

Perceived Image and Member Value Profile of the Finnish Triathlon Associ- ation

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Abstract <p>The purpose of the thesis was to determine how the brand image of a sports organization was perceived by its members and what kind of values the members possessed. Furthermore, the differences in value profiles according to the years of doing triathlon were studied. The thesis was assigned by the Finnish Triathlon Association.</p> <p>The research method used was quantitative, and the data was collected by an email questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was based on Shalom Schwartz's theory of basic human values, was sent to 2607 members of the Finnish Triathlon Association. The members had the opportunity to reply to the questionnaire between the 11th September 2018 and 25th September 2018, and 613 replies were received. The Webropol online survey system was used to create the questionnaire and analyze the results. Frequency distributions and cross tabulations were used to illustrate the research results.</p> <p>According to the results, the main attributes related to the Finnish Triathlon Association were honest, responsible, polite, traditional and nature-protective. The most important values for the members were security, nature and benevolence. The members' value profiles did not differ significantly according to the years of doing triathlon. However, some differences were found when comparing the attributes different age groups related to the Finnish Triathlon Association.</p> <p>The results can be utilized in planning and developing the marketing and sales operations of the Finnish Triathlon Association as well as in improving their brand image. Based on the research results, the Finnish Triathlon Association can also start creating a foundation for new partnerships or further improve their existing partnerships if they wish to do so.</p>		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää, millaiseksi urheiluorganisaation brändi-imago koetaan sen jäsenten keskuudessa sekä millaisia arvoja kyseisillä jäsenillä on. Tämän lisäksi opinnäytetyössä tutkittiin sitä, millaisia eroja jäsenten arvoprofiileista voidaan löytää sen mukaan, kuinka pitkään triathlonia oli harrastettu. Työn toimeksiantajana toimi Suomen Triathlonliitto.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisella tutkimusotteella, ja aineistonkeruumenetelmänä käytettiin sähköpostikyselyä. Shalom Schwartzin luomaan arvoteoriaan pohjautuva kyselylomake lähetettiin yhteensä 2607 Suomen Triathlonliiton jäsenelle. Kysely oli avoinna 11.–25.9.2018 välisen ajan, ja 613 liiton jäsentä vastasi kyselyyn. Kyselyn luomisessa ja tulosten analysoinnissa hyödynnettiin Webropol-käyttöjärjestelmää. Tutkimustulosten kuvaamiseen käytettiin suoria jakaumia sekä ristiintaulukointeja.</p> <p>Tutkimustulosten mukaan keskeisimpiä ominaisuuksia, joita jäsenet liittävät Suomen Triathlonliittoon, ovat rehellinen, vastuuntuntoinen, kohtelias, perinteinen ja ympäristöystävällinen. Jäsenten tärkeimpiä arvoja ovat turvallisuus, luonto ja hyväntahtoisuus. Jäsenten arvoprofiilit eivät eronneet toisistaan merkittävästi harrastusvuosien mukaan. Joitakin eroja kuitenkin löydettiin, kun Suomen Triathlonliittoon liitettäviä ominaisuuksia vertailtiin eri ikäryhmien kesken.</p> <p>Tutkimustuloksia voidaan hyödyntää Suomen Triathlonliiton markkinoinnin ja myynnin toimintojen suunnittelussa ja kehittämisessä sekä brändi-imagon parantamisessa. Tutkimuksen tulosten pohjalta Suomen Triathlonliitto voi myös halutessaan luoda pohjaa uusille yhteistyökumppanuuksille tai kehittää jo olemassa olevia yhteistyösuhteita.</p>		
Avainsanat (<u>asiasanat</u>) Brändi, brändi-imago, urheilubrändi, urheiluorganisaatio, arvot		
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1 Introduction

The business of sport has grown and commercialized rapidly. It has become an international industry where all sport organizations are competing for revenue, spectators, fans and players. Before it was enough that sport organizations were organized and managed well but as a result of the increased competition, they must now differentiate themselves from the competitors and their goods. One way to do that is to create a brand to which consumers relate strong, favorable and unique associations. Due to the unpredictable nature of sports, creating a positive brand image can be challenging. However, it is not impossible if the created brand associations are managed correctly and if they are not completely based on the success of the sport entities.

Several sport organizations in Finland have not done research about their brand image or the functionality of their marketing communications. As a result, these operations are either nonexistent or based on opinions and feelings rather than reliable research results. This means that sport organizations do not have sufficient amount of knowledge to efficiently manage their marketing operations. Conducting researches related to the brands of sport organizations offer valuable information which can be utilized when the branding and marketing communication operations are developed and improved.

The Finnish Triathlon Association, the assignor of the thesis, was founded in 1985. It is a national nonprofit sports organization whose purpose is to develop and spread triathlon activities and knowledge, act as a national organization for their member clubs and represent triathlon as a sport both in Finland and abroad. Their operations are based on the ethical values of sport and the principles of fair game. Moreover, the operations aim to further equality and tolerance between genders and people in general. The Finnish Triathlon Association is a member of the Finnish Olympic Committee, the Finnish Paralympic Committee, the Finnish Sports Association of Persons with Disabilities (VAU), the European Triathlon Union (ETU) and the International Triathlon Union (ITU). (Toimintakertomus 2017 2018.)

The Finnish Triathlon Association had not conducted any research previously to support their marketing and sales operations. Furthermore, the Finnish Triathlon Association did not have enough information about their members and brand image. Thus, there was a real need to further examine these matters. The aim of the research was to determine what kind of values the members possess and how they perceive the brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association. In addition, the possible differences between genders, age groups and how long the members had done triathlon for were studied. With the research results, the Finnish Triathlon Association could develop and improve the wanted operations.

2 Research framework

2.1 Research problem and research questions

Research is based on a research problem: the aim is to solve the problem by asking accurate research questions and finding answers to them. Research questions are derived from the research problem to ease the work, and they generate the answers needed to solve the research problem. In a quantitative study, existing theories and models help shaping the research questions. The research questions uncover the structures of the phenomenon, demonstrating the connections to and impacts of the various parts on it. (Kananen 2011b, 18, 20; Kananen 2015b, 28, 198.)

The Finnish Triathlon Association has little to no base for their marketing and sales actions as they have not conducted any research to support them. They hope to obtain more information about their current members' values and the Association's image in order to develop and improve their current marketing and sales processes, as well as their image if needed. (Tamminen 2018, telephone.) Based on this information, the Finnish Triathlon Association has insufficient amount of knowledge of their members and the Association's image as it stands. Thus, the research problem of the thesis is as follows: the brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association in the minds of its members and the members' values.

The following research questions were derived from the research problem:

- What kind of brand attributes do the members associate with the Finnish Triathlon Association?
- What kind of values do the current members possess?
- What kind of differences can be found in the value profiles according to the years of doing triathlon?

The purpose of the research was to study the members' value profiles, and the brand attributes that they associated with the Finnish Triathlon Association. The collected data could then be used to examine whether the values and associated brand attributes were congruent or contradicting. The analyzed data offers the Finnish Triathlon Association new understanding about their brand image and their members' personal values which can be used to further develop and improve the wanted sectors.

2.2 Methodology

Research method

Quantitative research deals with numbers and the connections between them, and it aims to generalize the results collected from a sample to concern the whole population. Quantitative research is based on positivism which strives for objective truth. (Kananen 2008, 10; Kananen 2011b, 36–37.) The deduction method, also known as theory-based research, is used in quantitative research and it requires existing theories and pre-understanding of the phenomenon. That is because the course of reasoning is from general to specific. (Kananen 2011b, 40, 73.) The collected data is measured in statistical methods in quantitative research. A sufficient number of observation units is required for the results to be valid and generalizable to the population. (Kananen 2008, 10.)

The quantitative research method was chosen for this research because of its aim and nature. In the base of the research is Shalom Schwartz's theory of basic human values and theories about branding, customer-based brand equity and brand image. The numerical research data was collected by using a questionnaire based on Schwartz's theory, after which the data was analyzed following the instructions and statistical rules of quantitative research.

Data collection method

The most often used data collection method in quantitative research is a survey. The existing theories must be well-known so that detailed questions can be developed for the survey. (Kananen 2015b, 201–202.) Seeing what kind of quantitative results are obtainable from the material and how the models and theories work in practice requires deep understanding of the phenomenon as well as the variables and the correlations among them (Kananen 2011b, 72).

According to Kananen (2015a) “quantitative research is always about measuring”. The measuring in quantitative research is done with questions and response options which can be structured or open. (Kananen 2015a, 141.) The questions determine the reliability and quality of the research: the questions must be short, optional, unambiguous and easy to understand, and the respondents must have the required information to answer them. By making sure that these prerequisites are met in each question, the research is likely to succeed. (Kananen 2015a, 147–148.)

The first step of the data collection process in quantitative research is planning the questionnaire and its structure. The survey contains specific questions designed to provide answers regarding the research problem and the research questions. In addition, there are questions concerning the background variables of the respondents because it enables comparison between the sample and the population. Furthermore, analyzing the results using cross tabulations requires background variables which can be chosen from the collected background data. (Kananen 2011b, 90.)

Conducting quantitative research online has its advantages and disadvantages. The benefits associated with online surveys are cost-effectiveness and the possibility to collect data fast and efficiently. Online surveys have the opportunity to reach target groups, both domestically and internationally, that are difficult or impossible to contact in other ways. Low response rates and not all people having Internet connections are seen as the disadvantages of online surveys. Furthermore, if the response rate is low and sampling is used, the results are not representative of the whole population. (Kananen 2015a, 162.)

The research data was collected from the members of the Finnish Triathlon Association by an online questionnaire sent via email. Webropol, an online survey system, was used to develop the questionnaire, save the collected data and analyze the results. The template which was used to create the questionnaire was the Finnish version of the value survey questionnaire created by Sport Business School Finland. It is based on Shalom Schwartz's theory of basic human values, and it has previously been used in many sport events.

The questionnaire was translated from Finnish to English and modified for the needs of this research. First, the background variables were changed and arranged to some extent. Secondly, the number of attributes was reduced from 39 to 25 in order to make the questionnaire more focused on this particular case and so that the attributes would better reflect the values the Finnish Triathlon Association wishes to portray. It also made the questionnaire easier to answer.

Thirdly, the attributes were chosen so that there was at least one attribute representing each 13 motivational factors of Schwartz's theory. Furthermore, other attributes and their opposites were added based on the values of the Finnish Triathlon Association and two of its cooperation partners, Klubben Sport Finland and Vierumäki. The cooperation partners in question were chosen because their values were both similar and varying compared to the Finnish Triathlon Association. With the above-mentioned modifications, the questionnaire was as valid and useful for the purpose as possible. The questionnaire was tested before it was sent to the target audience, and based on the feedback, it was modified slightly.

The questionnaire had six questions in total and it was structured except for the "Other, what?" option when asking about the respondents' occupational group. The first four questions were about the background variables of the respondents, in the fifth question the respondents were asked how strongly various characteristics related to the Finnish Triathlon Association, and in the last one the respondents were asked how much each described person was like him/her. At the end of the survey, the respondents had the opportunity to leave their contact details if they wanted to partake in a prize draw.

The background variables asked were age, gender, occupational group and how long they had done triathlon for. The fifth question was about the image of the Finnish Triathlon Association. The respondent was asked to rate how strongly various characteristics related to the Finnish Triathlon Association on a scale from one to seven where one (1) meant no relation at all and seven (7) meant a strong relation to the Finnish Triathlon Association. Altogether, there were 25 attributes to rate. In the sixth question, the respondent was asked to determine how much each described person was like him/her on a six-point scale where the options were very much like me, like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, not like me, and not like me at all.

