

# **Effective Marketing Communications to Win the Local Market**

## **Case: Rock Shop - Hard Rock Helsinki, Finland**

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<b>Degree programme</b> International Business	
<b>Thesis title</b> Effective Marketing Communications to Win the Local Market Case: Rock Shop - Hard Rock Helsinki, Finland	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b> 40 + 18
<p>This Bachelor's thesis was conducted for Rock Shop, Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki. Rock Shop is located in the center of Helsinki, Aleksanterinkatu 21. The store sells fashion items such as the famous Hard Rock t-shirt, bag, hat, home decorations and accessories as well as the signature collectibles of the brand and so on. The overall objective of the study was to determine recommendations for an effective marketing communications mix to reach and attract the Finnish market. The research question can be worded as "How can Rock Shop - Hard Rock Helsinki develop its marketing communications mix in order to attract local market?".</p> <p>The study includes a theory section and an empirical section that deals with the case company. The theory section discussed five elements of brand equity (awareness, loyalty, imagery associations, perceived quality and other assets) and the marketing communications mix, including advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing. The empirical part focused on the customer image of Rock Shop in customers' perception and what the company could do to improve the effectiveness of marketing communications.</p> <p>Primary data and secondary data was collected to answer the research question. Primary data was collected through an in-depth interview with sales and marketing manager of Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki and a survey to get a variety of answers from people living in Finland. Altogether 75 answers were collected for the survey from 17 April 2018 to 24 April 2018. The researcher gathered secondary data from theory books about brand equity and the marketing communications mix.</p> <p>The research showed differences between the current methods of marketing communications of Rock Shop and the preferences of the Finnish market. Recommendations for development include the implementation of separate marketing strategies and activities for Rock Shop and a careful customer segmentation which helps to deliver the value and brand messages to customers efficiently. To create strong brand awareness, the case company should also intensify its Internet marketing and use sponsoring as well as fashion Instagram influencers to make the brand more well-known in the local market.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Marketing communications, marketing communications mix, local market, brand, consumer brand equity, customer perception	

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# 1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the thesis. Background information, reasearch question, investigative questions, research scope, international aspect, benefits of the research to different stakeholders, key concepts, introduction of case company as well as risks management will be covered.

## 1.1 Background

Business environment is becoming more complex than it used to be with the globalisation and, therefore, developing a successful marketing communications (MC) has become a vital part in the development strategies of companies. According to Fill & Turnbull (2016, 13), organizations use marketing communications to engage with a wide range of customers by fulfilling their different needs. In order to survive in the competitive business environment nowadays, companies need to build appropriate and efficient marketing communications mix so that their brands can be identified and differentiated especially when it comes to merchandise retail.

As regards Hard Rock Helsinki's interest in improving marketing communications tools for its retail store, Rock Shop to attract local customers in Finland, the thesis aims to find out recommendations for effective marketing communications mix which is also the preference of Finnish market. The researcher will then continue to refer to Hard Rock Helsinki as 'HRH' throughout this paper.

HRH is well known for its American cuisine restaurants, bars and collections of rock and roll memorabilia. In addition, the company owns a retail store, Rock Shop where their famous t-shirts and branded accessories are sold. The company sees the situation in which a majority of customers visiting the store are tourists and its merchandise brand is not a big player in the Finnish fashion retail market.

In terms of the importance of this study to the researcher, the topic strengthens her specialized knowledge and provide the insights of modern marketing communications by conducting practical research. Moreover, being equipped with abundant knowledge and practices will help to boost her future career as a specialist in marketing communication.

## 1.2 Research question

The purpose of this thesis is to develop the marketing communications mix of Rock Shop - Hard Rock in Helsinki, Finland so as to attract the local market.

The research question (RQ) can be worded as:

***How can Rock Shop - Hard Rock Helsinki develop its marketing communications mix in order to attract local market?***

The RQ is divided into investigative questions (IQ) as follows:

IQ1. How does HRH's merchandise brand image from the viewpoints of Finnish market and the company differ?

IQ1a How does HRH want the Finnish market perceive its merchandise brand?

IQ1b How does the Finnish market perceive Rock Shop's brand?

IQ2. What are the current marketing communications tools used by Rock Shop in the Finnish market and how effective are they in term of creating awareness?

IQ3. What are the marketing communications tools preferences of the Finnish market?

Table 1 below presents the theoretical framework, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

<b>Investigative Question</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>Results (Chapters)</b>
<b><i>IQ1.</i></b> How does HRH's merchandise brand image from the viewpoints of Finnish market and the company differ?	Customer value, brand awareness, consumer brand equity, consumer purchasing behaviour, market targeting, positioning, branding	Quantitative survey, qualitative interview, qualitative desktop research	4.1

<p><b><i>IQ2.</i></b> What are the current marketing communications tools used by Rock Shop in the Finnish market and how effective are they in term of creating awareness?</p>	<p>Marketing communications, marketing communication mix, promotional tools, reward, online marketing, brand awareness</p>	<p>Qualitative interview, quantitative survey, qualitative desktop research</p>	<p>4.2</p>
<p><b><i>IQ3.</i></b> What are the marketing communications tools preferences of the Finnish market?</p>	<p>Marketing communications, marketing communications mix, promotional tools, online marketing, preferences</p>	<p>quantitative survey, qualitative desktop research</p>	<p>4.3</p>

### 1.3 Demarkation

The thesis topic is about developing marketing communications mix in order to reach and attract potential customers living in Finland. Hard Rock is a global corporate brand, including restaurants, hotels, casinos, retail store and live music venues (Hard Rock 2017a). This paper studies only marketing communications practices of HRH's retail business and focuses on Finnish market. Other business operation sectors of the company will be excluded.

Regarding to brand research, brand equity, specifically consumer brand equity, will be analyzed because of its significance to the marketing communications mix design. Additionally, the delimitation of the research to the consumer brand equity will provide a thorough understanding of local market's perception towards the retail brand of HRH.

Due to the main purpose of reaching potential customers in local market and influencing their brand awareness through marketing communications mix, the elements of marketing mix such as price, place and product will not be included in this study, enabling the researcher to focus on improving marketing communications tools. Recommendations for the effective marketing communications mix solutions will be made by identifying the gap between company's current marketing communications tools and local customers' preferences.

#### **1.4 International aspect**

HRH belongs to the global corporate brand Hard Rock International which is operating 176 corporate and franchise cafes, 24 hotels, and 11 casinos in 75 countries all over the world. Hard Rock Cafe, together with Hard Rock Hotels, Casinos and Live Venues are four brands of Hard Rock International (Hard Rock 2017b). Hard Rock's merchandise brand came later when its famous t-shirt became a 'rock and roll uniform'. The company in Helsinki, Finland operates businesses in restaurant, bar, live venue as well as in retail. Hard Rock is famous for its 'rock and roll' concept and thus strongly affects the brand image in Finnish market, making it differentiated compared from competitors. The nature of a franchise and being influenced by the corporate strategy on the other hand bring challenges for Rock Shop - HRH to effectively communicate with local market.

#### **1.5 Anticipated benefits**

The company, Rock Shop – HRH and the author of this thesis can benefit from the research.

From the company's perspective, Rock Shop can save time and focuses on other aspects of core business by having someone do research on developing marketing communications mix. Furthermore, the research helps to clarify the brand image in Finnish market and examine the success of the current marketing communications tools that HRH is using for its merchandise retail store. Research results will suggest improvements in marketing communications mix that is designed relevant to the local market. The research may contribute to the increase in brand awareness and growth in sales.

As a researcher the author will gain for herself thorough and practical learning on brand equity and marketing communications mix. Additionally, this is a valuable opportunity for the researcher to widen her business network through working directly with the company's executives as well as develop her project management skill and strengthen needed competencies that will help to boost the future career in the marketing field.

Other Finnish companies can also benefit from this thesis. The research provides an insight into Finnish market, identifying what types of effective marketing communications mix that are favoured by Finnish customers so that businesses will be enabled to build successful marketing plan.

## 1.6 Key concepts

To achieve an understanding of the thesis topic and research process, the key concepts used in this paper are defined as follows.

**Marketing communications** is a process in which participants recognize, evaluate and respond to needs of audiences in order to generate engagement between the participants and the audiences (Fill & Turnbull 2016, 20).

**Marketing communications mix** is a tools bag that companies use to communicate their value propositions to target customers. The marketing communications mix includes five major promotion tools: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing. (Armstrong & Kotler 2013, 385.)

**Brand** is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of a competitor" according to American Marketing Association. Keller (2013, 31) developed this definition as an identifier that adds either rational and tangible dimensions - related to product performance of the brand or symbolic, emotional, and intangible dimensions - related to what the brand represents.

**Brand equity** describes the value of a brand, the concept includes consumer brand equity and financial brand equity (De Pelsmacker & Geuens & Van Den Bergh 2018, 58).

**Consumer brand equity** is a concept which is used to indicate the marketing-related elements of brand equity. According to Aaker (1991, 17), consumer brand equity consists of performance/perceived quality, awareness, brand loyalty, associations and other assets such as distribution, shelf space, patents and trademarks. Each of the brand equity component is specified and influenced by marketing communications strategies. (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 60.)

**Brand awareness** is the extend to which customers are familiar with the brand, understand what the product stands for, its attributes and characteristics (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 60).

**Customer perception** is the way in which the customers "select, organise and interpret stimuli" (Fill & Turnbull 2016, 77) to create a picture of a brand or a product. Fill and Turn-

bull (2016, 78) indicated that customer perception can be influenced by advertising, public relations, social media, personal experiences and other marketing communications.

### **1.7 Risks and risks management**

Since the company belongs to the global corporate brand, the researcher sees the challenges coming from data accessibility. In order to solve this problem, all accessible data and documents will be fully utilized. Qualitative desktop research is also conducted for this thesis.

Another problem that could hinder the research process is selecting questionnaire respondents who have enough interest to dedicate their time for answering the questionnaire. Therefore, distributing the questionnaire within Finnish communities will help to provide descriptive but reliable results.

The convenience sampling will be undertaken because of the nature of the research: studying purpose, lack of time and money and moreover, this non-probability sampling technique is fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects are readily available. However, influence of bias and other interventions need to be taken into consideration.

### **1.8 Rock Shop – Hard Rock Helsinki**

Hard Rock Helsinki is a part of Hard Rock International. This global brand is famous for its collectible fashion and music-related merchandise (see Appendix 1), memorable dining experiences as well as Hard Rock Live performance venues. Hard Rock International is operating in 75 countries, consisting of 176 cafes, 24 hotels, and 11 casinos (Hard Rock 2017b). The company size is about 40,000 employees globally. Music is considered as the pillar of this brand. The brand wants to bring authentic 'rock and roll' experience to the customers through their products and services. Therefore, all venues and business sectors of the company are strongly influenced by this concept. In addition to four main brands Hard Rock Cafe, Hard Rock Hotels, Casinos and Live Venues, the merchandise brand Rock Shop of the company started later when its t-shirt with Hard Rock logo on it became famous all over the world.

The story of Hard Rock began in 1971 with the opening of the very first Hard Rock Cafe, an American style diner in London by Isaac Tigrett and Peter Morton (Hard Rock 2017c). Hard Rock has expanded globally since 1982 with the establishment of the first US Hard Rock Cafe in Los Angeles and then become one of the most recognized brands in the world. In March 2007, the business was acquired by the Seminole tribe of Florida, which

already owned Hard Rock-branded hotels and casinos in Hollywood and Tampa, Florida (BBC News 2006). The merchandise brand of Hard Rock started when the London Hard Rock Cafe sponsored a local soccer team in 1974. The signature white t-shirt featured Hard Rock's logo was the team uniform and caught a lot of attention from the public that many people wanted to buy it. (Hard Rock 2017a.)

HRH, Finland was established on 15 October 2012 with the grand opening of its famous restaurant, bar – Hard Rock Cafe and a Rock Shop. It is located in a popular shopping and dining area, near a variety of tourist attractions. While Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki is placed on the second floor, the ground one feature Rock Shop where customers can find 'one-of-a-kind Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki merchandise' including apparel, home accessories and collectibles (Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki 2017). The company uses the corporate's website for online shopping which enables customers to purchase their products easily. Having five years of history and development, the company is now continue working on how to attract more customers in local market in addition to tourists. Concerning the situation in which the Sales and Marketing Manager of HRH showed his interests in how the Rock Shop can attract local market, the researcher decided to do research on this study.

## 2 Relationship between consumer brand equity and marketing communications mix

This chapter presents theoretical framework used for the theory part. The key concepts, relevant theories and models are visualized in Figure 1.

