

MASTER THESIS

Acne Jeans and Brand Associations

- A Study of the Coherency Between the Brand Identity and the Brand Image

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Preface

First and foremost, we would like to seize the moment and express our appreciation to our supervisor Mr. Nils Kinch for his constructive criticism and encouragement throughout the execution of this thesis.

We would also like to take the occasion to extend our sincere thanks to all of you participating in the pre-test of our questionnaire. Your critical remarks were of highest importance for our research.

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Abstract

In recent years, the successful expansion of Swedish fashion companies have mainly relied on their ability to turn fashion into brands. However, when companies grow it seems to be difficult to maintain the original brand identity as well as to establish a unique brand image in the mind of the consumers. With regard to this matter the purpose of our thesis was to investigate the brand image of Acne Jeans. Our ambition was to examine to what extent the brand image coincided with the brand identity and if brand associations differed between different consumer segments. In order fulfill our purpose, we have conducted a questionnaire study on a sample of 130 students at Stockholm University. The findings of our study show that the brand image of Acne Jeans did not coincide with the brand identity regarding the aspects of individuality and innovativeness. We further concluded that there were several differences between the associations of those in possession of Acne apparel and those who did not own any Acne items. Finally, the associations of early adopters were investigated. The result indicated that the brand associations in this group did not deviate from the general opinion of the total sample.

Keywords: Fashion industry, Brand identity, Brand image, Brand associations, Brand communication, Brand perceptions, Early adopters, Symbolic value

Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 The fashion industry and the importance of branding.....	1
1.2 Problem discussion	2
1.2.1 Choice of industry – The fashion industry	3
1.2.2 Choice of company – Acne Jeans	3
1.3 Purpose and problem definition.....	4
1.4 Target group.....	5
2. Theoretical framework.....	6
2.1 Understanding the Fashion Industry	6
2.1.1 Consumer’s need of individuality and unique offerings.....	7
2.2 The concept of branding.....	8
2.2.1 The meaning of brands.....	8
2.2.2 Brand identity	9
2.2.3 Brand image.....	10
2.3 Communicating the brand identity	11
2.3.1 Communication of symbolic value.....	11
2.3.2 The origin of goods and brands	13
2.3.3 Retail allocation.....	13
2.3.4 Famous designers.....	14
2.3.5 Media as information channels.....	14
2.3.6 Sales staff and fashion embodiment	15
2.3.7 Fashion Innovation	15
3. Methodology.....	16
3.1 Research design	16
3.2 Practical approach	17
3.2.1 Literature review.....	17
3.2.2 Secondary data.....	18
3.2.3 Constructing the questionnaire	19
3.2.4 Conducting the questionnaire study.....	20
4. The brand associations of Acne Jeans	22
4.1 Respondents’ demographics and desire for uniqueness	22
4.2 Brand associations	23
5. Analysis.....	28
5.1 Students and brand associations	28
5.1.1 Acne - symbolic and functional value	30
5.2 Brand perceptions with regard to possessions of Acne garment	30
5.3 Early adopters and brand perceptions.....	34

6. Conclusions.....	38
6.1 Overview	38
6.1.1 To what extent is the brand image coherent with the brand identity?	38
6.1.2 Do associations differ between students in possession of Acne clothes and students not in possession of Acne clothes?.....	38
6.1.3 How do early adopters perceive the brand?	39
7. Managerial implications and future research.....	40
8. List of references.....	42
8.1 Books.....	42
8.2 Articles	44
8.3 Electronic Sources	46

Appendix 1. Source and target questionnaire

Appendix 2. Distribution of the received answers

Appendix 3. Associations with regard to possessions of Acne garment

List of figures

Figure 1. <i>Research Design</i>	16
Figure 2. <i>Clothes as mean of expressing personality</i>	23
Figure 3. <i>Clothes in a limited edition</i>	23
Figure 4. <i>Jonny Johansson and individual style</i>	27
Figure 5. <i>Jonny Johansson and creative design</i>	27
Figure 6. <i>Associations regarding individual style</i>	34
Figure 7. <i>Associations regarding creative design</i>	34

List of tables

Table 1. <i>Free brand associations</i>	23
Table 2. <i>Brand associations according to statements</i>	25
Table 3. <i>Reasons for choosing a location of purchase</i>	26
Table 4. <i>Students and brand associations</i>	29
Table 5. <i>Symbolic and functional value</i>	30
Table 6. <i>Acne and high quality</i>	31
Table 7. <i>Acne and innovative design</i>	33
Table 8. <i>The brand perceptions of early adopters</i>	35

1. Introduction

In this chapter we will present a background of our chosen research subject, a discussion about our problem area and the purpose of our thesis. Furthermore, we will emphasize our research questions and highlight our target group.