The research data was collected between the 11th of September and the 25th of September 2018, making the response time 15 days in total. The weekday and time to send the questionnaire to the respondents was chosen to be Tuesday morning as it seemed to be the best time to reach the respondents via email.

Due to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the recent changes in it, it was decided that the questionnaire would be distributed to the target audience by the Executive Director of the Finnish Triathlon Association, Mrs. Kaisa Tamminen. Distributing the questionnaire via the Finnish Triathlon Association's email address also increased the effectiveness, accessibility and reliability of the questionnaire. A ready version of a cover letter and the link to the questionnaire was sent to Mrs. Tamminen on the previous day so that she was able to send it forward at the agreed time.

Census, population and sample

Census is the statistical term used when all units from a population are involved in the study whereas when a group is chosen from the population, the term used is a sample (Kananen 2011b, 94). Kananen (2008, 70) summarizes the phases of sampling as follows: define the population, define the target group, choose the sampling method, define the size of the sample, define the sample units and collect the data.

At first, the population involved in the phenomenon must be defined and outlined closely (Kananen 2008, 70). Often the population is so large that taking a sample is preferred. By following the precise rules and directions of sampling, a representative and reliable sample of the population can be taken. (Kananen 2011b, 73.) In practice,

the following four criteria are used when choosing the size of the sample: what the objectives of the research are, how accurate parameters representing the population are wanted, how many factors will be studied simultaneously and how homogeneous the population is (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 180).

The sampling method is chosen on a case-by-case basis because there is no method of sampling that works in all occasions (Kananen 2008, 73; Kananen 2011b, 94). In order to obtain a statistically accurate sample, the members forming the population must be known, and thus, sufficient data of the population has to be accessible (Kananen 2011b, 95; Kananen 2015a, 176). Furthermore, the population must be well-known so that the representativeness of the units in the sample can be evaluated. If the population is not known, the sample must be taken with a method that picks out a group of informants that is as representative as possible. (Kananen 2015a, 176.)

Not receiving answers from a target unit is usually related to having incorrect or incomplete contact details, or to the respondent being unknowing about the subject or unwilling to answer the questions. This non-response is a very vast problem especially in postal and Internet surveys. (Kananen 2008, 77; Kananen 2011b, 94.)

With certain measures, the response rate can possibly be increased. In order to have the highest response rate possible, these measures should be taken into consideration already when planning the online questionnaire. For example, ascertaining that the target group is right, informing about the research beforehand, paying attention to the title and the length of the email, giving proper information and instructions about the questionnaire, having easy questions and a short questionnaire, sending reminders about the questionnaire, having incentives, such as prize draws and ascertaining that the contact details are correct can all increase the response rate. (Kananen 2015b, 217.)

On the 3rd of August 2018, the Finnish Triathlon Association had 110 member-clubs and 2714 members whose information was entered into the digital sport service called Suomisport (Tamminen 2018, email). The target group of this research consisted of all members of the Finnish Triathlon Association whose correct email address was entered into Suomisport. This was because the data of the population was unavailable and therefore it was impossible to take a representative sample. The

members who had incorrect email address or did not have it at all on Suomisport were not included in the research. The questionnaire was sent to 2637 members via email but 30 email addresses were not in use. A total of 613 responses were received. The response rate was counted using the number of members, 2607, who supposedly received the email. Thus, the response rate was 23.5%.

To increase the response rate in this research, the target group was informed about the coming questionnaire. This was done via the Finnish Triathlon Association's Facebook page five days before sending the questionnaire. Furthermore, a prize draw was organized among the respondents who left their contact details at the end of the questionnaire. This was completely voluntary but worked as an incentive for some.

In addition, a reminder where the ones who had not answered to the questionnaire thus far were asked to do so was sent five days before the questionnaire was closed. This had a substantial impact on the total number of responses: before the reminder, 259 responses were collected and after the reminder, 354 respondents answered the questionnaire. Furthermore, close attention was paid to everything from creating the questionnaire to ascertaining that the respondents knew that the answers were completely anonymous and confidential.

Analyzing methods

Quantitative research studies quantities, dependencies and causal connections (Kananen 2011a, 85). Thus, in quantitative research the research data is illustrated with statistics, frequency distributions or cross tabulations. In addition, statistical methods such as correlation analysis, regression analysis and factor analysis are used to portray the results. (Kananen 2015b, 84.) When the research problem aims to only describe the phenomenon, using analyzing methods which illustrate the data is enough (Kananen 2011a, 85).

The analyzing methods for each type of data are strictly defined in quantitative research, and they must be considered already when planning the questionnaire because the form of each question affects the analyzing methods that are used. (Kananen 2015b, 83.) Furthermore, the research question and the theoretical background assumptions impact the choice of analyzing methods (Kananen 2011a,

85). Often the results are presented as percentage distributions, and thus, the analysis is based on the percentages. Weighted averages are, however, more illustrative way to present the results than percentages. The use of weighted averages is not always unambiguous because it is only one statistic among others and the statistic can be composed of various kinds of distributions. (Kananen 2011b, 111.) Interpretations are done by searching for differences or similarities, depending on the nature of the variable (Kananen 2011b, 104).

Frequency distribution, among cross tabulation, is the most common format for presenting, condensing and interpreting quantitative research results. A frequency distribution table demonstrates how the answers to a single variable are distributed between the options. (Kananen 2011b, 101.) Since in quantitative research the aim is to generalize results, the ratio of each variable's value to whole data signifies rather than the frequencies (Kananen 2011a, 74).

The correlations between different matters are often the subject of interest in quantitative research because finding correlations makes influencing those matters possible (Kananen 2011a, 77). In cross tabulations, two variables are examined simultaneously (Kananen 2011b 102). The aim is to determine if there are differences between various groups or dependencies between variables (Kananen 2015b, 291). Cross tabulation is problematic because even if there are correlations between variables, there is no guarantee that they are causal connections. The correlation between variables can be strong but the factors might not depend on each other. In other words, technical dependency does not guarantee actual dependency. (Kananen 2011a, 77.)

In this research, frequency distributions and cross tabulations were used as the analyzing methods. Webropol online survey system was used to handle and analyze the data. All results were analyzed so that individual respondents could not be identified from them. Percentages and mean values were used in tables: the background variables were presented in tables as percentages and other results in tables as mean values. Furthermore, mean values were used in the figure presenting all attributes by gender.

2.3 Reliability and validity

The aim of a research is to collect data that is as reliable and truthful as possible (Kananen 2011a, 118). According to Kananen (2011b), reliability and validity must be evaluated in scientific research because only after that the quality of the work can be assessed. Furthermore, reliability and validity issues must be taken into consideration already before conducting the research. (Kananen 2011b, 125.)

Reliability in quantitative research refers to the coherency and repeatability of the research results. That is, when the measurement is repeated, the results remain the same. Repeating the measurement is, however, often expensive and challenging. In addition, new measurement does not automatically ensure reliability because the phenomenon may alter over time. Reliability does not ensure validity: if the measure is wrong, it will distort the results even if identical results are generated in repeated measurements. Reliability has two sub-concepts, stability and consistency. The former signifies that the measure stays constant over time, and the latter that it measures the same thing. (Kananen 2011a, 199; Kananen 2011b, 126.)

Validity refers to whether the right matters have been studied and measured (Kananen 2011b, 125). By using the right method of research, the correct measure and by measuring what is intended, the validity of a research can be ensured (Kananen 2011a, 121). Even though reliability does not guarantee validity, validity is prerequisite for reliability (Kananen 2015b, 351).

Validity can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the standard at which a study is conducted. It is nearly impossible to evaluate how well the criteria of internal validity has been met. However, the level of validity can be increased by proper documentation of the research and by defining the used concepts appropriately and preferably based on theory. External validity means the generalizability of the results to the population. The research setting must entirely correspond the population to make sure that the research results are always valid in similar situations. Thus, the sample must first be compared with the population if the research is based on sampling. However, external validity is not relevant when the whole population is included in the research. (Kananen 2011b, 125–128.)

Quantitative research is often seen as more objective than qualitative research because a questionnaire is used to collect the data. Each respondent can, however, decide if they want to answer truthfully or not. Furthermore, the respondents can understand the questions in their own way and not how they are intended to be understood. This means that quantitative research is not able to produce completely objective data either. In addition, all the choices a researcher makes during the research process affect the reliability and validity of the research. The researcher can also do incorrect interpretations and come to wrong conclusions. However, in quantitative research the analyzing rules are very strict, and sources of error are minimal. Examining the reliability and validity means that during the research process right choices are made and they are validated. (Kananen 2015b, 338–343.)

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of this research, each phase of the research will be carefully planned and reported. The aim is to make the questionnaire explicit and compact as well as design the questions so that they are unambiguous. If the questions are not open to interpretation, the respondents will understand them as they are meant to be understood. In order to achieve that, the questionnaire will be tested beforehand. Furthermore, in order to reach as high response rate as possible, the target group will be informed about the upcoming survey, a reminder will be sent midway of the response time and a prize draw will be organized. In order to diminish the margin of human errors when collecting and analyzing the data, the Webropol online survey system will be utilized.

3 Schwartz's theory of basic human values

3.1 Defining the basic values

People have many values guiding their life. Every value has a level of importance which is based on the individual's own perceptions. To some, certain values (e.g. security, universalism, power) are very important whereas others may see the same values as unimportant. (Schwartz 2012, 3.)

Regarding the most advantageous way to conceptualize the basic values, unanimity has arisen gradually since the 1950's (Schwartz 2005, 0). According to Schwartz (1992), Schwartz and Bilsky created a theoretical definition of basic values that included the six main features of values. These features were generated from the works of various theorists and researchers, such as Allport, Feather, Kluckhohn, Morris, and Rokeach. (Schwartz 1992, 3–4; Schwartz 2012, 3.)

The six main features are as follows:

- *Values are beliefs. But they are beliefs tied inextricably to emotion, not objective, cold ideas.*
- *Values are a motivational construct. They refer to the desirable goals people strive to attain.*
- *Values transcend specific actions and situations. They are abstract goals. The abstract nature of values distinguishes them from concepts like norms and attitudes, which usually refer to specific actions, objects, or situations.*
- *Values guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. That is, values serve as standards or criteria.*
- *Values are ordered by importance relative to one another. People's values form an ordered system of value priorities that characterize them as individuals. This hierarchical feature of values also distinguishes them from norms and attitudes. (Schwartz 2005, 0.)*
- *The relative importance of multiple values guides action. Any attitude or behavior typically has implications for more than one value. -- Values influence action when they are relevant in the context (hence likely to be activated) and important to the actor. (Schwartz 2012, 4.)*

The abovementioned features are common to all values (Schwartz 2012, 4). The pivotal content aspect differentiating values from each other is the type of objective or motivation they express (Schwartz 1992, 4; Schwartz 2012, 4).

The Schwartz value theory specifies ten broad and basic values based on the motivation underlying each of them (Schwartz 2012, 4). These values are known across cultures because they are grounded in three universal needs of human existence: individuals' needs as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and groups' survival and welfare needs (Schwartz 1992, 4; Schwartz 2012, 4).

The ten basic values characterized by their central motivational goals are self-direction (“independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring”), stimulation (“excitement, novelty, and challenge in life”), hedonism (“pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself”), achievement (“personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards”), power (“social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources”), security (“safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self”), conformity (“restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms”), tradition (“respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self”), benevolence (“preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the ‘in-group’)”) and universalism (“understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature”). (Schwartz 2005, 1–2.)