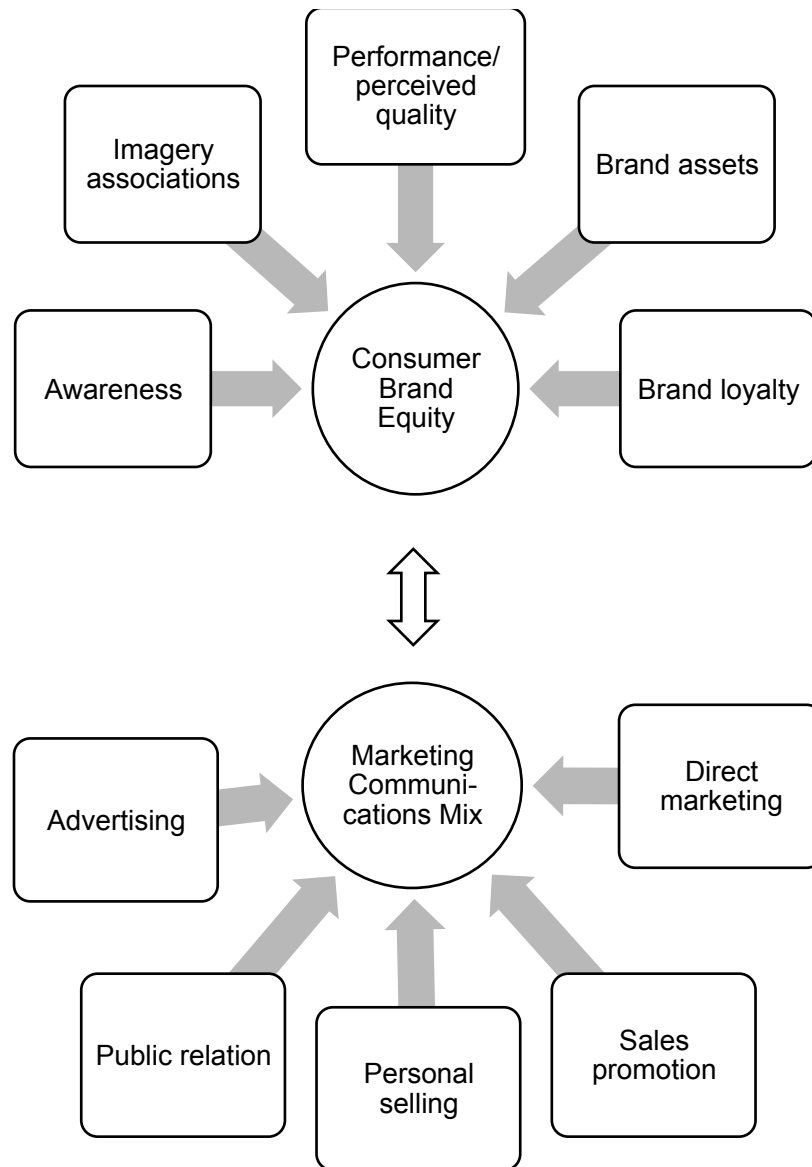


Figure 1. Relationship between consumer brand equity and marketing communications mix. (Aaker 1996; Fill 2013; De Pelsmacker & al. 2018)

As described in the figure 1, two fundamental theories will be used in this research are Consumer brand equity and Marketing Communications Mix. A brand is not just a logo or a name, because the customers will see a brand as a reflection of the flow of emotions and associations. The surplus value of a brand is the brand equity. According to Fill and



Turnbull (2016, 287), in order to achieve successful brand and attract the market, the images and the perceptions that customers have with brands and the brands' identities that managers wish to create need to be tightly related. And marketing communications mix plays an essential part in that process. Marketing communications mix is used to inform, persuade and remind customers of the brands presence, to communicate with customers and fulfil customers' needs. In other words, the role of marketing communications is to create and reinforce brand equity.

When talking about brand equity, the concepts of financial brand equity and consumer brand equity will be discussed. The former refers to the brand's financial value while the latter mentions the underlying customer- and marketing-related elements of the brand. Due to the objective of this research, the author will focus on consumer brand equity. There are five components of consumer brand equity: awareness, performance/perceived quality, brand imagery associations, other assets such as staff's quality, labels, etc and brand loyalty (Aaker 1991, 17). Each component is determined and affected by marketing communications and brings certain benefits for the brand, too.

Implementing effective marketing communications mix will contribute to the development of brand equity and improve brand's image in the market (Fill & Turnbull 2016, 295). Marketing communications mix comprises advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing. Deciding to use which marketing communication tools depends on the objective of organization as well as how the customers see the brand.

## **2.1 Consumer brand equity**

When looking at and evaluating the marketing value of a brand, De Pelsmacker, Geuens and Van Den Bergh (2018, 60) emphasize the significance of consumer brand equity in differentiating the company from its competitors. It can also be explained as the value of brand from consumer's perspective. Understanding and enhancing consumer brand equity helps firms gain customers' trust in the brand and develop brand's competitive advantages. Aaker (1991, 17) designs a comprehensive model of consumer brand equity which consists of five components: brand awareness, brand imagery, performance, brand loyalty and brand assets. The concepts and certain benefits of these components will be discussed more closely in the following parts.

### **2.1.1 Brand awareness**

Brand awareness is described as the likelihood that consumers recognize or recall a brand (Aaker 1991, 19). Brand awareness plays a very important role in the buying

decision process of a consumer, in which the brand itself determines whether the product will get the customer's attention and purchase intention. It refers the fact that consumers are aware of the existence of the brand, understand what the service or product stands for as well as its characteristics for example brand logo, product price, quality, advertising characteristics and so on (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 61). To put it simply, brand awareness represents the power of a brand presenting in the customers' mind.

Brand awareness is a key element which helps to increase the level of sales because customers tend to purchase brands that they are familiar with. In addition, brand awareness plays an important role in reinforcing customers' loyalty to the brand. The more well-known the brand is, the greater the opportunity that it will be purchased repeatedly. Brand equity will increase as the consumers gain a high degree of awareness of the products and retain them strongly.

### **2.1.2 Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is defined as the tendency of consumers to repeatedly buy products from the same brand instead of a substitute product from its competitors. Brand loyalty is influenced by an emotional involvement that is built and developed between the consumer and the brand through the purchase process and using the brand. There are two ways to approach brand loyalty: based on consumer attitudes and consumer behavior (Kabiraj & Shanmugan 2011). The former emphasizes the consumer's loyalty toward a brand by repeat purchase and frequent use of a product. Besides, Oliver (1997) argues that brand loyalty as a commitment of customers to purchase or use a product in the future, although the influences of market situations may alter customer behaviors. Meanwhile the latter refers to the consumer's intention in consuming the product. Rossiter and Percy (1987) argues that brand loyalty is reflected through the favourable attitudes of the consumers towards the brand and their future consuming the product over times.

Brand loyalty plays a key part in the success of a brand and the higher the brand loyalty of the consumers, the higher the profit. A brand which gains strong loyalty from customers will greatly benefit in sales and marketing. As retaining an existing loyal customer is always cheaper and easier than attracting a new customer, high brand loyalty enables firms to reduce marketing expenses and avoid competitive threats. In fact, brand loyalty is the highest measure that indicates the outcome of the branding process and is seen as the base to evaluate the brand strength.

### **2.1.3 Imagery associations**

In the concept of brand equity by Aaker (1991, 20) and Keller (2013, 76), the two terms "association" and "image" are often used interchangeably. The word "association" is from the perspective of the customers. From the perspective of the brand owner, "association" is equivalent to the trusted promise used in some other branding definitions.

Brand imagery associations include intangible aspects of a brand: user image, usage imagery, brand personality and brand feelings, reflecting how consumers think about the brand. These associations can be formed and developed through customers experience and contact with the brand, through marketing communications or other information sources, such as word of mouth (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 61). User image is the perception that consumers have about the brand by having experience and interactions with the brand. For example, Coca Cola is seen as a brand of happiness, excitement and joy. Usage imagery refers to the usage situations which consumers relate the brand to. Another intangible association is brand personality. Aaker (1997, 347) defines brand personality as the set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand. This component plays an essential role in enhancing consumer brand equity. The last type of imagery associations is brand feelings that relate to consumers' emotional attachment to a brand. According to Morrison and Crane (2007, 410), consumers' emotion plays an important role in brand decision making as well as satisfactory and loyalty toward a brand.

### **2.1.4 Performance**

Performance or perceived quality is the extend to which a brand meets customer's needs by providing attributes and benefits. It is the crucial element to distinguish a brand from its alternatives and provide customers reasons to buy. In other words, performance is the consumer's subjective perception of the product's overall quality or excellence regarding its intended purpose, in comparison with competitors (Aaker 1996, 17).

When the consumers perceive a brand as high quality, they will express their feelings because they recognize that the brand has characteristics that they enjoy and want to own it in stead of other brands. However, the true quality of a brand that the manufacturer provides and the perceived quality of the consumers does not normally coincide. The reason is that the customers are not experts in this field. Therefore, the quality that customers feel is the factor that they will use as a basis for their consumption.

### **2.1.5 Brand assets**

In addition to four components mentioned above, brand assets contributes to a strong brand equity. Brand assets is explained as patents, intellectual property rights, trademarks, shelf space and channel relationships (Ovidiu 2005). These assets help to strengthen the prevalence of a brand, hence increase its competitive edge.

A patent refers to a certificate issued by the state to a person or entity certifying that the patentee is the owner of an invention for a period of time. Within that time, the patentee has the right to seize, dispose of and exclusively use the invention. When the above-mentioned time limit expires, the right of the patent owner is automatically lost, the patent is now considered public and others have the right to use the invention. Patent helps companies avoid direct competition. Trademark protects a brand from being copied its name, logo or package. Channel relationship, if well built and managed, will enable brands to reach the potential customers.

### **2.2 Brand delivery through marketing communications mix**

Fill (2013, 18) clarifies marketing communications as a communication process between the company and its existing and potential customers through which the company convey its messages to the customers by understanding the customers' needs and environment. The process then raises cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural responses from the customers. Marketing communications aim to "differentiate, reinforce, inform or persuade audiences to think, feel or behave in particular ways" (Fill 2013, 19). The role of marketing communications is to engage consumers with the companies and create customer relationships. Therefore, using marketing communications efficiently can help to build and improve the brand equity.

Marketing communications mix is the combination of various tools that are used by a company to communicate with its current and potential customers. The most five common and essential instruments of marketing communications mix are advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct selling. Whether the companies choose to use a single tool or combine several ones, they need to find a balance of tool so that the brand's message is well delivered to the audiences.

In order to figure out how to deliver the brand effectively through marketing communications mix, key components of marketing communications mix need taking into consideration. In particular, the researcher will discuss about advertising, public relations, personal

selling, sales promotion, direct marketing and present how these tools can enhance consumer brand equity in this section.

### 2.2.1 Advertising

Advertising is one of the most visible and common vehicles of marketing communications mix that firms use. Richard and Curran (2002) establish a comprehensive definition of advertising after a lot of discussion and re-evaluation of prior studies: "Advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future".

Advertising is used to build the long-term brand image and does not have a quick influence on the sales. It is an effective mean to communicate the company's objective and its value proposition to a wide range of buyers at a low average cost. Using advertising in marketing campaigns can enable firms to change consumers' perceptions as well as encourage a change in consumer behaviour by taking advantage of the use of feelings and emotions in advertising. Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) generalize the effects of advertising through the below model.

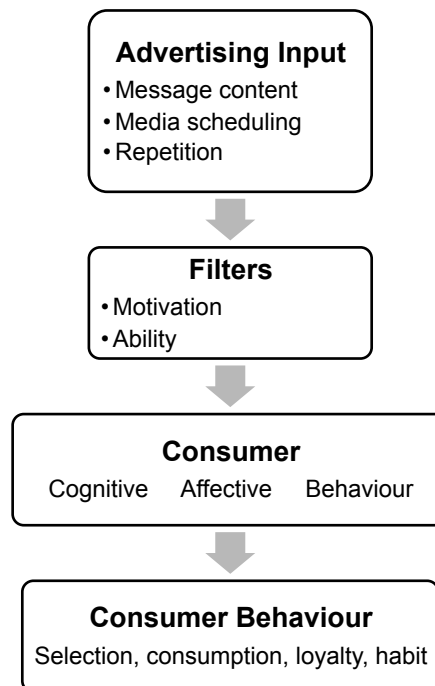


Figure 2. The effects of advertising (Vakratsas & Ambler 1999)

Kotler and Armstrong (2012, 447-448) categorize advertising into a number of main types: television ads, newspapers ads, magazine ads, Internet advertising, direct mail, radio ads, and outdoor advertising. When deciding what kinds of advertising methods to use, the

companies have to consider reach, frequency, influence of each vehicle. Reach refers to the percentage of people in the targeted market viewing, listening or reading the ads within a given time period. For the advertising media such as television and radio, this parameter indicates the number of viewers or listeners. Frequency is the number of times an ad appears on a media. For example, the frequency of a printed media is the number of issues and the number of reads. Last but not least, influence of advertising media is also taken into account. This parameter indicates the level of impact that advertising must have when reaching audiences. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 444-446.)

While printed page such as magazine, newspaper, journal, article is seen as a traditional and widely used mean of advertising, marketers consider active media including TV, radio and cinema as one the tools to grab attention from the audiences (Blythe 2006, 88). Another common advertising type is outdoor displays. Outdoor marketing refers to a variety of methods, for instance billboards, posters, banners or advertising on transport and street furniture (Blythe 2006, 114).

