HAAGA-HELIA
University of Applied Sciences

The effect of local spokespersons on brand image

Laura Myllykoski

International Business

Author or authors	**2009**
Laura Myllykoski	

Title of report	**Number of pages and appendices**
The effect of local spokespersons on brand image	47 + 3

Teacher/s or supervisor/s
Marika Nikkinen

This study was inspired by the current situation of Garnier Nutrissé brand which's marketing strategy for years has been to use local spokespersons to represent brands. However due to the recent organizational changes at L'Oréal it has been questioned whether localization is really necessary for the brand success.

In order to find out if keeping the local spokespersons are still worthy, L'Oréal Finland wanted to uncover if a brand identity that is represented by a local spokesperson matches the brand image in the perspectives of trustworthiness and approachability. If the two would match in the scope of the target group, the brand strategy would still be worth implementing for.

Based on theoretical framework about brand identity and brand image a market research questionnaire was constructed to get insight to consumers' perceptions about the localization strategy used in marketing. The target group for the market research on the wish of L'Oréal Finland Oy was women aged 16-60 who dye their hair at home. The respondents were recruited in social media.

The market research for this study was implemented during November-December 2011 and partly in January 2012. The quantitative data received was coded into charts to visualize how consumers are divided in their different opinions and perceptions. Age distribution calculations were done along with nearly all questions.

The results showed that approximately half of Finnish women are auspicious for marketing and advertising that utilizes local spokespersons. The half that is not really favouring local spokespersons suggests there is room for improvement on the trustworthiness and approachability perspectives. The study also proved that half of the people associate spokespersons easily to brands even out of context, which affects the brand awareness. Age distribution calculations disclosed there is no specific age group that is more auspicious than others for using local spokespersons.

Keywords
brand identity, brand image, brand equity, brand spokesperson

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1 Introduction

More and more people dye their hair at home these days and the competition in the field of hair colours is getting tougher by the minute. New formulas are created, shorter reaction times are possible and colours that treat your hair while dyeing are now reality. Still, the most popular hair colour in Finland is one that has not had drastic changes in its formula, appearance nor reaction time in years– Garnier Nutrissé Cream.

Nutrissé Cream is the only hair colour brand on the Finnish consumer market that has a Finnish spokesperson, astrologist and ex-athlete Satu Ruotsalainen. The success of Nutrissé Cream hair colours started only after Satu started as the spokesperson so the natural conclusion was that she has a positive impact on consumers' buying decision. Is the use of a local front man really the secret of this particular hair colour's success?

1.1 Inspiration for the study

Because of organizational changes at L'Oréal and the management merger of all Nordic L'Oréals, Finland is now in danger to lose its spokesperson for a greater good. Sharing an international spokesperson would definitely lower the costs but it would give up on a marketing strategy that has been in use for years. There's no guarantee that an international spokesperson would serve the purpose in Finland and it would change the status of Nutrissé Cream's differentiation.

Because of the current unstable situation L'Oréal Finland wanted to untangle whether using the local spokesperson is actually even a strategy worth implementing for anymore. This study is executed on behalf of L'Oréal Finland. In order to solve the dilemma, a consumer's insight was necessary to find out if in general the brand identity that the company is looking for with the use of local spokespersons really matches the image that consumers get.

1.2 Study objectives and research questions

This study is focused on examining what consumers think about the use of local spokespersons – do they really still serve their purpose or has this strategy seen its best days? The main

objective is to examine in general whether the identity that the company has been after with the use of a local spokesperson in marketing matches the brand image that consumers really have. Another objective is to examine if there is a special age group that is really auspicious for this kind of a marketing strategy.

The research questions for this study are:

Does the brand identity created with the help of a local spokesperson match the brand image consumers get?

Is there a specific age group that is more favourable for marketing strategies that utilize local front men?

To support the main research questions, there are also some sub-questions:

Do Finnish consumers commit that Finnish products in general are better than foreign products?

Do Finnish consumers prefer foreign products that use localization strategy in their marketing as opposed to no localization strategy at all?

Does it affect in Finnish consumers' buying decisions in any way if a product has a local spokesperson?

Does a local spokesperson raise brand awareness?

1.3   Structure of the study

The study will start with an introduction to the case company in chapter two. The case company introduction includes all relevant information about the applicant company, L'Oréal Finland and also all requisite information about the brand involved, Granier Nutrissé Cream. Chapter three will present the constitutive theories for this study, starting with brand identity and leading to brand image. After chapter three, follows the empirical part in chapter four. The empirical part presents and justifies the chosen research methodology as well as introduc-

es the reader with the process of recruiting respondents for this study. Findings of the research are presented at the very end of chapter four along with the discussion of the reliability and validity of the research and its results. The conclusions drawn from the findings are presented in the final chapter, chapter five. The final chapter will also give some recommendations for the case company and suggestions for further studies. The evaluation of the study is criticized at the end of the final chapter.

1.4   Definitions of relevant concepts

The following concepts are the most relevant abstracts for this study. The concepts are defined here in order to provide the reader with understanding of the terms and in that way support the reader's digestion of the whole study.

Brand

Brand is more than just a name or a logo and people usually interpret the word 'brand' much more concisely than it actually is. The word 'brand' appears in the study constantly and in order to follow the study it is important for the reader to understand the complete meaning of the term.

According to Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2008, 2) a brand can be defined as a certain kind of reputation, prominence or awareness in the marketplace in order to differentiate goods and services from others alike as opposed to just being a symbol, design, term, name, or a combination of them intended to identify the seller. Armstrong and Kotler (2007, 208) add that the brand is considered as an important part of the product and branding itself can add value to a product.

Brand identity

There are many different ways to define brand identity. However, the most important thing is to keep in mind that brand identity serves the brand quite similarly as a person's identity.

Aaker (1996, 68) defines brand identity as a unique set of associations that the organization wants to generate or maintain. These associations in fact represent everything that the brand

stands for and it should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving different kind of benefits.

Brand image

If we consider brand identity as something that a company creates for the brand, then brand image is how people see the creation. Unlike brand identity, brand image is more passive and tends to look into the past.

According to Peter and Olson (2005, 47-48) "a brand image includes knowledge and beliefs about brand attributes, the consequences of brand use, and appropriate consumption situations." In addition to moulting the brand image according to the attributes of the brand, the image can also be based on the consumer's own expectations, experiences and feelings.

Brand equity

Brand equity relates to the value of the brand. Equity is an intangible asset for the brand and it can be measured in many perspectives. Brand management should focus on building brand equity.

Brand equity is a set of assets that are linked to the brand's name and possible symbols. Brand equity adds or subtracts the value provided by a product or a service. The four asset categories of brand equity are brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. (Aaker 1996, 7-8.)

2   L'Oréal Finland Oy

In this chapter the reader will learn more about the case company L'Oréal Finland Oy, the brand that inspired this study, Garnier Nutrissé Cream and the circumstances that led to L'Oréal Finland's wishes to conduct this study.

2.1   Company history

Eugene Schueller, a young chemist had created his first hair dye formula under the name of Oréal. This hair color proved to be an outstanding breakthrough at the time with its very unique formula that gave a much better result than the ones on the market. Schueller filed for a patent in 1908 (n°383920) for the color and established a company in 1909 called Société Française des Teintures Inoffensives pour Cheveux (that was later to become L'Oréal) that was selling the revolutionary hair color to hair dressers. This started the success story of L'Oréal and is the reason why hair colors are still very important for the company. Because Schueller's hair color formula was so unique and superior to others available L'Oréal even today wants to create the best hair colors possible and therefore does constant development on the formulas.

2.2   General information

L'Oréal Finland Oy is a part of the L'Oréal concern which holds head quarters in Clichy, France. L'Oréal in whole is the biggest cosmetics company in the world with over 100 years of experience. In 2009 the turnover of the concern was around 17,5 billion Euros. L'Oréal operates in 130 countries, has around 65 000 employees, 23 international brands and 674 patents (in 2009). (L'Oréal Finland 2011.)

According to L'Oréal, its position as the world leading cosmetics company is based on investing constantly on high quality scientific research and product development which enables L'Oréal's brands to launch products that are innovative, efficient, practical and pleasant to use and naturally fill even the toughest quality and safety requirements. (L'Oréal Finland 2011.)

L'Oréal has a common mission in all countries it is operating in; to help men and women all over the world to be beautiful and to bring out each person's own personality with its cosmetics. According to L'Oréal this is the goal that gives meaning and content to its business and the work that is done at L'Oréal every day. (L'Oréal Finland 2011.)

2.3 Garnier Nutrissé Cream

Garnier as a company was founded in 1904 and bought by L'Oréal in 1965. Now Garnier has a huge range of sub brands and Nutrissé hair colors (Nutrissé Cream, Nutrissé Ultra Color and Nutrissé Truly Blonde) is one of the biggest and successful one of them. All Garnier products are inspired by nature and Garnier is the only brand in the L'Oréal range that highlights environmental friendly development on cosmetics.

Nutrissé Cream is an ordinary hair color except for the fact that it includes nourishing fruit oils and it smells delightful instead of ammoniac. There are many much more innovative hair colors on the market, for example foam colors and 10 minute colors and even professional colors that do not cost much more than Nutrissé Cream but still Nutrissé Cream is the best-selling brand in hair colors in the Finnish consumer market measured with continuous consumption (L'Oréal KESKO data 2011).

2.3.1 The strategy of Nutrissé Cream

Nutrissé uses the slogan Nourished Hair Means Better Color (translated to each country's own language) in every country and the primary target group is women aged 35+. In every single country it uses the same kind of marketing strategy: localization. The idea of using local spokespersons is to bring the product closer to the consumers in the country, make it easier to approach and more trustworthy.

The cooperation between Nutrissé Cream and Finnish celebrity Satu Ruotsalainen started back in 2006. Fairly after that Nutrissé Cream started showing signs of success on the hair color market. Today Nutrissé hair colors are the most consumed ones on the Finnish consumer market.

2.3.2 The future of Nutrissé Cream

Even though Nutrissé is still running the hair color markets, the future of the brand's marketing strategy is uncertain. Due to the Nordic merger, L'Oréal Finland is now part of the whole L'Oréal Nordic group and the highest management for each brand category is centralized. This means that even though the product category manager is located in Finland, the higher management is located in another Nordic country. For Garnier hair colors the top management is currently located in Denmark.

Because of this merger and the centralization policy that came with it, it has been noticed that it is harder to control the flow of marketing and united communication in all the Nordic countries because every country has its own spokespersons and different campaigns built around these persons. Therefore the question whether or not the localization strategy should be given up has been laid on the table.

L'Oréal Finland is reluctant to give up on Satu Ruotsalainen as the front man because she has been representing the brand for so long and the cooperation has worked fine and shown good results. In order to solve the issue, this study will examine Finnish women consumers' perceptions about the use of local spokespersons in marketing and give vision to whether or not the localization strategy is worth continuing for. This study is not focused only on Garnier Nutrissé Cream brand but more of a general study of the subject since the case company uses the same strategy for different brands.

3 Brand identity in relation to brand image

This chapter will present the reader with the related theoretical framework. Brand identity and brand image are defined in sections 3.1 and 3.2 and a review of brand equity is presented in section 3.3. It is important for the reader to understand how these terms differ from each other but also how they interrelate. Section 3.4 discusses the possibilities of making changes to the brand identity, position or executions.

