LAB University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Business Administration Lappeenranta
Double Degree in International Business
Specialization Marketing

Muriel Glutting

The influence of brands and advertising on consumer´s purchasing and consumption behaviour in the German wireless head-and earphone market

Bachelor´s Thesis 2020

Abstract

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The aim of the study was to find out whether or how brands and their advertising influence the willingness of people to buy a branded product rather than a product from an unknown product in the German wireless head- and earphone market. The work was commissioned by the LAB University of Applied Sciences and the University of Applied Sciences htw saar.

Data for this study were collected by means of a theoretical framework which examined background information about consumer behaviour, decision-making, brand management and advertising. The information was gathered from literature sources, Internet, and an empirical study in form of a quantitative research. This study was carried out in the German market for wireless head- and earphones and researched the purchasing and consumption behaviour of German consumers in this particular market.

The results of the study show that German consumers prefer to buy wireless head- or earphones from well-known brands rather from unknown brands. Based on the findings of the empirical study, the thesis also confirms that advertising and brands are influencing a consumer´s decision-making.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Brand Management, Decision-Making, Advertising, Neuromarketing

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

More than 300 years ago, the first brands were generated. From that point on brands gained more and more importance in society and in today´s world 'branding […] is the most important aspect of business' (Haig, 2011, p. 1). Therefore, brands became an essential part in our day-to-day life. People do not bond with a brand because of what the product is, but because of what it means and represents (Solomon, 2013, p. 2). Assuming that people often identify themselves with a brand. Moreover, a brands capability is well beyond just offering a product or service. A brand is capable of connecting people, for instance in terms of when an American child is looking at a poster in which a French child is drinking a coke. This creates a connection which basically means that 'brands can make a person feel more connected to other people, which can make them feel better about themselves' (Millman, 2013, p. 77).

However, when it comes to building a brand, one tool is crucial, Brand Thinking. According to Millman, 2013, Brand Thinking goes far beyond the basics of marketing and it deals with the issue of why people choose one brand over another and why consumers choose that one brand in particular. It is about understanding the customer and getting into people´s minds in order to be able to create and sell a brand the customer is willing to pay for and therefore adding value to the company.

Additionally, efficient advertising of a brand is crucial for the general brand success as well as for that of the company. Therefore, advertising plays an important role in terms of presenting a brand to the world through media. Advertising communicates offers by companies to potential consumers and aims to satisfy the demand for products, services or brands (Heun, 2017, p. 2). Thus, how advertising can be used in an efficient way and how brands influence consumers, will be researched in this thesis.

1.2 Purpose and research questions of the study

The purpose of this study is to research the influence of brands and advertising on a consumer´s purchasing and consumption behaviour in the German wireless head- and earphone market. While researching the influences of advertisements, the power of brands, the feeling of connectivity and the desire of belonging, to find out how the buying brain works and if people need things to be able to identify with themselves. As part of the thesis, an empirical study will help to find out whether strong brands and advertisements increase the willingness of people to buy well-known products rather than nameless products, or not. Therefore, one main research question and three sub-questions will be answered in this thesis. Which role do brands and advertising play in the purchasing and consumption process?' is the main research question. Followed by these sub-questions:

— Why do some businesses and brands get more attention than others?
— What is the attitude of buyers in the wireless head- and earphone market towards brands and advertisements?
— What motivates people to buy one specific earphone brand?

1.3 Delimitations of the study

Consumer behaviour is a very broad and diverse topic. Therefore, the research will mainly focus on the decision-making of a consumer, brand management and advertising. In order to prove the hypothesis, whether or how brands and their advertising influence the willingness of people to buy a branded product rather than a product from an unknown brand, it is important to define what a brand is, how brands became such an essential part in people´s day-to-day life and how influenceable advertisements really are. However, in order to investigate the hypothesis, it must first be specified what an unknown brand is. In terms of the thesis, an unknown brand is a brand which is recognized by only a few or no people and therefore do not have many loyal customers with an emotional connection to the brand.

Moreover, through the rapid development in new technologies, especially in the smartphone market, the usage of music streaming service has also increased.

Therefore, the wireless head-and earphone market is booming. Thus, a survey about this particular industry is included in this thesis. The empirical study will indicate whether people choose wireless head-and earphones brands, based on what they stand for or because of their performance. Additionally, the power of advertisements in this particular market will be researched.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters: Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Research Approach, Empirical Study and Conclusion.

The introduction chapter states the topic of the study and gives some background information about the subject. Additionally, the chapter provides information about the purpose and research questions, as well as the delimitations of the thesis.

The second chapter comprises the theoretical framework of the study. Firstly, the concept of consumer behaviour is introduced by means of the consumer´s decision making process, as well as the internal and external influencing factors on consumer behaviour. Following this, the term brand management will be explained, by means of brand identity, brand image and value, brand promise and trust, brand personality and meaning, brand loyalty and lastly brand equity. Furthermore, the advertising aspect of the study includes the development of advertising, advertising concepts and advertising´s role in branding. In order to get a broader understanding of product and brand choices, the psychological aspect in this chapter is covered by briefly introducing neuromarketing, the buying brain and brands, as well as the buying brands and advertising. However, the chapter will be closed with a market analysis of the German wireless head-and earphone market.

The third chapter deals with the research approach. Here, the author presents the research design, the questionnaire design, the sampling, and analysis method and lastly, the validity and reliability of the study.

Further, in chapter four, the empirical part of the study is presented. In this part of the thesis, the author indicates the respondent group and the evaluation of the results.

The fifth chapter is the concluding chapter and therefore gives the final research findings of the study and a future outlook for the industry.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Consumer- and consumption behaviour

Many years ago, before the first Industrial Revolution, consumption and production were totally different from what they are today. The buying- and selling process usually took place between neighbours or street vendors. However, after the Industrial Revolution, the type of goods sold changed. The first shopping malls opened and most importantly the development of advertising started. Through innovations and the rise in the variety and quality of goods, the consumption in general started to steadily increase (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, pp. 11–12). Hence, through this advancement, the market changed from a seller´s market to a buyer´s market. In a buyer´s market, which exists today, people can choose out of multiple options and alternatives (Trommsdorff and Teichert, 2011). Thereby, the new challenge for companies was to be successful even in a buyer´s market. Therefore, it became more and more important to differentiate themselves from their competitors and to address a specific target group. Consequently, businesses started to research the behaviour of specific target groups in more detail, to ultimately get to know and understand their customers in order to meet their needs and desires (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 6).

Today, consumer behaviour 'is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires' (Solomon, 2013, p. 33). In general, the study of consumer behaviour deals with the issue of how consumers can be induced to behave in a certain way (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 2). However,

the main scientific object of consumer behaviour research is a human being in his or her role as a consumer during an acquisition or use of a product or service (MacInnis and Folkes, 2010, p. 905). For that matter, the study of consumer behaviour deals with the situation in which a person takes on the role of a consumer who buys, uses, and ultimately consumes goods or services. Moreover, this behaviour is created and influenced by the persons own attitudes, learnings, and experiences (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 3).

Thereby, the scope of consumer behaviour is very broad. However, the concept mostly deals with the issue of why people purchase and consume goods and services and how these products are applied (East *et al.*, 2016, p. 3). Traditional consumer behaviour and marketing theories highlight the necessity for companies to identify why consumers are buying a firm's products instead of those of competing businesses. Moreover, reasonable management today, is based on balancing any component of the company, such as advertisement in order to meet customer's needs (Foxall, 2014, p. 28). Therefore, behavioural sciences like the social psychology and sociology are studied to meet the desires and needs of consumers. Further, consumer behaviour studies the psychological profiles of customers to find out how internal and external factors influence a consumer´s decision-making and how much customers are involved when making decisions (Foxall, 2014, p. 30).
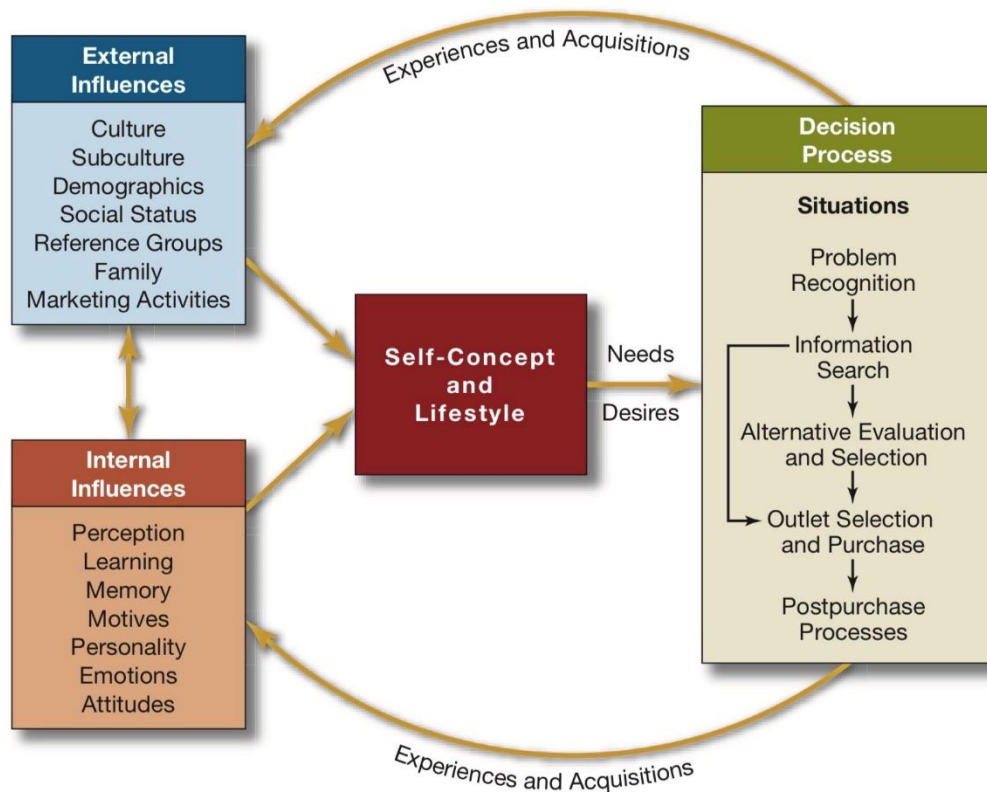
Figure 1: Overall Model of Consumer Behaviour (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 27)

Figure 1 shows the overall model of consumer behaviour. Through this model it becomes clear how decision-making, external and internal influencing factors and the self-concept and lifestyle of a consumer are linked to each other. All three factors combined basically describe the concept of consumer behaviour. Moreover, this thesis picks each of these parts as a central theme and also the structure of the thesis is built on figure 1. First the decision-making process will be researched, followed by the external and internal influencing factors and finally self-concept and lifestyle will be explained.

2.2 Decision-making

Consumers need to make decisions on a daily basis. Thereby, the decision-making situation is stamped by various factors (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 104). However, typically, the traditional decision-making approach begins with a consumer paying attention to an item and then retaining the product information in memory. When the consumer is then in need of such a product, he or she will

have this particular item in mind and suggest buying it. Nevertheless, before the customer finally purchases the item, the traditional consumer will do an evaluation and more research on existing alternatives. In addition, these kind of approaches are really hard to measure and therefore, consumers nowadays often simplify this process by first buying and then explain their actions (East *et al.*, 2016, p. 6). Hence, the decision-making process basically starts with the occurrence of a problem that needs to be solved (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 88). Therefore, the acquisition of a product is always the reaction to a problem (Solomon, 2013, p. 332).

Furthermore, when consumers need to make a decision, problems often occur during the decision-making process. These problems are depicted by three external components, being options, consequences, results and two internal components, consisting of goals and reasons (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 105). Products, services, actions and strategies are the options between which a consumer can choose. In terms of, buying a laptop or tablet, going to cinema, or watching Netflix or deciding whether to save money or to consume (Pfister, Jungermann and Fischer, 2017, p. 16). Following this, consequences can influence the choice of an option, for instance, if a person does not own a Netflix account, he or she will go to cinema. Moreover, results include the events a consumer cannot influence, such as the choice of movies which are shown in a cinema. If a cinema does not play the movie the person actually wanted to watch, he or she needs to watch another one (Pfister, Jungermann and Fischer, 2017, pp. 17–20). However, goals, being the first internal component, limit the amount of options a consumer has. For instance, if a consumer has the goal to watch a romantic movie, this will limit the amount of options. In addition to this, reasons drive decision-making in a certain direction, this direction is influenced by moral beliefs or attitudes. Therefore, the internal components of decision-problems drive the attitude of a consumer and the actions he or she choose to take (Pfister, Jungermann and Fischer, 2017, pp. 20–21).

Furthermore, the involvement of a consumer influences the decision-making behaviour. Some decisions are perceived more relevant than others and for this reason need more evaluation and research than for other purchases (Hoffmann

and Akbar, 2016, p. 107). Therefore, the level of involvement of the consumer during a purchase will be investigated. Below, figure 2 shows the main differences between high and low involvement decision-making.
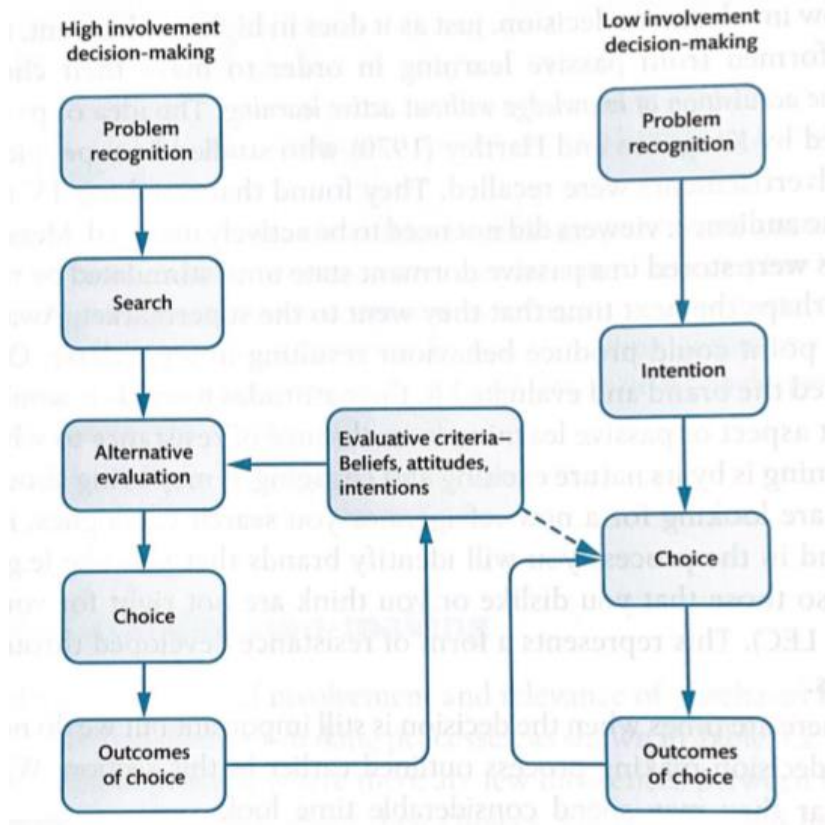
Figure 2: High and low involvement decision-making (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 89)

Usually, a consumer is highly involved in decision-making if the product is rather expensive or rarely purchased, for instance, the purchase of a car for instance. Therefore, the purchase is made actively and encompasses a rather complex decision-making. In contrast, in low involvement decision-making, the customer is acting passively while taking rather routine decisions (Solomon, 2013, p. 163). Summarized, this means that a consumer is minimally involved in decision making when he or she needs to buy ordinary products, such as eatable items (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 90).

As all decision-making processes, both, high- and low involvement decision-making start with the recognition of a problem. In low involvement decision-

making, the customer buys a product out of an intention. Hereby, hunger would be the problem recognition and going to a grocery store the intention. Followed by the consumer, choosing whatever product he or she is most interested in. In such buying situations, the importance of a product is perceived as low due to a lower risk of visibility since the product is not relatable to self-image and a lower risk to lose money (Solomon, 2013, p. 163). Moreover, factors like beliefs or attitudes have an impact on the choice but those are developed through passive learning. An example for passive learning is when a consumer is watching an advertisement of a particular food brand and keeps this information in memory. The next time the person goes to the supermarket he or she may or may not buy the brand. If it ends in a purchase, the brand will be evaluated and then an opinion about it, will be built (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 90). Possible outcomes in this buying situation are a straight rebuy of the brand or a decision by the consumer not to buy any product of the brand again (Solomon, 2013, p. 163).

In contrast, in high involvement decision-making the recognition of a problem could be a broken car and therefore the person needs a new one. A car is not a routine product and hence comprises complex decision-making. That´s why the consumer will first do a detailed research based on his or her own preferences, including comparing brands and afterwards evaluating the alternatives. Admittedly, before this step is completed, the choice won´t be made. High involvement decision-making is rather complex because such products are usually tied closely to the customer´s self-identity and therefore are also important to group norms and values (Solomon, 2013, p. 163). In conclusion from this, high involvement decision-making includes active learning. This means the consumer acquires a considerably large knowledge about the product or service before buying it in order to make the right decision. Though here, one needs to bear in mind that the consumer has an evoked set or consideration set before even doing the research. The evoked set imply all brands the customer registered in order to solve the problem and the consideration set adheres to the brands that the consumer is actually considering. Therefore, also in high involvement decision-making consumers make decisions out of an intention, depending on the amount of alternative brands the person is already aware of (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, pp. 89–90).

In terms of the research approach in this study, it will be investigated whether a purchase of wireless head- or earphones comprises low or high involvement decision-making.

2.3 Influencing factors on decision-making

Despite the involvement of a consumer during a purchase, the influencing factors on the buyer´s decision-making are a crucial part of the purchasing and consumption process. There are many factors that influence customers, such as the power of groups, word of mouth or mass media.

However, it is important to differentiate between external and internal influencing factors. External influences are, for instance, culture, subculture, demographics, social status, reference groups or family. Whereas, internal influences are perception, learning, memory, personality, beliefs and attitudes, and motivation (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, pp. 26–27).

In terms of this thesis, both external and internal influencing factors will be researched in more detail. Additionally, the research approach of the study will investigate whether a consumer is influenced more by external or internal factors when buying wireless head-or earphones.

2.3.1 External influencing factors

Culture is the very identity of a community. This community can be a nation, a specific population group or even a company. However, most importantly it is a group of people that share the same values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions and norms (Solomon, 2013, p. 568). Therefore, culture probably is the most ubiquitous influencing factor on consumer behaviour (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 28). Defining how exactly culture influences the purchasing and consumption behaviour is hard since culture is constantly changing. Especially through evolution, old attitudes get replaced by new ones. However, a culture consists of ecology, social structure and ideology. Thereby, ecology represents the manner in which a device adapts to its environment. Moreover, factors like the technological advancement and available resources within an ecology are influencing the culture. The social structure of a culture

describes how people keep their social life in order. Here, order is created by different groups, such as political, governmental or local authorities (Solomon, 2013, p. 569). The ideology of a person is shaped by personal characteristic traits and the influences of the persons social environment (Solomon, 2013, p. 570). All three parts combined, explain how culture in itself is externally influencing a consumer´s decision-making.