The power of Internet has made it become a less wasteful and one of the most measurable tools of advertising (Subramanian 2015, 314). Taylor, Lewin and Strutton (2011) present two key reasons for this development of Internet advertising. These are the majority of people having Internet access and the significant shift from traditional media audience to Internet audience. Internet advertising or online advertising is defined as the method of using the Internet to deliver marketing messages to the audiences. The tool consists of display ads, email ads, native ads and social media ads (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 266-268).

Advertising is considered as one of brand-building activities which helps to raise brand awareness. A creative and effective ads can gain the customers' attention and encourage their motivations to purchase the product. Moreover, implementation of frequent ad campaigns is an excellent method to build and maintain brand image by focusing on perceived quality or imagery associations.

### **2.2.2 Public relations**

So far there have been several discussions about how to define public relations (PR) and among them two ways of defining this concept are internationally accepted and familiar with PR professionals. The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK) defines PR as a planned and ongoing effort to establish and maintain trust and mutual understanding between an organization and the publics (Egan 2015). This definition emphasizes that PR activities are organized continuously into campaigns or programs and have to be carefully

planned. Meanwhile Jefkins (1998) indicates that public relations includes all types of planned communication, both inside and outside the organization, between an organization and its publics to achieve specific objectives that are related to the mutual understanding.

Public relation is a more generalized activity than advertising. PR refers to all communications within the organization, while advertising – is more costly than PR though - is limited primarily to marketing functions (with minor exceptions such as recruitment advertising). In addition, some organizations may not use advertising, but public relations are more or less involved in the operations of all organizations. For example, a firefighter can not advertise their services, but it certainly has links with the publics.

Public relations have a positive impact on branding by well-designed and carefully-planned campaigns. Different methods and techniques are applied in public relations, for instance community involvement, presentation, speech or participation in seminars and sponsorship. It is an effective communications tool to reap the public recognition and communicate the company's value as well as its objectives to audiences. When it comes to deliver valuable messages, public relations make it easier for consumers to relate to when confronted with the brand. Additionally, the message delivered through public relations activities is less commercial because the use of intermediaries or newspaper articles that contain diverse information make it easily accepted and sympathized by the public. Companies use public relations to build good relationship with customers and achieve favourable public image, therefore raise the brand awareness. For corporate brands, using public relations efficiently can help to build a strong brand image (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 66).

### **2.2.3 Personal selling**

Personal selling is the face-to-face communication between salespeople with potential customers through which the sellers learn the customers' needs in order to consult, introduce and persuade customers to choose and buy their products (Fill 2013, 24). Compared to advertising, personal selling is a better tool to convey more information and influence on customers. The interactions between the sellers and buyers are flexible and can be adjusted to the specific requirements and situations. Personal selling also contributes to establish and develop customer relationships because by direct communicating, the salespeople are able to identify customers' problem and quickly respond to their enquiries. On the other hand, this method might have a bad image from the perspective of end users, it is sometimes seen as a dishonest and forceful technique.

In order to attract new customers and successfully obtain orders from them, salespeople should follow the selling process including different steps as shown in Figure 3: prospecting and qualifying, preapproach, approach, presentation and demonstration, handling objections, closing, and follow-up (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 478-481). The process begins with creating the initial impression and providing the potential customers necessary information about the company, products as well as maintaining the customer relationships. The face-to-face meeting then is planned and organized. After discussions and negotiations to investigate the customers' needs and offer the solutions, the selling process is followed by handling objections. New orders can be made or not afterward and the salespeople will arrange follow-up calls or meetings to ensure the buyer's satisfaction and repeat purchase.

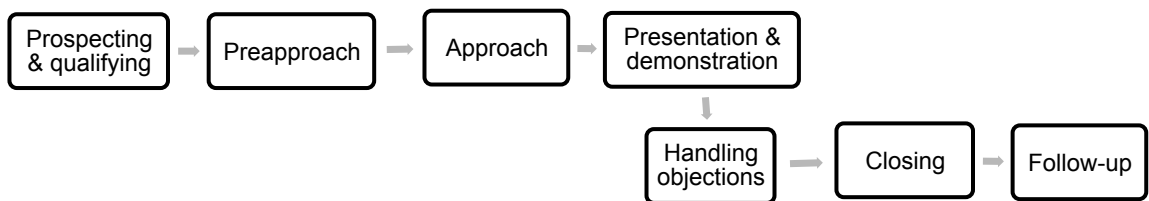


Figure 3. The selling process (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 478)

This communication tool plays an important role in building customer relationships. Personal selling, if well-handled, can contribute to brand equity by forming the brand image in customers' memory and creating the connections between the brand with favourable and unique associations.

#### **2.2.4 Sales promotion**

As stated by Fill (2013, 537), sales promotion refers to short-term incentives that encourage customers to buy in a short period of time by providing them additional benefits to increase sales and gather marketing information (pull strategy). Moreover, sales promotions target intermediaries in the marketing channel to motivate them to sell more goods to the other businesses (push strategy).

Companies are now using various promotional tools for different purposes depending on the market, products as well as the competition conditions. The typical tools includes sampling, gifts and coupons, bonus packs, price offs, and so on. The sample products can be sent to customers' houses by mail or at the store. Companies may also send free gifts such as hats, T-shirts, backpacks, bags or holiday vouchers, dinner coupons to loyal



customers. Another tactic is bonus package which means offering more products at the regular price, for example buying 1 getting 1.

In term of brand building, sales promotion is used to raise the brand awareness. By sending samples or coupons, vouchers, the companies can attract new customers and provide them opportunities to experience the products and services. Offering price offs on the other hand may harm brand's reputation and reduce consumer's loyalty in the long run because this method can lower the brand performance. Fortunately, the implementation of loyalty programs that reward frequent buyers will contribute to retain existing customers and create the effect of brand strength with new ones.

### **2.2.5 Direct marketing**

The last component included in Fill's model of marketing communications mix is direct marketing. Fill (2013, 499) defines direct marketing as "a strategy used to create a personal and intermediary-free dialogue with customers". The goal of direct marketing is to encourage the customers to buy right away. The success of a direct marketing campaign is reflected in the response rate. In addition, it has impact on the customer's perception and intention of future purchases. Direct marketing also helps to deliver messages that emphasize the brand image and unique associations, inform and instruct the customers to prepare for the next purchase (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 66).

Direct marketing is performed through a wide range of methods such as printed media, direct mail, telemarketing, door-to-door marketing, radio and television, the Internet and digital media, and so on. Direct marketing through printed media includes catalogue, magazines and newspaper. Catalogues directly delivered to consumers by mail usually contain features of products, sample collections, hotlines for inquiries and gifts, discounts. Direct mail refers to the method of sending advertising through the postal system. Telemarketing is an important tool in direct marketing and is being used commonly. Customers will use the telephone and call the toll-free number to place an order (Fill 2013, 510-516).

While advertising and public relations is used to create the brand awareness, raise the customers' interest and preference, sales promotion is implemented to stimulate the sales and personal selling aims to achieve the sales target, direct marketing leads to direct sales without intermediaries (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 408).

### 3 Research methods and Implementation

In the following sections, the research design and different methods that are used for this research will be discussed, including qualitative and quantitative methods. Sampling, types of collected data and evaluation of their reliability, validity will be also discussed. The data collection and data analysis methods are described visually as the below research model.

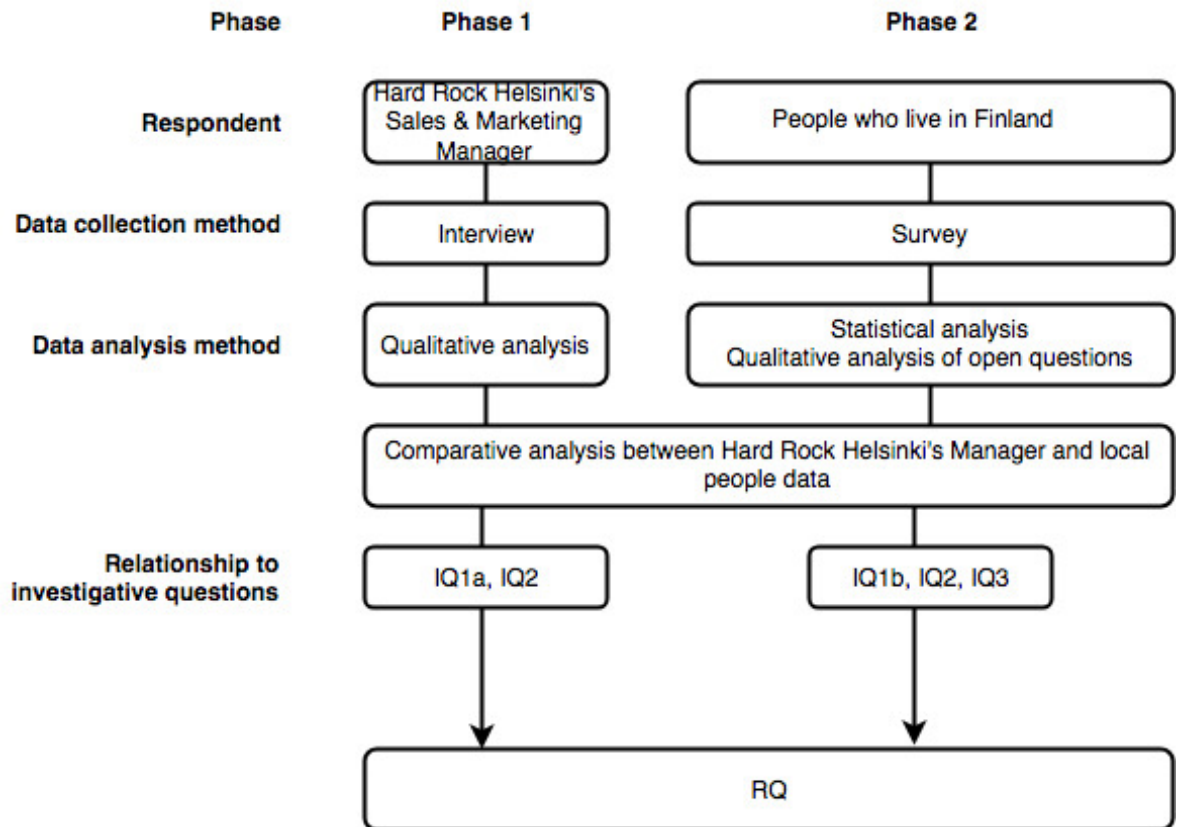


Figure 4. Research model

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016, 163), the research design shows how the research question is answered. And in the case of this study, the research was divided into three main parts. Firstly, theories about brand equity and marketing communications were collected and synthesized from different and reliable sources. The next steps were qualitative and quantitative research. A qualitative interview with Hard Rock Helsinki's Sales & Marketing Manager was conducted to get the answers for investigative question 1a and 2. Investigative questions 1b, the effectiveness of current marketing communications in IQ2 and IQ3 were answered through the questionnaires distributed to potential customers who are living in Finland. The research question then would be solved by stud-

ying the comparative analysis between collected data from the manager and the customers.

### **3.1 Research design**

Considering the subject of this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to explore the brand equity of Rock Shop from different perspectives: the manager and customers as well as identify the local market's preferred choices of marketing communications tools. The qualitative research was conducted through face-to-face interview with the manager of Rock Shop and several open questions in the questionnaire which was sent to customers. This method is useful to collect a rich source of information about current marketing communications that the company is using and gain the insights into the problem of company's marketing communications in Finnish market.

In addition, the quantitative method was used in order to investigate how the Finnish market perceives Rock Shop's brand as well as study the marketing tools that receive highly favorable responses from the potential customers who are living in Finland. One advantage of this method is the capability of collecting data from a large number of participants. Also, the data retrieved from surveys is representative and convenient to analyze. This method not only helps to collect individual data and aggregate to numerically analyze entire framework as well as the relationships between different variables but also requires less interpretation from the researcher. After deciding to use the quantitative research, the thesis author chose the survey as a research instrument for the study. Survey is an easy way to gather the information from participants within a relatively short time. The questionnaires are mostly in quantitative questions, rating scale form and there are a couple of qualitative questions.

### **3.2 Sampling**

Selecting the samples is one crucial step of the research process, especially when the research is implemented under the restrictions of time, money and access (Saunders & al. 2016, 272). Becker (1998) indicates that when choosing a sample to examine, it should represent the full set of the situations that are significant. Methods of sampling comprise probability technique and non-probability technique. The former refers to the sampling in which all subjects recruited can become a representative sample. But with sampling by the latter, the researcher cannot select any subjects as a sample. (Saunders & al. 2016, 276.)

The convenience sampling was undertaken because of the nature of the research: studying purpose, lack of time and money and moreover, this non-probability sampling technique is fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects are readily available. In this study, the subjects of the interview and questionnaire are selected because they are easy to access and recruit for the research and the researcher does not consider selecting subjects that are representative of the entire population. Therefore, in order to solve the limitation in generalization about the entire population of convenience sampling method, the researcher carefully select the sales and marketing manager of HRC as the subject for the interview as well as make sure that the survey participants are living in Finland.