3.1 Brand identity

Quite similarly to a person's identity the brand identity serves the brand in providing direction, meaning and purpose. The identity of a brand is a unique set of brand associations that the upholders of the brand pursue to create or maintain. These related associations represent everything that the brand stands for and insinuate a promise to the brands customers from the organization of the brand. (Aaker 1996, 68.)

Gad (2001, 16-17) on the other hand uses the term brand code to determine the essence of the brand: what it looks like, how it behaves and how it feels. The brand code should tell customers not only what the product is but who it is. The brand code also differentiates the brand from others alike.

However, the best way to describe brand identity is to concede that it is more of "a vision of how that brand should be seen by its target audience" than an actually existing identity. This basically means that even though a company creates a brand identity and communicates it to its customers, the brand identity cannot be real before the customers perceive it the same way it is meant to be. (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2000, 27.)

According to Aaker (1996, 68), by generating a value proposition involving benefits like functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits, the brand identity helps establishing a relationship between the brand and the customer. The value proposition is a statement of the benefits delivered by the brand that add value to the customer. In addition to building a brand-customer relationship the value proposition should drive purchase decisions.

Functional benefits are the most visible part of the brand identity. Functional benefits are based on product attributes that provide functional gain for the customer and usually relate directly to the actions performed by the product or service. (Aaker 1996, 95-96.)

Emotional benefits refer to feelings inspired by the use of the brand. The strongest brand identities often give the customer a positive feeling of some kind from buying or using the brand. Positive feelings can signify e.g. feelings such as safety or energetic. (Aaker 1996, 97.)

Self-expressive benefits provide the customer a way to communicate self-image. People have multiple roles in their lives, e.g. mother, athlete, writer and an associated self-concept for each role and a need to express that self-concept. Buying and using specific brands is one way to fulfill the need of self-expression. When a brand does provide self-expressive benefits, the connection between the brand and the customer is likely to be more retentive. (Aaker 1996, 99-101.)

Gad (2001, 17) does not identify the benefits Aaker refers to but alludes to them with own terms that generate the value proposition: the functional dimension, the social dimension, the spiritual dimension, and the mental dimension. These two different views, brand identity and brand code do not exclude each other but rather supplement each other.

In Gad's (2001, 17) model of brand code the functional dimension stands for the same as in Aaker's model the functional benefit, it is "the perception of benefit of the product or service associated with the brand." The social dimension on the other hand is an extent that allows the brand's customers to create identification with a group. There is also a spiritual dimension that concerns the brand's customers' perception of global or local responsibility whereas the mental dimension is the brand's ability to support the customer mentally.

No matter which brand model is used, it is vital for each actively managed brand to have a brand identity and the stronger and consistent the identity and brand position are, the easier the brand is to be remembered. Brands that are interesting and possess a personality tend to be recollected better than others. (Aaker 2002, 203; Aaker & Joachimstahler 2002, 25, 27.)

3.1.1   Brand position

"A brand position is the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates an advantage over competing brands" (Aaker 1996, 71). In other words brand position differentiates the brand from others and thus the brand position should be actively and clearly communicated to the target audience.

Because of the focused role of brand position, it guides all the current communication programs and is distinct from the general construction of brand identity (Aaker 1996, 71). Keller et.al. (2008, 95) say brand positioning is in fact is the "act of designing the company's offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's mind."

Batey (2008, 209) also comments on the brand positioning communication by saying: "By framing, evolving and modifying the associations and meanings attached to a brand, advertising plays a pivotal role in the generation of brand meaning and subsequent behavior." The successful outcome of the process including successful brand positioning depend on the advertisers' skills of creating and influencing brand meanings and the way they are interpreted in the light of motivations, values, and aspirations.

Armstrong and Kotler (2007, 215) remind marketers to position brands clearly in the target consumers' minds. They say brands can be positioned at three levels. The lowest level of positioning is based on product attributes, which are the least desirable level of brand positioning because competitors can easily copy them. The second level of positioning is associating the brand with desirable benefits that outcome from the use of the brand's products. The highest level of brand positioning connects the brand to beliefs and values in order to engage consumers on a deep, emotional level.

Brand positioning is an essential part of this study. Especially in the case of hair colors, brand positioning is often based on the first two levels of brand positioning, product attributes and benefits. Adding a local spokesperson to communicate the brand message might have some serious impacts on the credibility of the brand, both positive and negative.

3.1.2 The brand identity perspectives

In order to create and maintain a successful brand that is well positioned and has many qualities that add value to the value proposition, companies should consider their brands from many different perspectives.

Aaker (2002, 78) provides a four-perspective model for evaluating the brand in the eyes of the customers: brand as a product perspective, brand as an organization perspective, brand as a person perspective, and brand as a symbol perspective. To ensure that the brand has strong structure and depth, companies should consider their brands from all of these perspectives even though not all of them are to be harnessed. The idea of viewing the brand from all of these perspectives is to help "consider different brand elements and patterns that clarify, enrich, and differentiate an identity." (ibid. 78.)

The product perspective will almost definitely be an important part of a brand identity because the product-related associations are directly in contact with the customer's brand choice decision and use experience. Associations with the brand's product class are considered as the core element of brand identity because if the brand possesses a strong link to a certain product class, it is more likely to be remembered when the product class in question is cued. The product perspective also comprehends "attributes that are directly related to the purchase or use of a product". The product-related attributes can offer the customer both functional and emotional benefits. By offering something excessive or something better on the market, the product-related attributes can partake in the value proposition and in that way enrich the concept by adding the price dimension. (Aaker 2002, 78-80.)

"The brand-as-organization perspective focuses on attributes of the organization rather than those of the product or service" (Aaker 1996, 82). For instance innovations, a drive for quality, and concern for the environment are all attributes that are created by people, culture, values, and programs of the company. Attributes that are related to the organization are more sustainable and resistant to competitive claims than product-related attributes. Organizational attributes can also contribute value to the value proposition with such associations as customer focus, environmental concerns or e.g. technological commitment, that can involve emotional and self-expressive benefits based on for example admiration or respect. (Aaker 1996, 82-83.)

When it comes to the brand as a person perspective, it suggests a richer and more interesting brand identity than one based merely on product-attributes. Making a brand more like a person, upscale, competent, impressive, trustworthy or e.g. humorous can help make the brand stronger in several ways. A brand with a personality can among other things create a self-expressive benefit that helps the customer to express own personality and brand personality can act as the basis of a relationship between the brand and the customer. Brand personality may also contribute to a functional benefit by helping communicate a product attribute. (Aaker 1996, 83-84.)

Viewing the brand from the perspective of a symbol can assist companies in realizing that "a strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall". For some brands the presence of a symbol can be a key ingredient of brand development whereas its absence can be a significant handicap. Basically anything that represents the brand can be considered as a symbol, but usually symbols involving visual imagery can be more memorable and powerful. (Aaker 1996, 84.)

A local spokesperson can add some depth to the brand identity, especially if the identity is otherwise based on merely functional benefits. The personality of the spokesperson him/herself also contributes to the brand's personality and can assist in making the brand more memorable in the minds of consumers. This study is determined to find out whether Finnish women consumers consider local spokespersons giving any depth to a foreign brand in the perspectives the case company has defined.

3.1.3 The brand identity structure

In conclusion, to follow Aaker's (1996, 85) brand identity model, the brand identity is divided and defined into core and extended identities. Core identity is more permanent than extended identity and extended identity can be more volatile in time.

The core identity stands for the brand's timeless essence and involves the associations that are most likely to remain even if the brand takes on new products and markets. "The core identity of the brand should be more resistant to change than elements of the extended identity." Even though brand position and communication strategies of the brand along with the ex-

tended identity may change and vary in time, the core identity is more timeless and should stay the same. (Aaker 1996, 85-87.)

The extended identity complements the core identity by adding elements that provide texture and completeness to the brand. The extended identity "fills in the picture, adding details that help portray what the brand stand for". (Aaker 1996, 87-88.)

The core identity alone is usually not enough to express and perform all the functions of a brand identity. "In particular, a brand identity should help a company decide which program or communication is effective and which might be damaging or off target." (Aaker 1996, 88.)

By uncovering consumers' perceptions about local spokespersons, L'Oréal Finland can determine how important part of the identity structure the existence of the front man really is for the brand. It is easier and more secure to make changes to the external part of the brand identity. If a spokesperson plays a minor role in the identity structure, even changing the spokesperson at times is less risky for the brand.

3.2   Brand image

Brand image is comprised of cognitive and affective responses. Cognitive responses can be such as knowledge and beliefs about the brand's characteristics, the use of the brand, and consumption situations. Feelings, evaluations, and emotions that are associated with the brand are considered as affective responses and are also a part of the brand identity. Marketers should understand both the cognitive and affective responses and consider them in all product designs, advertisement, and store layouts. (Peter & Olson 2005, 47-48.)

In order to create a positive brand image it requires marketing programs that link strong, favorable, and unique associations to the brand. Being clear and strong about the communication of the brand identity is important because consumers can form brand associations in a variety of ways regardless of marketing activities. Such associations can come from e.g. direct experience, or word of mouth information. Associations can also come from assumptions and inferences consumers make about the brand itself, e.g. about its name, logo, or identification with a company, country, or channel of distribution. It is important for marketers to recognize

these other sources of information as a great influence to their customers and adequately account for them in designing communications strategies for the brand. (Keller 2008, 56.)

According to Aaker (1996, 69) brand image is how customers and others perceive the brand, and knowledge of the brand image provides very useful and often vital background information for the company when developing the brand identity.

The figure below is developed on base of the theoretical frame of this study and it aims to illustrate the essence of brand identity, brand image and brand position and their relations to each other. After brand identity is created and brand position is clearly communicated to customers, customers get an image of the brand which in turn should help brand strategists to develop the brand identity.
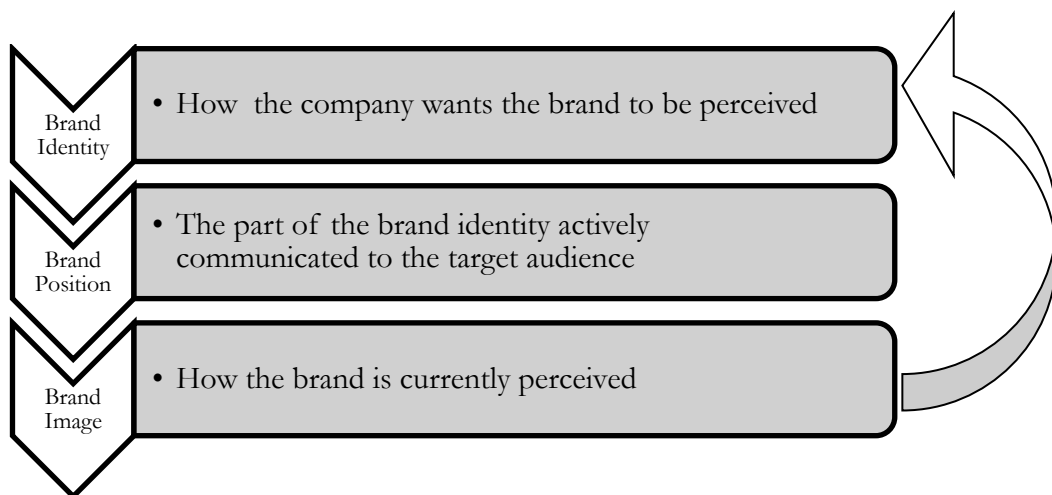

Figure 1. The relation of brand image, brand identity and brand position
(Aaker 1996, 70-85; Aaker & Joachimstahler 2000, 27; Batey 2008, 209; Keller 2008, 56; Peter & Olson 2005, 47-48.)