However, within a culture subcultures exist. A subculture, for instance, could be formed by a different age group or generation. These age groups are then connected through the same memories of certain events or celebrities (Solomon, 2013, p. 540). Subcultures exist because of the different needs and desires the age groups have within a society (Solomon, 2013, p. 37). Besides, there are ethnic, religious and also regional subcultures (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 28).

Furthermore, companies often adapt their products and advertisements to certain regions or countries. Consequentially, demographics and geography are a crucial part in the decision-making process (Solomon, 2013, p. 39). One example for local- or country specific product adaptations provides the franchising company McDonald's. With the concept 'think global, act local' McDonald´s ensures its success. The fast-food restaurant adapts its products according to consumer tastes and preferences as well as to religious laws existing in certain countries. For this reason the company almost exclusively serves vegetables and chicken in India and in Malaysia only halal food (Vignali, 2001). This is just one example of how important product adaptation is, because if McDonald´s wouldn't have adapted their products to the beliefs and customs in different countries, there would have been no intention at the beginning of the decision-making process to even buy a McDonald´s product.

Despite these factors, the social influences are also crucial for a consumer´s decision-making. Hereby, reference groups, family and social status are among the main social influencing factors. However, the most important factor is the reference group of a consumer, since family and social status basically belong to this component (Jisana, 2014, p. 35). Thereby, a reference group or persons

influencing the perception of the environment, attitudes and knowledge and thus ultimately also the behaviour of a consumer (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 140). Based on this, a person´s attitude, belief and behaviour is most likely influenced by family and friends due to the very close and continuous interrelation between the two parties. Additionally, the social status of an individual is determined by the groups, organizations or clubs he or she is a member of (Jisana, 2014, p. 35). In conclusion, a reference group has a huge influence on a consumer´s purchasing and consumption behaviour since these groups help to build attitudes and opinions towards brands and advertising.

2.3.2 Internal influencing factors

The process of internal influencing factors starts with perception. Perception describes how a person experiences and gives value to a certain stimulus (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 28). Basically, it is the opinion of an individual towards a particular product or service. However, perception is one of the most important factors for marketers since it cannot be assured even though two consumers might share the same values, beliefs and attitudes, that they also have the same perception towards a brand or product (Jisana, 2014, p. 36).

Hence, the process continues with learning and memory. In the consumption process learning and memory are linked very closely to each other. While learning comprises all attitudes, behaviours, feelings or preferences that consumers have gained information about, memory is basically the collection of all previously learned knowledge. However, there are two different ways of how information is processed and stored in memory. Short-term memory is the part or entire memory being activated or involved but the volume to store information is very limited and normally information is only stored for that time when it is actually in use (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 319). Whereas in long-term memory information and knowledge is stored permanently. Moreover, it has a much bigger capacity to store information than the short-term memory (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 321). In general, long-term memory is essential for marketing. Therefore, marketers usually create advertisements with the intention

to be remembered but this issue will be investigated in further detail in 2.5 (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 322).

Each consumer has a different personality which strongly influences the purchasing and consumption behaviour. Moreover, personality influences what beliefs and attitudes an individual has towards products, services, or brands. All three factors are essential for the buying behaviour of a consumer. However, beliefs and attitudes are even more important in terms of brand management since these factors put together the brand image (Jisana, 2014, p. 37).

Moreover, motivation is an important part of consumer behaviour (Jisana, 2014, p. 36). Motivation regulates, provokes and maintains all mental and physical activities (Gerrig, 2014). Furthermore, actions are driven by motivation. In general, consumers decide to act and execute this action intentionally. Thereby, all unintentional behaviours are automatically controlled processes and no actions. To summarize, motivation prepares an action, refers to a certain situation and lastly drives a consumer´s behaviour (Heckhausen and Heckhausen, 2018, p. 3). Thus, when a consumer recognizes a problem, he or she is driven by motivation to satisfy their needs (Solomon, 2013, p. 154). In order to understand what motivates customers to buy, Maslow´s Hierarchy of Needs, first established in 1943, will be researched. It is known as a social psychological model to categorize human needs and motivations. Thereby it offers the possibility to determine the intentions of customers outside the standard, which basically means that the model is going into more detail by also researching for data which is not usually researched. Due to this awareness, marketers are able to create content and marketing campaigns that emotionally attach their consumers and therefore fit perfectly to their needs and desires (Andrews, 2019). However, Maslow´s hierarchy of Needs consists of five different levels. These levels are built up on each other since the highest level can only be reached if the level below is fulfilled which will be shown in figure 3.
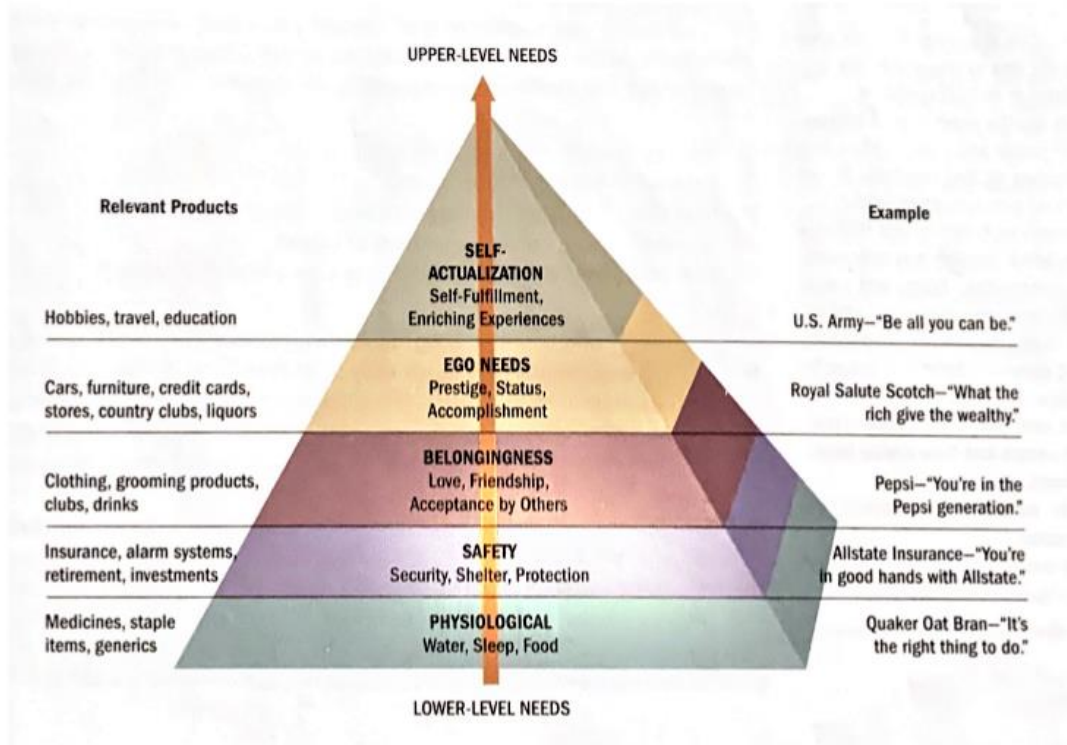
Figure 3: Maslow´s Hierarchy of Needs (Solomon, 2013, p. 161)

Figure 3 shows that Maslow´s Hierarchy of Needs ranges from physiological to safety needs to belongingness to ego needs and lastly to self-actualization (Solomon, 2013, p. 161). Hence, in the original model, these needs are considered to be universal and must be fulfilled one after another. Basically, the idea of this concept is that a customer will first satisfy the main need. Afterwards, when this need is satisfied, it will no longer motivate the consumer. Thus, the next need will be satisfied as soon as it needs to be (Jisana, 2014). However, recent studies suggest that the accomplishment of one need does not depend entirely upon another one. This makes it possible for companies to approach each need of a customer independently. As already mentioned, the model focuses on customer motivation. By means of this, businesses are able to gain exceptional insights into customer motivation as well as to understand them. Furthermore, Maslow´s model can help to create a more realistic and precise type of customer and thus improve marketing strategies, making the company the solution to the buyer´s problems (Andrews, 2019).

Even though, Maslow´s Hierarchy of Needs is an older model of consumer behaviour, it can still be applied in today´s business world. The model is a helpful tool in identifying the needs of consumers and therefore makes it possible for companies to react and adapt faster and better to their consumer needs and desires (Andrews, 2019).

2.3.3 Self-concept and lifestyle

Self-concept refers to the knowledge and perception of a person about him- or herself. This includes thoughts like, who and what the person is, how he or she feels and thinks about him- or herself and how the personal attributes are evaluated. Furthermore, self-concept is influenced by socio-demographic factors, such as the social environment or political, governmental or local authorities and institutions, see 2.3.1. Basically, self-concept consists of self-image, self-esteem and ideal-self of a person (Solomon, 2013, p. 569; Fasbender and Wehrle, 2018). Hence, self-concept influences consumer´s decision-making, by having a direct influence on the consumers' needs and desires (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 27).

Moreover, the lifestyle of an individual also has a huge impact on decision-making. Thereby, the personality, values, behaviours and things that are important for a person, describe how the individual lifestyle is lead (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 129). Furthermore, it refers to inner values, thoughts and condition and therefore are illustrated in the individual and consumption behaviour of a person (Hoyer, 2012, p. 401). Based on this, the lifestyle of a consumer plays a crucial role for marketers in order to create a psychological profile of their customers (Kenton, 2020). One common model that is used to measure different lifestyles, is the AIO, Activities, Interests and Opinions model (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 129). First, activities emphasis on the everyday life and interests of a person, for instance, if the person likes to do sport, prefers reading a book or watching movies. Second, the interests of an individual outline values and ideals which are controlling their fervour, such as hobbies or various interests. By defining a potential customer´s desires and interests, businesses can further understand how they can address them. Last, each consumer has an

opinion, but this opinion can differ from person to person. Therefore, it is important for marketers to find out and ask for their customer´s views on certain products or services, brands and stores (Kenton, 2020).

In conclusion, the AIO model has the purpose to build a consumer psychographic profile in order to be able to direct ads that match a specific lifestyle and the self-conception of certain customer target group. Therefore, it is important for marketers to monitor the self-concept and lifestyle of a person, as well as internal and external influencing factors since these factors are essential for the decision-making of a consumer.

2.4 Brand management

According to the American Marketing Association 'a brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller´s goods or services as distinct from those of other sellers' (American Marketing Association, 2020). However, brand management consists of all parts of a product or service which assist in creating a brands own personality. These parts are, for instance, the visuals, the placement in marketing campaigns and therefore in advertising, but also the logistical aspect of the product´s distribution (Kunsman, 2019).

In today´s world, brand management is one of the most important facets of a company. Without a strong brand name or good standing in the market, customers or even employees might be doubtful towards this particular brand or business. It does not matter what kind of product or service the company offers, but it is important how the brand is presented to the world and that the brand´s reason for being is visible to customers as well as to employees (Kunsman, 2019).

Therefore, this thesis investigates the following aspects of brand management, brand identity, 'brand promise and trust', 'brand image and value', 'brand personality and meaning', 'brand loyalty and lastly brand equity'.

2.4.1 Brand identity

The identity of a brand is presented through visible elements, such as the design of its logo, colours, or company name. These features are individual to each brand and therefore enable the brand to be recognised and to be distinguished from thousands of others. Therefore, the brand identity should mirror and represent the firm´s values (Traver and Khartit, 2020).

However, if a firm wishes to remain in the mind of consumers, a recognizable brand identity is crucial. It also helps to increase the value of the brand and the overall business becomes easier to conduct. Nevertheless, it is important to differentiate between brand identity and brand image, which will be researched in further detail in 2.4.2. Thereby, the brand image is the way in which consumers actually perceive the company and the brand identity represents the way how a company wants the brand to be perceived (Traver and Khartit, 2020). Assuming that, if the perception matches the brand identity, the promise a brand made becomes believable for consumers and thereby positively increase the overall brand performance (Griggs, 2018).

In conclusion, the brand identity is essential for the success, as well as for the existence of a brand (Esch, 2014, p. 78).

2.4.2 Brand image and value

The brand image indicates the consumers perception towards a certain brand, whereby the image is regulated by the company for instance, through marketing campaigns. Moreover, the importance of a brand image for a company´s value becomes apparent due to the fact, that even routine products, such as water or eatable items are being branded (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 342). However, the brand image is one of the most powerful components of brand management. A positive brand image will maintain steady sales and allow more effective product roll-outs (Traver and Khartit, 2020). Businesses with a strong brand image, such as Nike, Coke or Amazon, can elicit an emotional and meaningful connection between consumer and brand (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 343). This also refers to the decision-making process.

As already mentioned in Chapter 2.2 consumers have an evoked set or consideration set. Whereby the consideration set adheres to all brands the consumer is actually considering. (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, pp. 89–90). Moreover, exactly this set consists of the mentioned powerful brands which drive a consumer in decision-making. Further, this is the reason why strong brands continue to dominate the market (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 343).

When it comes to brand management, it is important to remember that branding is not just about the logo, visuals or slogan, but about the brand core, the brands reason for being (Silva, 2019). Therefore, choosing a brand is mainly about what value the brand can give back to the customer. '[To] feel and be seen as exclusive' is the main factor for customers to make a brand their brand (Millman, 2013, p. 242). Furthermore, if a customer is touched emotionally, this creates satisfaction and finally makes a brand desirable (Millman, 2013, p. 242). In addition, brand value helps to create a brand´s identity and are mirrored in advertising messages or actions of the brand (Esch, 2014, pp. 102–106).

Taking the company Coca-Cola as an example, one can see that customers associate the products with trust, service, value and especially quality. The company has already been established on the market for a very long time and has had a more or less constant demand over the years. Moreover, due to its permanent appearance on the market, its customers trust the company and believe in its quality. The typical behavioural outcome of these feelings is a repurchase. However, the company built a community all over the world, this means by buying a Coca-Cola product, one is automatically part of the exclusive club. Additionally, the value means creating a special taste in terms of happiness and refreshment. It is all about drawing a positive picture of a positive emotion in people´s minds. Today Coca-Cola is such a strong brand because they give the most valuable thing, a positive feeling. Giving value to customers, makes them decide to choose this brand over others (Millman, 2013, p. 243).

2.4.3 Brand promise and trust

A company´s brand promise represents the purpose of the brand to the world. This promise illustrates the major reasons for the brand´s existence and thus

explains what the brand stands for. However, even more important is that this promise is unique and performed in a company´s everyday life. With regards to the brand success, everyone within an organization should operate according to the promise. A business can only convey the right image to the outside world, if this is assured (Cloosterman and Hoekstra, 2019, pp. 47–48).

Since the business environment is steadily changing, consumers as well as employees and stakeholders need to trust their brand. However, building trust is difficult because a company needs to adhere to their own promise and prove its purpose at once (Cloosterman and Hoekstra, 2019, p. 47). Nevertheless, in order to create trust, businesses need to convince their customers that they value their time and resources. Moreover, companies should be open to criticism. This will enable a transparent communication and therefore companies can respond quicker and more efficiently to the problems of their consumers (Lewis, 2020). However, building trust is not a one-time initiative. Hence, companies should share their content actively with their customers and ask for feedback (Wells, 2019). Therefore Wells, 2019, suggests companies send out surveys on a regular basis, not only to collect answers but to actually listen to their responses and apply some of the ideas to the business. Moreover, if consumers start trusting your company, they may also recommend it to their friends, family or reference group (Wells, 2019).

Summarized, it is very important for brands to build and maintain trust with their customers in order to add value to the brand and also improve the overall business performance.

2.4.4 Brand personality and meaning

Human characteristics attributed to a company´s brand name are defined as a brands personality or meaning. A brands personality and its meaning plays an important part in building the brand identity (Esch, 2014, p. 93). Moreover, it influences how people feel about a product, service or purpose of a business or an organization. In general, a brand´s personality is adapted to core characteristics of a particular customer segment and hence evokes an emotional reaction in a particular group which then encourages consumers to take actions

that ultimately benefit the company (Hu *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, there are five different ways of how brand personality can reflect different traits. Firstly, excitement makes the brand stand for a juvenile and a carefree attitude. Therefore, the main customer segment of such a brand would be young people. In contrast, a sincerity-oriented brand represents the thoughtful, kind and family-focused customers. Thirdly, a rugged brand is appealing to tough or athletic people and therefore is used most frequently by apparel and sport equipment providers. A company promoting a competence brand usually stands for success, influence, or accomplishment. Lastly, most luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, are sophistication brands. These comprise classiness, elegance and esteem (Traver and Mansa, 2020).

However, the brand personality and meaning has never before been so important to customers. In particular, with the beginning of the digital age, the market has changed to a buyer-owned market. A reason for this is, for instance, that people expect more from their brand and want it to represent something that distinguishes them from others (Baird, 2019). Furthermore, the brand personality enables target customers to identify themselves with the values and meaning of the brand (Esch and Rühl, 2016, p. 218).

However, one very effective way that companies use to communicate their personality and give their brand a meaning, is storytelling (Millman, 2013, p. 130). Stanley Hainsworth was the former vice president global creative of Starbucks and without his work, the brand would not be as strong as it is today. The main reason for Starbucks being such a strong brand, is that Starbucks has a story to tell and this allowed Starbucks to develop an experience around the brand (Millman, 2013, p. 133). The Starbucks´s story is based on the special atmosphere in Italy, where people are enjoying their espresso and are talking to each other at the same time. Therefore, the founders wanted to create an atmosphere where people can experience exactly the same feeling but without being in Italy. Through this story people feel connected to the brand and create a personal relationship to it (Millman, 2013, p. 131). For instance, when someone has just had their first day at work in a new job and on the way home, he or she will buy a 5$ espresso at Starbucks to reward him- or herself. From that point on,

the brand will mean something different for that person. Even in 20 years the brand will be associated with that special event (Millman, 2013, p. 172). Brands are telling us authentic stories, therefore 'buying things with a very personal story, creates satisfaction in […] [human beings]' (Millman, 2013, p. 66).

2.4.5 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is described as a beneficial relationship in which customers are linked to a specific company and therefore repeat buying the same brand (Solomon, 2004, p. 483). This basically means, that a consumer is committed to this particular product or service through an emotional connection or due to self-identification with the brands own personality. Furthermore, people show their loyalty towards a brand by repurchasing their offered goods instead of those of competitors. If a customer finds a brand that meets exactly his or her needs, then he or she will most likely not be interested in giving another brand a chance at all. Nevertheless, in order to keep these customers loyal, companies need to keep track and watch the market continuously. If businesses do not keep up-to-date there are risks of losing loyal customers, since it cannot be assumed that a company can always satisfy its customer´s desires (Kopp, 2019)

In conclusion, if a company is able to create a brand with respect to 'brand promise and trust', 'brand image and value', and 'brand personality and meaning', it increases the loyalty of customers towards the brand.