### **3.3 Primary and secondary data**

Bryman and Bell (2007) defines primary data as the original data which is generated for particular purposes of a research. Primary data can be gathered through different methods: questionnaires, interviews, observations, experiments, reports, diaries, etc. (O'Gorman & MacIntosh 2015, 77-78). The primary data which was used for this study was collected by the researcher. The sources to fulfill the primary data were done through in-depth interview with the store manager and survey to get a variety of answers from people living in Finland. The interview was recorded upon the interviewee's approval so that all answers and information could be analyzed thoroughly. Questionnaires were distributed online and face-to-face to the participants.

In addition to the primary data, this research used secondary data. The term secondary data refers to already available sources of information from that the researcher can collect and analyze. These sources including public papers, reports, books, journals, articles and magazines, published speeches were originally collected for some other purposes (Blaxter & Hughes & Tight 2001). Specifically for this study, the researcher gathered secondary data from theory books. The main sources are "Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name" by David A. Aaker (1991), "Strategic Brand Management; Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity" by Kevin Lane Keller (2013), "Essentials of Marketing Communications" by Jim Blythe (2006) and "Marketing Communications: A European Perspective" by Patrick De Pelsmacker, Maggie Geuens and Joeri Van Den Bergh (2018).

### **3.4 Implementation**

The steps that were implemented in the actual procedure of this research are explained in the following subchapters.

### **3.4.1 Qualitative research**

In the research design, qualitative research was implemented through in-depth interview with HRH's manager. Saunders & al. (2016, 388) describe the qualitative interview as "a purposeful conversation between two or more people" wherein, the interviewer establish rapport and make questions and the interviewee attentively listen and answer the questions voluntarily. The researcher selected this method because it is a powerful tool to gain valuable insights and seek out the reliable answers for the research question (Saunders & al. 2016, 388).

The interview with the sales and marketing manager of HRH, Finland was performed on 10 April 2018 at Hard Rock Cafe, Helsinki. It was recorded discretely and with permission of the interviewee for later transcribing and analysis as well as ensuring the accuracy. The purpose of the interview is to study how the company expects the Finnish market perceive Rock Shop's brand. It also aims to explore the current methods of marketing communications they are using at the moment. The questions of the interview are listed in Appendix 2.

### **3.4.2 Quantitative research**

Survey is used as the quantitative research for this thesis. According to Saunders & al. (2016, 728), survey is a research method involving the structured data collection and analysis. Considering the sampling size and focus of the study, the researcher conducted questionnaires to gather the data. O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015, 165) explain this instrument as a method of "asking the same questions in the same order to different respondents" and mention that using questionnaires is an ideal method which enables the researcher to collect a wide range of information from answerers.

The survey questionnaires are mostly in quantitative question form and there are a couple of optional qualitative questions. All participants were asked to choose applicable options or evaluate some indicatory questions attributed to key concepts respectively: brand equity components of Rock Shop and their preferred marketing communications methods. In the questionnaire of this study, nominal scales are used for answering questions regarding demographic information such as age, annual salary.

Another scale to be used in this research is the ordinal scale which allows the ranking of studied variables on a continuum. In this survey, this scale will be used to measure respondents' opinions towards different statements regarding five components of Rock Shop's brand equity (brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand imagery

associations and other assets such as trademarks, copyright) and different methods of marketing communications a five-point scale. In the scale from 1 to 5, 1 equals to 'strongly disagree' or 'not at all likely' while 5 stands for 'strongly agree' or 'extremely likely'. Participants were asked to choose the number that corresponds their opinions and perceptions. In addition, the survey respondents were also asked whether they have had purchasing experience with the brand before or not by choosing 'Yes' or 'No' and if 'yes', what have they bought. The questionnaire also includes one optional open-ended question about respondents' recommendations to develop Rock Shop's marketing communications.

The questionnaire was formed on Webropol by the thesis author and she holds the copyright of the survey as well as the collected data. The data then was analysed and visualized into graphs for this study (see Appendix 3). Questionnaires were distributed face-to-face or online get a variety of answers from people living in Finland. The researcher decided to work on Webropol since it is a simple and easy template for online surveys to build up and distribute through social media channels, which is necessary to reach the desired participants for the data collection. Altogether 75 answers were collected in a relatively short time from 17 April 2018 to 24 April 2018. The list of questionnaires is presented in Appendix 4.

### **3.5 Research reliability and validity**

Saunders & al. (2016, 202) define reliability as the degree to which the research result is consistent over time. As stated by Joppe (2006), validity refers to the extend to which if the research measures what it was intended to measure or how accurate and generalized the research results are. While doing research, the author might face a number of threats to the reliability and validity of her research such as: bias of the respondents, possible error of the researcher, mortality as well as the influences of past events, and so on. (Saunders & al. 2016, 203-204.)

In order to minimize the possible threat to the research validity and reliability, the researcher needs to make sure that data and information selected and used for the study are retrieved from reliable and qualified sources. For the secondary data, there have been a huge resource of materials about brand equity and marketing communications that were found and established by other researchers. Therefore there is a need to carefully decide which theories used for this research. The prerequisite of selecting theory models involves the relevance of the theories to the thesis topic and the scope of the research. Furthermore, the researcher collected additional information for this study from the reliable and accurate Internet sources.

As described in sampling method, convenience sampling was used for recruiting the respondents for the face-to-face interview as well as the survey. This technique is fast, inexpensive, easy to conduct and the subjects are readily available (Burns & Bush 2010, 380). Possibility of non-sampling error such as response error therefore might exist. To minimize non-sampling error, all data gathered are treated as reliable because they are subjective and voluntary opinions from the participants. Also, the researcher cautiously coded collected data and faithfully responded to the respondents without personal perception, misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

## **4 Research results and Discussion**

In this chapter, the results of both qualitative and quantitative research will be explained. Research findings that correspond with theoretical framework mentioned in chapter 2 are also discussed. The purpose is to find out the answers for all investigative questions, then to solve the research question "How can Rock Shop - Hard Rock Helsinki develop its marketing communications mix in order to attract local market?".

This study aims to improve marketing communications tools for Rock Shop to attract the customers in Finland by exploring different viewpoints about the brand equity and studying Finnish market's favourable marketing communications methods. Each investigate question is resolved one by one and the research findings are analyzed in the below subchapters.

### **4.1 Brand equity of Rock Shop from the viewpoints of the company and the Finnish market**

This subchapter's objective is to answer IQ1. The result of how Hard Rock Cafe Helsinki thinks about its merchandise brand is retrieved from the face-to-face interview with the manager Dániel Árvai who is in charge of sales and marketing of Rock Shop. The discussion is presented in Appendix 1. On the other hand, Rock Shop's brand identity in the perception of customers in Finland was studied through the questionnaires (Appendix 2). All data collected are made into separate graphs in Appendix 3.

In addition to focus on restaurant and bar operation, HRH emphasizes the importance of it merchandise brand, Rock Shop to their revenue (Árvai 10 April 2018). Looking back at the history of Rock Shop, the brand started because of a happy accident when the owners of London Hard Rock Cafe sponsored a local football team and provided them the classic white t-shirt having Hard Rock's logo on it. It just happened naturally that the extra t-shirts were returned and the restaurant gave them to loyal customers. Seeing people wearing it around the city and through world-of-mouth, a lot of people visited the restaurant just to buy the t-shirt. Eventually, a separate store selling Hard Rock's signature t-shirt or the very first Rock Shop was opened (Hard Rock 2017a).

With the establishment of five years in Helsinki, Árvai (10 April 2018) indicates that Hard Rock has successfully created a solid position in the local market in term of restaurant and bar. However, through prior observations the company sees a lot of challenges and difficulties for Rock Shop to attract local customers in Finland. The reason for this is local cus-



tomers' perception toward the brand image – "a tourist attraction". In the interview, the manager admitted that at this stage, the company is trying to increase the brand awareness of customers toward the brand. Therefore, there is no specific targeted group of customers. The brand aims at all people who are fond of its products, enjoys collecting items or just want to buy comfortable and unique clothes regardless age, gender, occupation or nationality. Along with building the brand awareness, the company also concentrate on delivering excellent performance including good quality products and friendly customer services and strengthen customer loyalty. (Árvai 10 April 2018.)

The survey results shows how customers in Finland see and perceive the image of Rock Shop. Questionnaires used to investigate this problem were formulated based on the brand equity model of Aaker (1991). The total of 75 respondents who participated in the surveys are mostly from 18 to 24 years old, making up 68 percent while 20 percent of the participants are from 25 to 34 years old, the category of 35-49 years old accounts for 4 percents and the remaining are people from 50 to under 65 years old (see Appendix 3 Graph 1). All questionnaire participants inhabit in Finland, in which 40 percent are Finnish, the other nationalities are Vietnamese, British, Chinese and Russian (see Appendix 3 Graph 3, 4). They are mainly living near the center of Helsinki. 65 percent of respondents are from capital region while only 8 percent of them is living more than 40 kilometers from the center (see Appendix 3 Graph 5).

The respondents were asked to evaluate their opinions about the below thirteen statements (see Table 2) categorized into five aspects of brand equity of Rock Shop: awareness, loyalty, perceived quality, imagery associations and other assets.

Table 2. Brand equity questionnaires

<b>Brand Awareness</b>	<b>Brand Loyalty</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am familiar with Rock Shop, the merchandise brand of Hard Rock Helsinki.</li> <li>• I know where the store is located in Finland.</li> <li>• I know what products sold by Rock Shop.</li> <li>• I am able to differentiate the Rock Shop's products from other brands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I never visit other stores if I cannot find my favourable items at Rock Shop.</li> <li>• I definitely will repurchase products from Rock Shop.</li> <li>• I will introduce Rock's products to my friends, family members and colleagues.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brand Imagery Association</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When thinking about Hard Rock Cafe, I relate to the t-shirt with its logo on it or the special pins of this brand.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Perceived Quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A product from Rock Shop Helsinki will make good gift for my foreign friends.</li> <li>• Rock Shop provides products with high quality.</li> <li>• Products sold at Rock Shop are reasonable-priced.</li> <li>• Rock Shop's products are well designed and fashionable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Assets of Brand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is another brand which sells similar products, I still choose Rock Shop for its reputation.</li> </ul>	

The data collected from the questionnaires indicates the awareness of people living in Finland toward Rock Shop brand is not too strong. The average grade is 3.64 in the scaling from 1 as the lowest to 5 as the highest. The survey participants know where the store is located and find the brand familiar. On the other hand, they are not fully aware of what kinds of products sold by Rock Shop other than the classic white t-shirts and pins that are the imagery associations whenever they think of this brand. This has been proved by looking at the grade 4.2 for the statement about brand associations (see Appendix 3 Table 5).

The third element of brand equity is consumer loyalty which is described as the state of consumers to repeatedly purchase products from the same brand instead of a substitute product from its competitors. In the case of Rock Shop, the brand does not achieve strong loyalty from the customers since the average indicator of this aspect retrieved from the survey is 2.55. The participants do not have the tendency to continuously visit the store and buy its products. It might be because the targeted customers of Rock Shop are vaguely defined (Árvai 10 April 2018), which is difficult to deliver the value to different segmentations and build the trust among the consumers.

Aaker (1991, 19) indicates that the perception of quality can provide the reason to buy as well as influence the brand loyalty. According to the data collected, 60 percent of survey respondents said that products of Rock Shop could be ideal for to be a gift for friends. 48 percent of the total mentioned that they would purchase from Rock Shop because of its

popularity (see Appendix 3 Graph 6), therefore the last statement gains 3.16 as the average. However, there is a significant percentage of responses perceiving that the prices of items sold by Rock Shop are relatively high, accounting for 76 percent. In addition, graph 6 (Appendix 3) illustrated that up to 52 percent of survey respondents would not buy Rock Shop's products because they found them unnecessary. These reasons clarify the low grade of perceived quality: 2.77 (see Appendix 3 Table 5).

#### **4.2 Current marketing communications mix of Rock Shop**

In order to find out recommendations for developing marketing communications mix of Rock Shop to attract Finnish market and strengthen its brand equity, the researcher studies the current methods of marketing communications that Rock Shop is implementing and their effectiveness by conducting the interview with the manager. The objective is to explore the current marketing communications of Rock Shop HRH based on five components of marketing communications mix including advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct selling by Fill (2013).

Advertising is a common tool to attract customers and approach a large number of potential customers as well as retain existing ones (Reynolds 2017). Blythe (2006, 41) defines advertising as "a paid insertion of a message in a medium". Fill (2013, 416) explains that by delivering a message, advertising can influence how audiences think, perceive, understand and behave. According to Árvai (10 April 2018), the tools that Rock Shop is using to send out its advertising messages involve printed magazines (Evento, tourist magazine), catalogue of CityShoppari (see Image 1), outdoors advertising such as placing advertisement at the airport, at the back of Hop On Hop Off bus and paid advertising on social media channels (Instagram and Facebook).