> While brand image is usually passive and looks to the past, brand identity should be active and look to the future, reflecting the associations that are aspired for the brand. While brand image tends to be tactical, brand identity should be strategic, reflecting a business strategy that will lead to a sustainable advantage. The brand identity should also reflect the brand's enduring qualities, even if they are not salient in the brand image. (Aaker 1996, 70.)

3.3 Brand equity

"Brand equity is an intangible asset that depends on associations made by the consumer" (NetMBA Business Knowledge Center 2010). According to Aaker and Joachimstahler (2000, 9) brand equity is strategic, an asset that needs to be monitored closely by the top management of the brand's organization because it can be the basis of competitive advantage and long-term profitability. Aaker (1996, 7) coincides with the definitions above but defines brand equity a little more accurately: "Brand equity is a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers."

Keller et.al. (2008, 33-34) state that although brand equity has been defined in numerous ways over time" most observers agree that brand equity should be defined in terms of marketing effects uniquely attributable to a brand". In other words, brand equity means that different outcomes result from marketing products or services of a particular brand as opposed to marketing the same product or service without being identified by the brand. Armstrong and Kotler (2007, 214) are also aware of this fact and state that brand equity is actually the positive differential effect that knowing the brand name has on customers and that one quite good measurement of brand equity is the extent to which consumers are willing to pay more for a certain brand.

It is said that the power of brands lies in the minds of consumers and their experiences and information about the brand over time. Brand equity offers a strategic bridge from the past to the present and future. Ultimately the value of brand equity as a concept depends on how marketers actually use it. Brand equity can offer direction and focus, serving as a way to interpret the brand's past performance and design the future marketing programs. Brand equity can be used as a means of clarifying, communicating, and implementing market actions. (Keller 2003, 61, 64.)

The goal of brand leadership is to rather build brand equity than just to manage brand images. The brand equity measures should be developed in order to supplement short-term sales and profit figures. The brand equity measures should reflect major dimensions such as awareness, loyalty, perceived quality, and associations. (Aaker & Joachimstahler 2000, 9.)

Once this study has clarified the study group's general opinion about local spokespersons, it can be specified whether local spokespersons have any contribution to brand equity. If local front men prove to be a very important factor for the respondents in this study, the people posing as the spokesperson should be considered as great assets for the company as well and important contributors for the brand equity.

3.3.1 Brand awareness

Brand awareness signifies the strength of a brand's presence in a consumer's mind. Brand awareness can be measured by examining the different ways in which consumers remember a certain brand. Measuring can usually be done in the range from recognition to recall to dominance of one brand. (Aaker 1996, 10-16.) Keller (2003, 67) concurs with Aaker when it comes to brand awareness, but recognizes only two levels of it, brand recognition and brand recall.

Aaker (2002, 10) and Keller (2003, 67) both agree that at the stage of brand recognition people have already been exposed to the brand but only know it by name or by brand cue. Recognizing means people have seen or heard about the brand and can categorize it into a product group but they have not tried it themselves yet. At the stage of recognition brand awareness is still minimal.

Brand recall is a deeper level of brand awareness. At the stage of brand recall, people already know the brand and can even name brands in a product category. Brand recall is obtained when the certain brand comes to a consumer's mind as an example from its product class. (Aaker 2002, 10; Keller 2003, 67-68.)

Brand dominance is the most intense level of brand awareness. It is relevant to talk about brand dominance when a consumer is able to provide only the name of one brand in a whole product class. (Aaker 2002, 16.)

Keller (2003, 77) explains the relationship between brand recognition and recall in the light of consumer decision making process. When making product decision in a place where the brand is physically present, e.g. in a store, recognition plays a bigger role than recall. Then again when a purchase decision is made in a situation where the brand is not physically present (applies mostly to online and service brands) it is essential for the customer to recall the brand.

Aaker's (2002, 11-15) stand towards the relationship of brand recognition and recall is a bit different. In Aaker's graveyard model it is expressed that brands usually first gain recognition before starting to develop recall. According to this graveyard model there are two exceptions to the theory, niche brand and graveyard brands. Niche brands are known only to a small group of people that are usually the brand's loyal customers. For niche brands the overall recognition stage is quite low. Unlike niche brands, graveyard brands tend to have a high overall recognition but no recall. Graveyard brands are on the edge of decease because they may be recognized but not remembered in the purchase decision.

Brand awareness can also be characterized by its depth, meaning the probability of a brand element coming into mind easily, and breadth, meaning the range of all situations from purchase to usage in which the brand element comes to mind. Breadth is also disposed to the effects of the brand organization and already known information about the brand. (Keller 2003, 77.)

In order to create brand awareness consumers should be made familiar with the brand through repeated exposure that generates a higher level of brand recognition. To take the recognition to the next level, to brand recall, strong associations with the relevant product category are needed or other appropriate consumption or purchase cues. (Keller 2003, 77.)

Associating local celebrities to represent a brand may increase the level of brand recognition. This study is also to determine if seeing some local spokesperson out of context of the brand makes people associate him/her to the brand and in that way increase also the level of brand recognition.

3.3.2 Perceived quality

Perceived quality can define the competitive environment for many brands and especially their own position in that environment. The perceived quality position is often the defining point of differentiation for brands that are either price, prestige, or premium brands. "Perceived quality is usually at the heart of what customers are buying, and in that sense, it is a bottom-line measure of the impact of a brand identity." Generally customers' perceptions about other elements of the brand improve along with improved perceived quality. (Aaker 1996, 19.)

Knapp (2000, 260) says that "perceived quality is defined as our customers' perception of the overall superiority of our brand's products and services compared to our competitors." Aaker (2002, 17-18) suggests that this is also a linkage to the brand's financial performance, even though connecting financial performance with any intangible asset is rather difficult. Studies utilizing PIMS database have proven perceived quality to be the single most important provider of return on investment (ROI). By enhancing prices and market share, perceived quality contributes to profitability.

Perceived quality should not be confused with the actual quality of the product or service. Perceived quality is not concrete but more of a perception in the mind of the customer. Previous memory of the brand's poor quality may affect consumers so strongly that they may not be able to trust new claims of the quality or are no longer willing to even verify them. (Aaker 2002, 20.)

Perceived quality differs from actual quality also in the since that sometimes companies achieve abstract quality which the consumers consider significant and yet not benefiting for themselves. Therefore it is important to invest on quality in areas that influence consumers. (Aaker 2002, 20.)

Another reason for differentiating quality from perceived quality is that because consumers do not have all the necessary information about the quality for the use of making rational and objective conclusions, they need to rely on cues they can associate with quality. Hence the key of influencing perceived quality lays in the ability to understand and manage the cues of quality and also understanding what it is that consumers value in quality. (Aaker 2002, 20.)

Sometimes consumers may focus on wrong kind of cues when it comes to quality because it is difficult to know how to judge quality. Companies should therefore help consumers with for example metaphors and visuals that assist consumers to see the context. (Aaker 2002, 20.)

3.3.3 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is often excluded from the conceptualization of brand equity but Aaker (1996, 21) considers it very appropriate and useful. The importance is positing on that "a brand's

value to a firm is largely created by the customer loyalty it commands". Considering loyalty as an asset also encourages and justifies brand-building programs which in turn help optimize brand equity. The key to creating brand loyalty is to exceed customer's expectations and also surprise them positively whenever possible. Having a satisfied customer to tell a brand's story is very important for the company as a way to affect other consumers. (Knapp 2000, 15-16.)

Keller's (2003, 104-105) definition of brand loyalty is distinct from above. In his opinion brand loyalty is separated from brand equity but these two still relate closely to each other. Brand loyalty is a powerful advantage when creating a positive brand image but it should be noted that "repeat buying is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being a brand loyal buyer in an attitudinal sense: someone can repeat buy but not be brand loyal."

Then again Peter and Olson (2005, 406) have a very concrete way of describing brand loyalty. They say it is a natural commitment to repeatedly buy a particular brand. They also shore up a bit of Keller's theory by noting this should not be confused with repeat purchase behavior which only focuses on behavioral action whereas in brand loyalty's case the reasons for the habitual response are considered as well.

According to the stage of brand loyalty, consumers can be classified into different kind of segments. Aaker (2002, 22) names five segments: noncustomers, price switchers, the passively loyal, fence sitters and the committed, whereas Knapp (2000, 143) has settled for only four: the friend, the loyal customer, the disloyal customer and the satisfied customer.

The noncustomers are currently buying competing brands or brands of a different product class. Price switchers make purchase decision based on the costs and are therefore extremely price sensitive. Customers that buy the brand out of a habit rather than actual reason can be classified as passively loyal. Fence sitters are the customers that are indifferent between two or more brands. Committed customers are too often taken for granted. The way to keep committed customers and avoid losing them to competing brands is to constantly improve the product or service performance. (Aaker 2002, 22.)

In Knapp's (2000, 16, 143) opinion the first recognizable level of brand loyalty is the customers that consider the brand as a friend, second the loyal customers that are committed to buy the brand in the long run. The disloyal customers are most likely dissatisfied with the brand

and therefore looking for alternative ones. The satisfied customers either may or may not purchase the brand again.

Whichever consumer group is in question, there are ways to improve brand loyalty. One way to enhance the loyalty is to develop the relationship with the brand by means of brand awareness, perceived quality, and clear brand identity. There is also the possibility of building brand loyalty through a customer loyalty program. (Aaker 2002, 24-25.)

3.3.4   Brand associations

Consumers make a lot of associations to the brand that can be anything from product attributes to celebrity spokespersons to a particular symbol. The associations that consumers make with a brand support brand equity. Brand associations are driven by the identity of the brand and therefore developing and implementing a brand identity is the key for building a strong brand. (Aaker 1996, 25.)

Associations that link the brand to images, icons, and especially other brands create a certain advantage for the brand's company. Brand associations help consumers to process information about the brand. Associations actually start immediately consumers have become aware of the brand name. (Knapp 2000, 15.)

Keller (2003, 71, 88) has divided brand association into attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes are features that characterize a product or a service. In other words attributes describe the consumer's thoughts about what the product or service is and what is related with its purchase or consumption. Brand attributes are most commonly divided in two: product related attributes and non-product related attributes. Product related attributes vary by product category because they are related to the product's physical characteristics. Non-product related attributes are classified as external because they link to the product's purchase or consumption. Non-product related attributes include user and usage imagery, price, and brand personality aspects.

Benefits reflect the consumers' personal values, what they think the product or service does for them. Benefits can be divided into functional, experimental, and symbolic benefits. Functional benefits are experienced through product usage and are very essential advantages. Ex-

perimental benefits are classified as external because they relate to how the consumer feels using the product or service, for example through stimulation or sensory pleasure. Symbolic benefits reflect the consumer's self-concept and can be related to social or self-esteem needs. (Keller 2003, 71.)

Brand attitudes reflect the consumer's own attitudes towards the brand. Brand attitudes are very important drivers for the consumer and usually actions and behavior a consumer shows with a brand derives from these attitudes. Brand attributes and benefits usually relate to the formation of brand attitudes. (Keller 2003, 71.)

