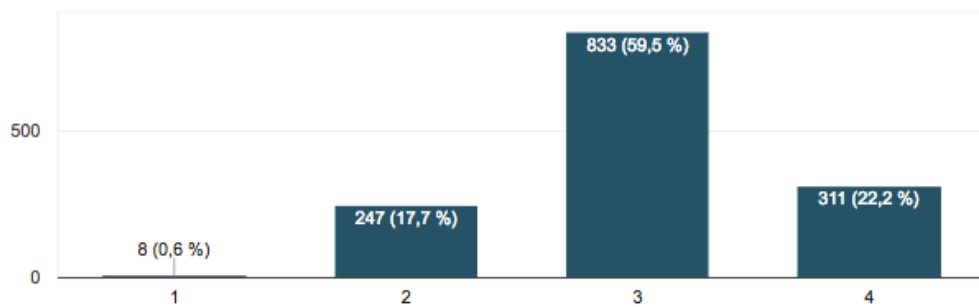
Trendikäs

1 404 vastausta



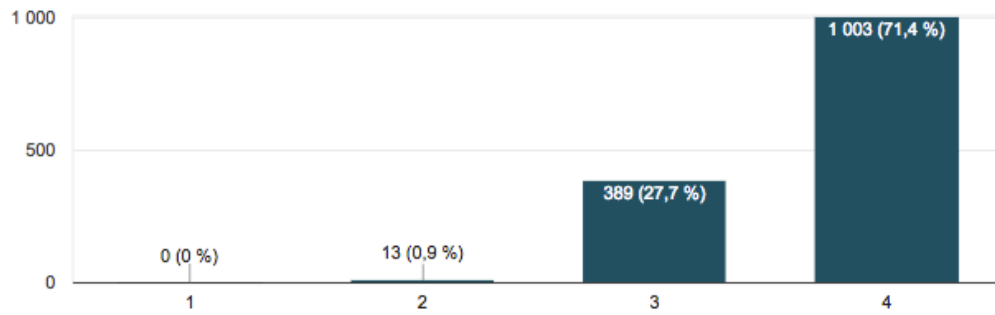
Samaistuttava

1 399 vastausta



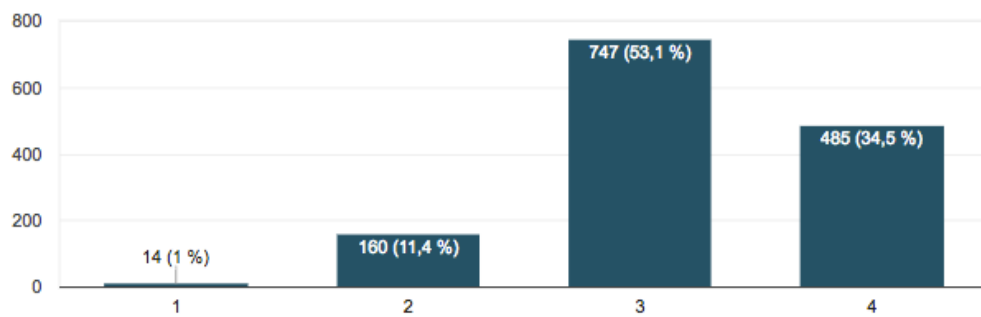
Positiivinen

1 405 vastausta



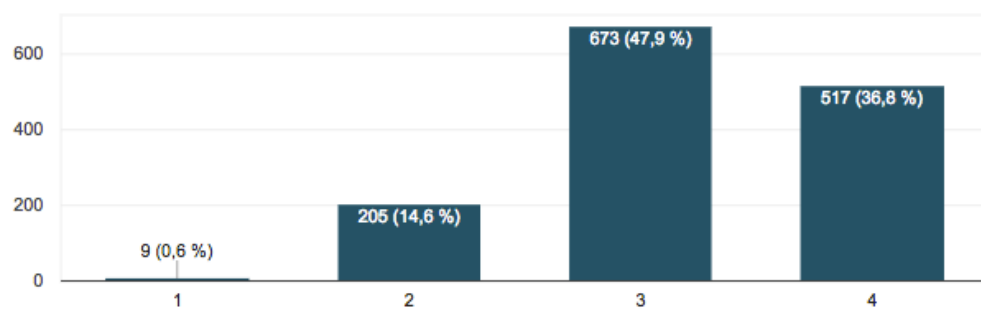
Naisellinen

1 406 vastausta