2.4.6 Brand equity

Brand equity is the value that a company gets from its name recognition. Therefore, it is built by making high quality, meaningful, catchy and recognizable products. Moreover, brand equity is crucial for a company´s success due to the fact that it increases the brand value as well as the business revenue. A positive brand equity can be determined if consumers voluntarily pay a substantial amount of money for the branded product, although competing firms might offer the same product for a smaller amount of money (Hayes and Kidness, 2020). However, it is basically a collection of many other factors that connect a consumer with a

company´s brand (MBA Skool Team, 2020b). Following, figure 4 will summarize all components of brand equity.
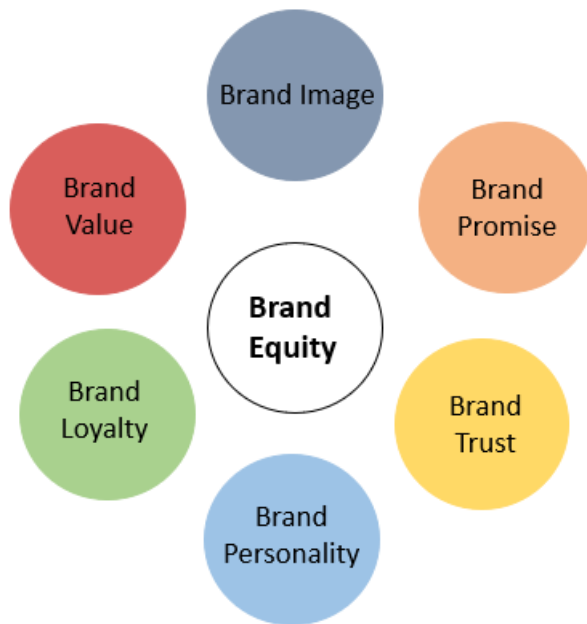

Figure 4: Brand Equity (modified from: MBA Skool Team, 2020)

Figure 4 demonstrates that all components researched earlier in this thesis build the brand equity. Though, one of the most important factors for a positive brand equity besides brand management, is consumer perception. Consumer perception is governed by the experience people have made with the brand and therefore bear it either positively or negatively in mind. However, the essence of having a positive brand equity is to consider all components of brand management but especially brand loyalty. This makes the brand equity valuable and will motivate customers to pay more for a preferred brand because of the positive association (Hayes and Kidness, 2020). Moreover, a strong brand personality supports the positive perception of a brand and is therefore determined to increase the brand equity even more (Hu *et al.*, 2019).

To summarize, each component, 'brand promise and trust', 'brand image and value', 'brand personality and meaning', 'brand loyalty and brand equity', make a brand memorable and therefore successful.

2.5 Advertising

In general, advertising has the purpose to communicate offers by companies to potential consumers and is used as a medium (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 178). Therefore, the main goal of advertising is to satisfy the demand for products, services or brands (Heun, 2017, p. 2).

However, as already mentioned earlier in 2.1, before the first industrial revolution, goods were commonly sold between neighbours or street vendors. At this time, advertising was rarely used (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 11). As the freedom of press was established around 1850, the first platforms for promotional campaigns were developed (Heun, 2017, p. 3). In 1900 advertising then became more professional in terms of artistic licence and target-oriented advertisements. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 21st century, advertising developed into a science and ultimately also into a psychological and emotional tool. Around this time, advertisers began to research behavioural controlling aspects in specific customer segments. In order to find access to the customers mind, psychological concepts focused on the motivational and personal factors of the consumers. In the following years, digitalization and new technologies in the media sector opened completely new ways for marketers to interact with potential customers. Consumption, in general, started to strongly increase at the same time and therefore customers were even more touchable. Thus, today´s companies communicate almost exclusively via digital media (Heun, 2017, pp. 5–13). Furthermore, through the rapid development of the world of the internet, the amount of new communication funnels and other options to spread advertising messages have been created. For instance, nowadays websites of particular brands exist, where products are promoted parallel to the actual advertising and this enormous reach ultimately benefits brands and their companies (Wertz, 2019).

Due to this particular change in advertising and media, different types of communication emerged. Today´s companies communicate with customers through mass media or individual media. One the one hand, individual media includes a one-to-one communication between company and consumer.

Assuming this, a firm interacts with a customer, for instance via mobile phone, e-mail or through a chat function. On the other hand, mass media enables a one-to-many or many-to-many communication. Examples for a one-to-many communication are advertisements via print or broadcast. Hereby, the goal of the sender of the advertising message, is to reach out to and to be received by as many people as possible. Whereas in many-to-many communication, the sender of the message is not directly involved in the process. Information about products or services of the company is exchanged on various platforms between consumers only (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, pp. 179–180). However, in 2.5.1 some mass media advertising concepts will be researched in further detail.

To summarize, advertising developed from print to broadcast to social media and mobile advertising. However, especially in the last two decades, there has been a rapid development and also a dramatic increase in the influence of advertising.

2.5.1 Advertising concepts

Products can be advertised in different ways, for instance through apps, in branded content, social media, sponsoring, product advertising, storytelling, influencer advertisements, radio advertising, print media, etc (Millington, 2014; Patel, 2015). However, advertising concepts basically have the function to perform promotional goals. Hereby, the method of resolution is often very creative and humorous since such ads are the most appealing to customers. Moreover, these concepts should include factors like creativity, mindfulness, traceability, credibility, clarity and pertinence for the target group and easy intelligibility to reach as many potential customers as possible (Heun, 2017, pp. 54–58).

However, this thesis will investigate advertising concepts in terms of social media, influencer marketing and product advertising or product placement.

The current number of the world population amounts to 7.8 billion people (Review, 2020). The number of the active global social media population worldwide is 3.96 billion with Facebook being the most popular platform, with one billion active monthly users (Clement, 2020). Therefore, social media is a very effective way for companies to spread their advertising messages. Besides, using

social networks can bring a viral effect, which means promotional messages are repeated by users and therefore reach out to an even bigger target group. Additionally, these channels offer brands the possibility to have a direct interaction with their consumers.

Here, social media marketing goes hand in hand with influencer advertising. An influencer is a person who enjoys a high reputation on social media platforms. Moreover, due to their reach and high number of followers, influencers are also considered as opinion leaders who can get their fans enthusiastic about a certain product or brand. Thereby, influencers often have a cooperation with companies and therefore offer the chance to increase their brand awareness through advertising campaigns on their social media channels (Heun, 2017, p. 105; unternehmer.de, 2020). In such agreements, the influencers are expected to present the branded product in a way that is appealing to the audience and therefore also increases the credibility of the brands advertising promise (Heun, 2017, pp. 103–105).

In product placement, the focus lies on the product itself and not the brand. Therefore, product advertisement usually has the purpose to generate attention for one specific product and to stimulate impulse buyers. However, in such advertisements the product is always placed in the centre to get the most attention and also to dominate the brands appearance. Product placement is also one of most commonly used promotional ways on social media platforms (Heun, 2017, pp. 94–97). An example for this is an influencer who posts gaming videos on YouTube and promotes one particular pair of wireless headphones that is perfectly suitable for gamers. This may have the effect that a number of followers will consider buying the product.

2.5.2 Advertising´s role in branding

Through the rapid development of advertising, genuinely innovative, catchy, convincing and effective advertisements gain more and more influence on creating a brand. Marketing in general and advertising specifically, have the function to develop, to enhance and to grow brand loyalty. Therefore, brand advertising needs to be significant and appealing in order to support the brand´s

position positively in the market. Moreover, it helps to create a positive brand equity and therefore adds value to the brand and the company (Light, 2019).

In conclusion, using product placement in social media and influencer advertising is a very effect way for companies to promote their brands and therefore increase their brand awareness, as well as their brand equity. Advertising is basically the way in which a brand is presented to the world through media and therefore essential for a brands success.

2.6 Neuromarketing

The previous parts of the thesis dealt with the issue of which factors influence the purchasing and consumption process in theory. Therefore, the following part of the thesis will focus on the psychological background behind this theory.

Neuromarketing studies how consumers are making their purchase decisions and what they are based on. Therefore, the aim of neuromarketing is to create the most efficient advertising strategies or campaigns adapted to the desires and needs of consumers (Haufe-Lexware GmbH & Co. KG, 2018). Moreover, the psychological part of neuromarketing deals with the issue of how beliefs, attitudes, norms, expectations, values and thoughts affect purchase and consumption behaviour. In addition, it also studies how consumers are related to particular products and services and how advertising messages influence consumer choices (Cherry and Swaim, 2020).

The human brain is one of the most complex systems which exists on earth. How the brain decides which products or services are desirable and which are not, has not been fully researched yet. Therefore, this thesis will research the buying brain and brands, as well as the buying brain and advertising in order to get a broader understanding of the topic.

2.6.1 The buying brain and brands

The goal of every company is to present their brand as one the customer is willing to pay for and wishes to maintain a lasting connection with. Even though newness and innovation is a basic human need, it is also part of human nature that people

want stability and dedication in their lives. Therefore, it is very important for marketers to be aware of these factors and build a brand that offers and communicates a consumer´s needs and desires (Pradeep, 2010, p. 120).

However, the human brain stores about 99 percent of all information, such as sensory input, subconsciously (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 3–4). Based on this the main challenge for marketers is to understand how consumers evaluate products, services or brands and how marketers can maintain a connection with their customer´s brains emotional core (Brandtrust, 2018). The answer to that question will be given in the following, by means of Figure 5.
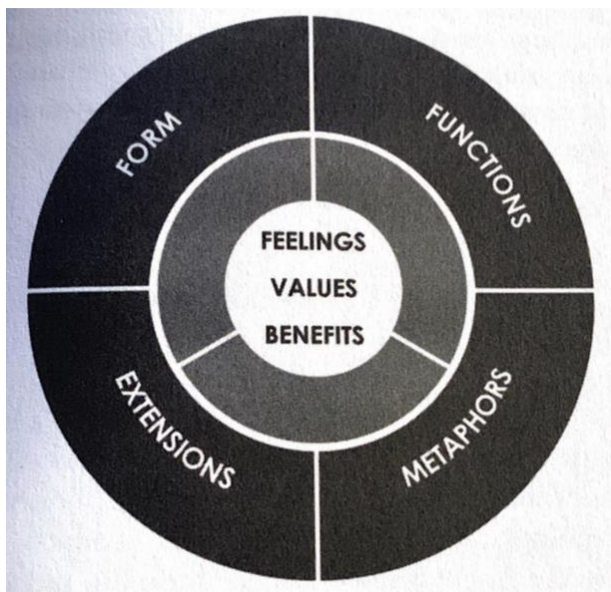
Figure 5: The Brand Essence Framework Core and Outer Dimensions (Pradeep, 2010, p. 129)

Figure 5 shows how brands are able to attach themselves to consumers. In the following, each dimension will be explained in further detail from the inside out.

Addressing feelings helps to create a subconscious emotional connection to the brand. A study by Dr. Pradeep, 2010, confirmed that the most successful businesses are the ones, with a unique and emotionally accessible branding strategy (Pradeep, 2010, p. 125). Feelings are a very powerful tool and therefore make it possible to associate a certain product or service with a situation, places or a person. If such an emotional bond is formed, companies will get a lot more

than typical loyalty, they will get a committed and dedicated intercessor for the brand (Danna, 2017). Taking Coca-Cola as an example once more, despite its unique bottle design, the company stands for refreshment, happiness and togetherness. In an advertising campaign from 2016, Coca-Cola promotes that there is a coke for every feeling (Coca-Cola, 2016). However, this is exactly what feelings do. Consumers will not remember any ingredients which are written on the bottle but they will remember a good feeling and therefore associate these with the brand (Pradeep, 2010, p. 125). In conclusion, it is essential for businesses to emotionally attach their customer in order to have a successful brand.

Moreover, the connection through feelings to the brand can be reinforced by values. If the brand supports the ethnical, social and moral beliefs and values of the targeted customer, it will increase the brands affinity (Pradeep, 2010, p. 126).

A benefit in this context, is the advantage the customer gets when purchasing the brand. Such benefits are also known as symbolic benefits. However, these benefits have more meaning than the actual function of the product or service. Here, the focus lies on what the brand represents, for instance intelligence or beauty, uniqueness or to be part of an exclusive club. Moreover, customers may buy a certain brand in order to improve their social status or to show that they belong to a particular social community and thereby express beliefs (Florack and Palcu, 2017, p. 2).

As already mentioned, functions are not as important as the benefit of the brand, but functions are essential for the brands existence (Pradeep, 2010, p. 124). However, uniqueness is even more important since it distinguishes the function from the more ordinary features. In general, standing out and being unique is crucial for brands. Being unique differentiates one brand from thousands of others (Kirchner, 2015).

Furthermore, some brands are unmistakable or are kept in mind because of the visual elements of the brand, which are stored in the subconscious memory. Hence, most often consumers only need a few seconds to recognize a particular brand in an advertising (Phillips, McQuarrie and Griffin, 2014, p. 225). However,

the visual elements not only effect advertising, but also the recognition of a brand elsewhere. For instance, consumers can identify a Coca-Cola bottle only by its unique form and design. Most commonly, such formal characteristics illustrate the difference to the competitors and therefore are patented. (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 123–124).

A metaphor represents a conception which then is associated with the brand consciously or subconsciously. Metaphors are most commonly used to give items human characteristics. For instance, if a car is described as dynamic, independent or strong, this usually represents how the driver should feel when taking a ride and how the brand will be perceived subconsciously (Pradeep, 2010, p. 127)

A brand extension is basically a replacement of other brands by this particular brand in the subconscious mind. Therefore, another scenario is the extension of the cases in which the brand is usually used. However, it can also occur in a kind of addition in which two brands merge and interact (Pradeep, 2010, p. 128).

To summarize, all these dimensions combined explain how marketers can maintain a subconscious relation to their customers. Thereby, feelings turn out to be the centre of all dimensions and to be the most powerful tool in order to attach a consumer to the brand emotionally.

2.6.2 The buying brain and advertising

In the previous chapters, chapter 2.5 and 2.5.1, the development of advertising, major concepts of how advertising is used and its role in branding were researched. However, this part of the thesis investigates how the brain reacts to advertising and how precious it is for companies to measure this reaction. Therefore, this chapter researches three elements of the advertising effectiveness framework, Second-by-Second A-E-M Response, neurological compression and parietal brain stimulation.

The most important aspect in creating an advertising spot, is to get people's attention and to trigger emotions in order to remain in the subconscious memory. One option to measure the effectiveness of an ad is the Second-by-Second A-E-

M Response. Thereby, A stands for attention, E for emotion and M for memory. This element aims to identify if an ad includes ineffective sections by researching the attentional, emotional, and memorable parts of the spot. A spot with a weak ending usually is not stored in memory (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 194–194). Assuming this, the brand logo or simply a package shot should be placed at the end of an advertising spot because people do not pay much attention in the middle of the spot and therefore will not focus on the brand., spots with a weak ending are not stored in memory (Young, 2017).

The human brain is programmed to only focus on the remarkable moments of an ad. Therefore, the neurological compression creates eight to ten second version of a spot that actually lasts 30 seconds (Pradeep, 2010, p. 195). By this knowledge, marketers get the opportunity to make their advertisements even more effective and memorable by compressing advertising spots in order to make them more attractive for their consumers. Moreover, the shorter spots can then be promoted via different platforms, such as YouTube or other mobile communication channels. In total, this makes it possible to use different variation of these short-form ads for different marketing objects (Burrus, 2014).

If an advertising spot shows people actually consuming the promoted item, this will automatically stimulate the taste, touch and smell senses. Advertising a product, is a very effective to demonstrate how the product is used and enjoyed. Direct brain stimulation is one of the most efficient ways to advertise since people perceive everything through their senses (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 195–196). Taking Coca-Cola´s advertising spot as an example. In the company´s ad from 2016, people are drinking and enjoying their coke. In return this creates a need, in the consumers subconscious mind, to also enjoy a coke (Coca-Cola, 2016).

In conclusion, there are many ways how marketers can stimulate their consumers brains and use advertising effectively. However, advertisers need to make sure that the ad communicates the product, brand or service in a way which is appealing to the potential customer.

2.7 Market analysis: the German wireless head-and earphone market

This analysis has the purpose to investigate the market size and growth, major trends and brands and lastly some advertising strategies. However, the author of this thesis will research the market for all kind of wireless head-and earphones, including in ear Bluetooth headphones, over ear Bluetooth headphones and any other form of Bluetooth head-and earphones.

The wireless head and earphone market in Germany is not fully researched yet. Therefore, this thesis has the purpose to investigate the market in more detail and to provide new findings in this particular segment. Since the market is not completely investigated yet, it is difficult to find data on sales figure and development forecasts. Hence, the author of this thesis contacted 15 different head and earphone producers and asked for data about the development of sales figures from 2013 to the first quarter of 2020. This data would have helped to determine which brand is market leader in Germany and which manufacturer has the most potential in future. However, none of the 15 companies was willing to provide and pass on such data. Producers such as Bose, Sony, Ultimate Ears, Samsung were contacted but also companies like Apple, Beats, Anker, Sennheiser or Beyer Dynamics.

Nevertheless, this thesis will investigate the market with help of all already published data about wireless head and earphones and the results of the empirical study.

2.7.1 Size and growth

The demand for wireless head-and earphones is steadily increasing. This is also confirmed by a global study conducted by Counterpoint from the year of 2019. According to the study, 129 million wireless head-and earphones will be sold by the end of 2020 (Lee, 2019).

In recent years, the global market for wireless hearables has grown rapidly. By 2018, the number of headphones sold had already reached 46 million. However, until 2021 the global wireless head-and earphone market value is estimated to amount to 27 billion US-Dollars. Nevertheless, the study also confirmed that the

company Apple dominates the market (Lee, 2019). Whether Apple dominates the German market or not and how big the potential for the German wireless head- and earphone market is, will be researched in the empirical part of the study.

Admittedly, data about the German wireless head-and earphone market may not be published yet and the author may not have been able to find the right data about the market. However, figure 6 helps to get a better understanding of the size of the general headphone market in Germany.