3.4   Changing identity, position, or executions of the brand

> A key issue in managing brands over time is the decision to change an identity, position or execution (to be termed identity/execution for the sake of brevity). Changing any one of the three can be expensive and potentially damaging. An identity change is more fundamental, but a change in position and execution can be disruptive as well. (Aaker 1996, 216.)

According to Aaker (1996, 205) "a central consideration in developing an identity, a position, and an execution is knowing when to change what has gone before." He also reminds that in fact only brands are usually created from scratch one whereas the identity, position, and execution are most often developed in the context of an already existing brand package.

There are contexts in which the brand identity, position, or execution is very reasonable to be changed. When considering how to change or develop the brand, companies should compare the brand's image to its identity and evaluate the ability to leverage each dimension. When comparing each element of the brand identity to its image, it is easier to sight which associations should be changed, what should be added, and what should be maintained or leveraged. (Aaker 1996,216; Aaker & Joachimstahler 2000, 84.)

Aaker (1996, 216-218) presents five principal rationales for changing the identity. These rationales include reasons such as if the identity/execution was poorly conceived or obsolete, appeals only to a limited market, is not contemporary, or if the identity/execution is tired.

If the brand identity/execution is ill-conceived or off-target, it can usually be detected at an early stage by measuring customer interest, sales, and brand perceptions and attitudes. "Dis-

appointing sales and share trends can be a particularly strong signal." If the identity, position, or execution is defective, it is a motive for change. (Aaker 1996, 216.)

When it comes to brands, contexts change. Technology evolves, company culture evolves, customer tastes change, and rival brands enter and leave the market. Even if the brand identity/execution has worked before it can become obsolete because the markets are not static. If there are some fundamental paradigm shifts in the brand's environment, the once successful identity/execution can become ineffective. (Aaker 1996, 216-217.)

If the brand identity/execution appeals only to a limited or perhaps a shrinking market, there may be a motive to change the identity in order to broaden the market. The market can be expanded by for example establishing a new application or repositioning the brand to reach another segment. (Aaker 1996, 217.)

Sometimes the brand identity/execution just may seem old-fashioned and ponderous. Even a meaningful brand that is still relevant on the market may start to appear outdated. The brand can be made more contemporary by making changes to the identity. (Aaker 1996, 217.)

Having always the same identity/execution for the brand may become boring for the customers over time. Even if there are some variants used on the execution, the brand can seem a little tired. "As a result, it can fail to attract attention and ultimately lose its effectiveness. Further, when an identity remains the same for years, lively ideas for presenting that identity can become scarce. Competitors with more exciting identities and ways to communicate them have an advantage." (Aaker 1996, 218.)

According to Aaker (1996, 218-219) even though there are some good motivations for changes, they are not inevitable. In Aaker's (ibid. 219) opinion there is no doubt that the goal should be to create such an identity which is effective and whose position and execution last and do not become obsolete or tired. Aaker and Joachimstahler (2000, 84-85) note that companies should always consider leveraging before changing. "A key decision in setting priorities in respect to the brand identity is whether to leverage owned associations (the current image/heritage) or move toward the new strategic thrust of the brand by changing these associations" (ibid. 84-85).

3.5   Conclusion

It is important to understand the meanings of brand identity and brand image and how they differ from each other. This study is focused on examining if the brand identities created with the help of using local spokespersons coincide with the brand image consumers have. Because brand identity is a set of associations the company wants to achieve in the customer's mind, it is fundamental to do some research on the brand and its customers in order to disentangle if there is any conflicts between the identity and the image consumers have, or if they are in perfect harmony.

The use of local spokespersons in the marketing strategy of a brand is aiming at cultivating associations with the brand. The more positive associations consumers make with the brand, the easier the brand is to be recalled. Associations contribute considerably to brand equity which in turn affects the financial performance of the brand by enhancing ROI.

It is important to remember that brands do not only create value for the companies but for the customers as well. In this case we need to examine whether using a local spokesperson creates more value to the brand's customers. In this study the brand equity model of Aaker and Joachimstahler (2000, 17) will be used as a basis for estimating the created value.

In case the research proves that using a local spokesperson for a brand does not fulfill its purpose as a part of the brand identity, procedures to fix this problem should be considered immediately. Sometimes problems of small caliber can be easily fixed with small adjustments but sometimes the problem may be bigger and require a complete change to the identity of the brand, its position, or execution.

However, any changes to the brand should not be made without first considering the current situation from the point of view if there is something wrong with leveraging the already owned associations of the brand. If there proves to be bigger problems than leveraging, necessary changes should be made with utmost consideration.

4 Empirical study

The empirical part of this study is divided into methodology and findings. Methodology and implementation of the research is fully reviewed in section 4.1. Section 4.2 presents the findings of the research and interprets the results.

4.1 Methodology

By comparing two common research methods, quantitative and qualitative, this section will rationalize the reader with the chosen research method. Also the conduction of the research and data analysis will be explained in detail.

To be able to make rational decision in day-to-day activities, companies need to do some research. "Research is essential for understanding even basic everyday phenomena that need to be handled by individuals and organizations." (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 9.) Research should be able to offer new knowledge despite the disciplines. The way to do research is to gather evidence that will be decoded for the research purposes. (Gillham 2008, 2.)

"In business studies the majority of researchers need to collect some primary data to answer their research question. Once the researcher has decided to collect information/data through primary sources, s/he has to decide what kind of data collection method to use." (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 103.) Structured and quantitative methods have been said to be more scientific and hence better for research purposes but in reality the most suitable methods and techniques depend on the research problem and its purpose. The main approaches to research can be classified into quantitative and qualitative methods. (ibid. 104.)

"The difference between quantitative and qualitative methods and approach is not just a question of quantification, but also a reflection of different perspectives on knowledge and research objectives." Qualitative research can be described as a rational, explorative, and intuitive method that often focuses on social process. Quantitative research employs measurement and is considered as a logical and very critical approach that often focuses on social structures. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 104-105.) Figure 2 below exhibits the main differences of these two methods.

Qualitative method	Quantitative method
• Data based on meanings expressed through words	• Data based on meanings derived from numbers
• Emphasis on understanding	• Emphasis on testing and verification
• Focus on understanding from respondent's point of view	• Focus on facts and/or reasons for social events
• Interpretation and rational approach	• Logical and critical approach
• Observationa and measurements in natural settings	• Controlled measurement
• Subjective 'insider' view and closeness to data	• Objective 'outsider' view distant from data
• Explorative orientation	• Hypothetical-deductive; focus on hypothesis testing
• Process oriented	• Result oriented
• Holistic perspective	• Particularistic and analytical
• Data collection results in non-standardised datarequiring classification into categories	• Data collection results in numerical and standardised data
• Analysis conducted through the use of conceptualization	• Analysis conducted through the use of

Figure 2. Main differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods
(Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 105; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007, 472)

Qualitative research focuses mainly on uncovering a person's behaviour or feelings behind it. Qualitative research is flexible and unstructured, suitable for studying organizations, groups, or individuals. In comparison to quantitative research, the qualitative method employs only a limited number of observations and tries to explain different aspects of the chosen problem area. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 106.)

Quantitative research is often used in a case where there is a hypothesis that needs to be tested. The hypothesis can either be rejected or accepted in a logical and consistent matter when

quantitative research method is used. Theory on the subject is used deductively on quantitative studies and the characteristic focus is on facts and/or reasons for social events. Characteristic for quantitative research is also that it tends to be very result oriented. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 104-106.)

This study is focused on testing a hypothesis, uncovering if a certain kind of brand identity element creates the desired image in the consumer's mind. The purpose is to determine whether consumers experience the presence of a local spokesperson in a wanted way, not understanding behaviour of consumers towards the brand in general. Consequently the focus will be on facts, theory, and testing the hypothesis.

A quantitative research method was chosen for the execution because of the nature of the research approach. Quantitative method is an appropriate method for a result oriented study and the results can be easily analysed. Analysis coded into statics is also easy to understand and the danger of misinterpretation of the results is minimal. The case company appreciates the quantitative method, because it wants a representative sample of the Finnish consumers in order to find out the general public opinion of this matter.

4.1.1 Questionnaire

Survey refers to a data collection method that utilizes questionnaires or interviews. Because questionnaires have to be filled in by the respondents without any assistance, the design and the development of the questionnaire is very crucial. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 118; Gillham 2008, 79.)

For this study it was natural to choose a questionnaire method over interviewing because the wanted representative sample of population was relatively big. The questionnaire is based on the theoretical framework and enables to test the hypothesis this study is uncovering. The survey consists of all in all 13 questions, 2 of which are open answers to explain the chosen option in the questions before (see Appendix 1).

Question 1 is about the age of the respondent. Question 2 aims to illuminate participants' general attitudes towards brands whereas question number 3 strives to research the respondents' attitudes in relation to Finnish vs. foreign products. Questions 4 and 5 are straightfor-

ward questions that focus on the images that the use of local spokesperson creates in the consumer's mind. These two questions are the case company's commission study and the adjectives used on these questions are the case company's vision of what the local spokesperson should represent to the brand.

Questions 6 and 7 are frank as well and compare the effect of a local spokesperson to consumers' buying decision. Question number 8 examines the effect of local spokespersons on brand awareness. The rest of the questions are formed to establish a background of the participants in order to ensure the gathered data applies to also Nutrissé Cream's case.

4.1.2   Conducting the survey

This study was conducted simultaneously with a consumer callback made for Franck Provost hair colours. Consumers had the chance to apply for the callback execution in social media, on Facebook. The application form was carried out by Activeark agency that gave L'Oréal Finland a username and a password for the server where all the applicants' information was gathered. It was possible to follow the number and information of applicants in real time.

In just a few days the advertisement on social media resulted in a total of 214 applicants. The selection criteria for respondents was very simple, to recruit women of Finnish nationality from 16-60 years old that dye their hair. Most applicants met the requirements and there was no need to do major cutbacks because even the age distribution of applicants was very auspicious. Only a few applicants of less than 15 years of age and not of Finnish nationality had to be disqualified from the study.

The questionnaire was sent to a total of 204 applicants with a pre-paid return envelope and clear instructions on how to fill it. The callback gave altogether 155 responds of which 2 had to be disqualified because of incomplete information.

4.2   Findings and interpretation

This section will present the findings from the research done for this study. Findings will be further examined in the light of the related theory and concepts. The findings should help reasoning does a brand identity involving a local spokesperson match the brand image that

Finnish consumers have. Ideally the findings will also point out if there is a particular age group that favours local spokespersons in marketing. Findings should also indicate Finnish women consumers' attitudes when it comes to foreign products with local spokespersons or no spokespersons at all. Reliability and validity is discussed at the end of this section.

4.2.1 Respondents

Respondents were targeted to be women between 16-60 years of age. L'Oréal Finland has products from hair care to make up, but only a few brands for men, hence the target group for this study was women. L'Oréal has targeted most brands that use local spokespersons for women over 35 years old. However, this study's purpose is to examine the women consumers in a more general way and therefore women of all ages were included in the study group.