3.2 The value relations structure

The Values Theory both identifies the ten motivationally divergent values and clarifies the dynamic connections among them. Pursuing any of those ten values has social, psychological and practical consequences which either contravene or are compatible with other values. (Schwartz 2005, 2; Schwartz 2012, 8.) For example, pursuing tradition values contravenes with pursuing stimulation values. However, tradition values are congruent with conformity values because both motivate actions of compliance to external expectations. Although people can pursue conflicting values, it cannot be done in one act. Instead, it can be done through separate acts, at different times, and in various surroundings. (Schwartz 2012, 8.)

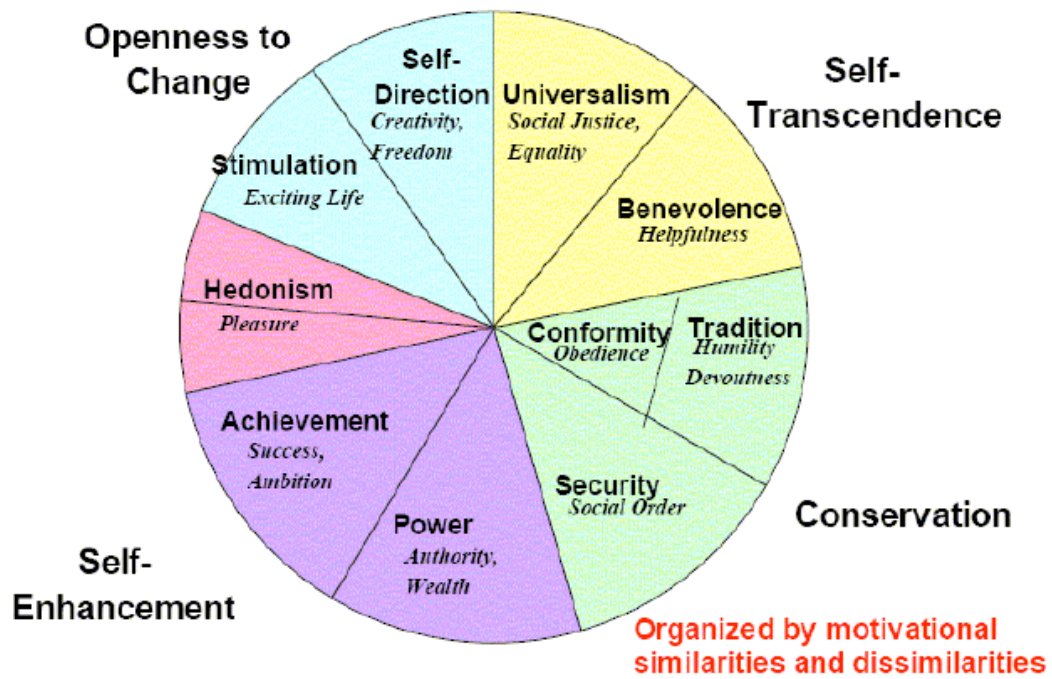


Figure 1. Theoretical model of relations among ten motivational types of values (Schwartz 2005, 3)

As seen in Figure 1 above, the ten values are organized to form a circular structure demonstrating a motivational continuum. The structure illustrates the complete arrangement of relations of contradiction and congruity between the values. The closer the values are located around the circle, the more alike their fundamental ambitions are. The further away any two values are from each other, the more opposing their fundamental ambitions are. (Schwartz 2005, 2.)

The structure is also divided into two pairs of opposing dimensions: Openness to change versus conservation, and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. On the former dimension, self-direction and stimulation values oppose tradition, conformity and security values. Elements of both self-enhancement and openness to change can be found in hedonism. On the latter dimension, achievement and power values oppose universalism and benevolence values. (Schwartz 2005, 3.)

Although the theory differentiates ten values, it suggests that the values create a continuum of connected motivations, which generates the circular structure

(Schwartz 2012, 9). To explain the continuum's nature better, Schwartz (2012, 9–10) presents the motivational emphases common to adjacent values. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Shared motivational emphases between the basic values (adapted from Schwartz 2012, 9–10)

The basic values	Shared motivational emphases
Power and Achievement	Social superiority and esteem
Achievement and Hedonism	Self-centered satisfaction
Hedonism and Stimulation	A desire for affectively pleasant arousal
Stimulation and Self-direction	Intrinsic interest in novelty and mastery
Self-direction and Universalism	Reliance upon one's own judgment and comfort with the diversity of existence
Universalism and Benevolence	Enhancement of others and transcendence of selfish interests
Benevolence and Tradition	Devotion to one's in-group
Benevolence and Conformity	Normative behavior that promotes close relationships
Conformity and Tradition	Subordination of self in favor of socially imposed expectations
Tradition and Security	Preserving existing social arrangements that give certainty to life
Conformity and Security	Protection of order and harmony in relations
Security and Power	Avoiding or overcoming threats by controlling relationships and resources

The idea that values create a circular motivational continuum has a crucial implication: it is just an arbitrary convenience that the scope of the value items are separated into ten distinct values. Consequently, it is logical to divide the value items into more specific values based on the requirements and objectives of the research. Furthermore, perceiving the formation of the values as a motivational continuum affects the relations between the values and other variables as it indicates that all ten values connect to the other variables (age, behavior, attitude, etc.) in an integrated way. (Schwartz 2012, 10.)

Schwartz, Cieciuch, Vecchione, Davidov, Fischer, Beierlein, Ramos, Verkasalo, Lönnqvist, Demirutku, Dirilen-Gumus and Konty (2012) presented a refined theory of the basic values where the concept of values forming a continuum was given greater importance. In the refined theory, the ten values are divided into 19 value facets, viewed as the subdimensions of the original values. In addition, the refined theory extends the ten basic values with two new values, face and humility. Face is located between security and power, and humility between conformity and benevolence. The 19 value facets form the first-order factors, the ten basic values with the new values form the second-order factors, and the four higher-order values form the third-order factors. Thus, three hierarchical levels can be distinguished in the refined theory. (Cieciuch, Davidov, Schwartz & Vecchione 2014, 178–180.)

3.3 The Schwartz Value Survey

The Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) was the first theory-based survey developed and used to measure values (Schwartz 1992, 16; Schwartz 2005, 11). The SVS introduces 57 single-value items which are chosen to symbolize the ten motivationally distinct value constructs (Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, Harris, & Owens 2001, 522). Each value item signifying a feature of the motivational goal of one value. (Schwartz 2005, 11; Schwartz 2012, 10). An additional descriptive phrase in parentheses was included for further defining each value's meaning (e.g. Pleasure (gratification of desires) is a hedonism item) (Schwartz 1992, 17; Schwartz 2005, 11).

In SVS, respondents are asked to rate the importance of each value "as a guiding principle in my life" using a nine-point scale where 7 means "of supreme importance" and -1 "opposed to my values" (Schwartz 1992, 17). Based on pre-tests, the scale was made asymmetrical because people tend to rate most values from mildly to very important. The scale also allows respondents to indicate opposition to values they avoid promoting or expressing. As people in one culture may reject values from other cultures, the asymmetry of the scale is essential especially in cross-cultural studies. (Schwartz 2006, 12.) Furthermore, in order to reduce some disadvantages for cross-cultural work, the values are rated rather than ranked (Schwartz 1992, 17).

A judgement task like this demands abstract thinking and evaluation. The SVS does not provide precise life contexts within which the respondents could weigh their application of values. Consequently, people have to determine and evaluate the guiding principles in their life, and to most, this kind of task is novel and intellectually challenging. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 522.)

Each value has a score representing their importance. The score is the average rating given to items appointed a priori as indicators of that value. The number of items representing each value varies between three (hedonism) and eight (universalism), demonstrating the abstract breadth of the values. In the indexes, only value items that have shown near-congruence of meaning across cultures in analyses using multifaceted scaling and confirmatory factor analysis are included. (Schwartz 2006, 12.)

Most of the literate adults across cultures organize values by a common structure of motivational differences and similarities even though there is a significant difference in the importance which people ascribe to values. Schwartz and colleagues (2001, 523) state the previous based on SVS studies: 95% of the samples from 63 countries back the individuality of the ten values and the prototypical circular structure of relations amongst them. Additionally, when measured with the SVS, value priorities have indicated systematic, predictable, and relevant connections with many attitudes, behaviors, individual tendencies, and background variables in 20 countries studied. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 523.)

3.4 The Portrait Values Questionnaire

The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) is, when compared to the SVS, an alternative and more concrete method to measure the ten basic values. It was created because the SVS was proven unsuitable for samples where the respondents were children from age 11 upwards, elderly, or people who were not educated in the Western schools which emphasize abstract, context-free thinking. In addition, an alternative instrument needed to be created to evaluate whether the values theory is valid regardless of the SVS method. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 520; Schwartz 2006, 13.)

The PVQ contains 40 verbal portraits describing goals, aspirations, or wishes strongly but implicitly connected to one of the ten basic values (Schwartz 2006, 13). For example, “He likes to be in charge and tell other what to do. He wants people to do what he says” describes a person to whom power values are important. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 521.)

Each portrait requires respondents to answer, “how much like you is this person?” on a six-point scale where the responses are as follows: very much like me, like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, not like me, and not like me at all. As each portrait is connected to one of the ten basic values, the respondents’ own values can be concluded from their self-stated similarity to people portrayed on each description. It is important to keep the respondents focused on the characteristics of the person portrayed, thus they are asked to compare the portrait to themselves. When comparing other to oneself, the focus is directed to the characteristics of the portrayed person whereas when comparing oneself to others, the attention is focused on self. As the similarity judgment should focus on the value-relevant aspects and not the respondent’s own characteristics, the former option is desired. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 523.)

Without clearly identifying values as the subject of examination, the verbal portraits capture the respondent’s values by describing the portrayed person in terms of what is important to him or her. According to Schwartz (2005), the PVQ is interested in the similarity of the respondent to someone with certain goals and aspirations (values) rather than the likeness to someone with certain traits. Both a value and a trait can be described with the same term (e.g. wisdom, obedience, ambition). Still, a person valuing a goal (e.g. creativity) does not necessarily have the equivalent trait (creative) and vice versa; a person exhibiting a trait (e.g. conforming) does not inevitably value that equivalent goal (conformity). (Schwartz 2005, 12.)

In the PVQ, the number of portraits for each value varies from three (power, stimulation, and hedonism) to six (universalism), demonstrating the abstract breadth of the values. The score representing each value’s importance is the average rating given to items appointed a priori as indicators of that value, just like in the SVS. In addition, only value items that have shown near-congruence of meaning across cultures in analyses using multifaceted scaling are included. (Schwartz 2006, 14.)

The methods for measuring value priorities differ significantly between the PVQ and the SVS. In the PVQ, the stimuli are people, described in terms of their goals, aspirations and wishes. It also measures values indirectly and asks to compare the similarity of another person to self on a six-point scale where the boxes are labeled. In the SVS, the stimuli are abstract, context-free values. In addition, it elicits direct, self-conscious reports of values, and asks to rate the significance of values as guiding principles in one's life on a partially labeled nine-point numerical response scale which includes positive and negative numbers. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 524.)

In contrary to the SVS, fewer fine differentiations are needed, and altering judgments into numbers is unnecessary when using the PVQ. Thus, respondents to the PVQ find the judgment making easy and seldomly ask any questions. (Schwartz et al. 2001, 524.) According to Schwartz and colleagues (2001, 238) "the theorized value content and structure were found with the PVQ" even though respondents are unknowing that the questionnaire measures values.