Absatz von Kopfhörern in Deutschland von 2008 bis 2019 (in Millionen Stück)
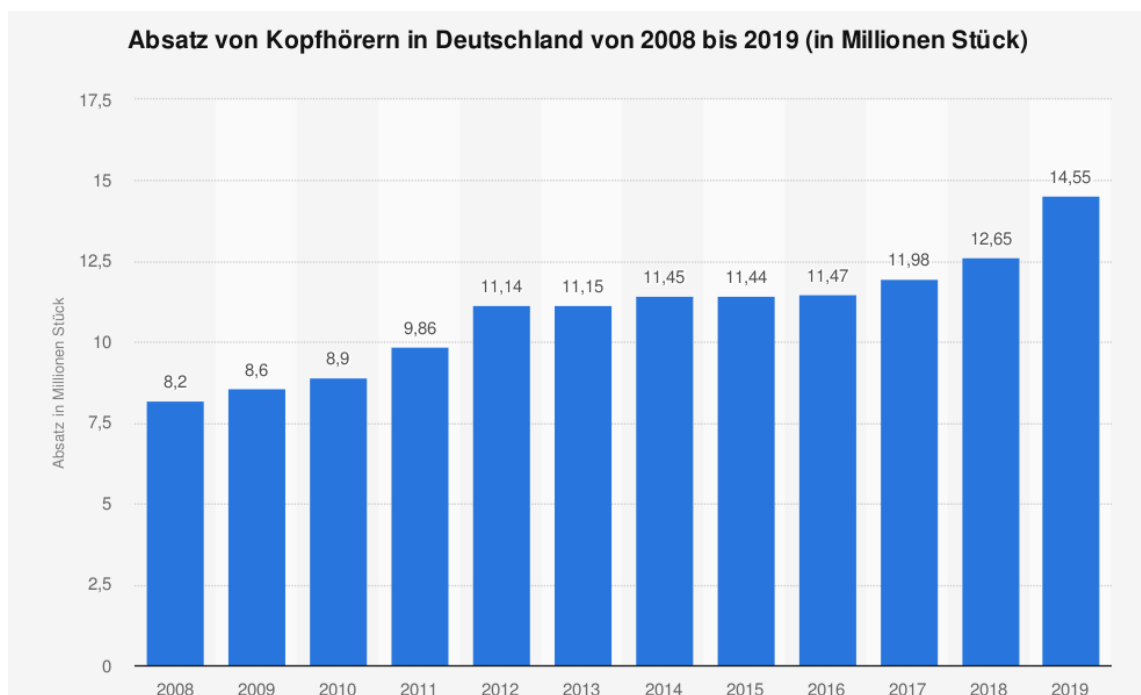
Figure 6: Sales of headphones in Germany 2008-2019 (Tenzer, 2020)

Figure 6 shows the total sales of head- and earphones in Germany. In this bar chart, all different types of hearables are included, like wired or in ear Bluetooth headphones for instance. Moreover, figure 6 demonstrates that the general headphone market in Germany is quite big with 14.55 million sold items in 2019. Whereas from 2012 to 2017 the number of goods sold only increased a little, a rise of about 2 million sold items can be seen from the year of 2018 to 2019. This indicates a growth of about 13.75%. However, the portion of wireless hearables in this chart is unclear. Furthermore, the author of this thesis was not able to find any data including sales figures, about the market for wireless head- and

earphones in Germany. This highlights the urgency of investigating this particular market and gathering initial data of the market.

2.7.2 Major brands

Apple, a company everyone around the globe knows for its phones or laptops, also seems to be market leader in the headphone segment. In July 2020, the Statista Research Department published a global consumer survey about head- and earphone producers in Germany. In this survey 1,300 people participated and 16% of all respondents positively answered to owning Apple headphones (Statista Research Department, 2020).

Von welcher Marke sind Ihre persönlichen Kopfhörer?

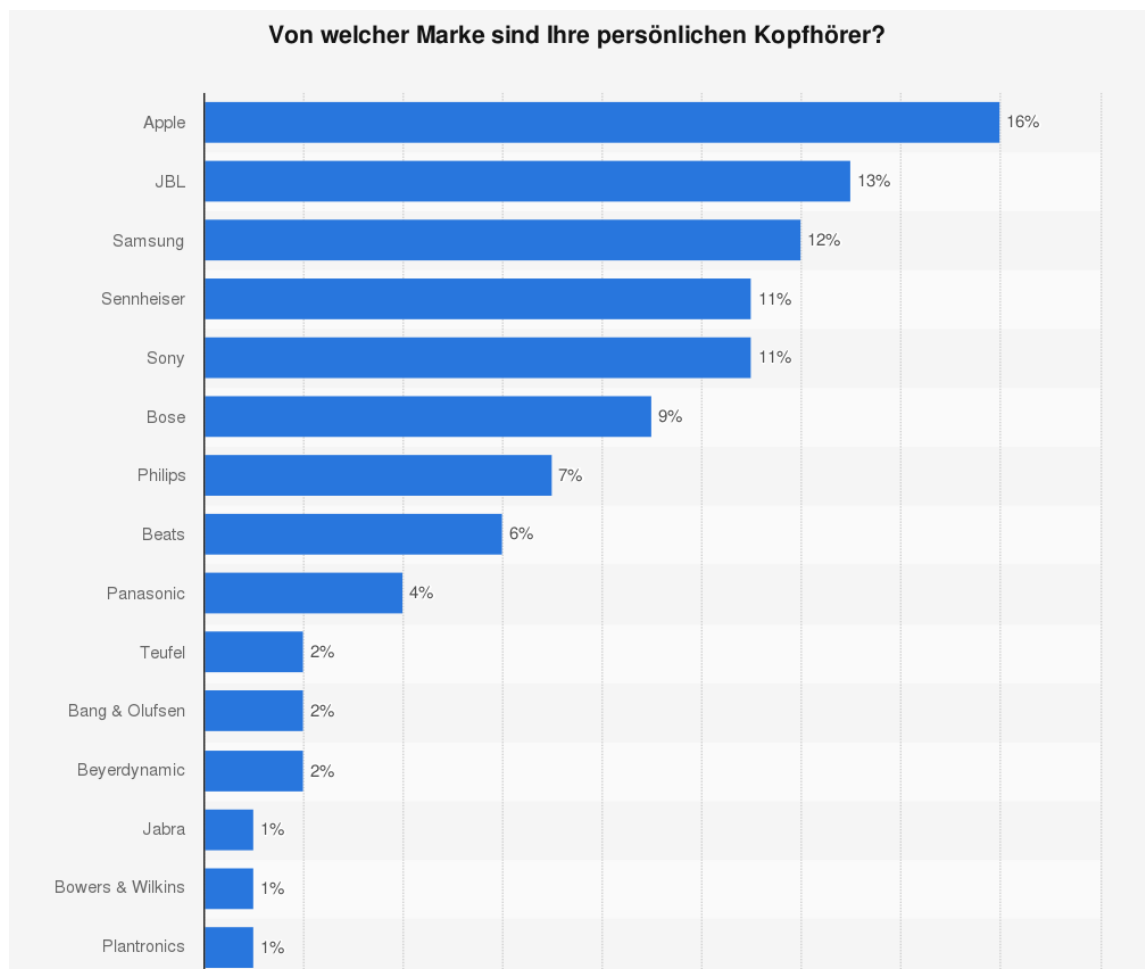| Brand	Percentage
Apple	16%
JBL	13%
Samsung	12%
Sennheiser	11%
Sony	11%
Bose	9%
Philips	7%
Beats	6%
Panasonic	4%
Teufel	2%
Bang & Olufsen	2%
Beyerdynamic	2%
Jabra	1%
Bowers & Wilkins	1%
Plantronics	1%

Figure 7: Statista Global Consumer Survey 2020 (Statista Research Department, 2020)

The second most owned headphone brand is JBL with 13%, followed by Samsung, Sennheiser, Sony and Bose. All other brands mentioned in the survey

form only a small percentage, whereby 15% of the respondents answer to own other brands not listed in the survey and 8% of the participants do not know a brand (Statista Research Department, 2020). With regards to the global head- and earphone market, Apple is the most preferred brand in the segment of true wireless earbuds. Thereby, main characteristics, such as ease of use, comfort, fit and portability were the major reasons for consumers to choose an Apple product (Lee, 2019).

To summarize, the major brands in the German wireless head- and earphone market are Apple, JBL, Samsung, Sennheiser, Sony and Bose. Further, the empirical part will investigate whether these are still the most recognized brands by German customers or not.

2.7.3 Advertising strategies

Every company has its own advertising strategies. However, this thesis will research some advertising strategies of globally leading head- and earphone brands, including Apple, Bose and JBL.

When Apple launched the AirPods Pro in 2019, the company introduced the new product with a one-minute advertising spot. In this spot the emphasis lies on the product itself and its key features, being active noise-cancelling, transparency mode with which the consumer can also hear what is happening around him or her, customizable fit and best audio quality (Apple, 2019). However, in this ad, Apple is using direct brain stimulation by showing people actually using and enjoying the product. Further, the perfect fit for each ear is underlined the most in the commercial. Various people are dancing wildly around and the AirPods fit perfectly and do not even move a bit. This kind of product presentation stimulates human senses and therefore, creates the subconscious need to enjoy the perfect fit and audio quality of the Apple AirPods Pro too (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 195–196; Apple, 2019).

A similar advertising strategy is used by the competitive brand Bose. The company follows a low-key advertising strategy. However, their promotional campaigns are product focused and have the purpose to strengthen emotions,

sedateness and to demonstrate how Bose products can make the daily life easier (MBA Skool Team, 2020a). This can be seen by means of an advertising spot from 2018, in which Bose promotes the SoundSport Free Headphones. The spot lasts only 30 seconds and shows how two men are practicing sports while using the product. Whilst Apple states several key features of the product, Bose focuses only on one main feature, no wires. This main feature is underlined at the end of the sport with the slogan: 'No wires. No stopping you.' (Bose, 2018). However, both brands are using the same strategy, direct brain stimulation and emotions by either seeing people dance or two men having fun when doing sport.

Bose´s and Apple´s competitor JBL does not advertise much differently. In an ad from 2019, the company JBL, which is originally part of Hartman International Industries, uses celebrity endorsement. Giannis Antetokounmpo, a famous basketball player is practicing in the gym while hearing music with JBL true wireless headphones. Suddenly, the surroundings change into a music record studio where an artist, Antetokounmpo is listening to, performs. Hereby, JBL emphasizes on best sound quality in their product JBL (JBL, 2019). However, the company uses humour at the end of the spot which also triggers people´s emotion as well as to get into the subconscious mind of their consumers (Pradeep, 2010, pp. 195–196; JBL, 2019).

All three researched brands use emotions and people who actually use the product in their advertising strategies in order to stimulate their consumers senses and brains directly. Moreover, each ad presents a situation to which a common person can easily relate to and therefore make the promotional campaigns appealing to their consumers. In conclusion, at least three of the major global brands use similar advertising strategies to promote their wireless head- and earphones.

3 Research approach and methodology

This study has the purpose to find out whether strong brands and advertisements increase the willingness of people to buy well-known products rather than

nameless products, or not and how brands and advertising influence the decision-making of German consumers in the wireless head- and earphone market.

By means of the research approach, the author of this thesis will explain how the empirical part of the study is structured and which methods are used to analyse the data. Moreover, the research design, the questionnaire design, the 'sampling and analysis method', as well as the 'validity and reliability' of the data will be presented and defined in this part of the thesis.

3.1 Research design

In the following, the author will present several steps which were taken to create the research design. First, the author scanned literature, such as books, journal articles, webpages and other online sources.

Followed by that, the author made the decision to do a quantitative research approach instead of a qualitative research approach. Due to the fact that a quantitative research approach includes the selection of a considerably number of participants and a questionnaire design in which answers are specified, this kind of research approach fits best to the purpose of this thesis (Bell, Bryman and Harley, 2018, p. 185ff.).

Ensuing, the German population was selected as the respondent group. Accordingly, the questions for an online self-completion questionnaire were created and the data was collected afterwards. The questionnaire was published in the German language since the aim of the study is to investigate the German consumer in the wireless head- and earphone market. The original, German version as well as a translated, English version are listed in the Appendix.

Lastly, the collected data was analysed and assessed. The research findings of the study are illustrated in the conclusion chapter of the study.

3.2 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. The author intended to phrase the questions in a way that would be understandable and comprehensive for each

participant. As already mentioned in 3.1, the questionnaire was composed in German.

As measurement, respectively scaling system, the author used the Likert-Scale for most questions, whereas questions concerning the life situation were created according to the dichotomous scale. Moreover, two other questions were open-ended questions.

3.3 Sampling and analysis method

The sample size amounts to 272 of which 249 participants completed the questionnaire. Therefore, the number of respondents is 249. The questionnaire was available online for seven days and therefore the data was sampled for exactly this period of time. The link for the questionnaire was shared through various social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Moreover, the link was shared with friend groups, as well as family. As sampling method, convenience sampling was used since the criteria for selecting participants was based upon availability and willingness to respond. In addition, the data was analysed descriptively.

After collecting the answers, the data was evaluated with help of Microsoft Excel and the given tools of the survey plattform 'umfrageonline.de'. The surveyed data is shown in part 4.2 of the thesis.

3.4 Validity and reliability of the study

Reliability describes the degree to which data analysis methods can offer accurate conclusions and consistent results. Moreover, the validity of a study can be measured and tested by another person who implements the same research under different circumstances and still receives the exact same results (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, pp. 148–150).

The main purpose of the study is to investigate consumer behaviour in the German wireless head- and earphone market and how strongly brands and advertisements influence their choices. Moreover, the author aims to provide a better understanding about consumers psychology, which might not be fulfilled

completely since consumer behaviour is a very complex and steadily changing issue. Additionally, the chosen sampling method might not provide results as reliable as, for instance, random sampling would have.

In order to assure an overall reliable study, the author has used a large amount of reliable literature for the theoretical part of the study. Furthermore, the empirical part of the study is based on the research findings of the theoretical framework and therefore enlarges the validity and reliability of the study.

4 Empirical study

4.1 The respondent group

As already mentioned in 3.1 the empirical study was carried out on German consumers. In order to get reliable results, the author chose to limit the respondent group only to the German population and not by any age or gender.

From 2019 to 2020 the population increased about 0.2 percent and therefore amounts to 83.2 million people. Out of this number, 42.1 million are women and 41.0 million men (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020b). Further the age distribution of the German population is pictured in figure 8.

German population - age distribution (in million)
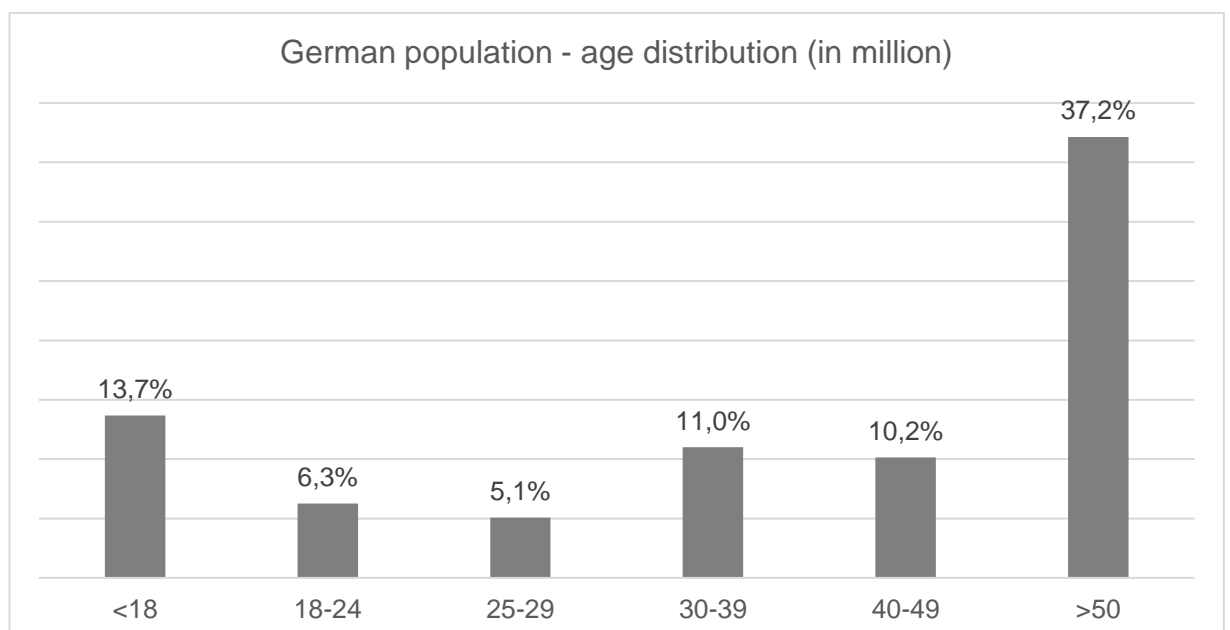
Figure 8: German population - age distribution (modified from: (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020c, 2020a)

Figure 8 shows, that the age groups 18-24 and 25-29 make up the smallest portion. Moreover, the biggest age group is the group of 50 year olds or older German citizens. Though, hereby 18.09 million people are 65 years old or older (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020a).

However, concerning the respondent group of the survey, 272 people participated but only 249 participants finished the survey. Further, 40.16% of the participants were men, 59.04% women and 0.80% diverse. The age distribution classified in relevant age groups will be represented in figure 9.
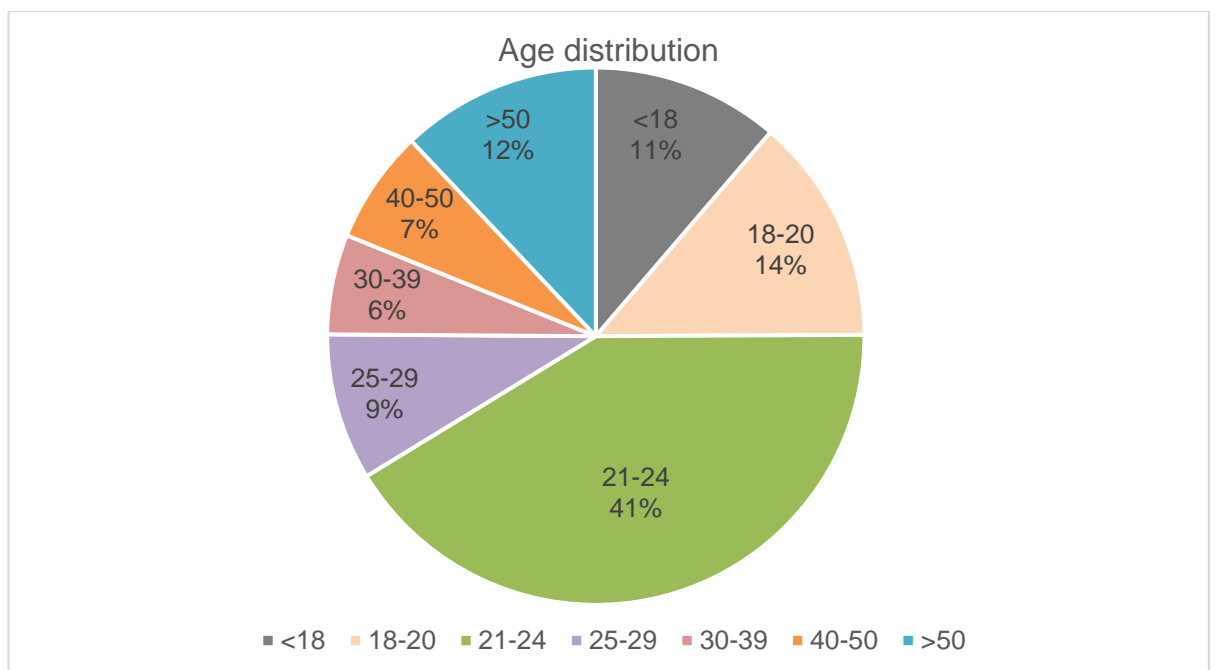
Figure 9: Age distribution of the respondent group

Figure 9 shows that the proportionately largest age group is the group of 21 to 24 year olds. The number of participants of this group amounts to 103 respondents. Out of these 33.01% are 21, 33.01% are 22, 24.27% are 23 and 9.71% are 24. Therefore, most respondents of the survey were in the age of 21 or 22.