The age distribution was relatively even considering the respondents were not handpicked for this study. 24% of participants were from the first age group, 15-24 years old. Most products from L'Oréal that are targeted for this age group are skin care products. 25-34 years old was the biggest respondent group with 31% of part takers. This age group is estimated to be the biggest target audience when it comes to L'Oréal's all products. 35-44 year olds represented the study group with 25% participation rate. The last age group, 45 or over represented with 20% of the respondents.
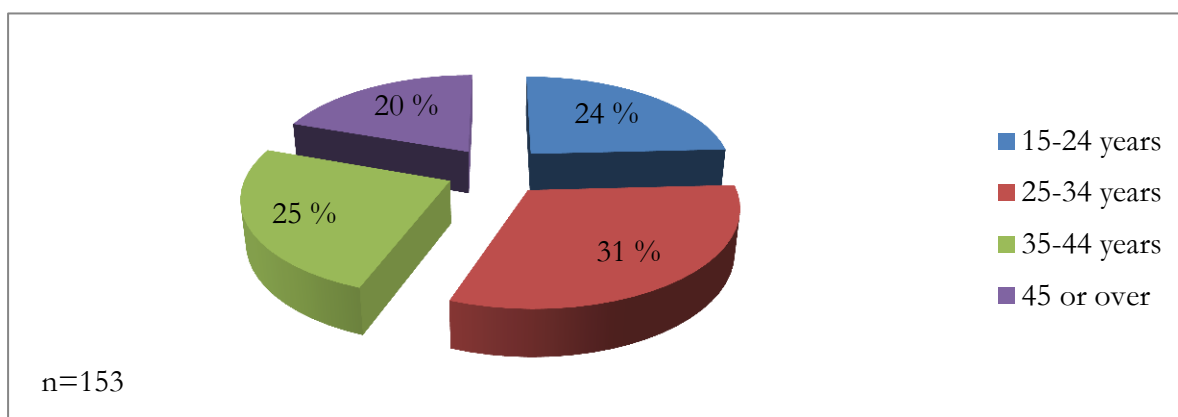

Figure 3. Age distribution among the study respondents

28

4.2.2   Brand awareness

It was important to ask the participants about their general brand awareness. Clarifying brand awareness is not really essential for the reliability and validity of this study but it helps understanding where the participants are coming from and what are their stances towards brands in general – are they or are they not that important. The question was; Are you precise about the brands you use?

The respondents had to estimate their own brand awareness objectively to answer this question. As a result, 55% of the respondents claim they are precise about the brands they use whereas 45% claim they do not pay that much attention to the brands they use. There was no clear age distribution to be detected among the respondents in this case. Below, the age distribution among the participants who admit being picky about the brands they use.
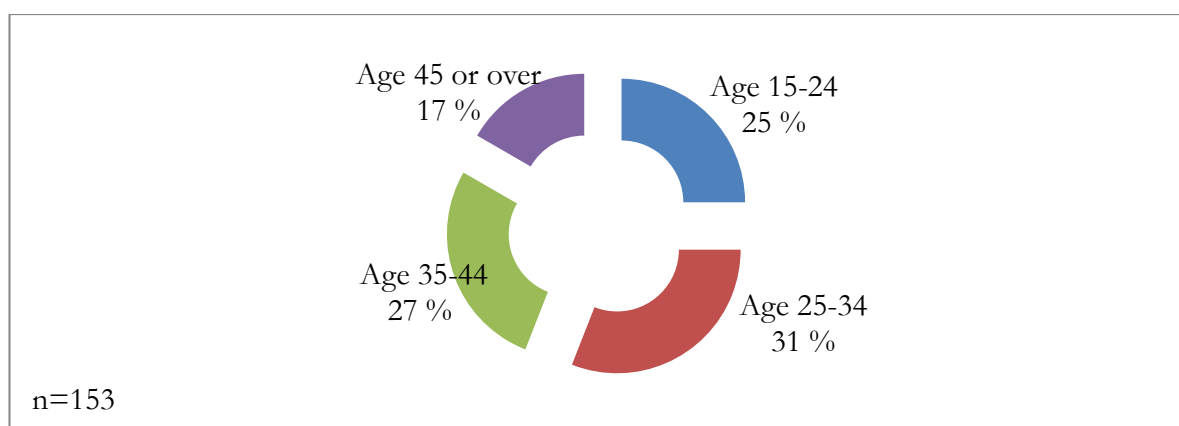

Figure 4. Age distribution among brand aware respondents

The age distribution is quite even proportioned to the amount of respondents in each age group. A same phenomenon occurs among the participants that deny being brand aware. 23% of non brand aware respondents were aged 15-24, 35% aged 25-34. Aged 35-44 non brand aware respondents were only 20% of the whole amount whereas 22% belonged to the over 45 years old.

The respondents were also asked how easily they usually relate celebrities to the brands they represent. The results were quite positive; 50% of the women who participated in the study estimated they quite often connect celebrities out of context to the brands they represent. The

chart below represents the age distribution of the 50% who think they connect celebrities with their representative brands effortlessly.
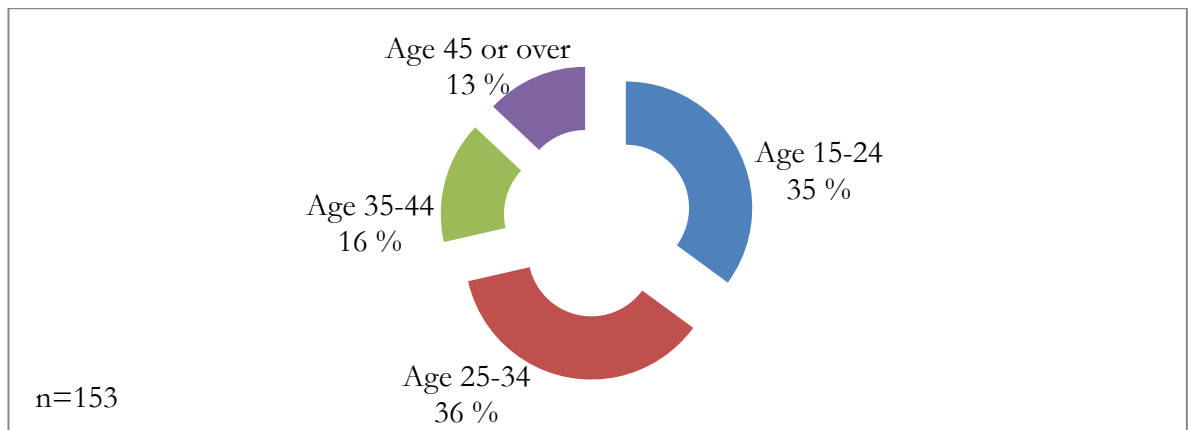

Figure 5. Age distribution among respondents that claim connecting celebrities to the brands they represent easily

The remarkable percentages that 15-24 and 25-34 years old represent in this case indicate that younger people are obviously better in relating spokespersons to the brands they represent. The corresponding calculations for the 50% that think they do not relate people with brands very often are: 15-24 years old 13%, 25-34 years old 29%, 35-44 years old 33% and aged 45 and over 25%.

In order to uncover any prejudice against foreign brands the participants were asked to express their opinion about whether they think Finnish brands are in general better than foreign brands. Again, this question is not essential for this study but helps establish a background of the respondents. Only 31% of the participants assess Finnish brands in general are better than foreign ones. The rest of the study group, 69%, do not find foreign brands any worse than Finnish ones.

The age distribution of respondents that held Finnish brands better is as follows; 10% were aged 15-24, 33% aged 25-34, 38% aged 35-44 and 19% aged 45 or over. The lead in age group 35-44 years old is quite relevant considering the whole amount of the respondents and this particular age group's size compared to it. The minority, only 10% in age group 15-24 is also quite noticeable and implies that younger people are more neutral when it comes to the origin of a brand or a product.

Among those who do not think Finnish brands in general are any better than foreign ones, the attention turns to the age group 15-24 years old that is considerably bigger than among those that do regard Finnish brands better. Also compared to the whole amount of people in this age group in the whole study group, the amount is pretty notable and reinforces the impression that young adults are more neutral when it comes to the origin.
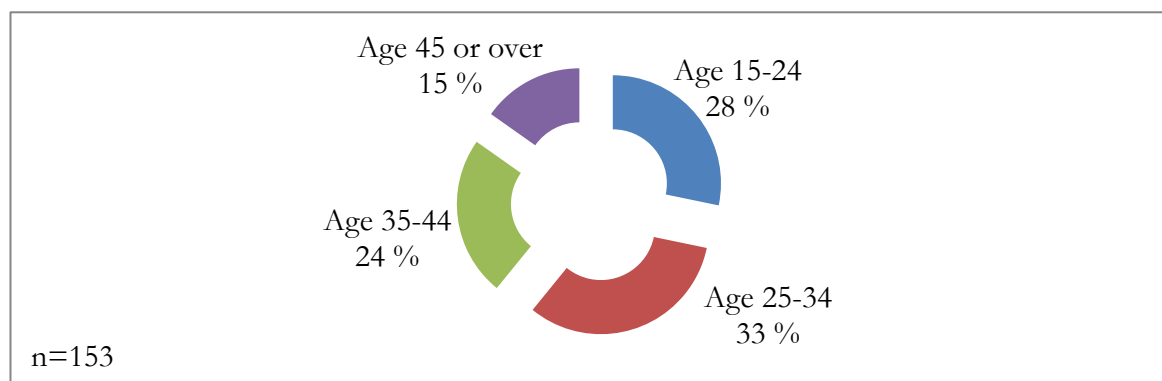

Figure 6. Age distribution among respondents that do not consider Finnish brands better than foreign ones

4.2.3   Consumer image

The case company's wish was to study if the respondents feel that having the local spokesperson involved in the brand's marketing gives the consumer a more trustworthy image of the brand and makes it easier to be approached. The respondents had to answer this question objectively, without targeting the question to a certain brand or a spokesperson.

40% of the participants considered that a local front man gives a trustier, more reliable image of the brand. The amount is considerable if the result can be applied to the whole Finnish market. There was a clear majority of respondents aged 25-34 that coincided local spokespersons giving a trustier image. Even though this particular age group was presented in the whole study group with 31% of all the participants, the distribution in this case is still remarkable. It should also be noted that only 15% in this 40% of respondents were over 45 years old. These results could be interpreted as a potential expansion possibility for the target group of local spokesperson marketing strategy in Nutrissé Cream's case.
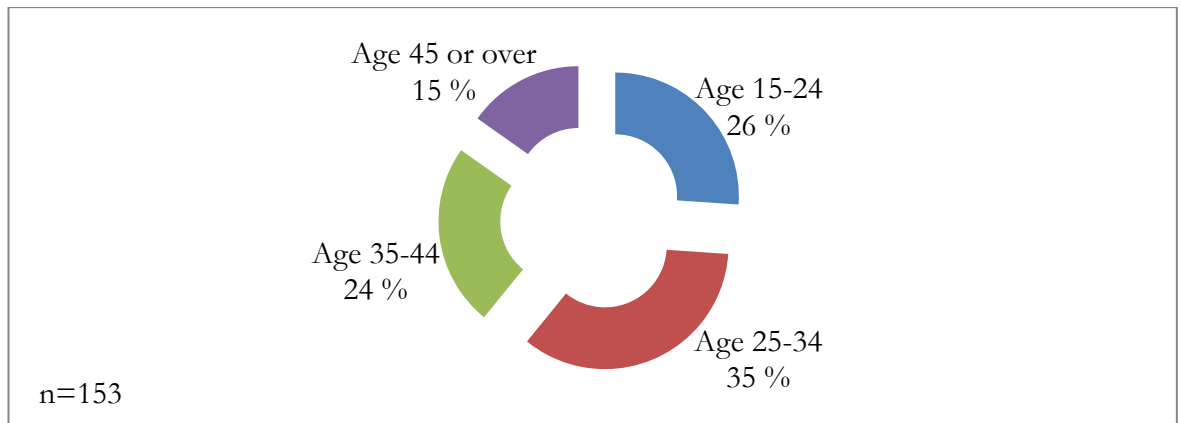
Figure 7. Age distribution among respondents that get a more reliable image from a brand using a local spokesperson

The age distribution was quite even among the 60% of respondents that did not feel a Finnish front man gives a brand any more reliability or makes it any more trustworthy. 15-24 years old shared this opinion with 21%, 25-24 years old with 32%, 35-44 years old with 25% and over 45 years old with 22%.