Image 1. Hard Rock's advertisement in CityShoppari 2018 (CITYSHOPPARI 2018)

As stated by Fill (2013, 416), advertising is an excellent tool in creating brand awareness or helping people learn about and know a brand which is the main objective of Rock Shop's marketing communications at this point. Since the cost of printed advertisement is relatively high in Finland and people prefer going online than reading magazines, newspaper, Rock Shop focuses on using paid ads on social media channels, especially Instagram and Facebook.

However, the advertising of Rock Shop is always combined with the restaurant and bar. Also, in term of the focus of advertising, Rock Shop is less emphasized than Hard Rock Cafe that might lead to low level of customer awareness toward this merchandise brand. Survey results show that 36 percents of respondent never see or hear any advertisements about Rock Shop and a few of them is aware of this brand when visiting or passing by the restaurant. Outdoor advertising reaches only 12 percent of participants (see Appendix 3 Graph 9).

As mentioned in chapter 2, public relations have a positive influence on branding. It is an effective communications tool to achieve the public recognition and communicate the company's value as well as its objectives to audiences. For corporate brands like Hard

Rock, using public relations efficiently can help to create a strong brand image (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 66). Recently, HRH was in collaboration with AAVE Festival, a yearly international audiovisual arts event held in Helsinki since 2010 (AAVE 2017). The logo of Hard Rock was carried in their marketing materials such as event posters, flyers so it was a chance to raise more awareness from the public. In November 2017, HRH sponsored CAGE 41 MMA Finland. Rock Shop had a booth selling its products during the event (Árvai 10 April 2018) and the logo of Hard Rock was printed on CAGE's poster (see Image 2) as well as presented on their website.



Image 2. Hard Rock's logo on CAGE 41's poster (MMA Finland 2018)

Considering the impact of these partnerships, the company expects to gain more public attention over the time although they did not influence directly on the sales (Árvai 10 April 2018).

Fill (2013, 24) describes personal selling as the face-to-face communication between salespeople with potential customers through which the sellers learn the customers' needs in order to consult, introduce and persuade customers to choose and buy their products. In the case of Rock Shop, the brand highlights quick and comfortable sales process as

well as focuses on delivering outstanding customer service. The staffs are trained thoroughly so that the customers are treated attentively and professionally (Árvai 10 April 2018).

Sales promotion of Rock Shop includes providing customer loyalty program called 'Reward', giving out coupons such as 20 percent discount for members of Shoppari and other special offers (see Image 3). The theory frame explained in chapter 2 indicated that sales promotion can help to increase the brand awareness. By sending samples or coupons, vouchers, the companies are enable to attract new customers and provide them chances to experience the products and services. According to Árvai (10 April 2018), the 'Reward' program grants customers special offers and discounts when visiting Hard Rock Cafes, Rock Shop or Hard Rock Hotels. The program applies for all locations of Hard Rock in the world. When the customers register to join in Reward program, the company is empowered to track their visit, purchases and build its own customer database.



Image 3. Special offer of Rock Shop

Direct marketing is considered as an effective marketing communication for Rock Shop (Árvai 10 April 2018). Because without using intermediaries, the company conducts direct marketing to encourage the customers to buy right away and influence the customer's perception and intention of future purchases (De Pelsmacker & al. 2018, 66). Additionally, direct marketing also reduces the costs. At this point, Rock Shop is quite active at online market by using its website and online channels such as Instagram and Facebook to

directly deliver the brand message. Emailed marketing is not included. (Árvai 10 April 2018).

Instagram enables users to upload vibrant photos or videos and is an easy to to engage with other users (Instagram 2018). The account of HRH on Instagram gains 2070 followers. The posts are mainly in Finnish that helps to create interactions with Finnish customers. Árvai (10 April 2018) mentioned that the engagement with the followers is very good and more and more people are aware of Rock Shop's brand image through channel. Marketing on Facebook is also an effective tool with more than 33 thousands followers. However, the company should put more effort into using social media channels for marketing since from the survey data, only 20 percent of respondents gains the knowledge about the store through these channels (see Appendix 3 Graph 8).

#### **4.3 Marketing communications mix preferences of Finnish market**

The last investigative question is about marketing communications mix preferences of Finnish market. Through questionnaire survey, data is collected and the answer is then formulated. As illustrated in Graph 8 (Appendix 3), Rock Shop's image are mainly exposed to the respondents through social media and outdoor advertising. Additionally, the participants of the survey tend to be influenced by information on social media and outdoor advertising such as billboards compared to other methods of marketing communications when considering purchasing from a brand. Moreover, the respondents preferred online marketing to traditional marketing such as advertising on printed newspapers and magazines (see Appendix 3 Table 6).

Seeing products advertised by celebrity endorsers or social media influencers is also favourable by the respondents. According to Fill (2013, 119), this method is commonly used by fashion brands and it is an effective tool to influence and develop the audiences' attitudes. One study entitled "The Economic Value of Celebrity Endorsements" by Elberse and Jeroen (2012) indicated that on the average, by using celebrity endorsement, sales of the product endorsed increase by an average of 4 percent. Using celebrity endorsement also means that the famous person who is chosen will carry the brand's name. Therefore, the company needs to carefully select a credible influencer who is able to positively motivate the targeted customers (Stevenson 2018).

Another preferred marketing communication tool by Finnish market identified through the research is sales promotion. 42.7 percent of survey answerers would like to receive promotional materials from Rock Shop once a month (see Appendix 3 Graph 10). Sales promotion not only helps to add value to a brand but also is a method to sell products (Fill

2013, 541). Only one person in the total of 75 people recruited for the survey refused to receive promotional material.

Among 75 respondents, there is a majority who indicated that the recommendations from family, friends and colleagues would have much influence on their purchase intention and decision. In average, they gave 4.24 for this communication (see Appendix 3 Table 6). The number indicates the importance of word-of-mouth marketing in changing consumers' perception and attitudes toward a brand. Direct selling is one of the elements making the success of word-of-mouth marketing. If the brand listens to its customers well and takes care of their problems with attentiveness, it can become one of the most favourite brands of the customers and its products will be talked about, which will eventually result in an increase in sales (Whitler 2014). Also, the respondents find promoting products in an events a good way through which they know and understand the brand. This method belongs to public relations, one component of marketing communications mix which is according to De Pelsmacker & al (2018, 66) helpful to create brand awareness.



## **5 Conclusions**

The objective of this study is to develop marketing communications mix of Rock Shop, Hard Rock Helsinki in order to attract the Finnish market and increase the customers awareness toward the brand. The research involves studying a combination of theory models and conducting qualitative and quantitative research methods. In this chapter, the thesis author concludes the recommendations for effective marketing communications for Rock Shop, and evaluate the reliability and validity, limitations of this research as well as presents her suggestions for the future researches.

### **5.1 Key findings**

From the research results, the differences between the current methods of marketing communications of Rock Shop and Finnish market's preferences were analyzed and recommendations for Rock Shop, HRH to develop its marketing communications are provided as the follows.

Firstly, the data collected shows that the commissioned company does not put a lot of efforts into promoting its merchandise brand, Rock Shop compared to the restaurant. The lack of marketing activities makes the brand unfamiliar to the customers in Finland. The customers also are not fully aware of the concept of the store and what specific products are being sold by the company. The researcher recommends that the company should implement separate marketing strategies and activities for Rock Shop in addition to the existing marketing communications used for both Rock Shop and Hard Rock Cafe.

Another problem studied through this research is the weakness in market segmentation. A study done by professor Clayton Christensen from Harvard Business School reveals that each year in the US, 95 percent of 30000 new products launched fail because of mistake in market segmenation (Nobel 2011). The company assumed that they targeted all customers and the marketing campaigns were implemented to serve the whole market. However, the broad targeted market should be divided into small groups and there are different marketing campaigns for each group. Careful customer segmentation will help to deliver the value and brand messages to its customers efficiently. This also makes the company understand the customers' needs and supports to develop customer perception of its brand: Rock Shop is not only a tourist attraction, the store also provides unique and stylish items for everybody.

As seen from the data collected and the result discussion in the previous chapter, social media is the channel which Rock Shop is focusing on and have a significant influence on customer awareness. Therefore, in addition to improve the efficiency of digital marketing and intensify the frequency of advertising, promoting on social media channels through attractive photos and videos, the brand can increase the interactions and engagement with audiences to raise brand awareness. One example is to organize an online competition on Instagram and Facebook in which the participants share their pictures of them with 'Hard Rock Helsinki' t-shirt taken when they travel to other countries. The one getting the most 'Likes' will get 50 percent discount for one meal at the restaurant and one gift from Rock Shop. Or a competition for t-shirt design ideas only for Finnish market might get attention from the public.

According to Árvai (10 April 2018), Hard Rock Cafe has 'Reward' program for customers and through this, the customer database is created. He also mentioned that direct marketing through email is not included in their marketing communications. Based on the collected data, the recommendation is sending monthly newsletter to customer emails. The newsletter will inform the upcoming events, promotions, information of new products as well as special discount or offer for loyal customers.

The last suggestion for development is having partnership with youth organizations in Finland such as student councils, Slush, Nordic Business Forum, Heltech, and so on as well as using fashion Instagram influencers in order to improve the brand image and gain attention from the public. As the classic white t-shirt of Rock Shop is globally recognized and receives a lot of love from young generation, the company can sponsor an event for university students by providing uniform. Instagram is a common social media channel in Finland with 1.3 million users from 13 years old (NapoleonCat 2017). Having a credible fashion Instagram influencer will help to spread the brand image. This requires that the endorsements have to be targeted carefully and accurately.

## **5.2 Limitations of research**

Considering the subject of this study, it was required to cover several theory models, leading to the difficulties for further study into any specific aspects. Since the author has a lack of extensive experience in collecting primary data, there might be a chance the research conducted had shortcomings. Additionally, since Hard Rock Helsinki is a franchisee, its operations and activities have to follow the requirements of the corporate. The situation is challenging for Hard Rock Helsinki in general, and for Rock Shop in particular to implement new marketing strategies.

Due to the researcher's convenience, time restraint and budget limitation, the research was conducted through convenience sampling; therefore, representativeness of the sample might not be completely assured. Because most of the questionnaires were distributed in groups, the information that respondents provided may lack of validity. The participants could also be influenced by other respondents' opinions and have the tendency to follow their way to answer the questionnaire. Due to short period of time granted for the study, the questionnaire pool was not adequate. The researcher gathered 75 responses through online questionnaire and it was insufficient to generalize the results to the larger population of interest.

### **5.3 Further research ideas**

This subchapter presents the researcher's recommendations for the further studies. In order to solve the lack of validity of information collected, the future research should be conducted with a wider sampling size, for example expanding the range of areas to conduct the research. Also, several research methods can be combined to increase the validity of data since survey might not be the best method in which respondents provide enough reliable information. Suggestion for future research is using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods to find out the underlying reasons and motivations of customers' brand perception, such as conducting the experiment and group interviewing.

This research only studies on how Rock Shop can develop its current marketing communications to create awareness among consumers in Finland. Therefore, the thesis author comes up with some ideas for the future studies. The interesting topic could be identifying what influences customers' perception toward the brand and how to change this perception. Another different idea is to study about their digital marketing which the company would like to focus on at this stage.

### **5.4 Personal learning**

To conclude, the researcher will assess her performance throughout the whole process of planning and conducting the research. In general, the thesis process was quite long and involved many steps, from brainstorming ideas for the topic, making the plan to implementing the research methodology and analysing the data. The author of this thesis at first faced a lot of challenges to find the commissioned company and decide on the subject. Getting enough number of survey answers and generalizing the data was also problematic. Looking back at the process, the researcher has spent a lot of time and put effort into this study. She also has a good opportunity to thoroughly study about brand equity and marketing communications.

The researcher not only gained knowledge in her specialized studies, she also developed and strengthened her competencies and skills that are useful for the future career such as research skill, time management, project management and leadership. Moreover, through conducting the research, the thesis author had opportunities to widen her professional network and seek out new opportunities for development.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Products of Rock Shop



Image 4. Products of Rock Shop (Hard Rock 2018)

## **Appendix 2. Interview questions**

1. Could you please describe the brand image of Rock Shop?
2. How do you describe the target customer of Rock Shop? What kinds of people on average mostly visit the store?
3. What value of Rock Shop's products do you think that the brand brings to your customers?
4. What are the opportunities and challenges in the Finnish market for Rock Shop from your company's perspective?
5. What is included in Rock Shop's marketing communications? What channels are you focusing on now?
6. What type of marketing communications works effectively? Where, how?
7. What type of marketing communications does not work? Why do you think this was ineffective?
8. How much money is spent on these marketing communications per month? Do you have a budget for planning and implementing marketing communications?
9. Have you hosted or participated in any events to advertise products of Rock Shop? What kind of events?
10. Are you cooperating with any celebrities/bloggers or famous people in Finland to advertise Rock Shop's products?
11. Does your company have membership program for your customers? If yes, could you please describe it?
12. Do you have any strategies to increase brand awareness in Finnish market?