4 The brand image of a sports organization

4.1 Brands and branding

The word brand originates from the Old Norse word *brandr* which stands for "to burn". Brands were, and still are, a way by which owners of cattle mark their animals to recognize them. In its modern meaning, branding is a way to distinguish and differentiate a product or service of one owner from those of another. (Keller, Apéria & Georgson 2012, 4.) As most companies can build and offer adequate products and services, the competition with several markets occur at the product augmentation level. Therefore, the difference is created by adding things people value to the product or service. (Keller et al. 2012, 4.)

According to the American Marketing Association (Dictionary: brand n.d.), "a brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers". Essentially, whenever a name, logo or symbol is created for a new product, a brand is also created (Keller et al. 2012, 4).

However, a brand is rather the culmination of consumer's every experience with the brand than only a synonym for a logo, name or design of a product or service. (Beech & Chadwick 2013, 200). Thus, a brand can be defined in terms of building knowledge, reputation and prominence, among other things, in the marketplace (Keller et al. 2012, 4).

Brands affect people's decision making and behavior every day for example by influencing which products or services they consume and how much they pay for them (Beech & Chadwick 2013, 200). A brand must be consistent so that the consumers can form a concept of the brand in their minds. Being consistent requires the product or service to deliver on what is promised at a quality level which meets or surpasses the expectations of the consumer. In addition, to understand what a brand stands for and for a proper brand image to form in consumers' minds, the brand must be presented to them in a consistent way. (Beech & Chadwick 2013, 203.) Consequently, sport organizations must manage their brands successfully as it is a way for them to create awareness and a strong image for their products or services. It also increases consumer loyalty which, in turn, results in increased revenue. (Mullin et al. 2007, 183, 186–187.)

Branding

Branding is a way to differentiate products and services from others either in rational and tangible or more symbolic, emotional and intangible way. The former relates to the brand's product performance and the latter to what the brand symbolizes. (Keller et al. 2012, 4.) Increasing number of consumers want to purchase the experiences around what is being sold. Emotional branding can be defined as "engaging the consumer on the level of senses and emotions" by creating a deep, durable personal connection between the consumer and the brand that surpasses material satisfaction. This can be done when a holistic experience generating an emotional fulfillment is created since that helps the consumer to develop a special connection with and unique trust in the brand. As consumption becomes more meaning based, branding is focusing more on the emotional than the functional side of products and services. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2009, 426–427.)

Consumers gain more experiential than tangible benefits from sport regardless of how it is consumed. Sport organizations have an advantage due to the experiential and emotional nature of sports: the range of emotions and the degree of emotional attachment sports trigger within the consumers are unique compared to other leisure and entertainment products or services. (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton 2007, 173.) Being associated with sport entities can bring value to brands – the positive attributes that sport teams, associations, leagues, and individual athletes represent can be effectively transferred to the sponsoring brand. This helps organizations to personify the positioning and selling proposition of their brand. (Beech & Chadwick 2013, 200.) In addition, the emotional attachment consumers have towards sports can also be utilized by the sponsors. Since people tend to make emotion-based decisions validated with logic, it is important for a sport organization to create such an impression that their brand triggers strong positive feelings in the consumers' minds. When a sport brand manages to do that, catching consumers and fans attention will be easier for the marketers. (Mullin et al. 2007, 173.)

The purpose of a brand

According to Kotler and colleagues (2009), the two perspectives from which a brand can be studied are consumer viewpoint and channel members' viewpoint. Brands indicate a specific level of quality for consumers and if they are content with it, they can easily choose the product or service again. (Kotler et al. 2009, 428.) Brands also help consumers to recognize the manufacturer and the origin of a product and service. Furthermore, strong brands help consumers make relevant and suitable decisions for themselves based on the previous knowledge and experiences of brands. (Keller 2013, 34.) This makes the purchase process more effective in terms of cost and time, and it diminishes the perceived risks associated with it (Kotler et al. 2009, 428).

Branding benefits companies every time a consumer is making a decision between various products or services because branding is based on consumers' ability to distinguish the differences between brands (Keller et al. 2012, 16). A brand makes a product or service hard to copy: the design or manufacturing process may be imitated but the strong impressions left in consumers' minds by marketing activities and

product or service experience are not easily duplicated (Keller 2013, 35). Furthermore, the unique features of a brand can be legally protected. This guarantees that the company can invest in the brand safely and exclusively enjoy the benefits. (Keller et al. 2012, 10.)

In addition, strong brands create loyal customers which gives the brands' owners a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Due to the competitive advantage, entering the marketplace is more challenging for the competitors. Moreover, customer loyalty offers predictability and security of demand for the company. (Keller et al. 2012, 10.) This reduces the vulnerability of a company against competitive marketing activities and changes in the marketplace. Strong brands can also charge more for their products or services and create potential for growth through brand extensions and licensing opportunities. A brand also increases the efficiency of marketing communications and performance. (Kotler et al. 2009, 429.)

Building a sport brand

According to Smith and Stewart (2015), sport brand building is a process which includes four steps: (1) establishing brand awareness, (2) developing and managing a brand image, (3) developing brand equity and (4) developing brand loyalty. First, brand awareness must be established because in order to understand the identity or image of a brand, consumers must be aware of it. The second step is to develop and manage the brand image. This includes, for example, shaping and managing consumers perceptions of a brand in several ways, and reminding them of the brand image. (Smith & Stewart 2015, 129–130.)

Step three focuses on developing brand equity. Creating high levels of brand equity makes the consumers more loyal to a product or service. Various aspects such as price, consumer awareness, concepts and ideas which consumers link to the brand, the distinctiveness of competitor's brands, and consumer loyalty can influence brand equity. The most effective element is, however, perceived quality. Thus, increasing awareness while managing the quality of provided products is the most profitable path to develop brand equity. (Smith & Stewart 2015, 131.) The last step is developing brand loyalty. Loyal consumers choose the certain product or service over other

equivalents offered by competitors. The quality of a sport product or service has a role in encouraging loyalty. (Smith & Stewart 2015, 133.)

It is essential to help consumers link specific ideas about what a sport brand stands for after they become aware of the brand. This can be done by shaping the brand image which contains all ideas and symbols influencing the brand image. The main purpose of branding is consumer loyalty. Brand loyalty can be increased through high-quality products, convenient distribution, taking care of customer relationships and customer loyalty programs. (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson & Stewart 2018, 261.)

4.2 Customer-based brand equity

The concept of brand equity arose in the 1980s. Even though brand equity has been defined in various ways, most people agree that the definition should be done in terms of the unique marketing effects which a brand conveys to a product or service. In other words, the differences in marketing outcomes depend on whether a product or service is branded or not. (Keller et al. 2012, 42.) Brand equity can thus be defined as “the brand assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and symbol that add to (or subtract from) a product or service” (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 17). In addition, American Marketing Association (Dictionary: brand equity n.d.) suggests that brand equity is “the value of a brand. From a consumer perspective, brand equity is based on consumer attitudes about positive brand attributes and favorable consequences of brand use” (Dictionary: brand equity n.d.).

Brand equity is approached from consumer perspective in the customer-based brand equity concept regardless whether the consumer is an individual, a company or a potential customer (Keller et al. 2012, 53). Keller (2013) defines customer-based brand equity (CBBE) as how differently the consumers react to the marketing of a brand based on the brand knowledge they have obtained about that brand. In order to clarify the definition, it can be divided into three parts which are the differential effect, brand knowledge and consumer response to marketing. (Keller 2013, 69.)

The differences in consumer reaction create the base for brand equity because without them, the brand name products would only be commodities. Brand knowledge is,

in turn, the reason behind the differences as each consumer has their own experiences and knowledge about a brand. These experiences and knowledge are formed based on the marketing activities of a company as well as other factors. The consumer response is the outcome of the above-mentioned parts because they shape the perceptions, preferences and behavior related to brand marketing. (Keller 2013, 69.)

According to Keller and colleagues (2012), at the core of successful marketing is understanding the needs and wants of consumers and gratifying them with suitable products and services. The fundamental offset of the CBBE concept is that the strength of a brand is based on customers' experiences of the brand over time. That is, what resides in the customers' minds based on what they have learned, seen, felt and heard about the brand. When consumers recognize a brand and therefore react more favorably to a product and the manner it is marketed than they would without it, a brand has a positive customer-based brand equity. However, if consumers react less favorably when recognizing a brand than they would without it, a brand has negative customer-based brand equity. Thus, building a strong brand can be a challenge for marketers because they must ensure that customers obtain positive experiences of the brand and consequently relate the desired thoughts, beliefs, feelings, opinions, perceptions and images to it. (Keller et al. 2012, 53–54.)

According to Mullin and colleagues (2007), a sport organization realizes brand equity when consumers have a strong image of the organization's brand in their mind. This can be achieved by generating substantial amount of favorable assets linked to the brand. In addition, being cautious not to create negative feelings towards the sport organization is important. (Mullin et al. 2007, 174.) Consumers are more likely to be content with a brand if they believe that the sport product has a high level of brand equity. The satisfaction will make the consumers brand-loyal or repeat purchasers which translates, for example, into increased revenue through sales. (Mullin et al. 2007, 174; Shank 2009, 211.)

Brand knowledge

The foundation of brand equity is the comprehension of consumer brand knowledge. That is, understanding all the various aspects that become linked to a brand in consumers' minds is what forms the base of brand equity. (Kotler et al. 2009, 426.) According to Keller (2013, 72), there are two elements, brand awareness and brand image, that compose brand knowledge. Brand awareness refers to the ability of a consumer in the target market to identify and remember the name of a brand. Brand awareness level must reach the wanted objectives before the focus can be shifted to brand image. This is because before consumers can comprehend the image a sports marketer is attempting to project, they must be aware of the product or service. (Shank 2009, 210.) Awareness impacts consumers' impressions and preferences of a brand: they tend to ascribe positive attributes to products and services that are known well (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 17).

Brand awareness can be divided into two parts: brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition means the consumer's capability to recognize and remember earlier exposure to a brand. In turn, brand recall is consumer's capability to retrieve a brand from memory, for example, when thinking about the product category or usage situation. (Keller 2013, 73.) Brand recognition is particularly important when consumers make decision at the point of purchase whereas brand recall is valuable in situations where the decision is made in a location away from the point of purchase. Although brand recall is less important at the point of purchase, consumers' choices and judgements about a brand will often depend on what they can recall about it given that they first recognize the brand. People are typically better at recognizing a brand than at recalling it. (Keller 2013, 74.) Brand awareness can be developed by frequently exposing the consumers to a brand and by making sure they relate desired associations to the brand (Keller et al. 2012, 62).

Sponsors of sport also place high importance on creating brand awareness because they pay to be associated with the sport properties. The aim and expectation are to make sport consumers feel better about the sponsor supporting the sport property. This is because if the consumers are uninformed of the sponsoring efforts, the sponsors do not gain anything from being a sponsor. (Mullin et al. 2007, 178.) Consumers'

knowledge about a brand and their probable reaction to company's marketing activity based on that knowledge determines the real value and future prospects of the brand (Kotler et al. 2009, 426).