When the participants were asked if a local spokesperson makes a foreign brand easier to be approached the results were even better. A total of 50% of respondents find a foreign brand with a local front man approachable. Open answers shed more light to why that is and the most common reason was that the respondent could at least be certain that the brand has instructions in Finnish and most likely customer service in Finnish as well. Other arguments were e.g. that the respondent could rely on someone Finnish having tested the product and that hearing your own language on an advertisement always draws more attention than foreign languages and therefore makes the brand more approachable.

The age distribution among the respondents that considered a foreign brand to be more approachable with a local Finnish spokesperson was not showing any sign of clear division to a certain age group. In fact, the age distribution in this case was much more even than with the previous question.
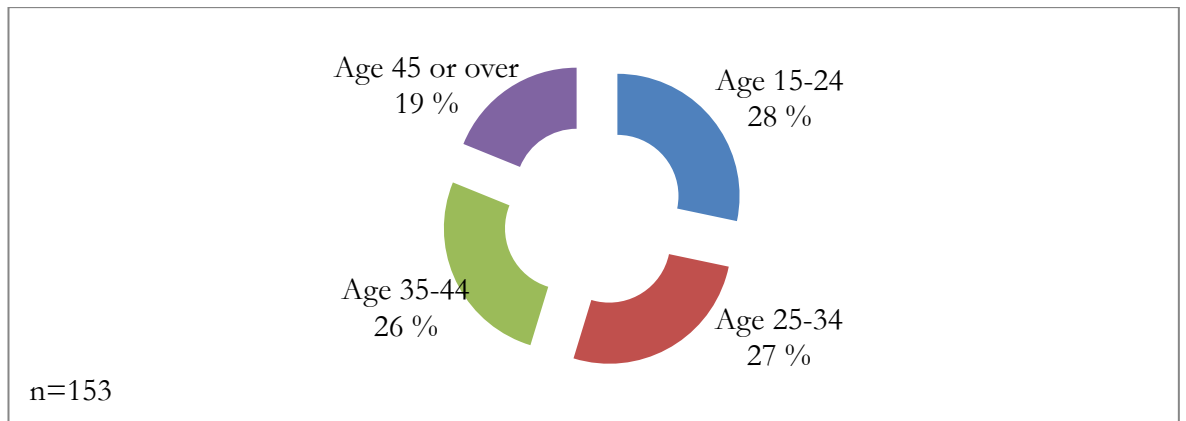
Figure 8. Age distribution among respondents that consider a foreign brand with a local spokesperson more approachable

However, the age distribution among the respondents that did not consider a local front man making a foreign brand any more approachable was very clear. A majority of 41% of the respondents that gave this negative answer belonged to the age group of 25-34 years old. 28% were aged 35-44, only 15% aged 15-24 and 16% over 45 years old.

4.2.4   Buying decision

A couple of questions disputed the respondents' buying behaviour. Participants had to objectively consider their own buying behaviour and make contrasts before answering the questions. Many things affect consumer buying behaviour subconsciously but the participants had to only answer these questions according how they honestly feel about their own buying behaviour.

First, the study participants were asked whether it has any affect at all on their buying behaviour that a foreign brand has a local spokesperson. The results were surprising considering the results from the previous questions about brand image. Only 20% of respondents admit that the fact that a foreign brand has a local front man affects their own buying behaviour. 7% of respondents could not estimate at all the affect a local spokesperson has or would have on their buying behaviour.

According to open answers from the 73% that said they do not let such things affect their buying decision, it is silly to believe in faux advertising and let it affect your own choices. This

exhales some negative attitudes against advertising even though 40-50% of the same participants in the questions before had agreed that using a local spokesperson gives a more reliable image of the brand and makes it more approachable.

Below is shown the age distribution among the 20% of respondents that admit local spokespersons affect their buying decision. The respondents are divided quite evenly in their opinions in relation to the total amount of respondents in each age group.
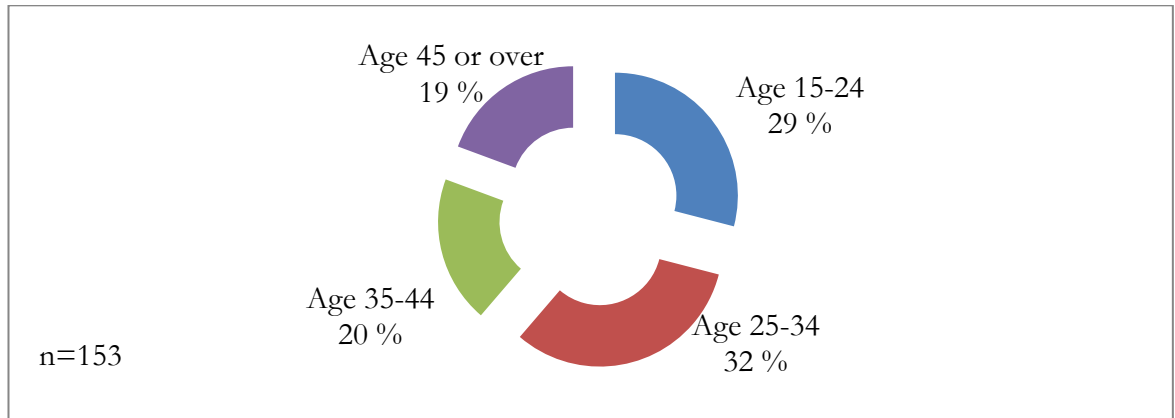

Figure 9. Age distribution among respondents who admit local spokespersons affect their buying decision

Distribution among those who denied local spokespersons on foreign brands having any affect on their buying behaviour varies a bit from above. 25% were aged 15-24, 34% aged 25-34, 25% aged 35-44 and 16% over 45 years old. The biggest variations are in the three other age groups despite 25-34 years old.

The respondents were also asked to make a contrast between a foreign product that has a local spokesperson and a foreign product that has no spokesperson at all. The participants were asked to choose between these two options in the case the products were otherwise completely the same. The result was that 54% of the whole study group would choose the product with the local spokesperson. Only 33% claim they would rather take the product without a local spokesperson and 13% could not say which product they would choose.
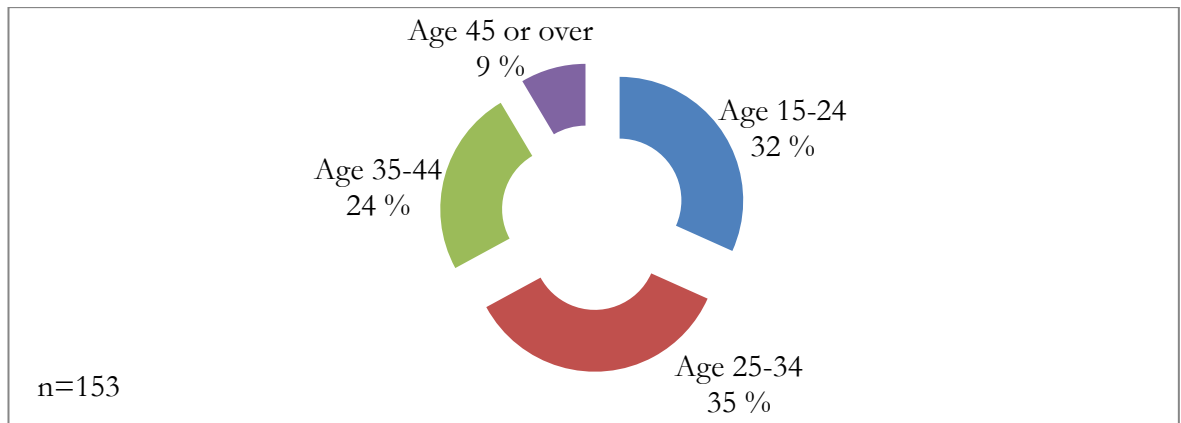
Figure 10. Age distribution among respondents that would choose a foreign product with a local spokesperson

The emphasis on the age distribution is clearly between 15-34 years old. Over 45 years old are a distinct minority in this case. Among the 33% of respondents who chose a foreign product without a local spokesperson, the age distribution was stressing the 25-34 years old with a 37% majority. 22% of people who refused the local spokesperson product were aged 15-24, 29% aged 35-44 and 12% over 45 years old.

4.2.5 Application to Nutrissé Cream's case

Since the case company wanted a more of a universal study of the subject in order to see the general public opinion about using local spokespersons, it was also important to ask questions from the participants that would help conclude whether the study results are really applicable to Nutrissé Cream's case. Hence, the respondents were asked some background questions about hair dyeing, like where they dye their hair and what hair colours have they used during the past year. The respondents were also asked to remark the things they pay attention to when buying hair colour in order to see the dimensions that matter the most for consumers.

The study participants were all women. The case company's wish was that the respondents would dye their hair and preferably do that at home. In that way the Garnier Nutrissé Cream brand would likely be known to them. So respondents had to answer where they dye their hair and the result was that 69% dye their hair at home. 23% of respondents use both home hair colours and go to saloons to dye their hair while only 8% used saloons as their primary place to dye hair.
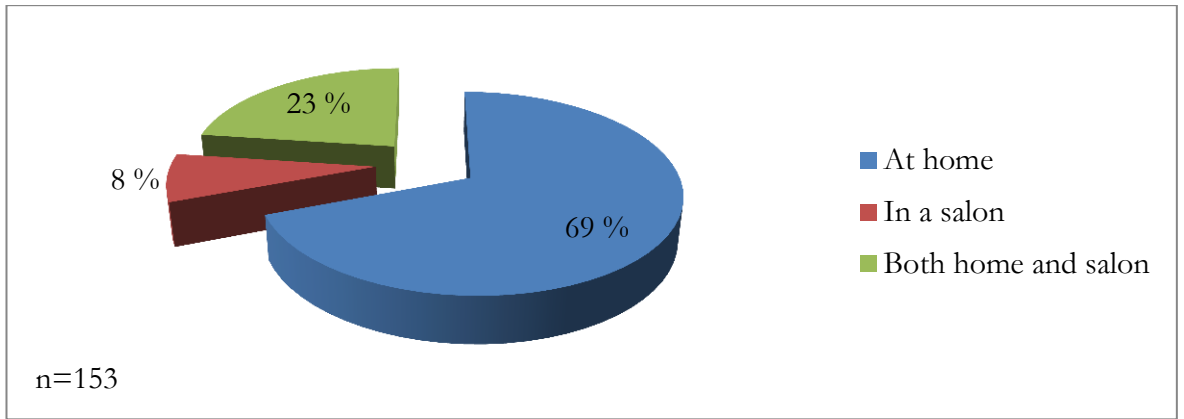
Figure 11. The respondents place to dye their hair

The respondents were also asked to write down all the hair colour brands they've used during the past year. Some people had used several different brands, which increased the total amount of responds to 189. L'Oréal Paris hair colours were the most popular ones used among the respondents by 41%. Garnier hair colours came far behind for the second place, with 27% of users. It is a good indication though of how well known the Garnier Nutrissé Cream brand likely is among the respondents. Other hair colours were not presented as well as L'Oréal and Garnier among this study group.