### **Appendix 3. Interview with Hard Rock Helsinki's Sales & Marketing Manager Dániel Árvai**

1. Could you please describe the brand image of Rock Shop?

Rock Shop is one big part of Hard Rock, with other businesses such as restaurants, bars, hotels, and casinos. Our classic white t-shirt with Hard Rock's logo on it has made it one of the most globally recognized brands.

2. How do you describe the target customer of Rock Shop? What kinds of people on average mostly visit the store?

We don't target on any specific groups. Customers visiting Rock Shop are different in ages, occupations or nationalities. In addition, there are a wide variety of products sold at Rock Shop: t-shirts, sweaters, accessories, home decorations, items for rock collectors, and so on. Considering the main customer groups, I would say that mainly tourists visit the store. Because we are an international brand and also a tourist attraction.

3. What value of Rock Shop's products do you think that the brand brings to your customers?

Since our products' designs are influenced by hard rock, we bring a cool rock-and-roll style to the customers. Moreover, for the customers who are the fans of the brand, they will visit the store to get their favourite items or new products for their Hard Rock collection. In terms of this, I will say our merchandise brand also helps customers fulfill their hobbies and brings them happiness.

4. What are the opportunities and challenges in the Finnish market for Rock Shop from your company's perspective?

Summer is the high season of Rockshop when we receive a lot of visits from tourists. Sales in the summer therefore make a big part in the revenue. Due to the drop of tourist visits to Finland in winter, we think that the local market can help us to maintain the sales during this low-tourism season.

On the other hand, we see there are a lot of challenges for us in the Finnish market. When asking opinions from people living in Finland, we got the common answers such as "It is not a preferred place for local customers", "We don't necessarily need local items" or "The

prices are too high". It seems that Finnish market see Rock Shop as a souvenir store for tourists only.

5. What is included in Rock Shop's marketing communications? What channels are you focusing on now?

We have started implementing in-house marketing since last December and before that, it was outsourced. Therefore, at the moment we are developing our marketing plan as well as strategies according to the corporate's requirements. The marketing communications we are using include advertisements on magazines: tourist magazine, Evento, catalogues such as city map, advertisement at airport and at the back of Hop On Hop Off bus, partnership with several events organized in the city. We also give out coupon called 'Bounce back card' to customers, giving them 10% discount for the next visit whenever we have a private event and are unable to serve them. Additionally, customer service is emphasized. The focused channel is social media, consisting of Facebook and Instagram.

6. What type of marketing communications works effectively? Where, how?

Instagram is a very good tool and relevant to the concept of Rock Shop. Through Instagram, we can upload viral video and visualize our products in pictures. Most of Instagram posts are in Finnish which is good to deliver to the local market. Facebook page also gains a significant number of likes and review grade. By following-up the activities on these channels, we can see that the reactions from our customers grown and more people are becoming aware of the brand as well as our items. Another reason we think social media channels work effectively is that not only in Finland but also all over the world more and more people prefer using these channels than printed magazines, newspaper. And social media is involved in the success of word-of-mouth marketing.

From our perspective, we see the potential of social media channels in increasing the brand awareness. However, direct marketing through social media does not really influence our sales and cannot turn into sales at the moment. Maybe it will take some time until then, when it has impact on purchase intention and decision.

7. What type of marketing communications does not work? Why do you think this was ineffective?

I would say participation in the events does not work effectively. The expense for this marketing communication is relatively high and the effect is not worth it. For example, we

used to sell our products at an event and the quantity of products sold was low because the sold price was higher than actual price at the store. This was because other additional costs.

8. How much money is spent on these marketing communications per month? Do you have a budget for planning and implementing marketing communications?

I can't really say because it's different every month. For example during the summer, we spend on marketing less than during the winter. The budget is about hundreds of euros per month in average.

9. Have you hosted or participated in any events to advertise products of Rock Shop? What kind of events?

Yes, we recently had partnership with AAVE 2018 (Alternative AudioVisual Event) in Helsinki. It is an art festival and fair event. Our Hard Rock's logo was carried on their marketing materials. Another event we participated last year was CAGE 41 MMA. The weigh-ins was held at Hard Rock Cafe on 24 November 2017. In addition, we had a spot selling Rock Shop's products during the events

10. Are you cooperating with any celebrities/bloggers or famous people in Finland to advertise Rock Shop's products?

We are actually cooperating with Robin Packalen, a famous Finnish singer and artist. There were times he visited the restaurant and attracted a lot of young customers. However, this also does not influence on Rock Shop's sales.

11. Does your company have membership program for your customers? If yes, could you please describe it?

For our customers, there is Reward program which grants them special offers and discounts when visiting Hard Rock Cafes, Rock Shop and Hard Rock Hotels. The program applies for all locations of Hard Rock in the world. When the customers register to join in Reward program, it enables us to track their visit, purchases and build our own customer database.

12. Do you have any strategies to increase brand awareness in Finnish market?

With the history of five years in Finland, there are a lot of things we need to do so that the

brand can be more familiar to the Finnish market. In order to balance with the culture here, we are planning to work more on our marketing communications such as building strong partnerships with local businesses and organizations, supporting direct marketing and creating an app which provides customer experience. Considering how to create the real experience for customers and turn them into sales, we are now using Flowbox in which all photos on Instagram about our brand are collected and gathered, then guide customers to relevant webpages and help to increase their engagement.

## Appendix 4. Survey questionnaire

### 1. Age

- under 18
- 18 - under 25
- 25 - under 35
- 35 - under 50
- 50 - under 65
- 65 or above

### 2. Annual Income

- less than € 16 700
- 16 700 - less than € 25 000
- 25 000 - less than € 40 800
- 40 800 - less than € 72 300
- € 72 300 or more
- I am not working

### 3. Nationality

- Finnish
- Other .....

### 4. How long have you lived in Finland?

- less than 3 years
- 3 – less than 10 years
- 10 years or more
- I don't live in Finland, please specify where you're living.....

### 5. How far do you live from the Helsinki city center?

- less than 5 km
- 5 – less than 20 km
- 20 – less than 40 km
- 40 km or more, please specify the area/city/country if relevant .....

6. Have you ever been to any Hard Rock's businesses: restaurants/ stores/ hotels/ casinos, etc. all over the world?

- Yes, specifically in .....
- No

7. Have you ever purchased any products from Rock Shop Helsinki?

- Yes, I have bought .....
- No

8. Which of the following are reasons that you might purchase this product?

*Please check off all the choices that are applied*

- Fashionable items
- Popular brand
- A good gift for other people
- Reasonable price
- Good quality
- Other, please specify .....

9. Which of the following are reasons that you might NOT purchase product from this brand?

*Please check off all the choices that are applied*

- Too expensive
- I don't need anything from this brand
- Poor quality
- Other, please specify .....

10. Please indicate to which level you agree or disagree with the following statements.

*Scaling: 1 - Strongly Disagree 2 - Disagree 3 - Neutral 4 - Agree 5 - Strongly Agree*

	1	2	3	4	5
I am familiar with Rock Shop, the merchandise brand of Hard Rock Helsinki.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know where the store is located in Finland.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what products sold by Rock Shop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am able to differentiate the Rock Shop's products from other brands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I never visit other stores if I cannot find my favourable items at Rock Shop.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



- I definitely will repurchase products from Rock Shop.
- I will introduce Rock Shop's products to my friends, family members and colleagues.
- When thinking about Hard Rock Cafe, I relate to the t-shirt with its logo on it or the special pins of this brand.
- A product from Rock Shop Helsinki will make good gift for my foreign friends.
- Rock Shop provides products with high quality.
- Products sold at Rock Shop are reasonable-priced.
- Rock Shop's products are well designed and fashionable.
- If there is another brand which sells similar products, I still choose Rock Shop for its reputation.

11. In the last 3 months, where have you seen or heard about Rock Shop?

*Please check off all the choices that are applied*

- When visiting Hard Rock Cafe
- From friends, family members or colleagues
- Celebrity endorsement
- Social media
- Online news/ magazine
- Printed news/ magazine
- Email advertisement
- Outdoor advertisement (public transportation, billboards)
- In an event
- Hard Rock's website
- Other, please specify
- I don't remember hearing about or seeing advertisement for this brand in the last 3 months

12. How often have you seen or heard about it in the last 3 months?

- Very often
- Often
- A few time
- Once or twice
- Never

13. How often would you like to receive promotional material (new products information,

gift vouchers, etc.) from Rock Shop store?

- Once every two week
- Once a month
- Once every two months
- Once every six months
- Once a year
- I do not want to receive promotional material

14. How likely do these following methods of marketing communications influence your purchase intention and decision?

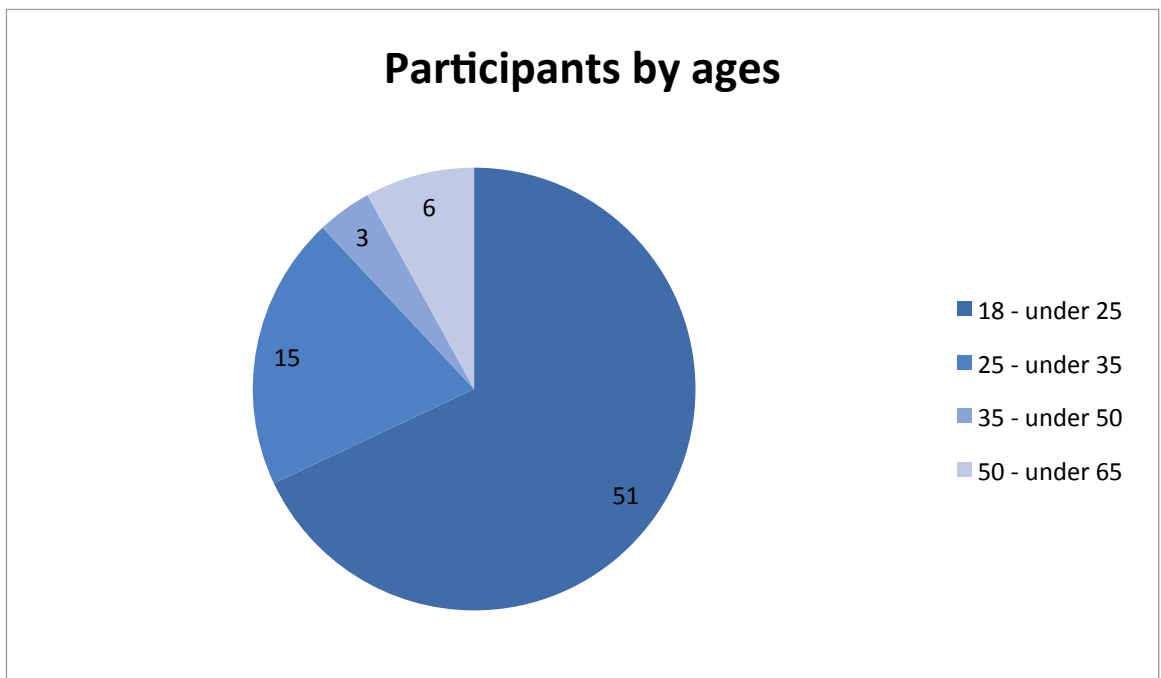
*1 is not at all likely, 5 is extremely likely*

	1	2	3	4	5
Recommendations from friends, family members or colleagues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Celebrity endorsement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online news/ magazine article	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printed news/ magazine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TV advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Radio advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Email advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mailed advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor advertisement (public transportation, billboards, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

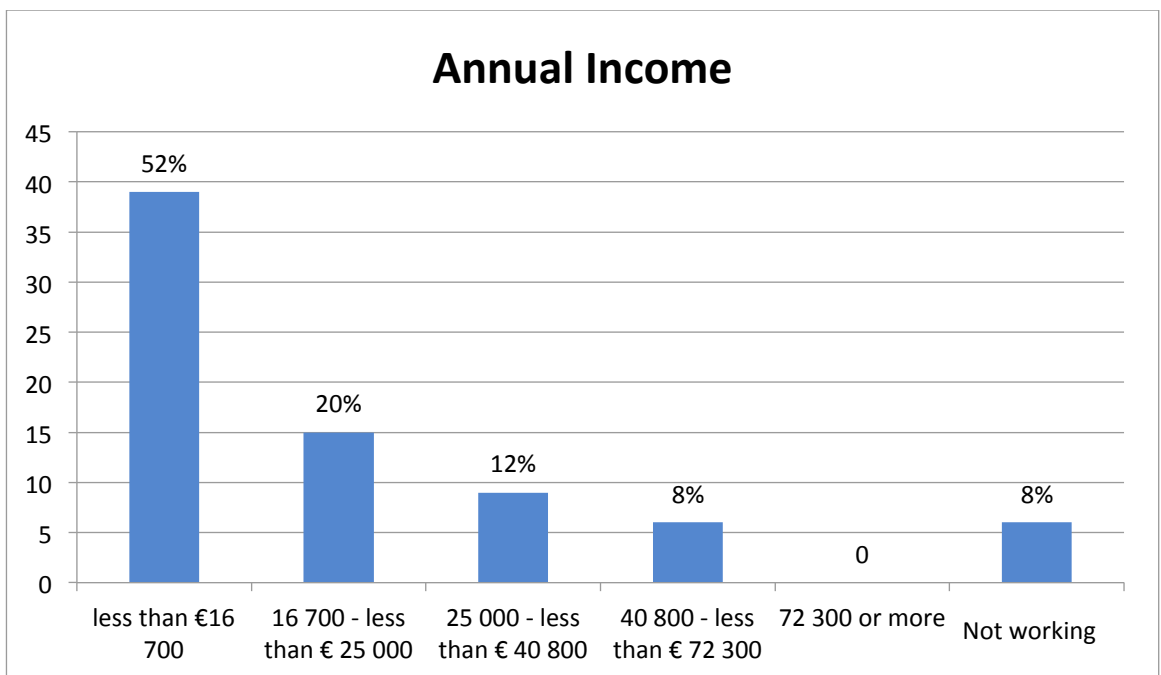
15. Any recommendations for Rock Shop to make its brand more familiar and closer to customers?