4.3 Brand image

When a satisfactory level of brand awareness is established, developing and managing a brand image can begin (Keller 2013, 76). Brand image can be defined as the array of beliefs which the consumers have about a brand. These beliefs also shape the consumers' attitudes towards a brand. In addition, brand image can be seen as the "personality" of a brand. (Shank 2009, 210–211.) The aim of creating a brand image is to develop powerful, unique and favorable brand associations which mean the words and phrases that come to mind when thinking about a certain brand. Since sport is so strongly linked to emotion, sport marketers have an advantage regarding the creation of unique associations. (Mullin et al. 2007, 178.)

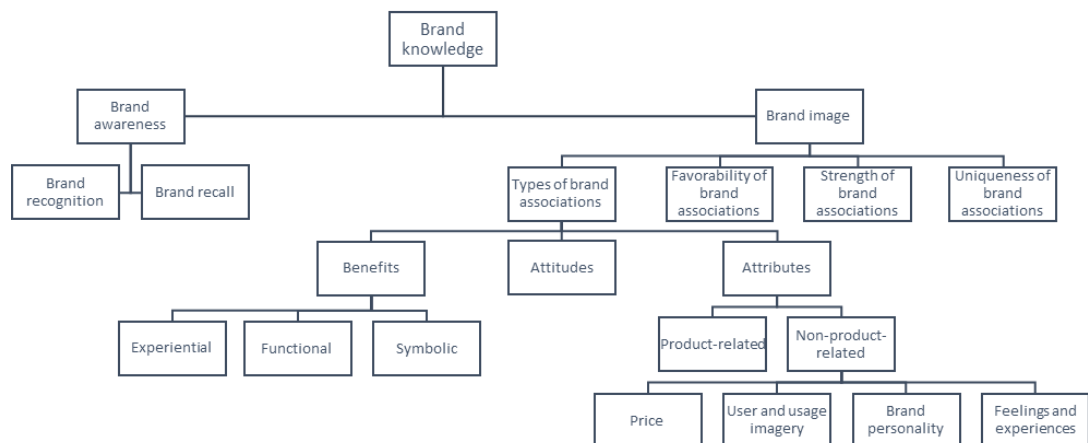


Figure 2. Summary of brand knowledge (adapted from Keller 2013, 548)

Brand associations are the imagery, product features, organizational associations, brand personality and symbols, among other things, that attach customers to the

brand. Deciding which associations to create and then figuring out how to connect the associations to a brand is a major part of brand management. (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 17.)

Brand associations can be divided into different types and studied through their favorability, strength and uniqueness which are the key factors in creating a positive brand image. According to Keller (2013), brand associations can be either brand attributes or benefits. Brand attributes can be divided into product-related and non-product-related characteristics whereas brand benefits are the symbolic, experiential and functional values and meanings which consumers relate to a product or service attributes. Although consumers create impressions about brand attributes and benefits in various ways, the customer-based brand equity concept does not discern between the origin of the brand associations and the way they are created. That is because only the strength, favorability and uniqueness of the associations matter. In addition to the marketing activities, consumers can form brand associations in different ways. These include all experiences, assumptions, impressions and conclusions consumers make about the brand. (Keller 2013, 77.)

The strength of brand associations depends on two factors: the personal relevance and the regularity with which it is demonstrated over time. Thus, the more intensely product information is thought and connected with existent brand knowledge, the stronger the brand associations are. Favorable brand associations are created by assuring consumers that a brand holds relevant attributes and benefits which gratify their needs and wants. All brand associations are not equally important to consumers, nor are they all viewed favorably or valued similarly across various purchase or utilization situations. The uniqueness of brand associations creates a way of differentiation for a brand and a competitive advantage for companies. It is important that a brand establishes its place in the marketplace as well as stands out in a positive way so that the consumers want to purchase the product or service of that certain brand. (Keller 2013, 78.)

Sport brand managers must observe closely how consumers perceive and experience their products and services because in sports, the product or service is the experience (DeGaris 2015, 63–64). Ensuring that the brand associations are powerful, favorable and unique is not always easy for sport marketers due to the unpredictable

nature of sports. Therefore, they should take care of the brand associations continually. In addition to winning, sports have other sources of brand associations which include, but are not limited to, brand elements, players, owners, entertainment around a game event and the venue where a sport event takes place. (Mullin et al. 2007, 178–179.)

One of the non-product-related brand attributes is brand personality which is a way to differentiate a product or service in a market. Thus, it can create brand equity in various ways. It is challenging for a brand to gain awareness and develop customer relationships if it has no personality and therefore the brand needs to be interesting and memorable. In addition, brands can benefit from consideration of concepts such as energy and youthfulness which brand personality triggers. Lastly, brand personality can help to create various types of brand-customer relationships which make the relationship development clearer and more inspiring. (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2009, 53.)

5 Results

5.1 Background variables

The first four questions on the questionnaire were aimed to discover the respondents' age, gender, occupational group and how long they had done triathlon for. More than half of the respondents were male (62%) and nearly two fifths were female (38%) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents by gender

Gender	n	%
Male	374	62 %
Female	233	38 %
Total	607	100 %

As shown by Table 3, the two biggest respondent groups were 33–42-year-olds and 43–52-year-olds both with over a third (37% and 36% respectively) of all responses. One eighth (12%) of the respondents were people aged 53–62, and a tenth (10%) were 23–32 years old. The smallest groups that responded were people aged 22 or younger (4%) and people aged 63 or older (2%).

Table 3. Respondents by age

Age	n	%
-22	24	4 %
23-32	58	10 %
33-42	222	37 %
43-52	214	36 %
53-62	73	12 %
63-	11	2 %
Total	602	100 %

Table 4 shows that almost a third (29%) of the respondents worked in middle management positions. The second biggest occupational group was employees (21%). Lower management and a leading position, working for someone else, were close to each other in percentages, the former being 15 percent and the latter 14 percent. From the respondents, one eighth (12%) were entrepreneurs or private practitioners,

and six percent were students. In total, two percent of the respondents were retired. The rest of the occupational groups – other, stay-at-home mothers or stay-at-home fathers, and agricultural entrepreneurs – were clearly minorities as all of them represented less than one percent of the respondents. None of the respondents were unemployed.

Table 4. Respondents by occupational group

Occupational group	n	%
Leading position, working for someone else	88	14.4 %
Middle management	176	28.7 %
Lower management	94	15.3 %
Employee	128	20.9 %
Entrepreneur or private practitioner	72	11.7 %
Agricultural entrepreneur	1	0.2 %
Student	38	6.2 %
Retired	9	1.5 %
Stay-at-home mother or stay-at-home father	2	0.3 %
Unemployed	0	0.0 %
Other	5	0.8 %
Total	613	100.0 %

As seen from Table 5, nearly a third (32%) of the respondents had done triathlon for 3–4 years. Slightly over a fifth (22%) of the respondents had done triathlon for 5–6 years, and slightly over one sixth (16%) had done triathlon for 2–3 years. In addition, nine percent of the respondents had done triathlon for 7–8 years and seven percent for 9–10 years. People who had done triathlon for 21 years or longer represented five percent of all the respondents. Four percent of the respondents had done triathlon for less than a year and three percent for 11–12 years. The smallest representations with under one percent came from people who had done triathlon for 13–14, 15–16, 17–18, and 19–20 years respectively.

Table 5. How long have you been doing triathlon for?

Years of doing triathlon	n	%
-1	25	4.1 %
1-2	97	15.8 %
3-4	195	31.9 %
5-6	133	21.7 %
7-8	57	9.3 %
9-10	42	6.9 %
11-12	15	2.5 %
13-14	4	0.7 %
15-16	5	0.8 %
17-18	5	0.8 %
19-20	3	0.5 %
21-	31	5.1 %
Total	612	100.0 %

5.2 The brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association

In order to determine how strongly the members related various attributes to the Finnish Triathlon Association, they were asked to rate the attributes on a scale from one to seven where one (1) meant no relation at all and seven (7) meant a strong relation to the Finnish Triathlon Association. Thus, the mean values on the following tables illustrating the results of the related brand attributes were proportioned to a scale from one to seven.

Table 6 demonstrates the ten strongest and five weakest attributes related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. These attributes were organized based on their importance. The letter n indicates the number of respondents who rated the specific attribute and as can be seen, all respondents did not answer each part.

As can be seen from Table 6, the respondents rated the attributes honest (5.39), responsible (4.97), polite (4.86), traditional (4.86) and nature-protective (4.82) to have the strongest relation to the Finnish Triathlon Association. The three weakest characteristics that the respondents related to the Finnish Triathlon Association were unjust (2.22), irresponsible (2.22) and weak (2.91) – each with a mean value under

three. Other characteristics weakly related to the Finnish Triathlon Association were inefficient (3.20) and formal (4.06).

Table 6. The most and least important attributes by all members

	Attribute	n	Mean
1.	Honest	604	5.39
2.	Responsible	602	4.97
3.	Polite	598	4.86
4.	Traditional	601	4.86
5.	Nature-protective	600	4.84
6.	Communal	602	4.82
7.	Broad-minded	603	4.80
8.	Pleasant	602	4.78
9.	Equal	599	4.70
10.	Adult	601	4.65
21.	Formal	600	4.06
22.	Inefficient	600	3.20
23.	Weak	600	2.91
24.	Irresponsible	602	2.22
25.	Unjust	603	2.22

The image according to genders

The strongest and weakest attributes which the male and female respondents related to the Finnish Triathlon Association differed slightly, as shown by Table 7. Both genders saw honest and responsible as the two strongest attributes, and traditional can be found in both genders' top five strongest attributes but from different places. There was a difference, however, between the two other attributes which each gender thought belongs to the five strongest attributes. For male respondents these were nature-protective and polite, and for female respondents broad-minded and communal. The five attributes which the respondents of both genders related weakly to the Finnish Triathlon Association were unjust, irresponsible, weak, inefficient and formal. However, female respondents saw irresponsible as the weakest attribute and

unjust the second weakest whereas male respondents rated them the other way around.

Table 7. The most and least important attributes by gender

Male respondents		Female respondents	
Attribute	Mean	Attribute	Mean
1. Honest	5.40	1. Honest	5.38
2. Responsible	4.95	2. Responsible	5.00
3. Nature-protective	4.88	3. Traditional	4.93
4. Polite	4.88	4. Broad-minded	4.88
5. Traditional	4.81	5. Communal	4.85
21. Formal	4.12	21. Formal	3.97
22. Inefficient	3.40	22. Inefficient	2.88
23. Weak	3.09	23. Weak	2.63
24. Irresponsible	2.31	24. Unjust	2.14
25. Unjust	2.28	25. Irresponsible	2.11

The mean value of inefficient, weak and strong differed the most between male and female respondents. Male respondents saw inefficient and weak to be more related to the Finnish Triathlon Association than the female respondents, the difference being 0.52 and 0.46 units respectively. On the contrary, female respondents rated the attribute strong 0.42 units higher than the male respondents. Both genders rated the attributes individual, polite and honest the same way – the variation between the mean values of each attribute was only 0.02 to 0.03 units.

The image according to different age groups

For comparing the attributes the members relate to the Finnish Triathlon Association, the respondents were organized into six groups based on their age: 22-year-olds or younger, 23–32-year-olds, 33–42-year-olds, 43–52-year-olds, 53–62-year-olds

and 63-year-olds or older. Table 8 demonstrates the ten strongest and five weakest attributes which these four groups related to the Finnish Triathlon Association.