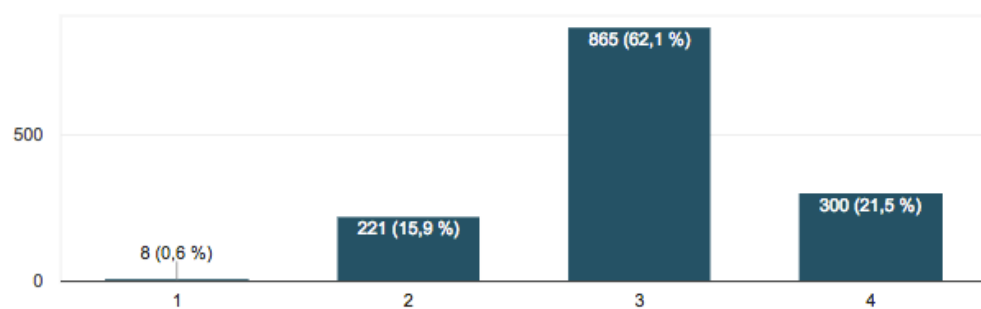
Helposti lähestyttävä

1 404 vastausta



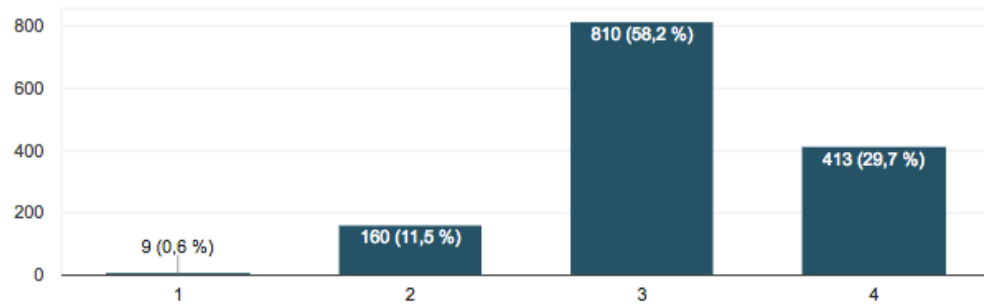
Ekologinen

1 394 vastausta



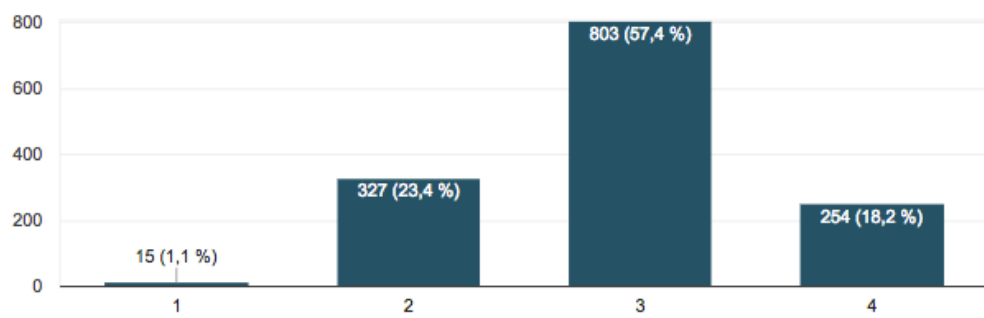
Eettinen

1 392 vastausta



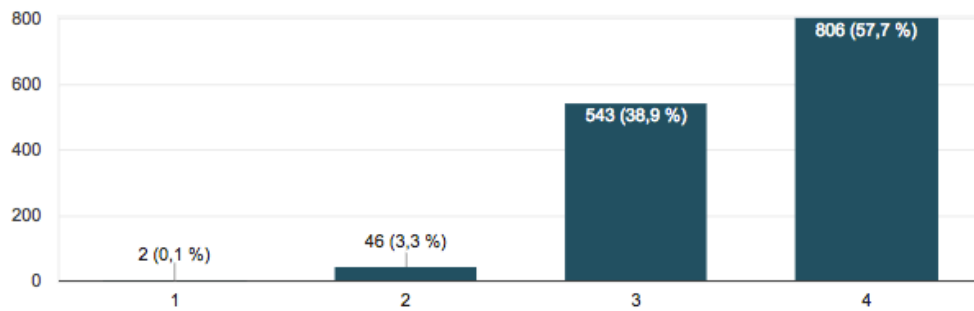
Kaupallinen

1 399 vastausta