.....

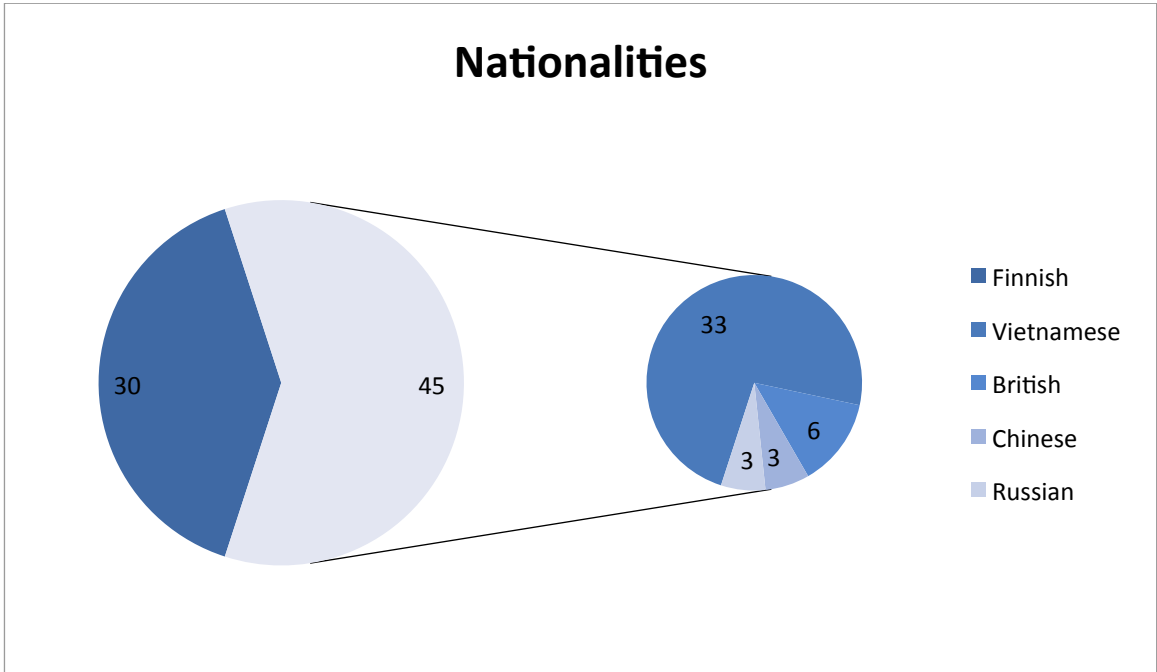
## Appendix 5. Survey data in graphs



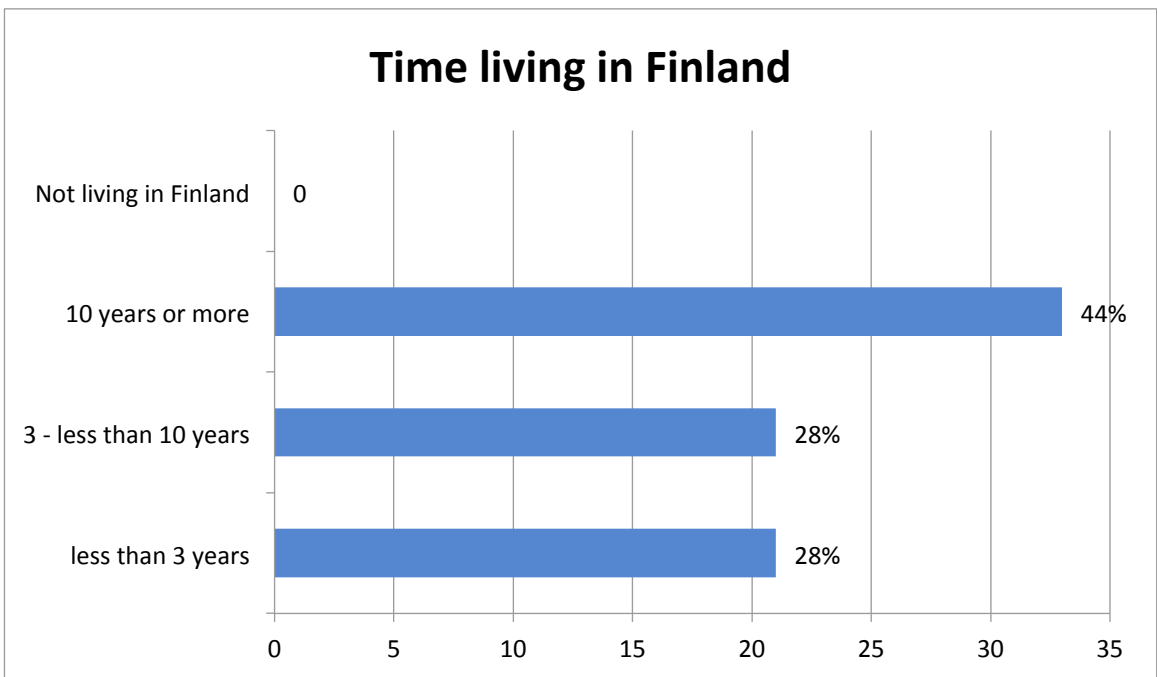
Graph 1. Question 1. How old are you?



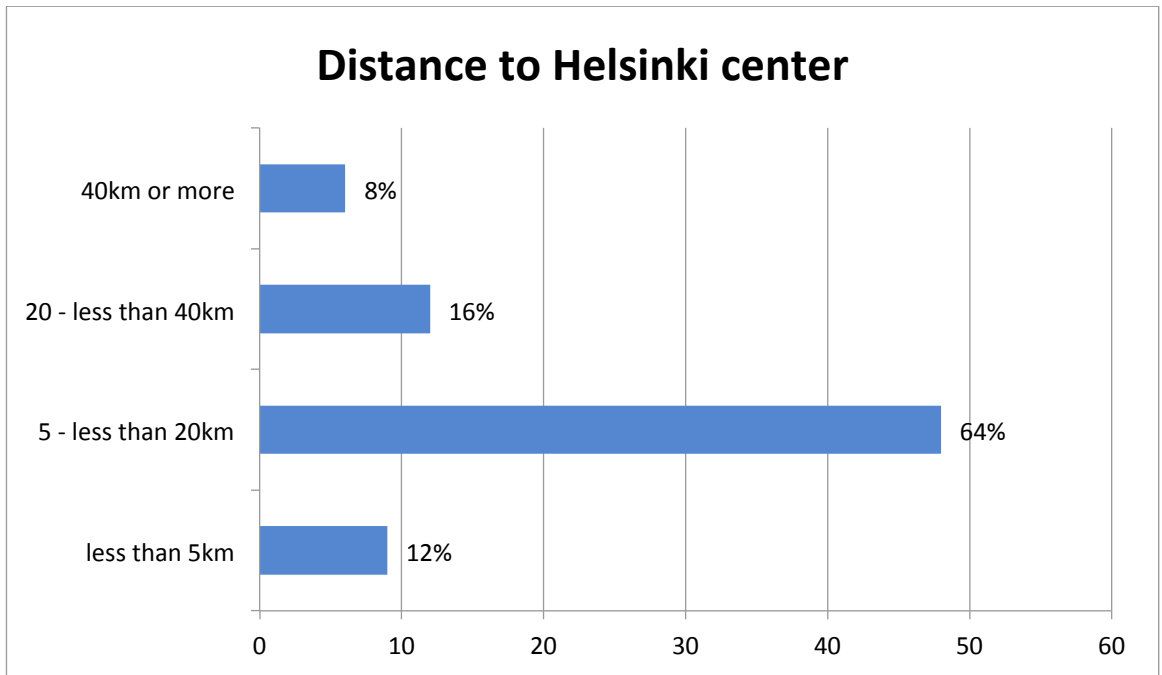
Graph 2. Question 2. What is your average annual income?



Graph 3. Question 3. What is your nationality?



Graph 4. Question 4. How long have you lived in Finland?



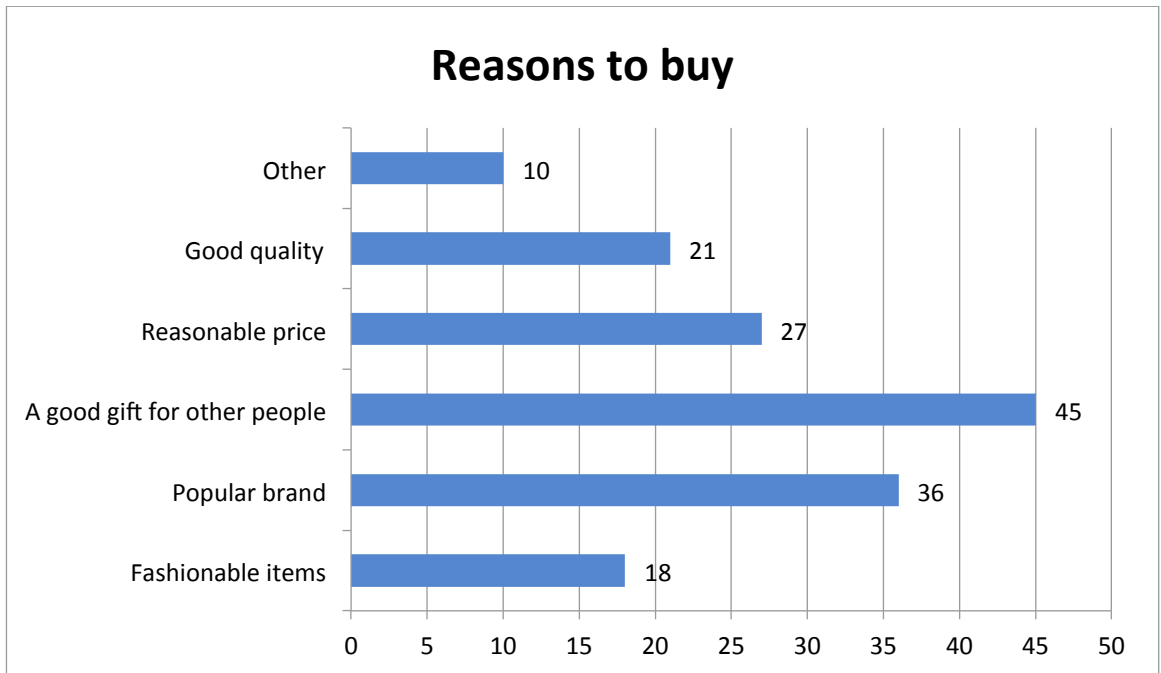
Graph 5. Question 5. How far do you live from the Helsinki city center?

Table 3. Question 6. Have you ever been to any Hard Rock's businesses: restaurants/ stores/ hotels/ casinos, etc. all over the world?

<b>Yes, I have been to the establishment in</b>	<b>No</b>
48 (Helsinki, Rome, Prague, Budapest, Hongkong, Glasgow, Vietnam, Thailand, Poland)	27

Table 4. Question 7. Have you ever purchased any products from Rock Shop Helsinki?