When comparing the attributes respondents related to the Finnish Triathlon Association based on their age group, some differences were found. In the top five strongest attributes of all age groups, there were eleven different attributes: honest, responsible, communal, broad-minded, polite, traditional, nature-protective, trendy, changeable, pleasant and equal. Honest was the only attribute which appeared in each age group's top five, and other attributes which two or more age groups shared were responsible, communal, broad-minded, polite, traditional and nature-protective. The respondents who were 22 years old or younger saw trendy as the strongest and changeable as the second strongest attribute related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. In addition, respondents aged 23–32 thought that one of the top five strongest attributes was pleasant, and respondents aged 63 or older thought equal was the fifth strongest attribute.

When it comes to the weakest attributes, there were eight different attributes in total across the bottom five attributes of all age groups. These were irresponsible, unjust, weak, inefficient, formal, individual, youthful and equal. The first four weakest attributes listed above appeared on the bottom four of all age groups whereas the four attributes listed latter varied based on the age group.

The importance placed on each attribute differed between the age groups. Respondents aged 22 or younger, 53–62 and 63 or older rated their top five attributes so that the attributes' mean value was five or higher. 23–32-year-olds had three attributes with a mean value of five or above whereas 43–52-year-olds had two and 33–42-year-olds had one attribute with a mean value of five or above. When the importance placed over the weakest attributes was compared, it was seen that various number of attributes at different age groups' bottom five had a mean value under three. Respondents aged 63 or older had four attributes, respondents aged 23–32, 43–52 and 53–62 had three attributes, and respondents aged 22 or younger and 33–42 had two attributes with a mean value under three.

Table 8. The most and least important attributes by age groups

Attribute	22 or younger	23–32	33–42	43–52	53–62	63 or older
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
1. Honest	5.13	5.36	5.37	5.38	5.54	5.73
2. Broad-minded	5.17	4.78	4.68	4.78	4.99	5.27
3. Nature-protective	4.92	4.82	4.66	4.89	5.01	5.64
4. Emphatic	4.71	4.75	4.29	4.36	4.51	4.55
5. Innovative	4.88	4.27	4.11	4.21	4.49	4.45
6. Pleasant	5.08	4.95	4.59	4.81	4.95	5.00
7. Successful	4.83	4.45	4.33	4.58	4.73	5.00
8. Strong	5.04	4.40	4.28	4.47	4.67	4.91
9. Healthy	5.00	4.76	4.50	4.61	4.86	5.00
10. Polite	5.09	5.00	4.77	4.83	5.07	4.60
11. Traditional	5.00	4.95	4.84	4.85	4.77	4.73
12. Individual	4.71	4.11	4.06	4.05	4.36	4.55
13. Responsible	5.13	5.02	4.82	5.00	5.19	5.18
14. Trendy	5.29	4.33	4.14	4.37	4.74	4.73
15. Efficient	4.75	4.38	4.21	4.30	4.56	4.82
16. Changeable	5.21	4.47	4.02	4.12	4.26	4.55
17. Youthful	4.88	4.18	4.00	4.14	4.42	4.73
18. Inefficient	3.21	3.09	3.31	3.24	3.00	2.91
19. Adult	4.75	4.65	4.60	4.68	4.65	4.36
20. Weak	3.00	2.78	3.00	2.90	2.81	2.73
21. Formal	4.38	4.40	4.13	4.04	3.70	3.73
22. Communal	5.21	4.60	4.74	4.81	5.01	5.00
23. Equal	4.29	4.82	4.60	4.72	4.92	5.18
24. Irresponsible	2.67	2.13	2.26	2.16	2.29	2.09
25. Unjust	2.79	2.15	2.25	2.16	2.23	2.18

When comparing the mean values of each attribute separately, additional differences were found between the age groups. People aged 22 or younger rated the attributes more positively in general than the other age groups. Some attributes the youngest age group viewed differently than the other age groups were trendy, unjust and equal. While the other age groups rated the attribute trendy between 4.14 and 4.74, respondents aged 22 or younger rated it to be as high as 5.29. In addition, respondents aged 22 or younger rated the attribute equal to be only 4.29 whereas the other age group rated it between 4.60 and 5.18. Thus, equal was the only attribute besides honest that people aged 22 or younger rated lower than the other age

groups. Furthermore, this age group rated the attribute unjust higher than the others: for them, the mean value of unjust was 2.79 whereas for the other age groups it varied between 2.15 and 2.25.

On the contrary to the youngest age group, people aged 33–42 rated the attributes more negatively in general than the other age groups. Some attributes they viewed differently than the other age groups were successful, changeable and youthful: they rated these, and other, attributes lower than any other age group. The mean value of successful was 5.00 among people aged 63 or older while the mean value of the responses from people aged 33–42 was 4.33. In addition, the mean value of the attribute changeable among this age group was only 4.02 when the youngest age group rated it as high as 5.21. Furthermore, the mean value of the attribute youthful was 4.00 among respondents aged 33–42 whereas the other age groups rated it between 4.14 and 5.29.

In addition, people aged 63 or older rated the attribute nature-protective much higher than the other age groups. The lowest mean value for that attribute was 4.66 and it was given by the 33–42-year-olds. Other age groups rated it higher, the mean value being between 4.82 and 5.01. There were no significant differences in the importance which the 23–32-year-olds, 43–52-year-olds and 53–62-year-olds placed over each attribute when compared to others.

The image according to how long the members had done triathlon for

For comparing the attributes the members related to the Finnish Triathlon Association, the respondents were organized into four groups based on how long they had done triathlon for: four years or less, five to ten years, 11–16 years, and 17 years or longer. Table 9 demonstrates the ten strongest and five weakest attributes which these four groups related to the Finnish Triathlon Association.

In total, nine different attributes were found within the five strongest attributes which the four groups related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. These four groups had only one common attribute, honest, within their strongest attributes. In each group, honest was placed first. Two attributes, polite and traditional, were present in the top five of three groups. Polite was found in the top five of members who had done triathlon for four years or less, five to ten years and 11–16 years. Traditional

was placed as one of the five strongest attributes within the people who had done triathlon for five to ten years, 11–16 years and 17 years or longer.

Attributes responsible, nature-protective, broad-minded and communal were each found twice between the four groups. Respondents who had done triathlon for four years or less and five to ten years perceived the Finnish Triathlon Association as responsible. Attribute nature-protective was in the top five strongest attributes of people who had done triathlon for five to ten years and 17 years or longer. Attribute broad-minded was found in the top five of people who had done triathlon for 11–16 years and 17 years or longer. Members who had done triathlon for four years or less and 17 years or longer related the attribute communal to the Finnish Triathlon Association. In addition, healthy and equal appeared both once: the former on the list of respondents who had done triathlon for four years or less and the latter on the list of respondents who had done triathlon for 11–16 years.

The four attributes weakest related to the Finnish Triathlon Association were unjust, irresponsible, weak and inefficient. All four groups had them at their bottom five attributes but in a slightly varying order. Respondents who had done triathlon for four years or less and 17 years or longer rated unjust as the weakest attribute, followed by irresponsible, weak, inefficient and formal. For the respondents who had done triathlon for five to ten years and 11–16 years, the order was irresponsible, unjust, weak, inefficient and individual. The fifth attribute varied between the groups: for two of the groups it was formal and for two of them individual.

Table 9. The most and least important attributes by how long the members had done triathlon for

Attribute	4 years or less Mean	5–10 years Mean	11–16 years Mean	17 years or longer Mean
1. Honest	5.52	5.22	5.42	5.38
2. Broad-minded	4.90	4.61	5.08	4.92
3. Nature-protective	4.93	4.68	4.92	4.95
4. Emphatic	4.58	4.21	4.21	4.46
5. Innovative	4.49	3.94	4.13	4.33
6. Pleasant	4.95	4.55	4.96	4.64
7. Successful	4.88	4.14	4.13	4.21
8. Strong	4.85	3.98	4.25	4.23
9. Healthy	4.98	4.19	4.54	4.61
10. Polite	5.05	4.61	5.17	4.71
11. Traditional	4.89	4.81	5.00	4.92
12. Individual	4.26	3.90	3.87	4.67
13. Responsible	5.16	4.75	5.00	4.68
14. Trendy	4.61	4.03	4.54	4.49
15. Efficient	4.57	4.06	4.25	4.15
16. Changeable	4.34	4.01	4.25	4.18
17. Youthful	4.27	4.04	4.13	4.33
18. Inefficient	2.88	3.56	3.50	3.53
19. Adult	4.76	4.50	4.71	4.51
20. Weak	2.60	3.26	2.83	3.23
21. Formal	3.98	4.22	3.88	3.87
22. Communal	5.01	4.57	4.78	4.79
23. Equal	4.81	4.58	5.08	4.38
24. Irresponsible	2.04	2.42	2.04	2.72
25. Unjust	2.03	2.43	2.08	2.72

When the top five attributes of the four groups were compared to the top ten of all respondents, they were almost congruent. The only attributes that were not found in all four group's top ten but that were present in all respondent's top ten were equal and adult. However, the groups that did not see them as one of the ten strongest attributes still rated them quite high. Instead of these two attributes, people who had done triathlon for four years or less perceived healthy and successful as part of the ten strongest values. People who had done triathlon for 17 years or longer thought that individual and healthy were stronger values than equal and adult, thus they were in their top ten strongest values instead.

When the bottom five of the groups was compared to the bottom five of all respondents, the bottom five of all respondents was the same as with members who had done triathlon for four years or less and for 17 years or longer. Interestingly, the attribute formal was the eleventh strongest attribute in the minds of people who had done triathlon for five to ten years. In addition, individual was placed within the ten strongest attributes related to the Finnish Triathlon Association in the minds of people who had done triathlon for 17 years or longer.

5.3 Members' value profiles

In order to determine how much each described person was like the respondent, they were asked to rate the descriptions on a six-point scale where the options were (1) not like me at all, (2) not like me, (3) a little like me, (4) somewhat like me, (5) like me and (6) very much like me. Thus, the mean values on the following tables illustrating the results of the members' values were proportioned to a scale from one to six.

Table 10 shows that for all the respondents, the five most important values, each with a mean value over 4.50, were security (5.19), nature (4.95), benevolence (4.83), universalism (4.77) and self-direction (4.68). On the contrary, the least important values for the respondents were power (3.20), tradition (3.26) and achievement (3.30).

Table 10. Values by all members

Value	Mean
10. Security	5.19
13. Nature	4.95
7. Benevolence	4.83
6. Universalism	4.77
5. Self-direction	4.68
3. Hedonism	4.33
9. Conformity	4.26
12. Humility	3.88
4. Stimulation	3.77
11. Face	3.44
2. Achievement	3.30
8. Tradition	3.26
1. Power	3.20

Value structure based on gender

As seen in Table 11, the value profile of the male and female respondents did not differ from each other much: only the last three values were in a different order. Both genders rated security, nature, benevolence, universalism and self-direction as the five most important values. However, male respondents rated power as the least important value, followed by achievement and tradition. For female respondents, the least important value was tradition, followed by power and achievement.

Table 11. Values by gender

	Male		Female
Value	Mean	Value	Mean
10. Security	5.13	10. Security	5.27
13. Nature	4.88	13. Nature	5.05
7. Benevolence	4.75	7. Benevolence	4.96
6. Universalism	4.67	6. Universalism	4.93
5. Self-direction	4.64	5. Self-direction	4.76
3. Hedonism	4.32	3. Hedonism	4.36
9. Conformity	4.25	9. Conformity	4.27
12. Humility	3.84	12. Humility	3.96
4. Stimulation	3.75	4. Stimulation	3.83
11. Face	3.47	11. Face	3.38
8. Tradition	3.37	2. Achievement	3.19
2. Achievement	3.37	1. Power	3.14
1. Power	3.26	8. Tradition	3.07

Even though the order of the values was nearly the same, male and female respondents placed different importance on these values. The mean value of universalism, power and benevolence differed the most between the genders: female respondents rated universalism 0.27 units higher and benevolence 0.21 units higher than the male respondents, and male respondents rated power 0.23 units higher than female respondents. The mean values of conformity, hedonism and face between the genders were close, varying only from 0.03 to 0.09 units.