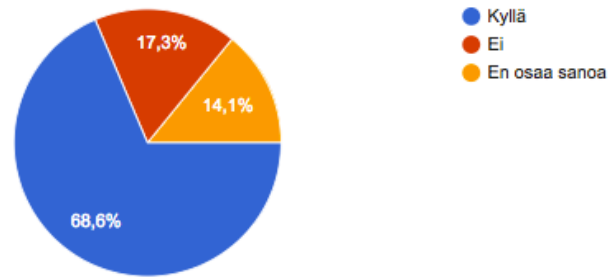
Aito

1 397 vastausta



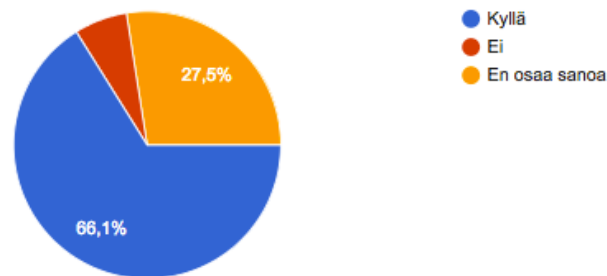
9. Koetko R/H Studion olevan brändi, joka suunnittelee vaatteita kaikenlaisille naisille?

1 404 vastausta



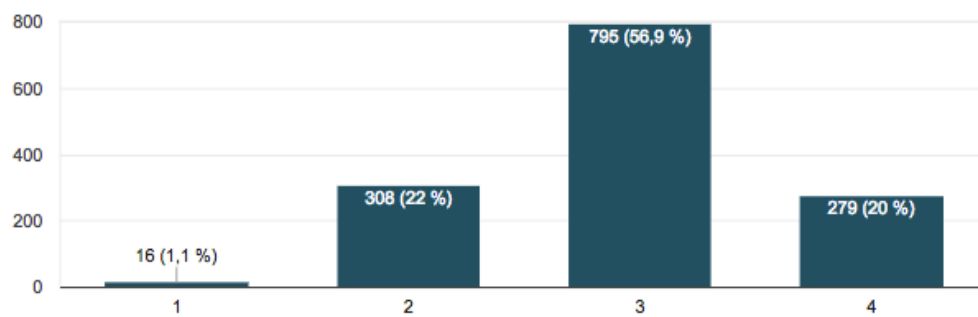
10. Luoko R/H Studion brändi sinulle kuluttajana lisäarvoa?