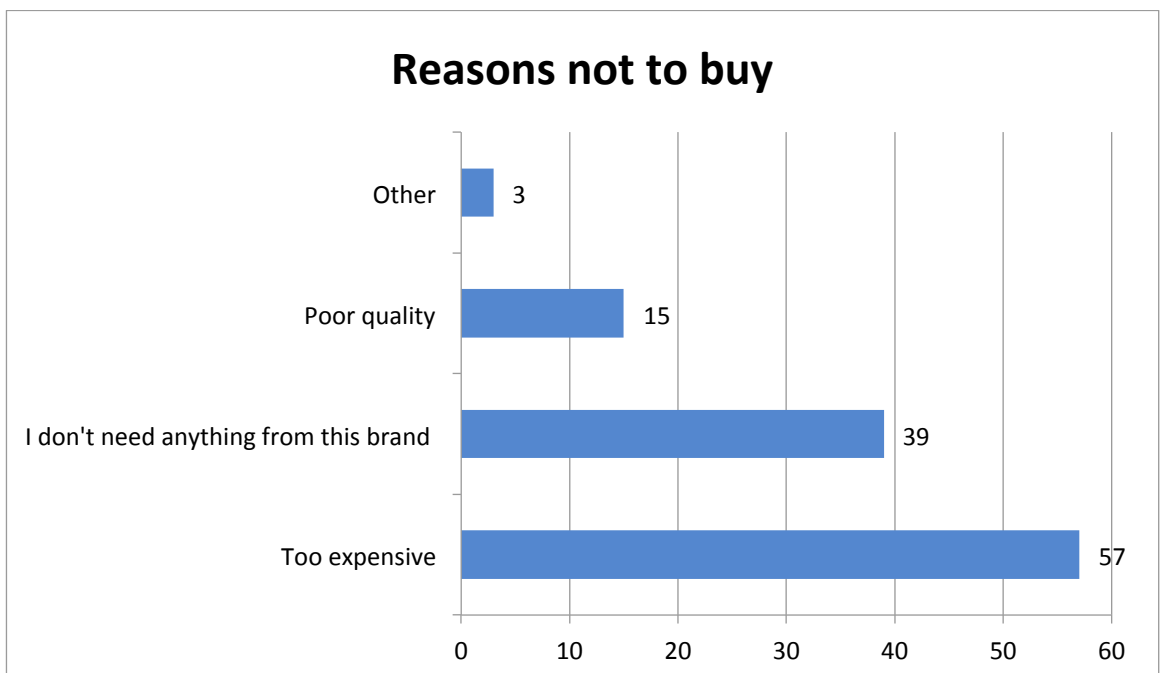
<b>Yes, I have bought</b>	<b>No</b>
15 (T-shirt, pins)	60



Graph 6. Question 8. Which of the following are reasons that you might purchase this product?

Other reasons relate to:

- Not being aware of merchandise products other than restaurants and cafes
- If it's related to Rock Music, maybe I would buy it because of the band's name.
- For my Hard Rock collection

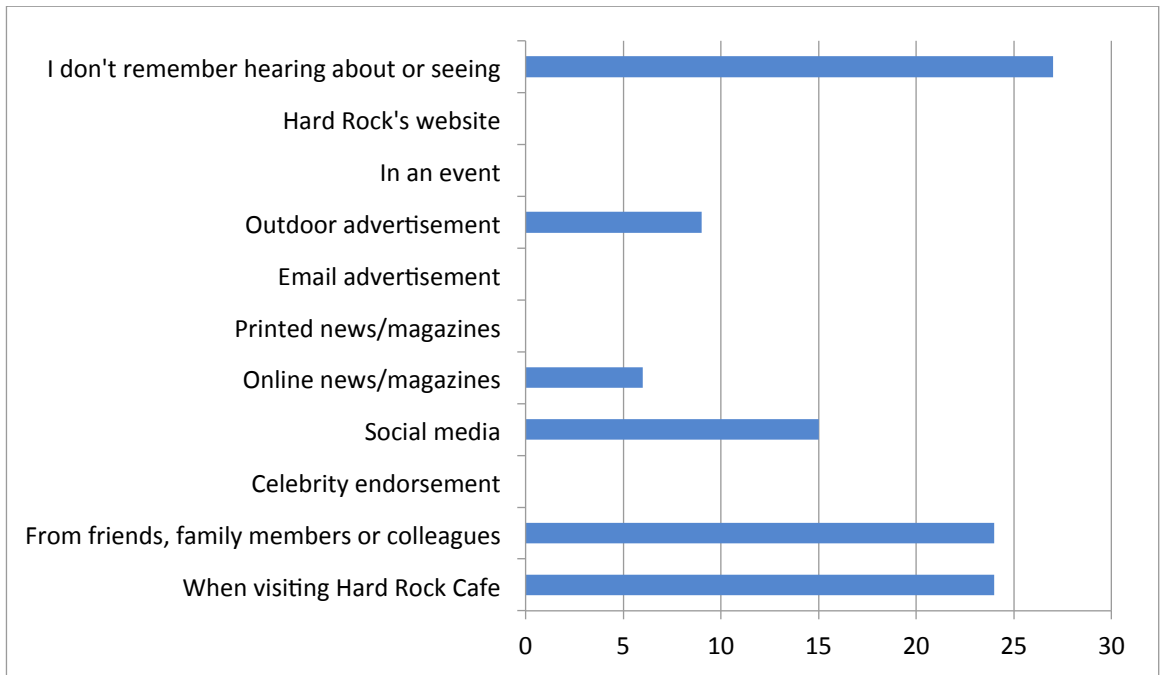


Graph 7. Question 9. Which of the following are reasons that you might NOT purchase product from this brand?

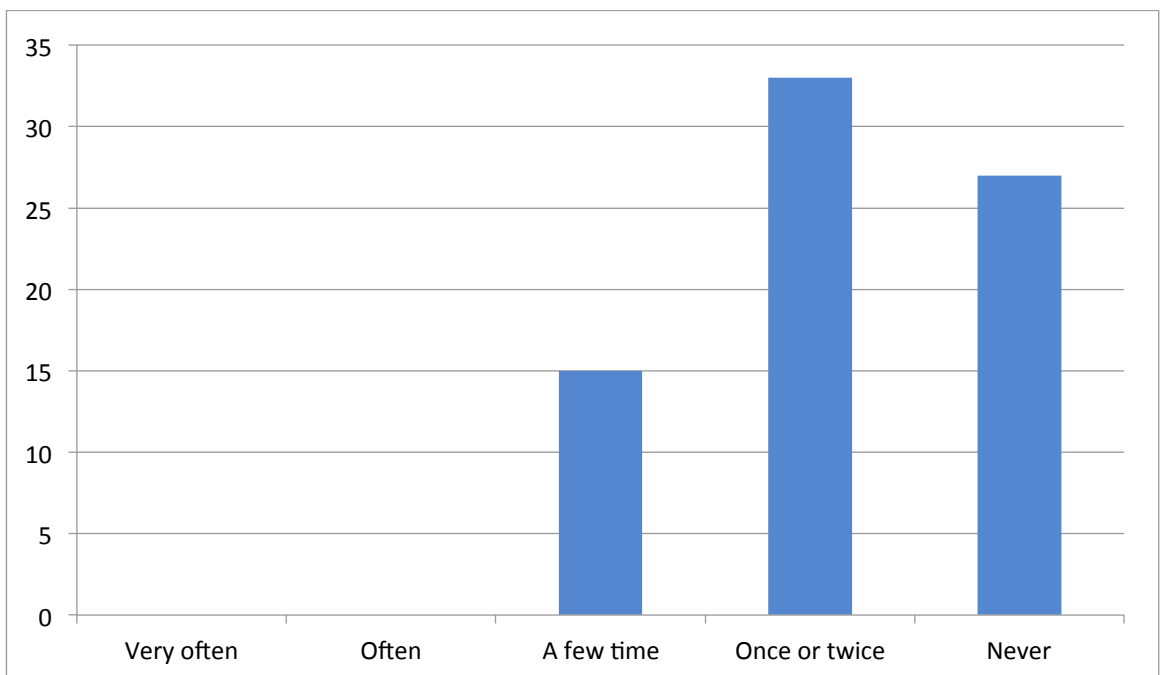
Some respondents also mentioned that they did not want to purchase the local product with "Helsinki" printed on it.

Table 5. Question 10. Please indicate to which level you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
<b>Brand Awareness</b>						
I am familiar with Rock Shop, the merchandise brand of Hard Rock Helsinki.	9	6	9	30	21	3.64
I know where the store is located in Finland.	6	3	9	12	45	4.16
I know what products sold by Rock Shop.	6	18	21	24	6	3.08
I am able to differentiate the Rock Shop's products from other brands.	3	6	21	27	18	3.68
						3.64
<b>Brand Loyalty</b>						
I never visit other stores if I cannot find my favourable items at Rock Shop.	21	18	30	3	3	2.32
I definitely will repurchase products from Rock Shop.	6	9	57	3	0	2.76
I will introduce Rock Shop's products to my friends, family members and colleagues.	12	18	39	3	3	2.56
						2.55
<b>Brand Imagery Associations</b>						
When thinking about Hard Rock Cafe, I relate to the t-shirt with its logo on it or the special pins of this brand.	3	0	6	36	30	4.2
<b>Perceived Quality</b>						
A product from Rock Shop Helsinki will make good gift for my foreign friends.	18	12	21	21	3	2.72
Rock Shop provides products with high quality.	3	6	51	12	3	3.08
Products sold at Rock Shop are reasonable-priced.	6	27	39	3	0	2.52
Rock Shop's products are well designed and fashionable.	3	21	42	9	0	2.76
						2.77
<b>Brand Assets</b>						
If there is another brand which sells similar products, I still choose Rock Shop for its reputation.	3	15	30	21	6	3.16
						<b>3.13</b>

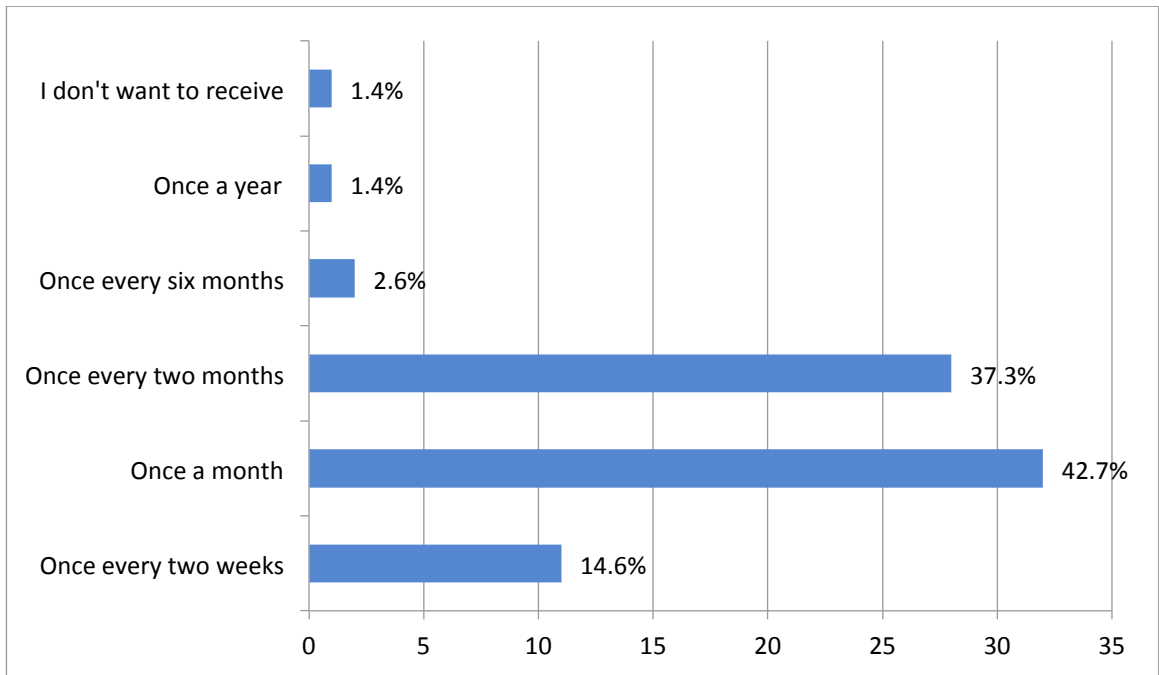


Graph 8. Question 11. In the last 3 months, where have you seen or heard about Rock Shop?



Graph 9. Question 12. How often have you seen or heard about it in the last 3 months?





Graph 10. Question 13. How often would you like to receive promotional material (new products information, gift vouchers, etc.) from Rock Shop store?

Table 6. Question 14. How likely do these following methods of marketing communications influence your purchase intention and decision?

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Recommendations from friends, family members or colleagues	0	0	9	39	27	4.24
Celebrity endorsement	6	18	42	9	0	2.72
Social media	0	18	36	18	3	3.08
Online news/ magazine article	3	24	24	21	3	2.96
Printed news/ magazine	9	18	27	18	3	2.84
TV advertisement	9	24	30	12	0	2.6
Radio advertisement	27	24	24	0	0	1.96
Email advertisement	15	24	27	6	3	2.44
Mailed advertisement	12	27	27	6	3	2.48
Outdoor advertisement (public transportation, billboards, etc.)	6	21	24	18	6	2.96
Events	6	27	18	21	3	2.84

Table 7. Question 15. Any recommendations for Rock Shop to make its brand more familiar and closer to customers?

- Increase the frequency of advertising
- Invite fashion Instagram influencers to wear or use products
- Not be a rip off
- TVC (ad on TV)
- Maybe more events and advertisement, rarely have seen their advertisement from

anywhere

- TV ads
- Maybe some outdoor events
- Display of the store is not attractive enough