Value structure based on age

As shown by Table 12, people aged 22 or younger and aged 23–32 had similar value structure. The three most important values for these age groups were security, benevolence and nature. The least important values were power, face and tradition. Furthermore, the 33–42-year-olds and 43–52-year-olds had almost identical value structure as only values hedonism and conformity, placed as sixth and seventh important values, were in a different order. Both age groups valued security the most, followed by nature and benevolence. At the bottom of the list were tradition, power and achievement.

People aged 53–62 and 63 or older valued the same values above others but the order of the least important values varied. For both age groups, security, nature and universalism were the three most important values. They also had power and tradition within the three least important values. However, 53–62-year-olds perceived achievement as one of the least important values whereas people aged 63 or older thought that humility belonged there instead. (See Table 12.)

Even though the order of the values differed slightly, all age groups viewed the same four values – security, benevolence, universalism and nature – as the most important ones. Most of the age groups also perceived the same four values, power, face, tradition and achievement, as the least important ones though they were rated differently between the groups. However, achievement did not belong to the least important values of the people aged 63 or older. Instead of achievement, they placed humility as one of the least important values. (See Table 12.)

Table 12. Values by age group

Value	22 or younger Mean	23–32 Mean	33–42 Mean	43–52 Mean	53–62 Mean	63 or older Mean
1. Power	3.21	3.18	3.30	3.15	3.18	2.73
2. Achievement	3.88	3.65	3.31	3.16	3.16	3.55
3. Hedonism	4.78	4.63	4.48	4.11	4.28	4.00
4. Stimulation	4.42	4.12	3.86	3.54	3.70	3.45
5. Self-direction	4.71	4.70	4.77	4.64	4.59	4.27
6. Universalism	4.88	4.83	4.78	4.75	4.82	4.91
7. Benevolence	5.04	5.00	4.89	4.78	4.62	4.55
8. Tradition	3.63	3.46	3.29	3.13	3.29	3.09
9. Conformity	4.38	4.32	4.26	4.27	4.22	4.18
10. Security	5.33	5.22	5.15	5.17	5.32	5.27
11. Face	3.29	3.37	3.48	3.42	3.39	3.82
12. Humility	4.38	4.35	3.92	3.85	3.64	3.27
13. Nature	4.96	4.90	4.94	4.94	5.16	5.09

Value structure based on how long the members had done triathlon for

For all four groups, the five most important values were security, nature, benevolence, universalism and self-direction as illustrated on Table 13. Both people who had done triathlon for four years or less and people who had done it for five to ten years rated the values in that exact order. The order of the first two values was different for people who had done triathlon for 11–16 years: for them, nature was more important value than security. The other three values were in the same order as described above. People who had done triathlon for 17 years or longer rated security and nature, in that order, as the most important values. However, on the contrary to the other groups, they evaluated the three latter values differently. For them, the third most important value was universalism followed by self-direction and benevolence.

Table 13. Values by how long the members had done triathlon for

Value	4 years or less Mean	5–10 years Mean	11–16 years Mean	17 years or longer Mean
1. Power	3.22	3.23	3.00	3.08
2. Achievement	3.30	3.34	3.21	3.05
3. Hedonism	4.41	4.25	4.63	4.03
4. Stimulation	3.84	3.73	3.63	3.54
5. Self-direction	4.73	4.64	4.75	4.49
6. Universalism	4.83	4.69	4.92	4.72
7. Benevolence	4.88	4.81	4.96	4.44
8. Tradition	3.25	3.26	3.17	3.36
9. Conformity	4.38	4.08	4.54	4.21
10. Security	5.28	5.08	5.17	5.08
11. Face	3.39	3.49	3.33	3.54
12. Humility	3.96	3.82	3.75	3.72
13. Nature	5.00	4.84	5.38	4.90

However, when the means of the five most important values between each group were compared, some differences were found. The mean value of the two most important values for respondents who had done triathlon for four years or less as well as for 11–16 years was above five. For the other groups, only the most important value had a mean value over five and the second value was rated under that. Thus, even though the groups rated the same values as the most important ones, the importance of each value was different for each group. The mean of the three other important values varied between 4.44 and 4.96 among all groups.

The five least important values for all four groups were power, tradition, achievement, face and stimulation. Three of the four groups rated the values in this order. Only people who had done triathlon for 17 years or longer rated them differently, placing achievement as the least important value, followed by power, tradition, stimulation and face. The means of the five least important values were between 3.00 and 3.84. As mentioned before, even though the least important values were the same, the importance placed over each value differed between the groups.

6 Conclusions

The brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association is formed by their members' perceptions of the organization. In order to create a brand image in their minds, the members must first be aware of the Finnish Triathlon Association. As the members are part of the organization, even though the communication between them is minimal, they have an awareness of it. Examining how strongly certain attributes are associated with the Finnish Triathlon Association and what kind of value profiles the members have based on Shalom Schwartz's theory of basic human values, more thorough understanding about the brand image can be obtained. This information helps to further improve the last three steps of sport brand building.

The members perceived the Finnish Triathlon Association as honest, responsible, polite, traditional and nature-protective. The attributes the members did not relate to the Finnish Triathlon Association were unjust, irresponsible, weak, inefficient and

formal. The perceived brand image did not differ considerably according to genders or the years of doing triathlon. However, some differences were found when comparing the responses of the age groups. In general, people aged 22 or younger rated the attributes more positively than the other age groups. In addition, people aged 33–42 rated the attributes more negatively in general than the other age groups.

According to the results, the most important values for the members were security, nature, benevolence, universalism and self-direction. The least important values were, in turn, power, tradition and achievement. No significant differences were found in the value profiles when comparing genders or age groups. However, even though the values were rated in a similar order within the groups, the importance placed on the values differed.

One of the research questions was aimed to discover what kind of differences could be found in the value profiles according to the years of doing triathlon. No significant differences were found in the value profiles of members based on this comparison. The same five values, security, nature, benevolence, universalism and self-direction, were the most important values for all four groups. The five least important values for all four groups were power, tradition, achievement, face and stimulation. As with the most important values, the order of and the importance placed on the least important values varied between the groups but not significantly. With both the most and least important values, the people who had done triathlon for 17 years or longer rated the importance of the values most differently.

The results suggest that the members have similar values in life and therefore are quite homogenous in terms of their value profiles. Since values motivate people, the Finnish Triathlon Association could benefit from associating the same values their members possess to the Association's brand image. In addition, the homogeneity makes improving the brand image easier for the Finnish Triathlon Association.

As explained in the methodology part of the thesis, the attributes chosen for the questionnaire were based on Shalom Schwartz's value theory, the values of the Finnish Triathlon Association and the values of two of their cooperation partners. The Finnish Triathlon Association wants to be perceived as communal, equal and

responsible organization (Tamminen 2018, email). In turn, some of the values their cooperation partner Vierumäki bases its operations on are responsibility, innovativeness and nature-protectiveness (Vierumäki -yhtiöt n.d.). Furthermore, the values their cooperation partner Klubben Sport Finland wants to portray are honesty, success, equality, communality, innovativeness and responsibility (Asiakaskeskus n.d.).

All the values the Finnish Triathlon Association wants to portray were rated within the ten strongest attributes related to the organization. In addition, most of their cooperation partners' values above were within the top ten strongest attributes related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. The attribute honest was placed as the first, responsible as the second, nature-protective as the fifth, communal as the sixth and equal as the ninth strongest attribute related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. Only the attributes innovative and successful were rated outside the top ten, successful as the 12th and innovative as the 17th among the 25 attributes. Furthermore, the attributes unjust and irresponsible were rated as the two attributes weakest related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. Thus, the attributes which the members associated with the Finnish Triathlon Association were congruent with the values the organizations wanted to portray.

When the attributes related to the Finnish Triathlon Association were compared to the values of the members, a few interesting differences were found. For the most part, however, the attributes and values were congruent. The most important value for the members was security but they rated the attribute healthy, representing the security value, to be the 11th strongest attribute related to the Finnish Triathlon Association. Thus, there is a slight contradiction there. Benevolence was the third most important value for the respondents and they rated the attribute honest, representing the benevolence value, as the strongest attribute related to the organization. Thus, from this part, the attribute and value were congruent.

However, the other attribute representing benevolence, emphatic, was rated 14th of the 25 attributes. In addition, the members related conformity attributes polite and responsible strongly to the Finnish Triathlon Association but for them, the value conformity was placed exactly in the middle of the 13 values. The most interesting comparison was, however, between the tradition value and attribute: the members

perceived the Finnish Triathlon Association as traditional, placed as the 4th strongest attribute, but they did not see it as an important value in their life. From the other parts, the organizations' values, the perceived brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association and the members' values were mainly congruent. Based on the differences, some changes could be made if the Finnish Triathlon Association wishes to change their current brand image in the minds of its members.

7 Discussion

The purpose of the research was to determine how the brand image of a sports organization was perceived by its members and what kind of values the members possessed. In addition, the differences in value profiles according to gender, age group and the years of doing triathlon were studied. The aim was to collect data which would help the Finnish Triathlon Association to develop their marketing and sales operations as well as improve their brand image if needed. The research questions were answered and the research problem was solved based on the research results.

As illustrated by Figure 3, the thesis process began in January 2018 with a discussion with the assignor to determine what their wishes and needs were in terms of the research. The topics chosen were brand image and members' values as they seemed to provide the most usable material for the Finnish Triathlon Association. After the research topic was decided, finding material for the conceptual framework began in March 2018. Furthermore, the research plan was created around the same time.

In August 2018 the questionnaire was created, and the cover letter was written. After that, the questionnaire was tested and a notification about the upcoming survey was posted. On the 11th of September 2018 the questionnaire was sent to the target group via email. A reminder was sent when the members had five days left to reply, and the survey closed on the 25th of September 2018. Webropol online survey system was used to analyze the results during October 2018. When the analyzing part was done, conclusions and discussion for the thesis were written.

The results offered new information about the brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association and their members' values. Altogether, the research was successful because the research problem was solved, and the research questions were answered. The assignor got important information about the current situation of their brand image and the members' values. Based on the results, the Finnish Triathlon Association could develop their marketing and sales operations and improve their brand image.