1 401 vastausta



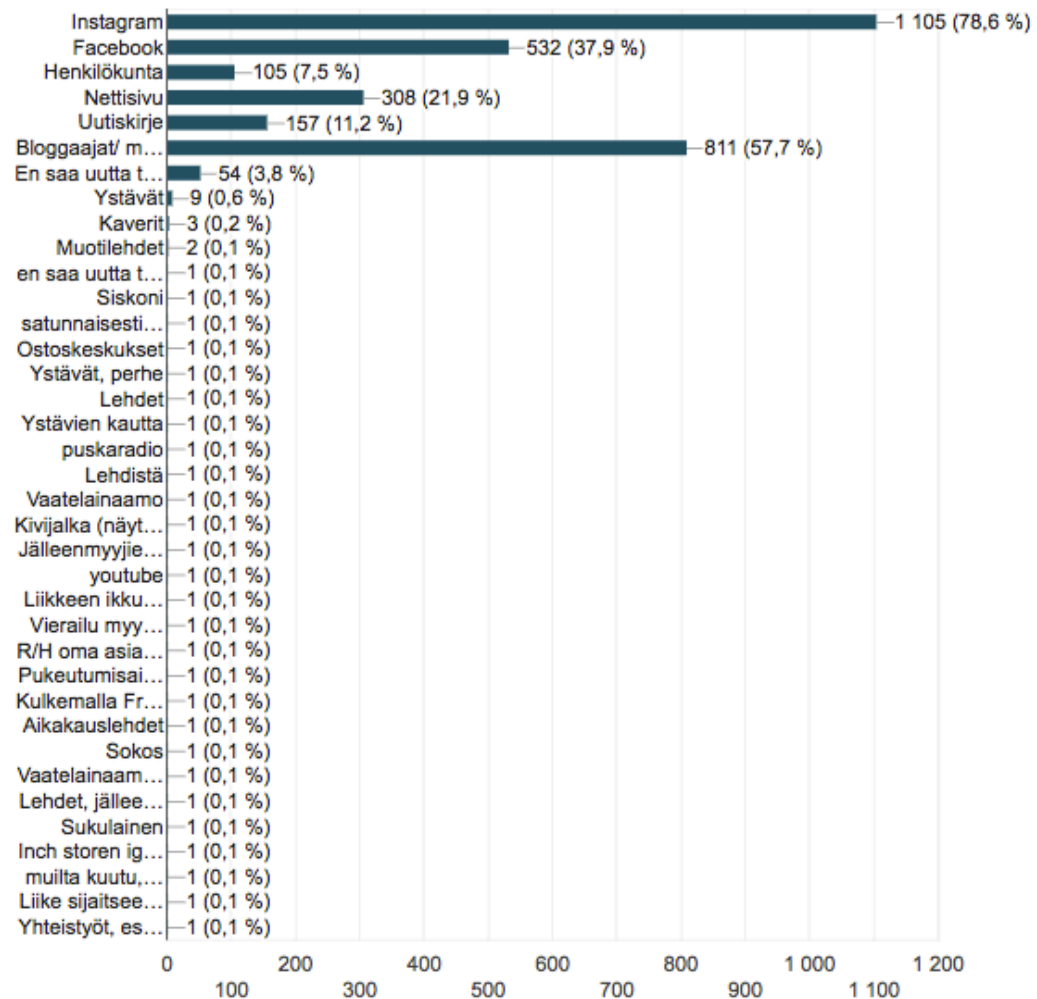
11. Asteikolla 1-4, kuinka tehokkaaksi koet R/H Studion nykyisen markkinoinnin?

1 398 vastausta



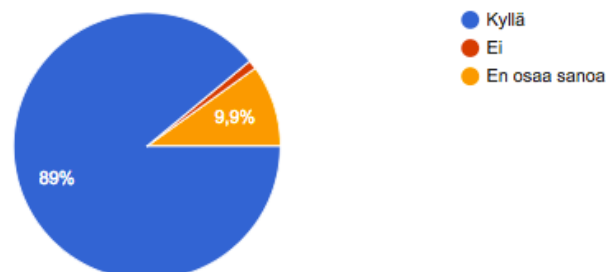
12. Mitä kautta vastaanotat tällä hetkellä uutta tietoa R/H:sta? Voit valita useita vastauksia.

1 405 vastausta



13. Koetko että R/H:n nykyinen markkinointi ja visuaalinen ilme ovat brändin näköisiä?

1 401 vastausta



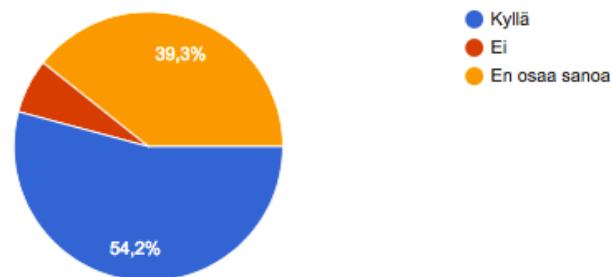
14. Kerro muutamalla sanalla, millaiseksi koet R/H:n asiakaspalvelun?