The second largest group is the age group from 18 to 20. This age group is also dominated by a certain age, the age of 20. Hereby, 70.59% of the participants are 20 years old. Since both age groups together account for about 55% of all

participants, these age groups will be examined the most, in the following evaluation part of the empirical study.

Besides the age distribution of the respondent group, the gender distribution will be considered as well. Out of the 249 participants, 59% were female, 40.2% male and 0.8% diverse. However, the following figure 10 will show the gender distribution by the relevant age groups.
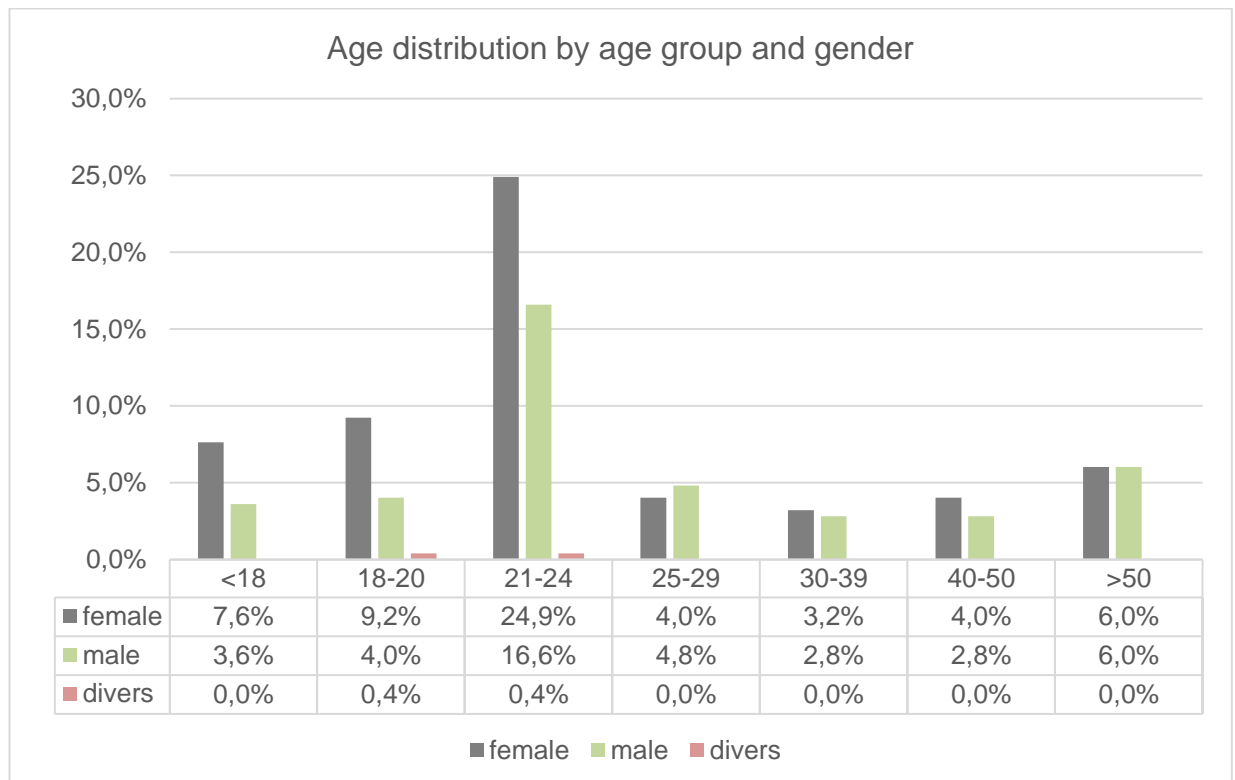
Age distribution by age group and gender

	<18	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-50	>50
female	7,6%	9,2%	24,9%	4,0%	3,2%	4,0%	6,0%
male	3,6%	4,0%	16,6%	4,8%	2,8%	2,8%	6,0%
divers	0,0%	0,4%	0,4%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%

Figure 10: Age distribution of the respondent group by age group and gender

In figure 10 it can be seen that in the age group <18 the portion of female participants with 4.02% is slightly higher, as well as in the age group 18-20 with 5.22%. Moreover, the respondent group of 21-24 years old people has the biggest difference in gender distribution. Here, 8.3% more women participated in the survey. Further, in the age groups 18-20 and 21-24, in each case, one person indicated to be divers. However, in all other relevant age groups, the gender was mostly equally distributed.

4.2 Consumer preferences of wireless head- and earphones

This part of the thesis will evaluate questions concerning wireless head- and earphones as a product. Moreover, it will be researched which brand is owned the most, when the participants first purchased this kind of product and for which purpose wireless head- and earphones are used. In question three of the survey the participants were asked to indicate whether they own wireless hearables or not. Hereby, 59.4% of the respondents answered positively to owning wireless head- or earphones, whereas 40.6% indicated not owning any kind of the product.

However, regarding the age groups, it is noticeable that especially the younger age groups own wireless head- or earphones. Accordingly, figure 11 shows the ownership or wireless head- and earphones by the relevant age groups.

Ownership of wireless head-and earphones by age group

	<18	18-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-50	>50
■ yes	82,1%	58,8%	61,2%	50,0%	66,7%	35,3%	50,0%
■ no	17,9%	41,2%	38,8%	50,0%	33,3%	64,7%	50,0%

■ yes ■ no
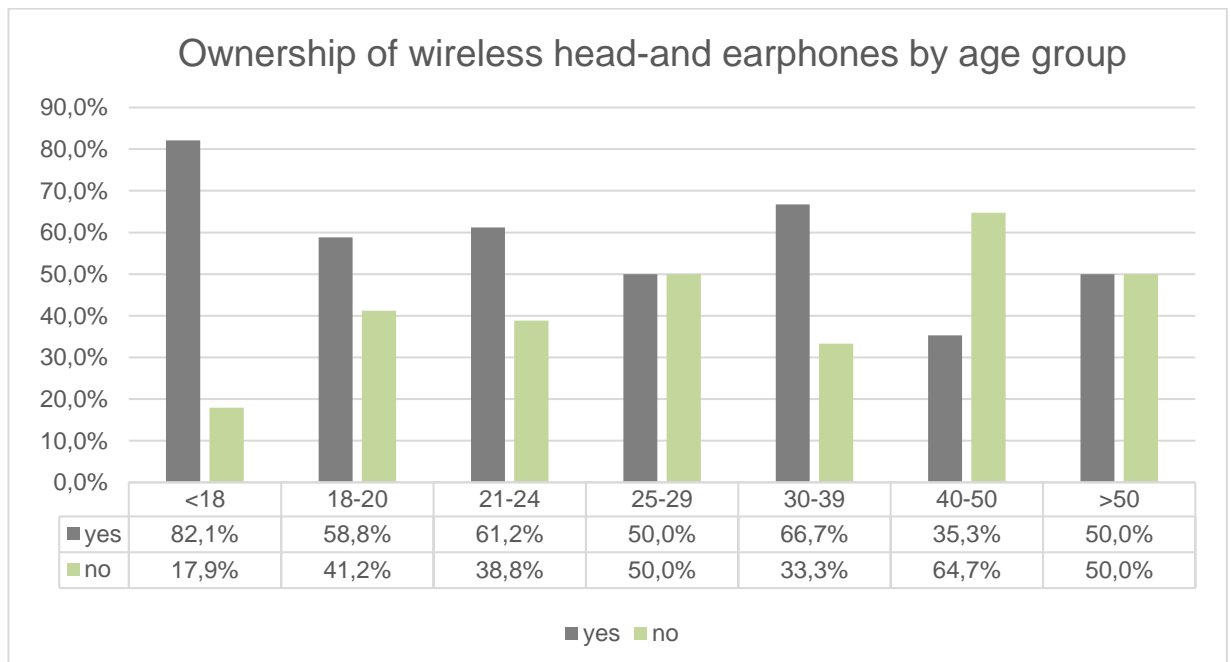
Figure 11: Ownership of wireless head- and earphones by age group

The diagram shows that, in percentage terms, with 82.1% the age group of <18 is the group in which most people own wireless hearables. Moreover, it is noticeable that in almost each age group, the percentage of participants who own wireless headphones is higher than the percentage of participants who do not own wireless hearables. However, in the age group 25-29 and >50 the percentage share is the same, 50% to 50%.

Next, in question four the participants were asked to name the brand they own and if they do not own wireless head- or earphones, they were requested to ignore the question. 143 respondents answered the question and 195 answers were given since some participants named two or more brands. In the following, figure 12 will show which brand is the most owned brand, whereby the answers were not filtered by the age groups.
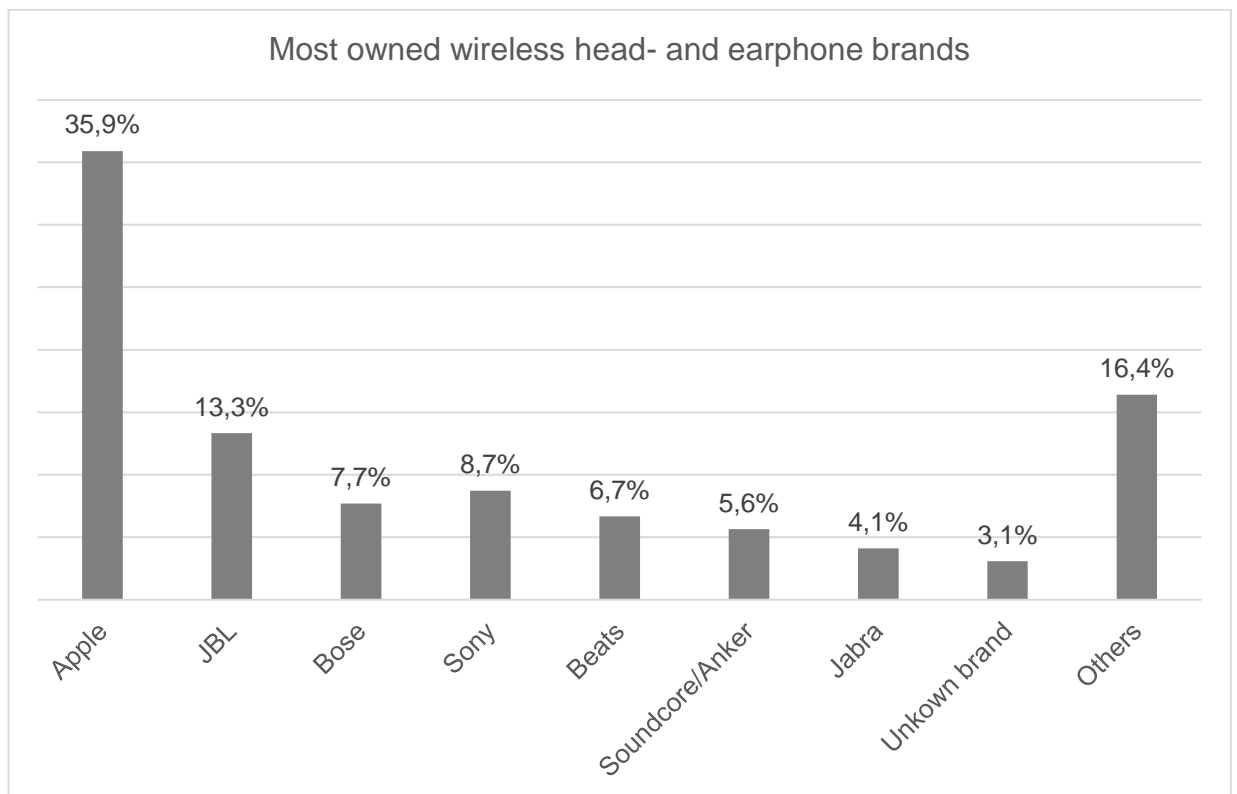

Figure 12: Most owned wireless head- and earphone brands

In figure 12, it can be seen that the results of the survey confirm Apple to be the market leader in the German wireless head- and earphone market followed by JBL, Sony and Bose. Whereas, in percentage terms, with about 22.6% more owners than JBL, Apple is clearly leading the market. Considering the age groups, especially the younger groups, <18, 18-20 and 21-24, own Apple headphones.

As a fifth question, the participants who own wireless hearables were asked to indicate when they first purchased this kind of product. Therefore, participants

who do not own any wireless hearables, were bespoken to skip the question. How the German market for wireless head- and earphones has developed from 2010-2020 will be shown in figure 13.
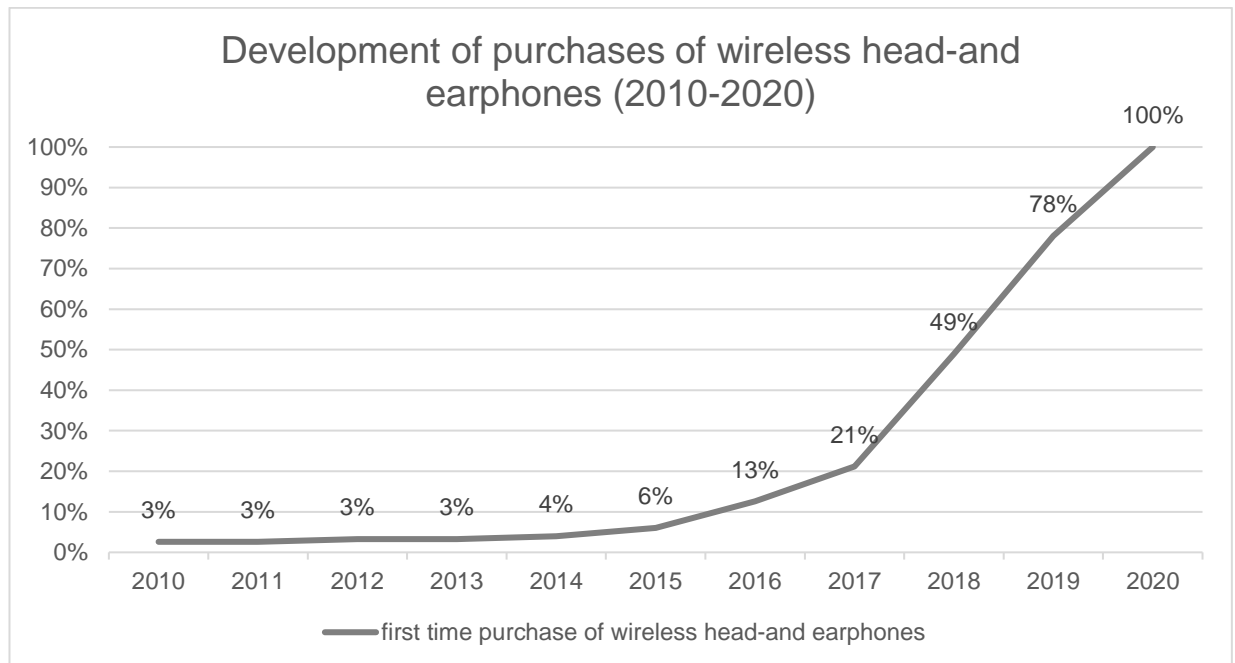
Figure 13: Development of purchases of wireless head- and earphones (2010-2020)

From the years 2010 to 2016 there was only a slight positive development in purchases. However, starting in 2017 the number of purchases of wireless head- and earphones in Germany strongly increased. Moreover, this result of the survey supports and confirms the prediction that the global market for wireless head- and earphones is rapidly growing (Lee, 2019).

From question six onwards, the respondents were asked to answer any of the following survey questions from the point of view of someone who does own wireless hearables even though they do not actually own this kind of product. Thereby, question six researches for which purpose wireless head- and earphones are used the most. Hence, 209 people answered this question. These participants were able to choose out of the following options: sports, work, online meetings, learning, listening to music, listening to audio book or to watch movies.

In order to measure the results and to get a mean value, the author used the Likert Scale with the following measurements:

1 – very often

2 – often

3 – sometimes

4 – rarely

5 – never

The answers of the participants are shown in figure 14.

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Standard deviation
Sports						2,34	1,34
Work						3,66	1,24
Online Meetings						3,31	1,34
Learning						3,65	1,32
Listening to music						1,86	1,13
Listening to audio books						3,39	1,45
Movies						3,56	1,27
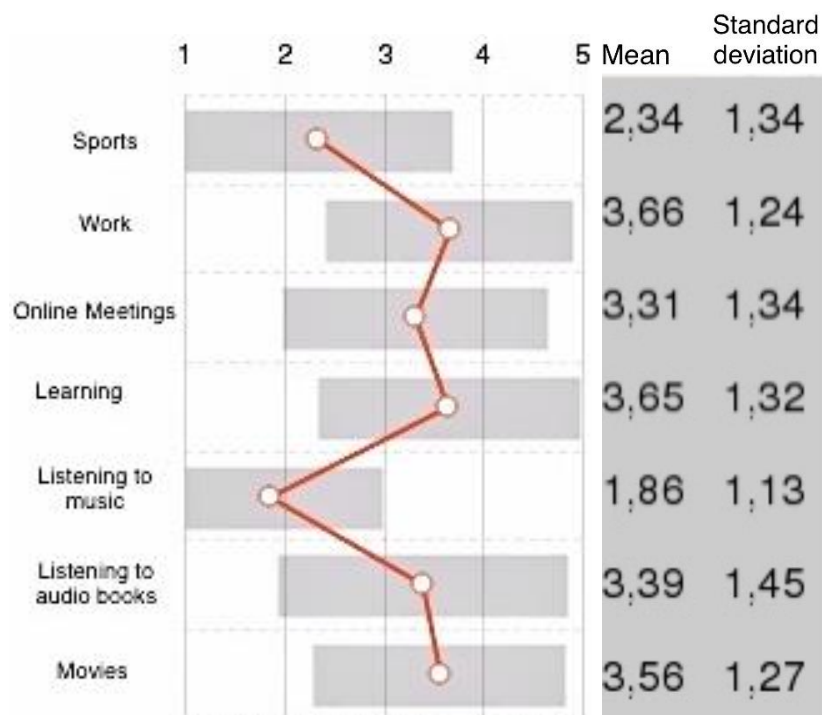
Figure 14: Purpose-oriented usage of wireless head- and earphones

Figure 14 shows the mean value of the answers which is presented by the red line and the standard deviation which is demonstrated by the grey scantling. With a mean of 1.86 most of the participants use wireless head- and earphones to listen to music, followed by doing sport.