Figure 12. Hair colours the respondents had used during the past year

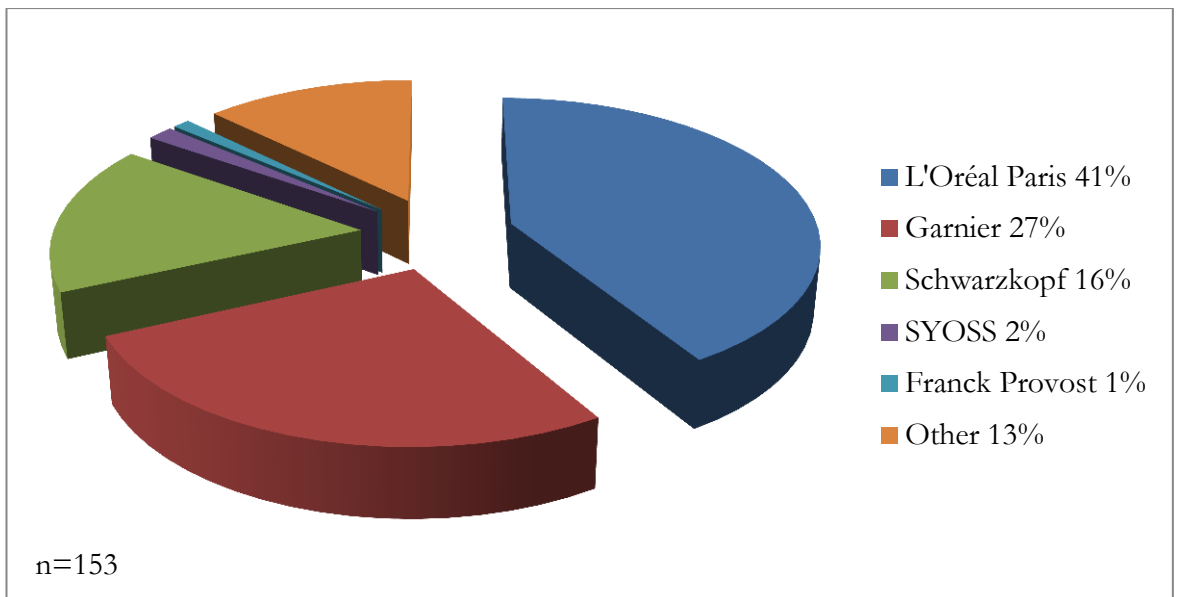It was expected that when the respondents were asked to check off the things they most pay attention to when buying a hair colour, the actual colour would become first. In fact, only 65% chose the actual colour first whereas quality was the first choice for 17% of the respondents. 10% said the qualifications of the product matter the most. As a second most important thing when buying a hair colour 35% chose quality. 25% chose the qualifications and 17% the colour itself. Among the six things the respondents were allowed to mention in this case, not one of them had anything to do with the origin of the product, language, or anything else that could be interpreted as essential for this study.

4.2.6   Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability means "the extent to which data collection technique or techniques will yield consistent findings, similar observations would be made or conclusions reached by other researchers or there is transparency in how sense was made from the raw data" (Saunders et.al. 2007, 609). In other words, reliability refers to the stability of the measurement in question (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 79). Reliability can be measured considering three different factors: test-retest correlations, internal consistency, and consistency in test administration and scoring (Creswell 2003, 158; Kumar, Aaker & Day 1999, 294).

Test-retest correlations measure the stability of the test results over time by repeating the same measurement with same instruments and respondents. By doing this, the possible fluctuations of the study can be detected. Internal consistency measures reliability in consistency of the responses across constructs, meaning that the conceptions are linked to each other. Consistency in test administration and scoring measures whether errors in the study were caused by carelessness in administration and scoring. Usually errors in this area occur when there is more than just one person involved in recording of the results. (Creswell 2003, 158; Kumar et.al. 1999, 294.)

Due to the fact that in the brand market contexts change constantly, the results measured with test-retest correlations are very likely to be different over time. Because markets are not static, it is important to follow the development of the markets and redo measurements on even intervals. On marketing issues the retests could be done quite frequently since people tend to be very aware of trends and marketing and advertising should keep up with the latest ones.

Internal consistency can suffer for instance if the respondents relate differently to questions involving the same concepts or misunderstands the questions. Situations like this can be avoided by simply making the questions and instructions for it as plain and simple as possible. The structure and language of the questionnaire were made simple enough for the respondents to easily fill it in. The preface on the questionnaire also requests the participants to leave blanks if they do not understand the concepts or the questions. These preparations for their part help preserve the internal consistency.

In this study's case there is no greater concern of the consistency in test administration and scoring because the results will not be recorded by more than one person. However, there is always the possibility of errors but the best way to avoid them is to recount the results several times.

Validity can be defined as "the extent to which data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure". In other words, it is about the extent to which the findings of the research are really about what they claim to be. (Saunders et.al. 2007, 614.) Validity can be measured in four dimensions: construct validity, internal validity, statistical conclusion validity, and external validity (Ghauri, Pervez & Grønhaug 2002, 70-72).

Construct validity refers to the extent to which an operationalization gauges the concept that it claims to measure. In other words, construct validity determines the extent to which the measure that is being used for the study is reasonable to measure the thing that it claims to measure. If a study has no construct validity, the findings of the study will be meaningless. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2002, 70, 72.) In this study's case the research was done quantitatively which suits better for a study like this that aims to investigate the subject more generally and get a vast overview of the Finnish consumer market. Also, statistical results are easier to understand and interpret for further utilisation.

Internal validity relates statistically to the cause-effect relationships and measures the correlations between variables in the study. In other words, it refers to the extent to which the results measured in the study are true. This is possible by measuring if causal variation among variables is at least one of the influencing factors. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010, 63, 83.) The questionnaire follows a certain pattern that prevented the participants to predict the outcome or affiliate the questions to any particular product or brand. Because of the structure, it was possible to have some variations on the variables. The biggest variations between variables in this

study were pointed between questions that had to be answered with reasoning and questions that had to be answered according one's senses. However, the causal variation in this case can be recognized and stated that it is one of the influencing factors causing all the variations.

Statistical conclusion validity questions the sample size needed for the study in question. Statistical significance needs to exist in the study in order for it to prove a causal relationship. External validity measures the extent to which the findings can be generalized to certain people and settings and times. Measurement can be done also across the types of people and settings and times. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2002, 70, 72.) The aim for this study was to recruit at least 100 women participants quite evenly from the four different age groups (15-over 45) in order to ensure the statistical validity. The expectations were exceeded with a total of 155 responds that came back. Of these 155 responds, two had to be disqualified because of incomplete information. By leaving out the incomplete questionnaires the validity can be further ensured. The participants were quite evenly from different age groups and from all around Finland which affects positively to the external validity. Nevertheless, the case company's wish was to recruit women respondents so the results can be applied to only Finnish women consumers.

In order to make sure the respondents understood the questions right, the language on the questionnaire was very clear and simple. Some questions are followed by examples so the respondent would understand the main idea better and some questions have more detailed information on how to fill in the answer. These precautions should help ensure the respondents understand the concepts right and make no mistakes in filling in the answers. And since the focus on this study is to examine Finnish (women) consumers' perceptions about the use of local spokespersons for foreign products and therefore the participants were qualified only if they were of Finnish nationality and lived in Finland. Further, the questionnaire was executed in Finnish to ensure there is no language barrier. Also the questions and explanations on the questionnaire refer to the use of local spokespersons in Finland – not in general around the world, so that respondents would understand the context.

Considering all the facts, the study can be classified as valid and reliable. For example, the questionnaire was formed in a simple, easily to be understood language to avoid misunderstandings and the instructions on the questionnaire were clear as well to ensure correct answers. When the risks of misunderstandings and insufficient instructions have been eliminated, it can be considered that the respondents' answers are reliable and valid. The participants

were not handpicked for the research but everyone had the chance to apply for the position in social media. This ensures there is no abuse of the test group, for example by gathering up only certain kind of people in order to get certain kind of answers. The sample size is relatively large for a study of this kind and therefore the validity and reliability of the research is ensured for that part. Also, by having only one person dealing with the results, the risk of lacking consistency in test administration and scoring is minimized.

5   Interpretation and recommendations

L'Oréal Finland Oy's main goal for this study was to disentangle the general (women's) public opinion about using local spokespersons. The idea was to investigate whether a brand identity of a foreign brand that has a local front man matches the brand image consumers receive. The respondents for this study were targeted to be women of 16-60 years old that preferably dye their hair at home.

69% of the respondents claim they dye their hair mainly at home and 23% said they dye both at home and in a salon. 27% of the respondents had been using Garnier hair colours during the past year. Because a grand majority (92%) of the respondents are familiar with dyeing their hair at home and almost a third of the study group had been in recent contact with Garnier hair colours, it can be accounted for that the results of this study can be applied to Garnier Nutrissé Cream's case and not just in general. It was important to have some indication that the study participants would recognize the marketing strategy that the study was about and being exposed to the case company's products insinuates there is possible exposure to the marketing strategy in question.

When it comes to hair colours, the respondents did not express great interest in the origin of the product or any interest in the marketing/advertising of hair colours. The main interests for the partakers in this study group were the colour, the quality, and the qualifications of the hair colour. Only 20% admit local spokespersons affect their buying decision at all. Therefore it can be assumed hair colour is a product that's buying decision is affected by the product's own functions much more than advertising gimmicks. Marketing strategy may affect the consumer's choice more subconsciously.

On the other hand, 54% of the participants would choose a foreign brand with a local spokesperson in the case the corresponding product would be similar except for the lack of the spokesperson. This clearly suggests there is something seductive about the local spokesperson that attracts people more than not having one. Whether it is the reliability or the fact that is easier to approach or perhaps even easier to identify oneself with could not be clarified at this point. This result is even in contradiction with the fact that only one fifth of the study group actually admitted local spokespersons affect their buying decision. This clearly indicates marketing/advertising has a bigger affect on consumers than they even realize or like to admit.

The additional questions clarified that only one third of the respondents in the study group considered Finnish brands better than foreign ones – in general. A slight majority (55%) claim being very precise about the brands they use. These results enforce the results that implied the origin of the product is not as in intrinsic fact anymore whereas the brand itself has become more relevant for consumers. It has to be pointed out though that younger people (under 35) seemed to be more neutral to the origin of a brand than people over 35. The outline of these results is that Finnish origin does not seem to create more perceived quality for the majority of the respondents.

All these results give background to the main object of this study; finding out if the reliable and easily to be approached brand identity the case company has wanted to create by using Finnish celebrities as brand spokespersons matches the brand image consumers get from this particular marketing strategy. The conclusion was that 2/5 of the study group get a more reliable image of a foreign brand when it does have a Finnish representative and half of the study group feel that a foreign brand is easier to approach when it has a Finnish representative. Altogether the results indicate that a great number of people are favourable for a marketing strategy that utilizes local spokespersons.