1 059 vastausta

Ei kokemusta (46)
En osaa sanoa (28)
Ei ole kokemusta (16)
Ystävällinen (15)
Hyvä (10)
- (10)
Asiakaslähtöinen (7)
Ystävällinen (6)
Erinomainen (6)
Erittäin hyvä (5)
Asiantunteva, ystävällinen (4)
En tiedä (4)

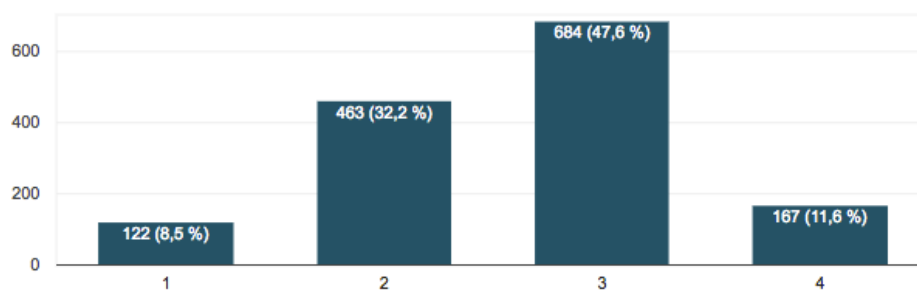
15. Koetko ostokokemuksen luovan sinulle kuluttajana lisäarvoa?

1 394 vastausta



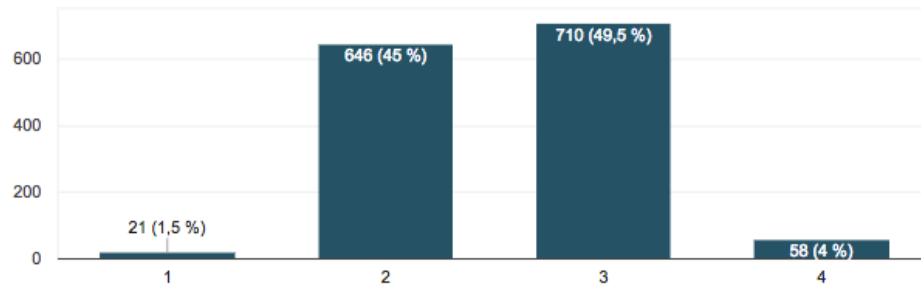
16. Koetko olevasi brändiuskollinen kuluttaja?