4.3 Brands in the German wireless head-and earphone market

Question 7,8,9,10 and 11 of the survey broach the issue of brands in the German wireless head- and earphone market. For question 7,8,9 and 10 the participants were asked to agree or disagree to certain statements. For these questions, the Likert Scale was used in order to measure the results. However, people were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

The statement of question 7 was that wireless head- and earphones represent status. Hereby, 247 people stated their level of agreement. Following, figure 15 shows how the percentage distribution of all answers.
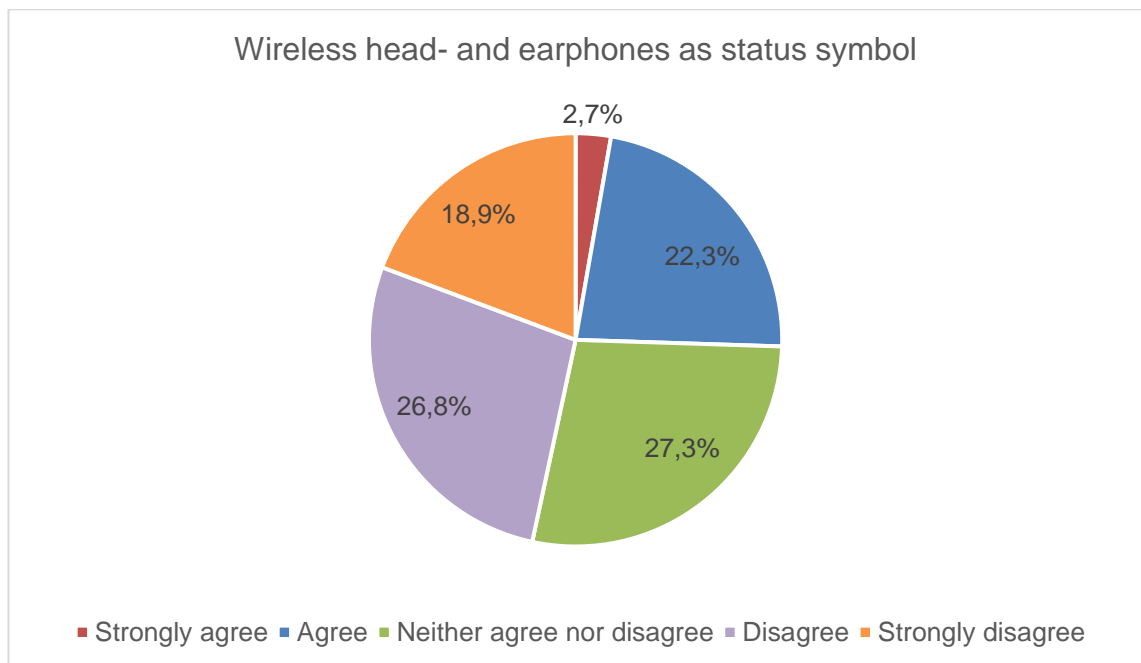
Figure 15: Wireless head- and earphones as status symbol

Figure 15 shows that 25% of all respondents strongly agree or agree to the statement and 45.7% disagree or strongly disagree. While 27.3% of the participants neither agree nor disagree, it becomes clear that the majority of the respondents do not confirm that wireless head- and earphones represent status.

To summarize, the majority of all participants disagreed with the statement. In particular, the age groups 18-20, 30-39, 40-50 and >50 contradicted the statement very clearly, since 0% in each group strongly agreed.

However, while comparing the level of agreement of the female and male sex, some major differences in attitudes were conspicuous. The gender distribution in answers for this question was 59.1% women, 40.5% men and 0.4% diverse. Below, figure 16 will illustrate the differences in opinions of women and men.
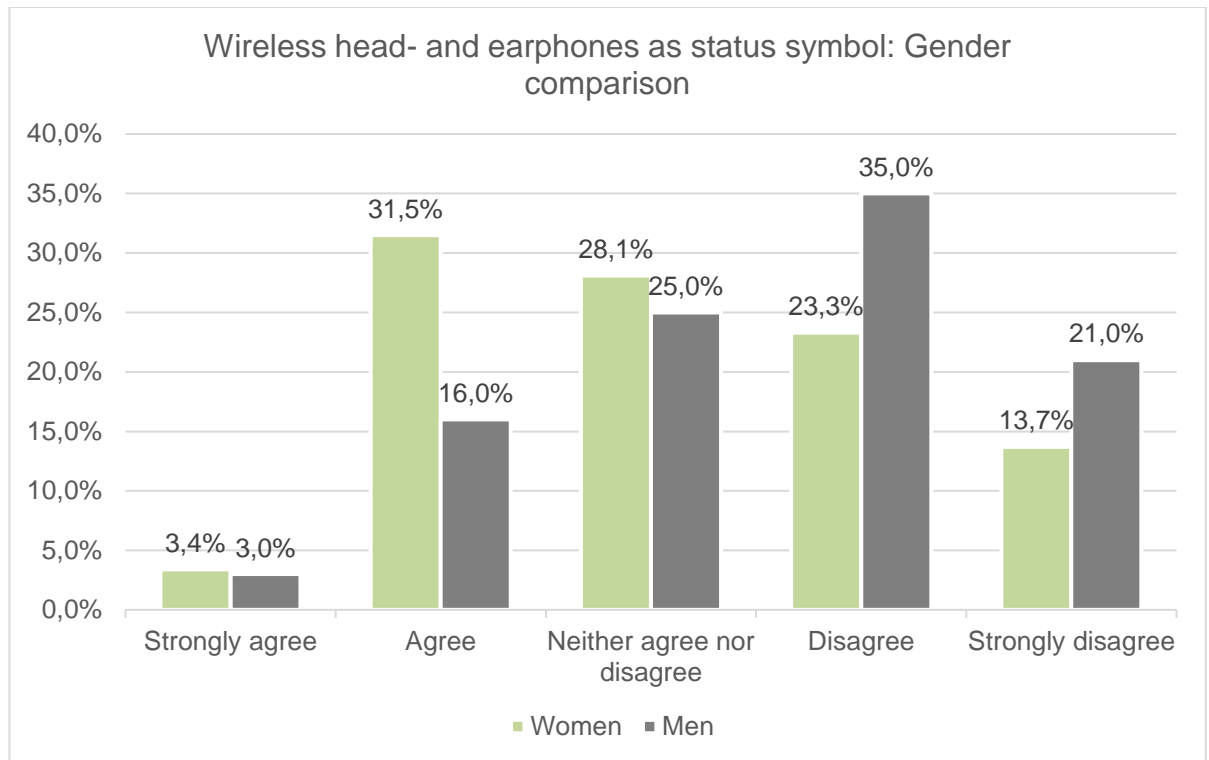
Figure 16: Wireless head- and earphones as status symbol: Gender comparison

While comparing the female and male gender, it becomes clear that women more likely see wireless hearables as a status symbol, whereas only 16% of all men agree. Another major difference in attitudes can be seen by the fact that most men disagreed while the biggest portion of female participants agreed or had a neutral opinion towards the statement. Moreover, 56% of all men disagreed or strongly disagreed to the predication that wireless head- and earphones are a status symbol, whereas only 37% of all women disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In the subsequent question, question 8, the participants were asked to agree or disagree to the statement that wireless head- and earphones represent lifestyle. Here, the number or replies amounts to 247 answers. Hence, figure 17 depicts the percental level of agreement of all respondents.

Wireless head- and earphones as lifestyle symbol

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
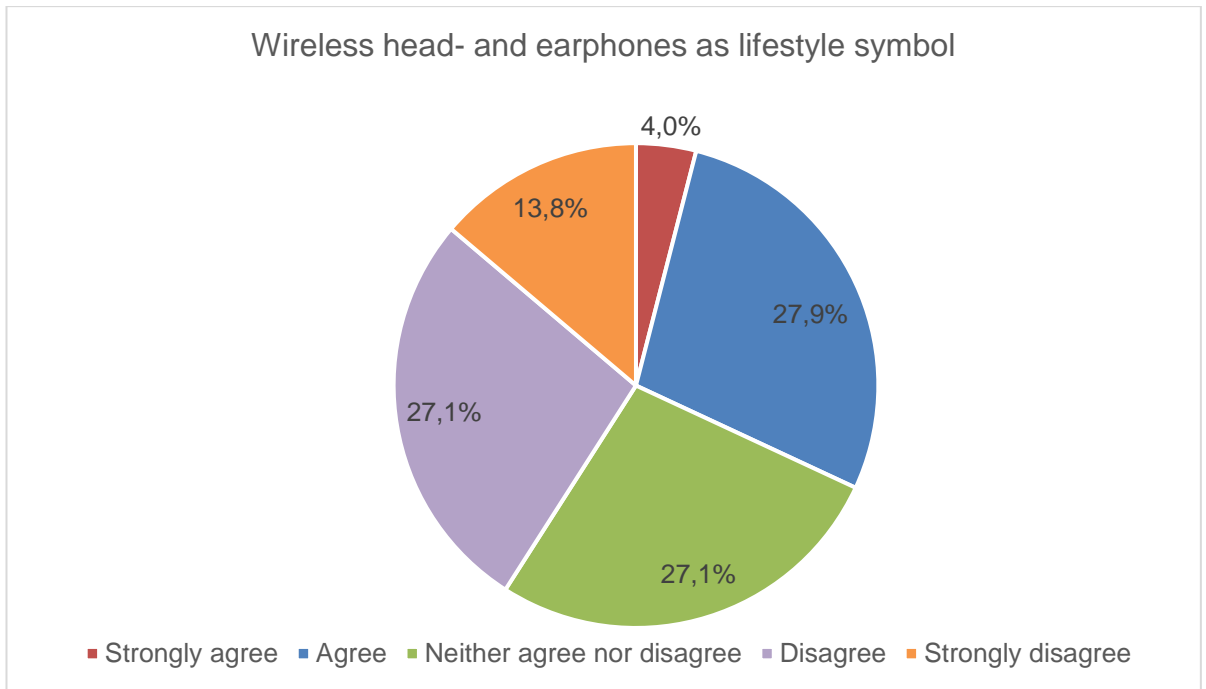
Figure 17: Wireless head- and earphones as lifestyle symbol

Figure 17 illustrates that the participants have a similar attitude towards wireless head- and earphones representing lifestyle compared to the previous statement about the status symbol. Moreover, looking at the gender, female participants also agreed more with this statement than men.

In conclusion, the majority of female participants see wireless hearables as a status and lifestyle symbol, whereas men do not consider the product as representative symbol.

However, when it comes to measuring the attractiveness of a well-known brand compared to an unknown brand, the answer is the same in all age groups. In question 9 of the survey, the participants were asked to agree or disagree to the statement that brands with a high brand recognition are more attractive than brands with a low brand recognition. 246 people answered this question and in the following figure 18 will show the level of agreement of all respondents.
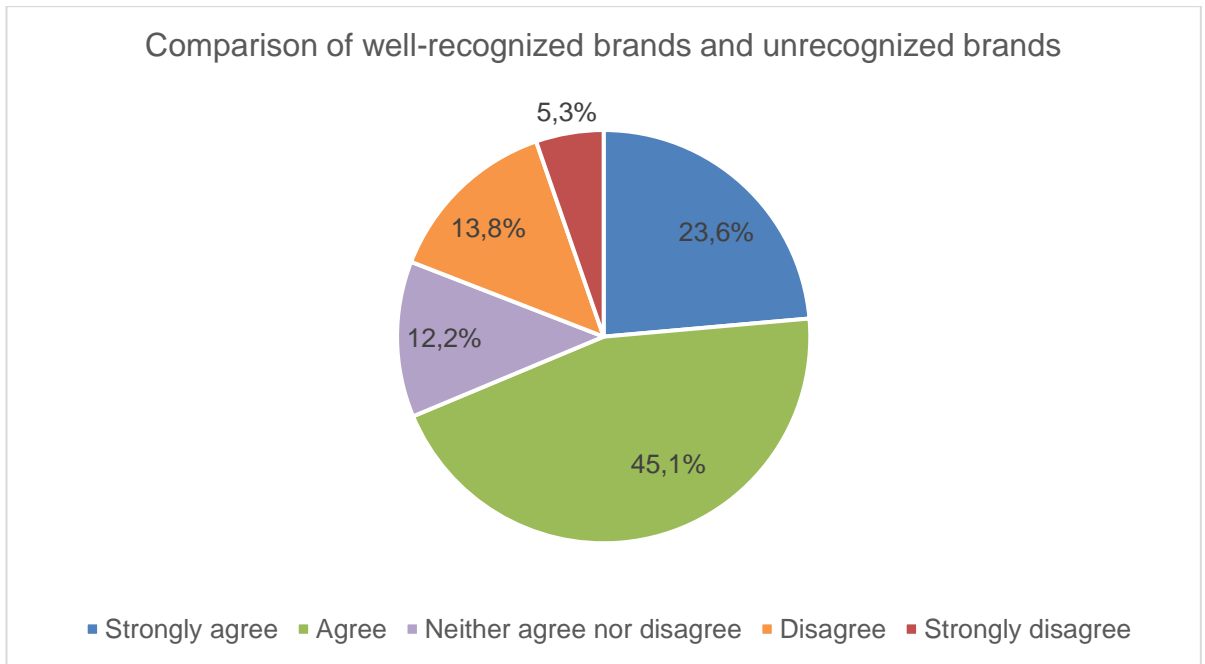
Figure 18: Comparison of well-recognized and unrecognized brands

This pie chart shows that 68.7% of all participants either strongly agreed or agreed that well-recognized brands are more attractive than unrecognized brands. Thereby, only 19.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement. Moreover, almost all age groups strongly agreed or agreed to at least 56%. However, there were small deviations in the age groups 25-29 and 40-50. Participants in the age of 25-29 strongly agreed or agreed with 45.5% to the proposition. Moreover, out of all age groups, this group had the biggest portion of neutral opinions. Furthermore, 0% in the age of 40-50 strongly agreed to the statement while 56.3% agreed. In addition, 40-50 years old participants disagreed or strongly disagreed the most, with 31.2%.

In conclusion, 68.7% of all participants would find well-recognized brands more attractive than unrecognized brands, whereby small deviations occurred in the age groups 25-29 and 40-50.

Similar results were obtained in question 10, in which participants were asked whether they would be willing to pay 20% more for a brand they know and trust, even though another brand offers the same product for less money. To this question 247 answers were given. Hence, figure 19 illustrates if the participants agreed or disagreed to the statement.
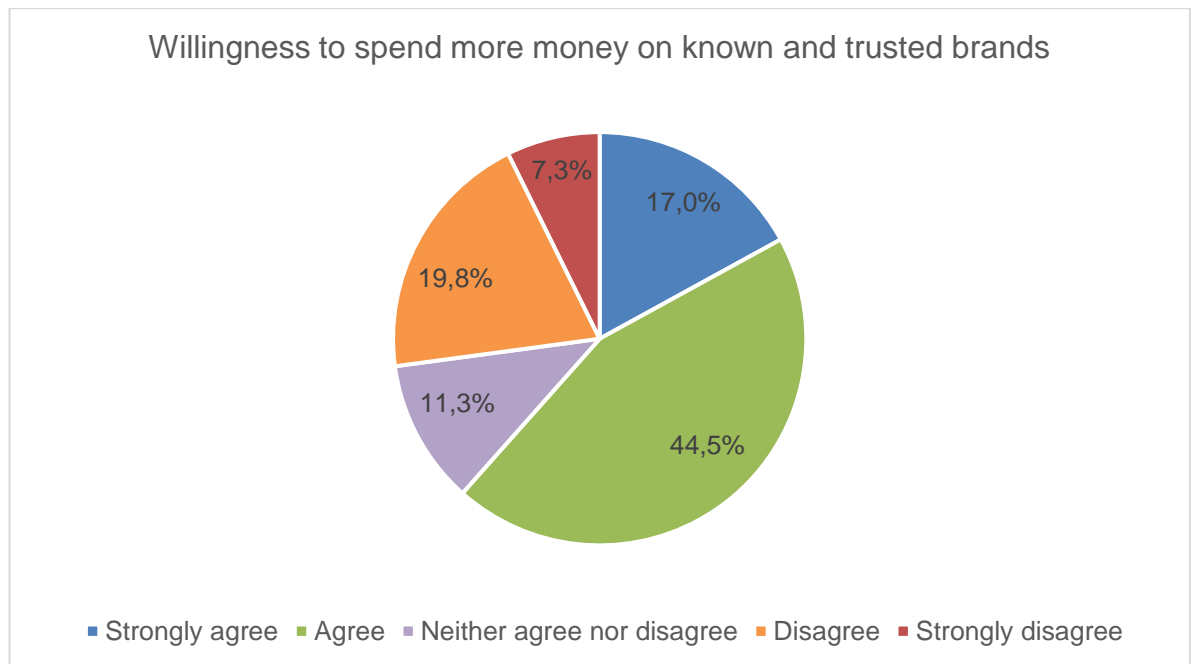
Figure 19: Willingness to spend more money on known and trusted brands

This graph shows that 61.5% of all participants would be willing to pay 20% more for a product from a brand they know and trust rather than from a brand they have no experience with. Considering the age, people aged 18 to 24 indicated were most in agreement with the statement. Both age groups, 18-20 and 21-24, together make 54.7% of all answers. 66.2% of this group strongly agreed or agreed to the statement. Moreover, there were clear differences of opinions between women and men. These differences are specified in figure 20.
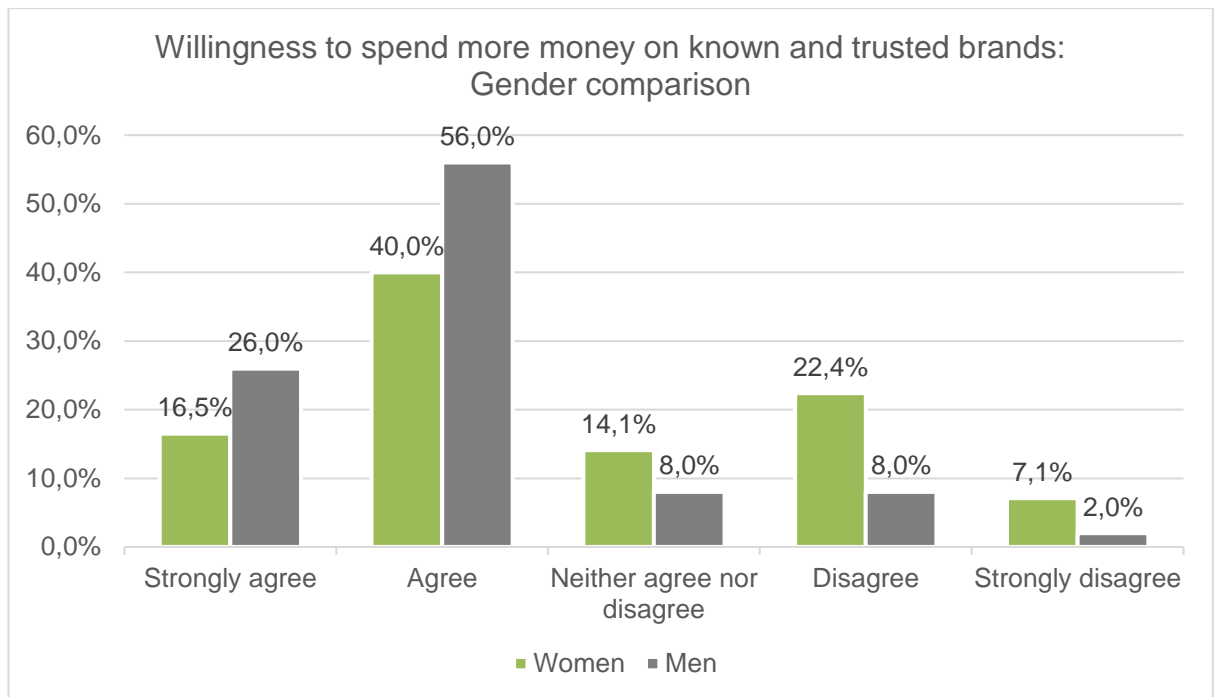
Figure 20: Willingness to spend more money on known and trusted brands: Gender comparison

In this graph it can be seen that the male participants in this particular age group agreed to the statement to 82% and only 10% disagreed. Even though the largest proportion of women in the age of 18-24 also agreed to the statement, 29.5% disagreed. In total, the majority of all participants agreed to the statement whereby men aged 18-24 are the most willing most to pay 20% more for a product from a brand they know and trust rather than buying a product from a brand they have no experience with.