However, the results about matching brand identity to brand image suggest there is room for improvement. Because these results are a general insight to (women) consumers' opinion about using local spokespersons it is difficult to estimate to what extent this applies to the cases of different brands. After all the spokesperson him/herself has a great impact on the image that s/he creates for the brand. The problem might also be in some other area, for example positioning the brand.

The interesting finding of this study is that the age distribution calculations indicate that in addition to the 35-44 years old age group, there are two other age groups that are auspicious as well for this kind of a marketing strategy. Even though a slight majority of the respondents belonged to the 25-34 years old age group, the calculations point that this particular age group is very favourable for local spokespersons in marketing. Surprisingly also the younger age group, 15-24 years old are showing positive responses. These calculations suggest there is no designated age group that is more favourable to a local spokesperson marketing strategy than others. In fact, since people in all age groups show positive responses to using local spokesperson, the case company could consider broadening the target group they currently use for this marketing strategy.

One thing though is clearly standing out from the results. From the 50% that estimated their own ability to connect celebrities out of context to the brands they represent to be pretty good, most women were under 35 years old. An unbelievable majority, 71% of these women were aged 15-34. This definitely proves younger people are more exposed to brand associations if they can connect spokespersons to their brands out of context so effortlessly. The fact is that greater exposure to brand associations has an effect on brand awareness and recollection and in that way to brand equity that is most valuable for the brand's company. This is also something for the case company to think about when considering the future of Nutrissé Cream.

Based on the gathered results it is possible to answer the research questions that served as a precept throughout the study. The recommendations for the case company for further research and actions can be reviewed in the next section.

Does the brand identity created with the help of a local spokesperson match the brand image consumers get?

The image that the case company has wanted to create with the help of local spokespersons is that the brand would be more reliable and approachable. Based on the results it can be said that to a great extent the brand identity matches the brand image received yet there is the possibility to improve the trustworthiness and easy approach frame.

Is there a specific age group that is favourable for marketing strategy that utilizes local front men?

Based on the age distribution calculations, it can be stated there is no one age group that would prefer local spokespersons more than any other age group. In fact, the people in each age group are divided quite evenly in half when it comes to favouring local spokespersons or not. This actually shows some potential for broadening the target groups of marketing that utilizes local spokespersons.

Do Finnish consumers commit that Finnish products in general are better than foreign products?

Based on the results of this research, most Finnish consumers do not consider Finnish products or brands any better than foreign ones. It is important for the case company to know if other products have some advantages over their supply. At least in this case it is for the case

company's comfort that on the Finnish market (women) consumers are not prejudice against foreign brands.

Do Finnish consumers prefer foreign products that use localization strategy in their marketing as opposed to no localization strategy at all?

Applying the results of this study to the Finnish consumers, it can be said that a majority of Finnish women would rather buy a foreign product that has a local face than the same product without a local front man. Clearly the localization adds some value to consumers in the case they are choosing between other similar products.

Does it affect in Finnish consumers' buying decisions in any way if a product has a local spokesperson?

The consumers do not recognize the affect that advertising may have on their buying behaviour. Most Finnish women consumers would not admit local spokesperson have any effect on their buying behaviour but then again when they would have to choose between similar products than have and have not local spokespersons, a slight majority would let the local front man impact on their final decision. So applied to the Finnish market, the (women) consumers (at least a little over half of them) do let local spokespersons impact their final buying decisions.

Does a local spokesperson raise brand awareness?

Women under 35 years old clearly make connections between celebrities and the brands they represent more easily than women aged 35 and over. The findings of this study demonstrate that among women under 35, local spokespersons do raise brand awareness because they relate people to products more often than older women. Among women aged over 35, the local spokespersons do not create outstanding brand awareness.

In theory sense, the results indicate that using local spokespersons to express the brand's trustworthy and approachable personality is somewhat dividing the consumers opinions in half. The problem may be the positioning of the brand, the spokesperson him/herself or even the fact that markets have changed and the marketing strategy is not keeping up with the trends. Most probable cause for the gap between brand identity and the actual brand image is defective brand positioning or communication, or brand associations that are related to the spokesperson. If the problem relates to the associations connected with the brand spokesperson, it may have some serious negative impact on brand equity. Brand image measurements

should help improve the brand identity and defective positioning if needed. On the other hand, the findings report a positive phenomenon on brand awareness and especially among younger women, less than 35 years old. Connecting brand spokespersons to the brands out of context is very potential in the brand awareness perspective.

When it comes to hair colours, the research showed that the functional benefits matter the most for women consumers. However, the results also show that a local spokesperson does have some conscious and subconscious positive effect on buying behaviour and therefore it can be interpreted that the spokesperson does add some value whether the consumers realize it or not. In Nutrissé Cream's case these study results may signify that the local front man adds some value to the value proposition but the functional benefits are the most important attribute. It is most likely that the success of Nutrisse hair colours is related more to the brand loyalty that the functional benefits have created rather than the local spokesperson that represents the brand. Changing the identity or positioning of the brand requires some further research on the specific brand.

5.1 Recommendations for L'Oréal Finland Oy

The theoretical frame proposes that in any brand's case, when the brand identity is created and positioning is executed, the brand image should be measured and the results applied to improving the brand identity and its positioning if needed. The results of this study are relatively positive for the case company in the sense that the marketing strategy it uses has proven to be very potential and Finnish women consumers are apparently auspicious for this type of marketing/advertising. However the recommendation would be to do some further research on specific brands, especially in Nutrissé Cream's case before taking into any actions.

Further research should study if the brand identity of that particular brand matches the brand image and if the spokesperson for that particular brand has the positive effect on the brand's trustworthiness and approachability. It should also be examined whether consumers consider the local spokesperson ineffectual for the brand or not, to determine if the spokesperson is in any way essential for the particular brand's marketing strategy.

In Nutrissé Cream's case, if conducting any further research is for some reason impossible for the case company, it would be advisable to stick with the current marketing strategy until the

results of the next retest or opinion poll are reported. The case company has now some positive results to show the other Nordic L'Oréals to convince those that utilizing local spokespersons in Finland is very potential and changing the strategy without further research would be very risky.

In order to get some great results of matching brand image, the case company could invest in reinforcing the brand positioning and making sure the image of the spokesperson is also in outstanding alliance with the brand identity s/he is representing. With using real people to represents brands there is also the danger of brand external associations of the spokesperson affecting the brand image. In Nutrissé Cream's case the spokesperson is the strongest differentiation factor and a benefit that it has over other hair colours on the market.

If possible changes to brands that have a local spokesperson are relevant, the case company could consider using this marketing strategy to a more wider target group than just over 35 year olds. After all, the results showed that women under 35 are just as auspicious for this kind of a marketing strategy as women 35+. What comes to brand awareness, the study substantiated that women from 15-34 are very potential in making connections between people and their brands which naturally has a positive effect on brand equity.

If the case company is not willing to do any more research on the subject, the final recommendations for Nutrissé Cream brand would be to keep with the current marketing strategy and focus on strong positioning. This study has proved local spokespersons appeal to approximately half of women consumers and as a marketing strategy it has a lot of potential. If the case company wants to stick with the localization strategy but still change the spokesperson, the suggestion would be to consider a slightly younger representative that would appeal to also the younger women consumers. This would be a very potential way to increase sales and ensure Nutrissé Cream's lead position in the Finnish home hair colour market. The same applies to any brand having a local spokesperson.

Without further research on the brand image it would not be advisable to make any changes to the brand execution. Since local spokespersons clearly affect positively on brand awareness, buying behaviour and the whole brand image, the brand identity nor execution cannot be stated to be actually defective. If there is no clear defective on the brand identity, positioning or execution, any changes to them could be very risky for the brand.

5.2 Evaluation of the study process

Once the case company had assigned the study objective, it was fairly easy to search for related theory. Constructing the questionnaire and execution of it was easy and simple thanks to L'Oréal Finland that offered the excellent frame for carrying out the research even though gathering up the questionnaires and counting the results was more challenging and time consuming than expected. Formulating the interpretation of findings proved to be the biggest challenge of them all, but with enough time and patience the findings could be formulated in a simple way for all readers to understand.

The case company is very pleased with the results that this study disclosed. It is great that the study objectives were fulfilled and all the research questions got their answers. It is also magnificent that L'Oréal Finland can utilize these findings and apply the results in general for their own marketing purposes. The findings can also help the case company to conserve their own current marketing strategies against joint Nordic strategies.

As a learning process, conducting this study was very mind broadening and definitely a good learning experience. The study process helped to improve the author's market research knowhow in many perspectives and deepened the understanding of the related theoretical framework. Learning how to express your own interpretation to others in a written way was absolutely one of the most valuable things that conducting this study gave to the author.

Disregarding the obvious development in the field of marketing, market research and academic writing, the study process also gave the author a chance to develop skills in time and project management, responsibility of own tasks and timetable, and of course in information retrieval. Constructing the questionnaire also required some competent logical thinking and ability to make collaborations.

All in all, the thesis process itself was a positively educational experience that was beneficial for both the author and the case company. The author got the chance to develop in many levels as a business person whereas the case company got answers to its topical questions. The challenges with time and interpretation have ensured better preparations for the future and preparedness for adversities. As a conclusion, it can be said that the study was successful and all parties pleased with what it had to offer.

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Appendix 1
Questionnaire

Please read through the questions carefully and answer with consideration. If you have any doubt about the question or terms in it, please leave the question blank.

1. How old are you?
   a) 15-24
   b) 25-34
   c) 35-44
   d) over 45

2. Are you precise about the brands you use?

   (Do you for example buy products because it is of a certain brand, or do you prefer certain brands because of some reason?)

   a) Yes
   b) No

3. Do you think Finnish brands in general are better than foreign brands?

   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) I cannot say

4. Do you think that a foreign brand that has a Finnish spokesperson is more trustworthy than the same brand without the spokesperson?

   (A spokesperson is someone who represents the brand e.g. on commercials. Examples of Finnish spokespersons are Sami Hyypiä for L'Oréal Paris Men Expert, Tuuli Matinsalo for Danone and Satu Ruotsalainen for Garnier Nutrissé hair colours)

   a) Yes

b) No
c) I cannot say

Can you rationalize you answer?

_____

_____

5. Do you think that a foreign brand with a Finnish spokesperson is more approachable than the same brand without a spokesperson?

a) Yes
b) No
c) I cannot say

Can you rationalize you answer?

_____

_____

6. Does it affect your buying behaviour in any way if a foreign brand has a Finnish spokesperson?

a) Yes
b) No
c) I cannot say

7. If you have two exactly the same products to choose from, the only difference being that the other one has a Finnish spokesperson, which of the products would you choose?

PRODUCT 1 WITH a local spokesperson
PRODUCT 2 WITHOUT a local spokesperson

a) Product 1
b) Product 2

8. Do you easily connect celebrities with the brand they represent?

    (If you see a celebrity out of context of the brand, do you effortlessly connect him/her to the brand s/he represents? For example, if you see David Beckham on an article, do some brands he represents pop into your mind and so on?)

    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) I cannot say

9. Where do you dye your hair?

    a) At home
    b) At a salon
    c) Both at home and at a salon

10. What hair colour brands have you been using during the past year?

    _____

11. Where do you pay attention when you are buying a hair colour?

    (Number the options from 1-5. 1=the most important thing, 5 =the least important thing.)

	The Colour
	The Brand
	The qualifications (e.g. foamy, nourishing etc.)
	Quality
	The Origin
	Something else, what?