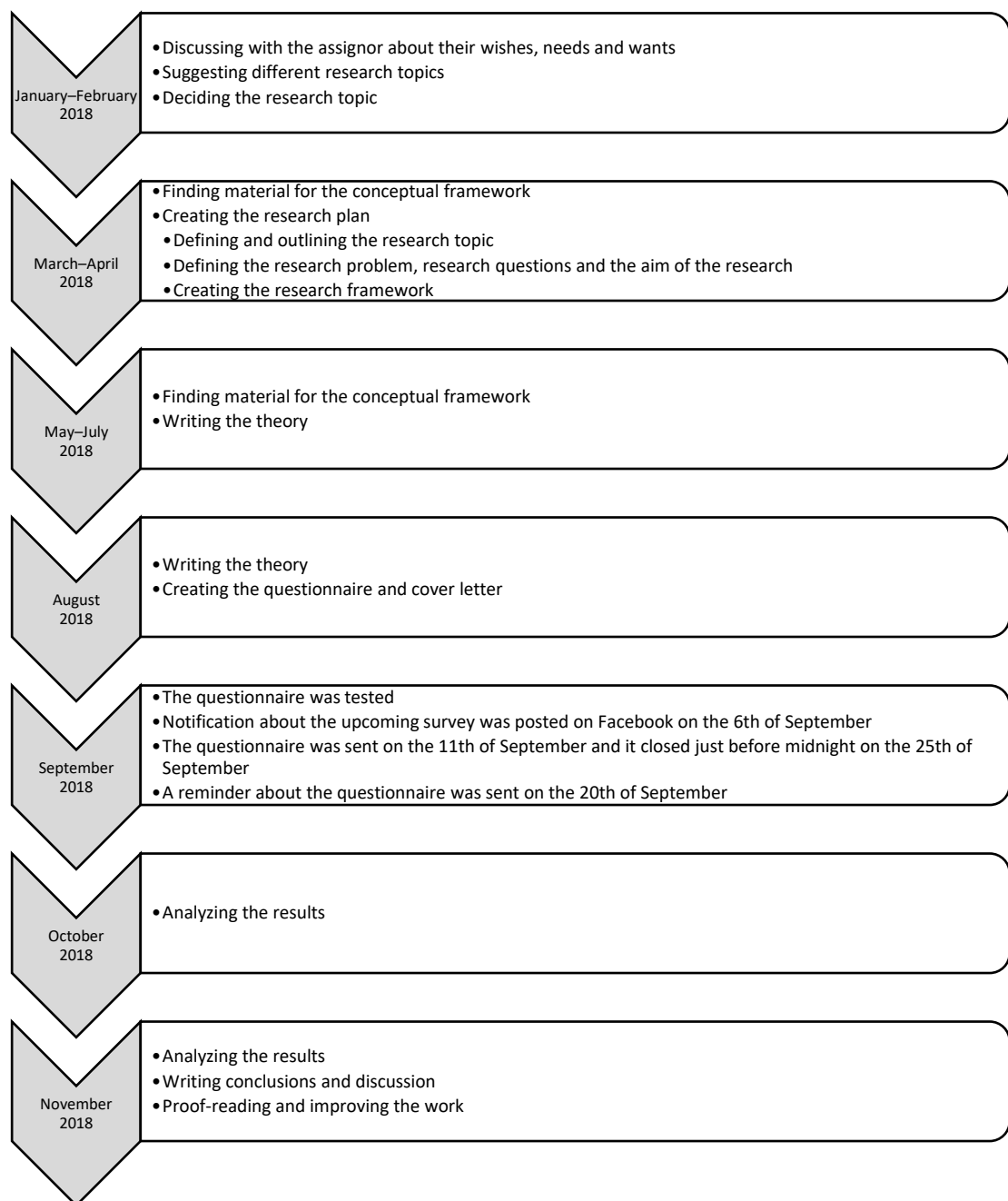


Figure 3. Research process

Reliability and validity

The research was conducted using quantitative research method, and the research data was collected from the members by an online questionnaire sent via email. Since the research problem was solved and the research questions answered, it can be said that the methods were the right choice for this research. The questionnaire and the questions measured what was intended: the perceived brand image and the members' values. The reliability and validity of the research were taken into consideration already when planning the research and it was viewed regularly as the work proceeded. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of the research is composed of relevant, reliable and mostly current sources which increases the reliability and validity of the research. Some sources were published more than ten years ago but they were relevant for the theories presented in the thesis. In order to have as high internal value as possible, the whole research process was documented, the basic concepts were defined based on existing theories and the reasons behind each choice were explained.

The research was a census study as the target group included all the members of the Finnish Triathlon Association whose correct email address was entered into the digital sport service Suomisport. As mentioned in the methodology part of the thesis, the Finnish Triathlon Association had 2714 members at the beginning of August 2018 (Tamminen 2018, email). However, only the email addresses of 2637 members were found from Suomisport which meant that 77 members were disregarded already at the beginning. In addition, when the questionnaire was sent, 30 of them came back because the email addresses were not in use. Thus, 2607 members supposedly received the questionnaire. This means that nearly four percent of the members whose information was on Suomisport without a (correct) email address did not have the opportunity to take part in the survey. A total of 613 responses were received which made the response rate 23.5% when counted from the number of members who supposedly received the questionnaire.

According to Kananen (2011b, 99), if the response rate is under 30 percent, the data is not statistically reliable for solving the research problem. However, it does always mean that the research results are wrong: they can be correct but not in a statistical sense. In addition, Kananen (2015b, 263–264) suggests that if a minimum of hundred

responses are gathered, simple statistical analysis can be made even though the response rate is not high enough. Even though the response rate of this research remained under 30 percent, more than hundred responses were gathered and the response rate was fairly high compared to the response rate online surveys usually receive. Thus, simple statistical analysis could be made.

As stated at the methodology part of the research, the template used to create the questionnaire for this research was the Finnish version of the value survey questionnaire created by Sport Business School Finland. The questionnaire was based on Shalom Schwartz's theory of basic human values and it had been used to collect data at various sport events around the world. Close attention was paid to the design of the questionnaire when modifying it for the research, and it was made sure that the questions were as unambiguous as possible. That way it was ensured that the respondents would understand the questions like they were meant to be understood. Even though the attributes in the questionnaire were modified to better suit the research, each still fit the theory. Reducing the number of attributes presented on the questionnaire from 39 to 25 made the questionnaire shorter and probably motivated people to reply. In addition, no obvious negative impacts related to reducing the number of attributes were noticed. All these factors improve the validity and reliability of the research.

The questionnaire was completely structured except for the "Other, what?" option when asking about the respondents' occupational group. This increased the validity of the research because it eased the interpretation of the research results. Furthermore, in order to reduce the human error in the data collection process, Webropol online survey system was used to save, collect and analyze the data. Some of the respondents did not answer all questions fully which might be because the option "I do not know" was not added to the questionnaire. If that option was included, more parts of the questionnaire would probably have been completed entirely.

In addition, there might be some dispersion in the results. Mean values were used to illustrate the data because of their clarity. However, some attributes were rated broadly on a scale from one to seven and therefore the opinions of all the respondents were not distinctly seen in the mean values. This was also the case with

some of the values which had to be rated on a scale from one to six. Therefore, the mean values were not entirely reliable when it came to the attributes and values.

The members had the opportunity to choose either the Finnish or English version of the questionnaire. This way it was made sure that most if not all members who received the questionnaire were able to participate if they wished. The questionnaires were made so that they would correspond each other as well as possible. However, not all terms could be directly translated between English and Finnish so the closest alternative had to be found and used. When the questionnaire was tested, no comments were given regarding the translations so presumably the questionnaires corresponded well.

The questionnaire was distributed to the target audience by the Executive Director of the Finnish Triathlon Association due to the recent changes in the GDPR. This increased the effectiveness, accessibility and reliability of the questionnaire because the respondents were able to recognize the sender. Sending the questionnaire via email ensured that only the members of the Finnish Triathlon Association had the opportunity to reply. If the questionnaire was posted, for example, on their social media channels, anyone would have been able to reply.

Ascertaining the reliability of the research without redoing it cannot be done so in this research, the reliability will only be estimated. The measurement was not repeated because it would have been challenging, especially time-wise. The reliability of the research is rather high because each phase was documented and the internal and external validity are also quite high. In addition, if the measurement was repeated using the same questionnaire, the results would be similar. That is unless the target group or phenomenon changes remarkably between the measures. Altogether, the research can be said to be quite valid and reliable. The research results provided answers to all the research questions and thus a solution for the research problem was also found. The Finnish Triathlon Association received plenty of information about their perceived brand image and their members' values at their current state.

Benefits and future research

The results can be utilized in developing and improving the marketing and sales operations and the brand image of the Finnish Triathlon Association. As they had not conducted any previous research about their members or brand image, the research results were beneficial for them. Because of the research results, the Finnish Triathlon Association now knows how their members perceive their brand image and therefore can decide which attributes they wish to emphasize and which ones they try to change by managing the brand. This way the Finnish Triathlon Association can improve their brand image in the direction they want. In addition, knowing their members better offers the Finnish Triathlon Association an opportunity to create base for new partnerships or improve the existing ones if they wish to do so. Furthermore, as the Finnish Triathlon Association has not properly defined values for themselves, it would be important to do so in order to be able to start creating a strong, favorable and unique brand image.

In order to understand these topics further, the research should be conducted regularly, for example yearly or every two years. Repeating the survey would both assure the reliability of the research as well as provide further information about the brand image and the members' values. If the Finnish Triathlon Association decides to start developing their marketing and sales operations and improving their brand image, repeating the measurement could also give information about the success of their operations when the new results are compared to the results of this research.

Alternatively, a research about the brand image of triathlon as a sport could be conducted. The target group of the research could be either the people who do not participate in triathlon or the ones that do. If the former group was chosen, the research could provide important information about potential members and the brand image of the sport in their minds. In addition, during this research process it was noticed that the members are not very familiar with the Finnish Triathlon Association but they would like to know more about it. Thus, it would be beneficial for the Finnish Triathlon Association to conduct a research regarding how well their marketing channels and communication reach their members and what could be done in order to improve these operations further.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire (page 1)



VALUES BEHIND TRIATHLON

This research is about the perceived image of the Finnish Triathlon Association and their members' values. The research and its results are important when developing and improving the operations of the Finnish Triathlon Association.

Each answer is very important. Please note that all answers will be kept confidential and presented anonymously and scientifically. The employer of the research is the Finnish Triathlon Association.

Thank you for your participation!

1. Age:

2. Gender:

 Male Female

3. Occupational group:

Select the group to which you see yourself mostly belonging to

- Leading position, working for someone else
- Middle Management
- Lower Management
- Employee
- Entrepreneur or private practitioner
- Agricultural entrepreneur
- Student
- Retired
- Stay-at-home mother or stay-at-home father
- Unemployed
- Other, what?

4. How long have you been doing triathlon?

Appendix 3. Questionnaire (pages 3 & 4)

6. How much is this person like you?

	Not like me at all	Not like me	A little like me	Somewhat like me	Like me	Very much like me
1. He/She likes to be in charge and tell other what to do. He/She wants people to do what he/she says.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Being very successful is important to him/her. He/She likes to stand out and to impress other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. He/She really wants to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to him/her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. He/She looks for adventures and likes to take risks. He/She wants to have an exciting life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. He/She thinks it is important to be interested in things. He/She is curious and tried to understand everything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. He/She thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. He/She wants justice for everybody, even for people he/she doesn't know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. He/She always wants to help the people who are close to him/her. It is very important to him/her to care for the people he/she knows and likes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. He/She thinks it is important to do things the way he/she learned from his/her family. He/She wants to follow their customs and traditions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. He/She believes that people should do what they are told. He/She thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no one is watching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. The safety of his/her country is very important to him/her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. He/She seeks security and respect by trying to maintain his/her public reputation and avoiding humiliation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. He/She is humble and aware of his/her own insignificance in a wider context of things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. He/She cares for the nature. It is very important for him/her to protect and cherish the environment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. If you wish to participate in the prize draw, please leave your contact details below

Five (5) prizes (1 pc. Triathlon Finland hoodie, 1 pc. Triathlon Finland T-shirt, 1 pc. Triathlon Finland towel, and 2 pcs. Orkla's product bags) will be drawn among the people who give their contact details. The contact details will only be used for the draw and will not be linked with the answers given in the survey. The winners will be contacted personally.

Name

Phone number

Email