The last question concerning brands in the wireless head- and earphone market dealt with the most recognized brands in this certain market. Participants were asked to name the one brand that immediately pops up into their minds. Further, question 11 was designed as an open-ended question and 233 answers were given.

Consumer´s brand recognition in the German wireless head- and earphone market

Brand	Value
Apple	70,4%
Bose	8,6%
Beats	5,2%
Sony	4,3%
JBL	3,4%
Samsung	2,1%
Sennheiser	1,7%
Others	4,3%
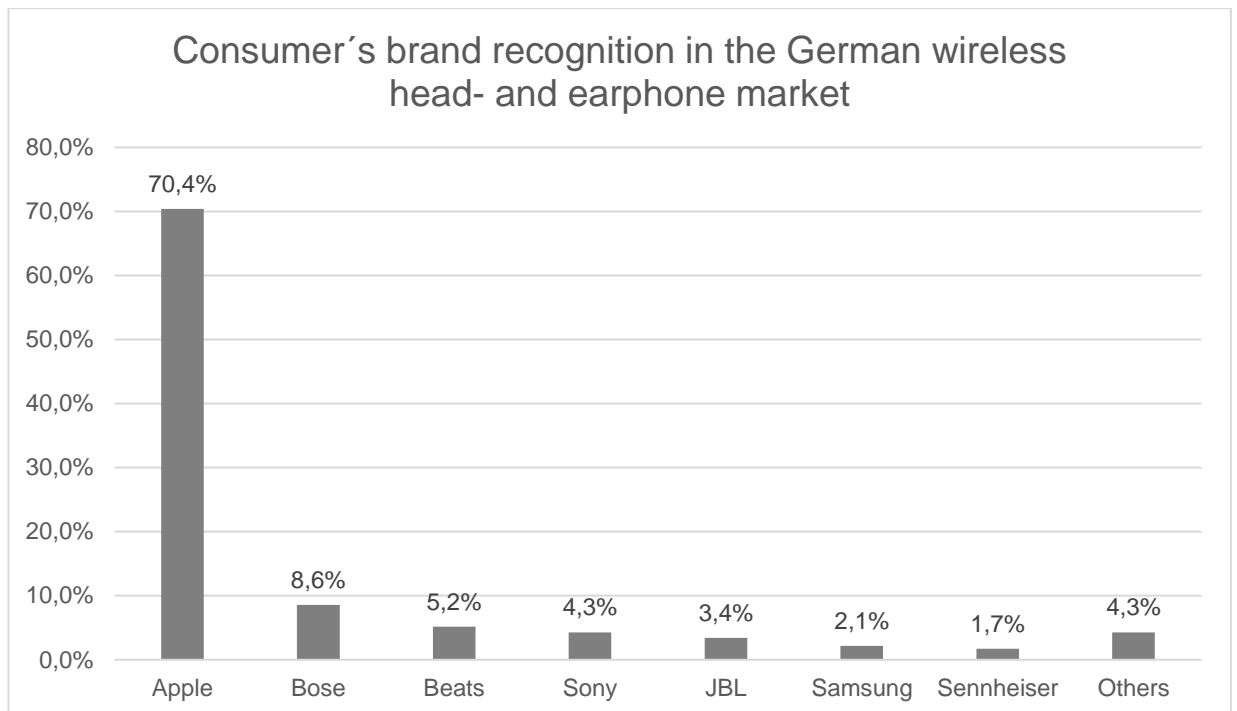
Figure 21: Consumer´s brand recognition in the German wireless head- and earphone market

This graph clearly shows that Apple is not only the most owned brand (figure 12) but also the most recognized one in Germany. With a 61.4% difference, Bose is the second most recognized brand. Other globally known brands such as Beats, Sony, JBL, Sennheiser or Samsung were also mentioned but only by a small number of participants. However, considering the age groups no significant data could be evaluated, since each brand was named by all age groups.

4.4 Decision-making and advertising in the German wireless head-and earphone market

The following part of the survey dealt with the issue of decision-making in the wireless head- and earphone market in Germany. Therefore, three major questions about the topic were asked with reference to research before making a purchase, pricing, and brand trust. Thereby, the same scale system was used as in question 7-10 and the participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement.

In Question 12, the participants were asked whether a detailed research before buying wireless head- and earphones is necessary and important or not. Further, 247 people answered this question and the results are illustrated in figure 22.

Question 12: a detailed research is important
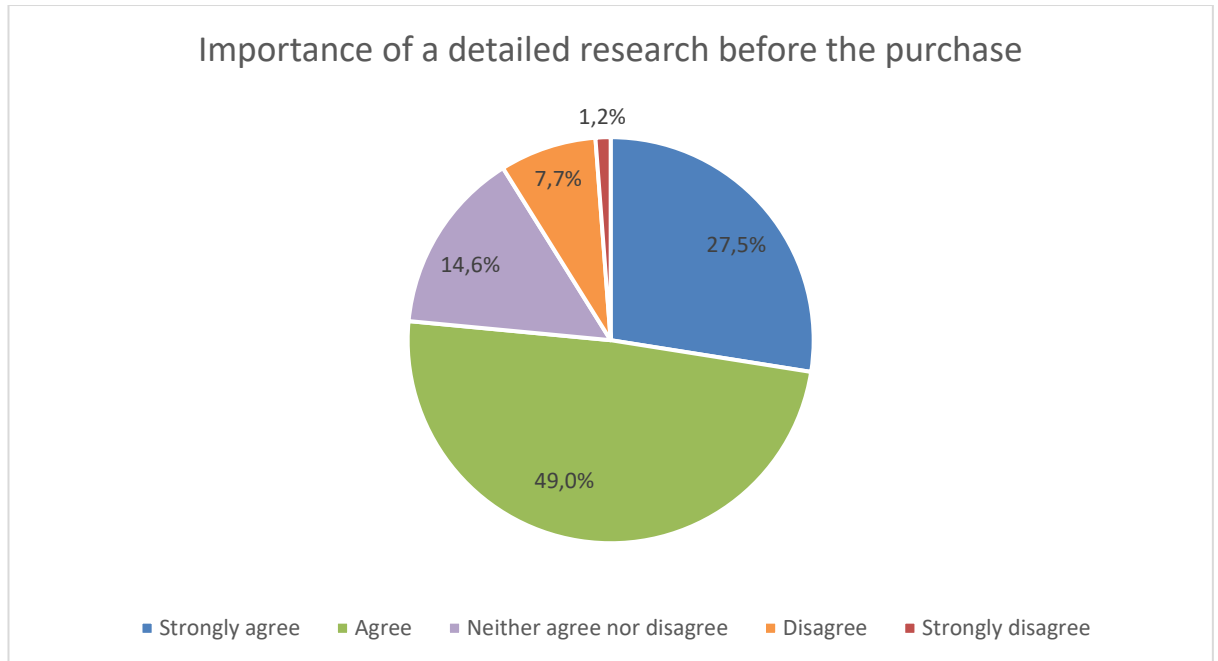
Figure 22: Importance of a detailed research before the purchase

The majority of all participants affirmed that a detailed research before purchasing wireless head- or earphones is necessary and important. Therefore, just 8.9% of see no need for a detailed research beforehand. People who disagree with the statement were aged <18, 19-24 and 39-48. Moreover, 31.8% were men and 68.2% women. Further, considering the gender, no significant data could be researched since there was only a small percental deviation in opinions.

Next, the participants should were asked to evaluate the importance of pricing in the decision-making process. Question 13 was answered by 247 people. However, in this question 0% of the participants strongly disagreed and only 6.9% disagreed. Thus, figure 23 will give a better overview of the results.
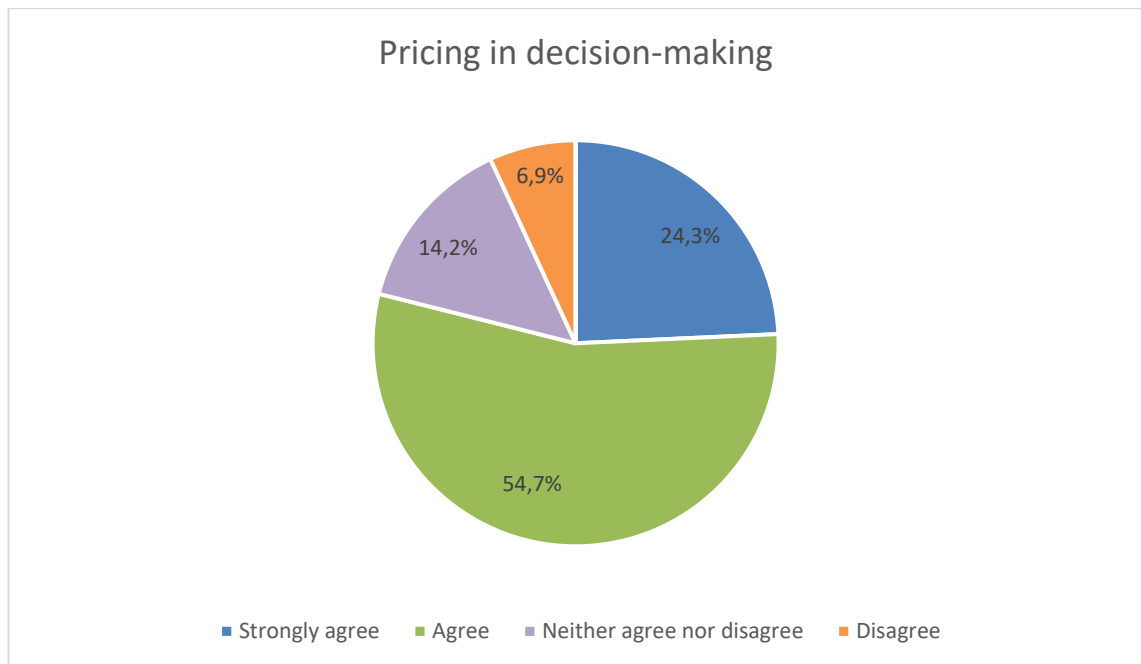
Figure 23: Pricing in decision-making

79% of the answers indicated that pricing plays a crucial role in decision-making when purchasing wireless head- or earphones. Moreover, 14.2% had a neutral opinion towards the statement and as already mentioned only a small number of participants disagreed. However, one noticeable fact about this particular group who do not see pricing as an important influencing factor in the decision-making process, is that the 71.6% actually own wireless head- or earphones and most likely the brand Apple. Furthermore, only about 32% of all respondents actually own wireless head- or earphones.

A roughly equal number of respondents agreed in question 14 to prefer purchasing wireless head- or earphones from a brand they know and trust. 74% of all 246 participants agreed that they prefer to buy wireless hearables from a familiar brand and 8.1% disagreed with the statement. However, also in this question no significant data considering the age groups or gender could be generated.

4.5   Advertising in the German wireless head- and earphone market

In this part of the survey, the participants were asked to look at four different advertising pictures. The author chose advertisements of companies Bose, Apple

and JBL since those are some of the most recognized brands globally. Moreover, one advertising picture of a rather unrecognized brand, Soundcore, was shown. In each picture true wireless hearables are advertised, which are headphones without any wire. In addition, in each ad either a female or male person is pictured actually wearing and using the product. The pictures are illustrated in Appendix 2. However, since the survey was conducted in German, the headings and the advertisements are in German. Hence, Bose and JBL both promote their products by focussing on the perfect fit while doing sports. Whereas Apple is underlining the product´s key features being wireless charging. Furthermore, Soundcore promotes the good sound quality of their product. Chapter 2.7.3 refers to the different kind of advertising strategies in more detail.

In order to evaluate the different advertising pictures, the participants were asked to rank the advertisements from 1-4 according to their attractiveness, with 1 being the highest score. 239 participants answered this question and hence, table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Ranking advertising pictures

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		Mean	Standard deviation
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±
Bose	28x	11,52	92x	37,86	87x	35,80	29x	11,93	7x	2,88	2,57	0,94
Apple	48x	19,75	64x	26,34	53x	21,81	40x	16,46	38x	15,64	2,82	1,35
JBL	12x	4,94	61x	25,10	98x	40,33	63x	25,93	9x	3,70	2,98	0,93
Soundcore	4x	1,65	24x	9,88	74x	30,45	108x	44,44	33x	13,58	3,58	0,90

Here it can be seen that Bose was voted to have the most attractive advertisement, followed by Apple as second, JBL as third and lastly Soundcore. Moreover, this table shows the mean value and standard deviation of each possible answer. In addition to this, this sign 'Σ' represents the number of participants who voted for one particular option. The author compared age groups and gender and thereby it could not be determined whether a certain age group or gender prefers one advertisement or brand. Gender, as well as age was distributed equally.

Based on this, question 16 determines how strongly the participants choices were influenced by factors like familiarity with the brand, positive experiences with the brand, attractiveness of the advertising picture, presentation of the product and key features of the product. Hereby, the Likert scale was used as in previous questions, with the headings very strongly influenced, strongly influenced, partly influenced, barely influenced, and not influenced at all. The results of this question are shown in further detail in table 2.

Table 2: Influencing factors on the pariticipants decision-making

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		Mean	Standard deviation
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø	±
Familiarity with the brand	32x	13,17	75x	30,86	78x	32,10	37x	15,23	21x	8,64	2,75	1,13
Positive experiences with...	41x	16,87	83x	34,16	61x	25,10	28x	11,52	30x	12,35	2,68	1,24
Attractiveness of the...	30x	12,40	72x	29,75	80x	33,06	38x	15,70	22x	9,09	2,79	1,13
Presentation of the product	37x	15,16	89x	36,48	71x	29,10	36x	14,75	11x	4,51	2,57	1,06
Key features of the product .	26x	10,74	89x	36,78	78x	32,23	37x	15,29	12x	4,96	2,67	1,02

Participants who rated Bose to have the best advertisment, indicated to be strongly influenced by the attractiveness of the advertisiment as well as by the presentation of the product. Moreover, the familiarty with the brand partly influenced the participants. Following, this people who ranked Apple first were influenced very strongly by positive experiences with the brand, whereas the presentation and key features of the product only partly influenced the respondents. The brand JBL was chosen as rank number one by only 13% of all participants. However, this portion chose this particular brand because of the strong influence of the attractiveness of the ad, as well as of the presentation and key features of the product. The 11% who rated Soundcore as their first choice had similar arguments. Here the most influencable factors were the key features of the product and presentation of the product.

As a last question, participants were asked which brand they would most likely buy based on the advertising pictures. Thereby the Likert Scale was adapted to:

1 – under any circumstances

2 – Very likely

3 – Maybe

4 – Not likely

5 – under no circumstances

Table 3: Purchasing decision based on advertisments

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%	Ø
Bose	28x	11,52	92x	37,86	87x	35,80	29x	11,93	7x	2,88	2,57
Apple	48x	19,75	64x	26,34	53x	21,81	40x	16,46	38x	15,64	2,82
JBL	12x	4,94	61x	25,10	98x	40,33	63x	25,93	9x	3,70	2,98
Soundcore	4x	1,65	24x	9,88	74x	30,45	108x	44,44	33x	13,58	3,58

Table 3 illustrates that 19.8% of all people would buy the Apple wireless hearables under any circumstances, whereas only 11.5% would buy the Bose headphones even though most people rated Bose to have the best advertisement. However, looking at the mean of the values, with a mean of 2.57 Bose would be the brand which would most likely be purchased. Whereby Apple got a very similar value of 2.82 and therefore would be the second most purchased brand. As a third choice, JBL would be purchased by a mean of 2.98. Compared to those three brands, Soundcore is the least likely to be purchased since it received a mean of 3.58. Moreover with regards to question four, 75% out of the people who would buy Apple under any circumstances, also indicated Apple to actually own wireless hearbales of this brand. Whereas only 21% of participants who would buy Bose under any circumstances, own Bose headphones. However, one research finding was suprisingly, 9.8% of people who would very likely buy a Bose product own Bose wireless hearables, whereas 31.4% of these people own wireless head- or earphones of Apple.

However, while analysing the data, the author was not able to find a significant difference considering age or gender.

To summarize, in all three assessment steps, Bose and Apple have a neck-to-neck race, in which Bose wins by a narrow margin. Compared to those two brands, JBLs advertisement is perceived in a slightly more positive way, whereas the rather unknown brand Soundcore could only convince some participants to a small extent.

5   Conclusion

5.1   Research findings

The main goal of this thesis was to find out which role brands and advertising play in the purchasing and consumption process. Therefore, the study aimed to get a broader understanding of how consumers think, how brands can get into people´s mind and how companies create and sell brands the customer is willing to pay for. Assuming that the author picked decision-making, brand management and advertising to be the central themes.

The essence, in order to have a successful and memorable brand in today´s business world, is to consider any component of brand management. However, brand loyalty and brand personality are the most important factors when it comes to building a subconscious connection with a customer (Pradeep, 2010, p. 125). If a brand is capable of building such a connection in the subconscious mind, the brand attaches the consumer´s feelings and emotions and finally makes the customer loyal towards the brand. Furthermore, brand loyalty and brand personality support a positive perception of the brand and therefore are crucial for a brands success. Moreover, effective advertising strategies can support a positive association with the brand. Hereby, advertising has the main purpose to communicate offers by companies to potential customers (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, p. 178). Further, these customers are even more touchable through digitalization and the development of new technologies in the media sector. Thereby, new communication funnels to spread advertising messages were

created (Hoffmann and Akbar, 2016, pp. 179–180). Today, 50.8% of the world population are active social media users and due to this social media marketing and influencer advertising gain in importance (Clement, 2020).

Ultimately, all these factors, like emotions, brand personality, advertising channels or strategies, play a significant role in the decision-making process. In fact, starting with brand management, followed by the strategy of how a brand is advertised and presented to the world, the main goal is always to influence a consumer´s decision-making. In addition to this, the self-concept and lifestyle of a consumer are strongly influencing decision-making since it refers to inner values, thoughts and condition of a person (Hoyer, 2012, p. 401; Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2015, p. 27). Consequently, it helps marketers to create a psychological profile of their customers and therefore directly influences the decision-making (Kenton, 2020). Moreover, it is differentiated between low- and high-involvement decision-making. On the one hand, people are less involved in a purchasing-decision, for instance, if the product is a routine product. On the other hand, consumers are highly involved in decision-making, if a product is rarely purchased or rather expensive (Solomon, 2013, p. 568). This statement also applies to the empirical part of the study.