1 436 vastausta



17. Ostatko yleisesti ottaen suomalaista muotia/ designia?

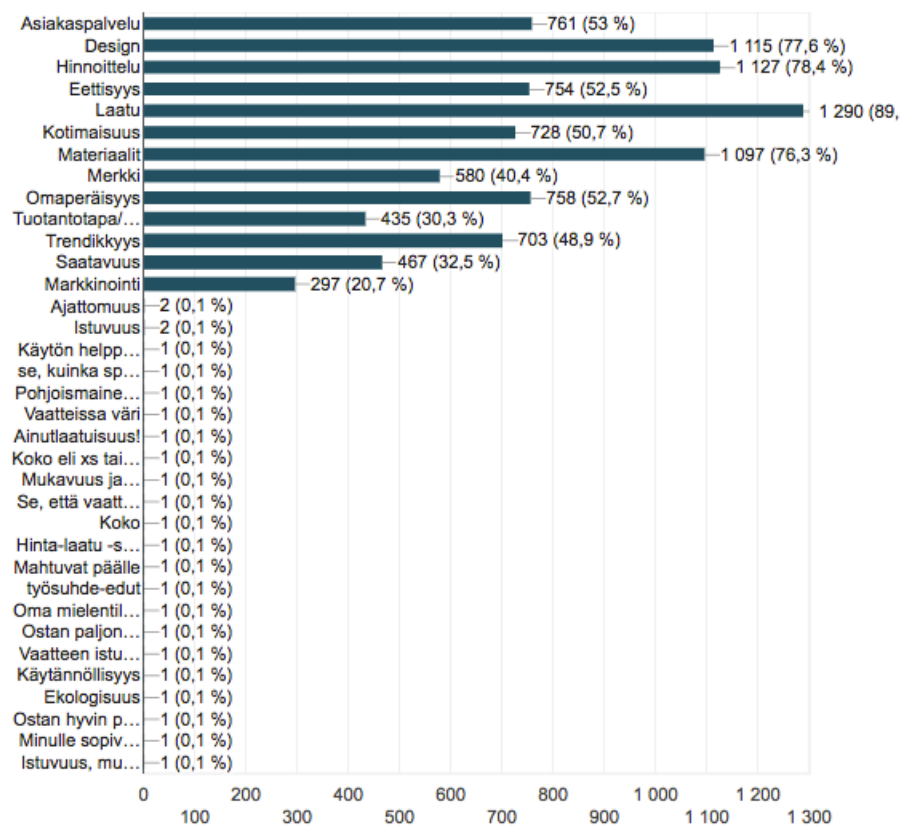
1 435 vastausta



18. Minkäläisten ominaisuuksien koet vaikuttavan vaateostopäätökseesi?

Voit valita useita vastauksia.

1 437 vastausta



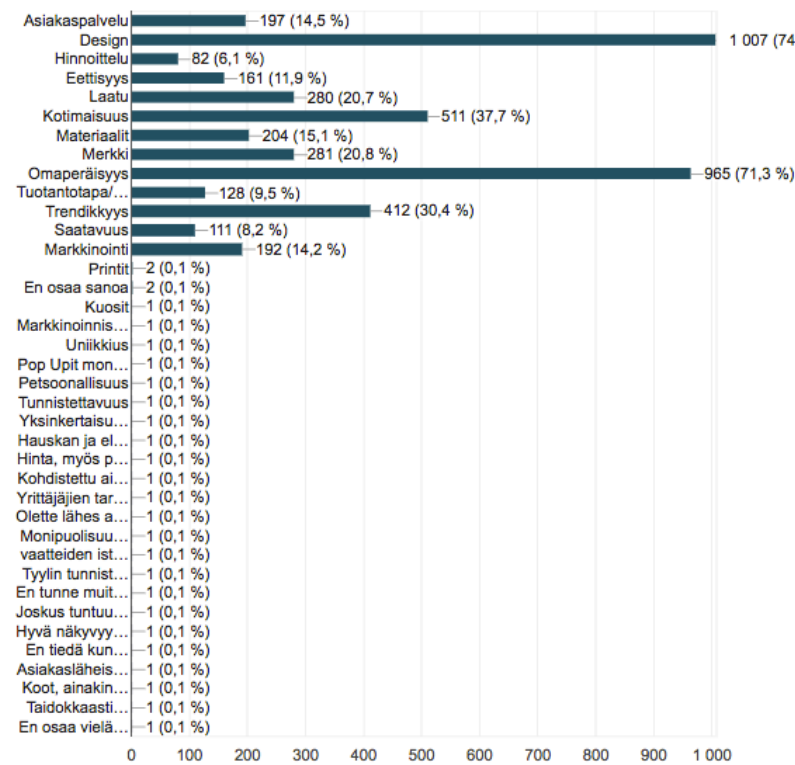
19. Koetko R/H Studiolla olevan kilpailijoita? Jos näin on, ketä?

743 vastausta

- (24)
En osaa sanoa (22)
Marimekko (18)
Uhana (13)
Samuji (12)
En koe (11)
Uhana Design (7)
Uhana design (7)
En (6)
En osaa sanoa. (6)
R-collection (6)
Samuji, Marimekko (5)

20. Mitkä ovat asioita, jotka mielestäsi erottavat R/H Studion kilpailijoistaan? Voit valita useita vastauksia.

1 354 vastausta



22. Asteikolla 1-10, kuinka todennäköisesti suosittelisit R/H:ta tutullesi?

1 421 vastausta