Considering the empirical study of this thesis, the respondent group does not present the whole German population. Even though German consumers of each age group participated in the survey, almost half of the respondent group was in the age of 21-24 (41% of all respondents). In addition, only 13% of participants were aged between 30 and 50 years. Therefore, based on the survey sample, no general conlcusions about all German consumers could be made. Moreover, since the questionnaire was distributed through social media and not all Germans are actively using social media, equal opportunities for participation could not be guaranteed for this research. Hence, the participants affected the survey results negatively, by not being transferable to the whole German population.

The empirical study proved that purchasing wireless head- and earphones includes a high-involvement decision-making process. As mentioned earlier in 4.4, the majority of all participants agreed that detailed research is necessary and

important before purchasing wireless hearables (see figure 22). Moreover, they also indicated that pricing plays a crucial role when making purchase decisions (see figure 23). This becomes even more clear by the fact that 0% of the participants strongly disagreed to the statement. However, only 32% of participants who agreed with this statement actually own wireless head- or earphones. When taking ownership of wireless hearables into consideration, the study gave surprising results.

According to Lee, 2019, the global wireless head-and earphone market value is estimated at 129 million US-Dollars and is expected to grow to 27 billion US-Dollars by 2021. As a result of this, it can be said that the global market for wireless hearables is already huge and will continue to grow even more rapidly. However, according to the evaluated data of the survey, the global market may be big already, but only 59.4% of German consumers who participated in the survey, own wireless head- or earphones. Thereby, the largest proportion of owners was found in the younger age groups, being <18, 18-20 and 21-24, whereby it was determined, that 82.1% of all under 18 years old participants, own wireless head- or earphones. Additionally, it was noted that the majority of this particular age group owns wireless hearables of the brand Apple.

Furthermore, the study confirmed Apple to not only be the global leader in the wireless head- and earphone market, but also to be the participants preferred choice of earphone brand (Lee, 2019). Hence, 74% of all participants prefer buying a wireless head- or earphone brand they have had experience with (see chapter 4.4). Since Apple is also one of the leaders in the global smartphone market, it could be assumed that people prefer buying wireless hearables from Apple because of the familiarity and good experiences (IDC, 2020). Moreover, the majority of participants is willing to pay 20% more money for a brand they know and trust which leads to the conclusion, that the results of the survey support the statement that brand image and brand loyalty are both being very important and essential for a company´s success.

Considering the advertising aspect of the study, the participants were asked to rate similar advertising pictures of the brands Bose, Apple, JBL and Soundcore,

in part 4.5 of this thesis. According to the results, which are illustrated in figure 21, Apple is the most recognized brand, Bose 2nd, JBL 5th and Soundcore was only mentioned once (see chapter 4.3). Thereby Soundcore can be defined as a rather unknown brand. When people were asked to rate the advertising Bose and Apple were rated best, closely followed by JBL, with Soundcore being rated, by far the least attractive. A reason for this could be either a missing emotional accessible branding strategy or a lack of presence in media. However, the main challenge for marketers is to get into consumer´s subconscious mind (Pradeep, 2010, p. 125; Brandtrust, 2018). All three well-known brands are being advertised widely through various media channels and therefore are more present in the minds of consumers in the wireless head- and earphone market.

Further, the theoretical framework and the empirical study prove the hypothesis, that the willingness of consumers to buy branded products rather than products from an unknown brand is being influenced by brand management and its components as well as by various advertising strategies.

5.2 Future outlook

In the future, it will become more and more important for marketers to track and measure the purchasing and consumption behaviour of consumers as the technology and the market environment are continuously evolving and changing of an incredible speed (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018, p. 422).

Moreover, as advertising develops from print to broadcast to social media and mobile advertising, the traditional ways of communication will be used less in future. In the digital age, companies will exclusively communicate with their customers through digital advertising platforms but especially through social media channels (Heun, 2017, pp. 5–13). However, the core for this is an emotional accessible branding strategy (Pradeep, 2010, p. 125). Therefore, companies need to invest more in the development of an efficient brand management in order to keep pace with the rapidly developing market. Furthermore, people want to be made to feel special and want to be distinguished from others, people want to be exclusive and thereby brands will need to develop

even more personal and emotionally attaching branding strategies (Millman, 2013, p. 136).

As Lee, 2019, suggests, there will be a general increase in sales of wireless head- and earphones globally. However, in order to increase sales in the German wireless head- and earphone market, more effective and emotionally attaching marketing campaigns are required. At the moment the market share in Germany is very small compared to the international market for wireless head- and earphones. Therefore, marketers will have to focus on advertising strategies that make it possible to get into the subconscious mind of the German consumer and therefore increase the market size for wireless hearables in Germany. However, within the scope of this thesis, the data was analysed descripitively. Furthermore, if head- and earphone manufacturers want to get a broader understanding of the behaviour of their consumers, an in-depth statistical analysis of the purchasing and consumption behaviour is required. This will give further results of how the subconscious mind of consumers can be accessed.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire original version

Umfrage zum kabellosen Kopfhörer-Markt in Deutschland 0 %

Liebe/r Teilnehmer/in,

Im Rahmen meiner Bachelor-Abschlussarbeit führe ich eine Studie im Markt für kabellose Kopfhörer in Deutschland durch. Meine Arbeit untersucht die Einflüsse von Marken und Werbung auf das Konsumentenverhalten. Dabei liegt der Fokus auf dem Entscheidungsprozess und warum Kunden bestimmte Marken anderen gegenüber bevorzugen.
Da der Markt für kabellose Kopfhörer in Deutschland noch nicht vollständig untersucht wurde, möchte ich Sie darum bitten, durch das Teilnehmen an dieser Umfrage, dabei zu helfen weitere Erkenntnisse über diesen Markt zu erlangen.

Ich bedanke mich für Ihre Teilnahme,
Muriel Glutting

[Weiter]

Umfrage zum kabellosen Kopfhörer-Markt in Deutschland 17 %

Fragen zur allgemeinen Lebenssituation

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Alter an *

[Bitte wählen... v]

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Geschlecht an *

[Bitte wählen... v]

[Zurück] [Weiter]

74

Fragen zu kabellosen Kopfhörern

Besitzen Sie kabellose Kopfhörer?

◯ ja

◯ nein

Wenn ja, welche Marke?

Falls Sie keine kabellosen Kopfhörer besitzen, können Sie diese Frage überspringen.

[   ]

Wann haben Sie erstmals kabellose Kopfhörer erworben?

Falls Sie keine kabellosen Kopfhörer besitzen, können Sie diese Frage überspringen.

[Bitte wählen... ⌄]

Für welchen Zweck verwenden Sie kabellose Kopfhörer am häufigsten?

Sie besitzen keine kabellosen Kopfhörer:
Welche Aussage würden Sie treffen, wenn Sie Besitzer eines kabellosen Kopfhörer wären?

	Sehr häufig	Häufig	Manchmal	Fast nie	Niemals
Sport	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Arbeit	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online-Konferenzen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lernen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Musik hören	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Hörbücher	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Filme	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

[Zurück] [Weiter]

75

Marken im kabellosen Kopfhörer-Markt

Bitte geben Sie an, ob Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht.

Kabellose Kopfhörer repräsentieren Status.

- ◯ Stimme voll und ganz zu
- ◯ Stimme zu
- ◯ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab
- ◯ Stimme nicht zu
- ◯ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Kabellose Kopfhörer repräsentieren Lebensstil.

- ◯ Stimme voll und ganz zu
- ◯ Stimme zu
- ◯ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab
- ◯ Stimme nicht zu
- ◯ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Hersteller mit hoher Markenwiedererkennung sind ansprechender als Hersteller mit geringer Markenwiedererkennung.

- ◯ Stimme voll und ganz zu
- ◯ Stimme zu
- ◯ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab
- ◯ Stimme nicht zu
- ◯ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Ich wäre dazu bereit 20% oder noch mehr, für eine Marke zu zahlen, die ich kenne und der ich vertraue, obwohl andere Marken ähnliche Produkte für weniger Geld anbieten.

- ◯ Stimme voll und ganz zu
- ◯ Stimme zu
- ◯ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab
- ◯ Stimme nicht zu
- ◯ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Wenn Sie an eine Marke denken, die kabellose Kopfhörer produziert, welche Marke fällt Ihnen zuerst ein?

[ ]

Zurück   Weiter

Entscheidungsprozess

Bitte geben Sie an, ob Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht.

Beim Erwerb von kabellosen Kopfhörern ist eine detaillierte Recherche vor dem Kauf sehr wichtig und notwendig.

○ Stimme voll und ganz zu

○ Stimme zu

○ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab

○ Stimme nicht zu

○ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Der Preis des Produkts spielt eine wichtige Rolle im Entscheidungsprozess.

○ Stimme voll und ganz zu

○ Stimme zu

○ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab

○ Stimme nicht zu

○ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Ich bevorzuge kabellose Kopfhörer einer Marke, die ich kenne und der ich vertraue.

○ Stimme voll und ganz zu

○ Stimme zu

○ Stimme weder zu noch lehne ab

○ Stimme nicht zu

○ Stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Zurück   Weiter

Werbung im kabellosen Kopfhörer-Markt

Bitte schauen Sie sich die folgenden Werbungen genau an.

Bose

Quelle: www.bose.de

Apple

Quelle: https://www.macwelt.de/news/Airpods-Werbung-sorgt-fuer-Unmut-10621874.html

JBL

Soundcore

Wie haben die Werbungen auf Sie gewirkt?
Bitte ordnen Sie die Werbungen nach Attraktivität in einer Reihenfolge von 1-4 an.

1 = sehr gut
4 = ausreichend

‡ [∨] Bose

‡ [∨] Apple

‡ [∨] JBL

‡ [∨] Soundcore

Wie stark haben die folgenden Faktoren Ihre Wahl beeinflusst?

	Sehr stark beeinflusst	Stark beeinflusst	Etwas beeinflusst	Kaum beeinflusst	Überhaupt nicht beeinflusst
Vertrautheit mit der Marke	○	○	○	○	○
Positive Erfahrungen mit der Marke	○	○	○	○	○
Reiz der Werbung	○	○	○	○	○
Präsentation des Produkts	○	○	○	○	○
Hauptmerkmale des Produkts	○	○	○	○	○

Basierend auf den oben gezeigten Werbungen, welche Marke würden Sie am ehesten kaufen?

	Ganz sicher	Ziemlich wahrscheinlich	Vielleicht	Wahrscheinlich nicht	Keinesfalls
Bose	○	○	○	○	○
Apple	○	○	○	○	○
JBL	○	○	○	○	○
Soundcore	○	○	○	○	○

[Zurück] [Fertig]

Appendix 2: Questionnaire translated version

Survey in the German wireless head- and earphone market

Page 1

Dear participant,

As part of my bachelor thesis I am conducting a study in the German wireless head- and earphone market. The study investigated the influences of brands and advertising on consumer´s purchasing and consumption behaviour. Moreover, the focus lies on the decision-making process and why consumers prefer certain brands over others. Since the market is not fully researched yet, I would like to ask you to participate in this survey in order to help in gaining further insights into this market.

Thank you for your participation.

Muriel Glutting

Questions concerning the life situation

1. Please indicate your age

-_____

2. Please indicate you gender

- female

- male

- divers

Questions about wireless head- and earphones

3. Do you own wireless head- or earphones?

- yes

- no

4. If yes, which brand do you own?

- _____

5. When did you first purchase wireless head- or earphones?

- 2010

- 2011

- 2012

- 2013

- 2014

- 2015

- 2016

- 2017

- 2018

- 2019

- 2020

6. For which purpose do you use wireless head- and earphones the most?

If you do not own wireless head- or earphones: What would you answer if you owned wireless head- or earphones?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Sports	O	O	O	O	O
Work	O	O	O	O	O
Online-meetings	O	O	O	O	O
Listening to music	O	O	O	O	O
Listening to audio books	O	O	O	O	O
Watching movies	O	O	O	O	O

Questions concerning the wireless head- and earphone market

Please indicate to what extend you agree or disagree to the following statements.

7. Wireless head- and earphones represent status.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

8. Wireless head- and earphones represent lifestyle.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

9. Brands with a high brand recognition are more attractive than brand with a low brand recognition.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

10. I would pay 20% more for a product from a brand I know and trust, although a competing firm offers a similar product for a smaller amount of money.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

11. If you think of wireless head- and earphones, which is the first brand that comes into your mind?

- _____

Question concerning the decision-making process

Please indicate to what extend you agree or disagree with the following statements.

12. When purchasing wireless head- or earphones a detailed research is important and necessary.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

13. The price of wireless head- and earphones plays a crucial role in the decision-making process.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

14. I prefer to buy a brand I know and trust rather than a brand I have no experience with.

- Strongly agree

- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Advertisements in the wireless head- and earphone industry

Please look at the following pictures very detailed.
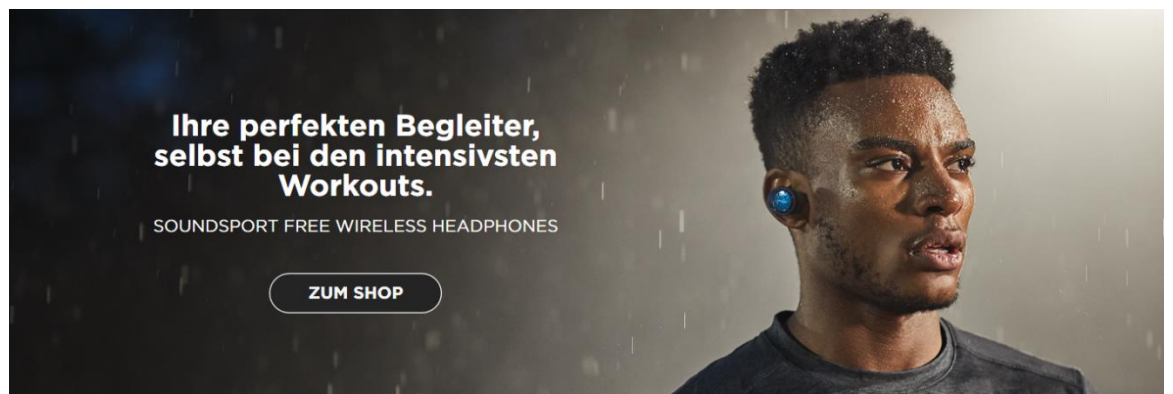
Source: www.bose.de

Source: https://www.macwelt.de/news/Airpods-Werbung-sorgt-fuer-Unmut-10621874.html
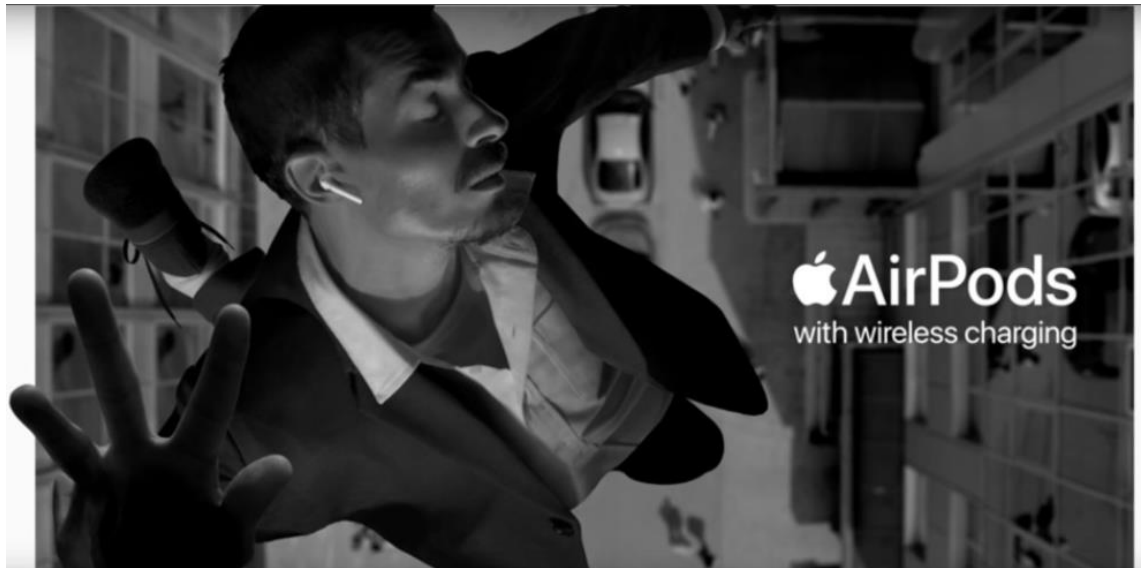
Source :

https://www.google.de/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.co.uk
%2FJBL-Reflect-Flow-Sport-Ear-
Black%2Fdp%2FB07N9G52SW&psig=AOvVaw05xwFYXjpjLPghnoW9YDk
D&ust=1598879493137000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwo
TCODfrbWAw-sCFQAAAAdAAAAABAQ

Source :

https://www.google.de/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.de%2
FSoundcore-Ger%25C3%25A4uschisolierung-kristallklares-Akkulaufzeit-
Wasserschutzklasse-
Schwarz%2Fdp%2FB07SJR6HL3&psig=AOvVaw347MzxeJ_ibdSIIJEZ5Gi
V&ust=1598879323677000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAMQjB1qFwo
TCJjDzOv_wusCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD

What do you think about the advertisements?

15. Please rank the advertisement in an order from 1-4 according to their attractiveness.

- Bose

- Apple

- JBL

- Soundcore

16. How strongly did the following factors influence your choice?

1 – very strongly influenced

2 – strongly influenced

3 – partly influenced

4 – barely influenced

5 – not influenced at all

	1	2	3	4	5
Familiarity with the brand	O	O	O	O	O
Positive experiences with the brand	O	O	O	O	O
Attractiveness of the advertising	O	O	O	O	O
Presentation of the product	O	O	O	O	O
Key features of the product	O	O	O	O	O
Watching movies	O	O	O	O	O

17. Based on the shown advertisements, which brand would you most likely buy?

1 – under any circumstances

2 – Very likely

3 – Maybe

4 – Not likely

5 – under no circumstances

	1	2	3	4	5
Bose	○	○	○	○	○
Apple	○	○	○	○	○
JBL	○	○	○	○	○
Soundcore	○	○	○	○	○

Declaration of Originality

I affirm that I have authored the bachelor thesis myself and on my own and that I have not used any means of aid other than those means of aid which have been quoted. Neither this paper nor another paper with the same or a simliar subject has been previously submitted to another authority or at any other place.

The docent in charge receives the paper also in an electronic form which facilitates a check for plagiarism. I consent to such check of my paper also by means of plagiarism-software. I am aware of the fact that in the course of the checking process the contents of the paper may be possibly added to the plagiarism-software.

M. Glutting

St.Ingbert, October 26, 2020