1.1 The fashion industry and the importance of branding

In recent years, the Swedish fashion industry has grown rapidly. During 2006, small fashion companies experienced increased growth rates; the fashion designer Odd Molly increased its turnover by 155 percent, Whyred, Carin Wester and Hunkydory expanded their sales by 125 percent.¹ According to the latest research the success of Swedish fashion companies have mainly relied on their ability to turn fashion into brands. As a result, this has enabled them to not only compete with price and design. Instead, branding has become the dominating differentiation strategy for many firms.²

It can be argued that the fashion industry has experienced increased competition, which has led to subtle and decreased differences between competing products. In such business environment a strong brand can facilitate the communication of unique symbolic value. Such value will distinguish the company's identity from competitors, motivate the consumers in the buying decision process and can ultimately be an opportunity to achieve brand-consumer relationships.³

In order to build a strong, sustainable brand consistency in brand communication is essential.⁴ Inconsistencies in brand communication may lead to consumers' dissatisfaction and reevaluation of the brand and ultimately brand devaluation.⁵ However, when companies grow it seems difficult to maintain the original brand identity as well as to establish a unique brand image. With

¹ Veckans Affärer, 2007

² Hauge, 2007

³ Aaker, 1996, pp. 95

⁴ Buchanan et al, 1999, Wood, 2000

⁵ Court et al, 2002, pp. 2

regard to the complexity of this matter, Patrick Gournay, the former CEO of Body Shop, states that:⁶

“It is difficult when a company grows to maintain contact with its customers easily, this is an issue we are very sensitive to. We will always retain a local focus and a personal, individual feel to our brand.”

The importance of consistent communication of the brand identity in order to achieve long-term success of a brand’s image within the volatile fashion industry, is further emphasized by Ralph Lauren:⁷

“I am not looking like Armani today and somebody else tomorrow. I look like Ralph Lauren. And my goal is to constantly move in fashion and move in style without giving up what I am”

1.2 Problem discussion

Satisfying the needs and wants of the customers is the primary task of all marketing-oriented organizations, whichever part of the fashion industry it is operating in. It is therefore necessary for any company to understand the costumers’ motivation to buy.⁸ Many researchers have investigated the fashion industry from a sociological perspective, focusing on the creation of fashion as well as the diffusion and adoption of trends within a society.⁹ Findings from such studies show that ‘lead consumers’ of fashion, also known as early adopters, have a strong desire to express “uniqueness” through acquisition and usage of fashionable apparel that distinguish them from others.¹⁰ For any company operating in the trend-oriented area of fashion, it will be essential to meet the needs and demands of these trend conscious consumers. However, when fashion companies grow their clothes will be mass-produced and discovered and recognized by a larger group of consumers. As a result these companies risk loosing their unique image and consequently, consumers might perceive them as mainstreamed. In the short run the economic gain will be considerable due to economies of scale and increased efficiency when allocating

⁶ Clifton & Maughan, 2000, pp. 52

⁷ Ask Men, 2008-04-15

⁸ Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994

⁹ Solomon & Rabolt, 2002, Sproles, 1981, Tungate, 2005

¹⁰ Lynn & Harris, 1997, pp. 603, Tian et. al, 2001, pp. 50-53

internal resources, but in the long run this progress might lead to a devaluation of the brand due to inconsistencies between the brand identity and the brand image.¹¹

1.2.1 Choice of industry – The fashion industry

Fashion is, as stated above a growing and increasingly important industry which has been the centre of numerous research projects. However, such studies have often been directed towards the field of consumer behavior, leaving out the branding perspective. Moreover, we believe that there is an even greater absence of studies concerning the aspect of branding in the Swedish fashion industry. Therefore, we consider our chosen topic to be worthwhile investigating.

In many markets, the distinctions between products are small and the consumer choice of products is to a large extent based on the symbolic meaning behind the product or the company. In such environment, the brand has become a source of stability and a way to establish a unique position in the minds of consumers. The fashion industry could be seen as an extreme case in this matter as it is safe to say that fashion is little about needs but more about emotional aspects.¹² For that reason, fashion companies must be able to efficiently communicate value associated with certain life-styles and social characteristics of a specific consumer group.¹³ Consequently, we believe that findings from studies on the communication of symbolic value in the fashion industry also could be applicable for companies in other volatile and highly unpredictable industries.

1.2.2 Choice of company – Acne Jeans

When considering the issue mentioned above Acne Jeans has emerged as a research object of highest interest due to its expanded sales and its aim to represent individuality. Acne Jeans together with five other companies, with a focus on creative business activities, constitute the Acne collective. The other five companies are Acne Creative, Acne Digital, Acne Film, Acne JR

¹¹ Solomon & Rabolt, 2002, Hauge, 2007

¹² Hauge 2007, pp 17

¹³ Pettinger, 2004, pp. 171

and Acne Paper.¹⁴ When moving further through our thesis Acne Jeans will be referred to as Acne.

The company was founded in 1997 as a small, entrepreneurial firm with the aim to represent creativity, individuality, an innovative style and high-fashion design.¹⁵ Acne primarily targets early adopters and fashion leaders.¹⁶ The first collection of hundred pairs of red-stitched jeans was launched in 1998, designed by the Creative Director Jonny Johansson.¹⁷ Finding the right balance between artistic independence and commercialization is the cornerstone of Acne's strategic thinking. Concerning this matter, Jonny Johansson further states:¹⁸

“Art/Industry has been an important tagline since the starting point”

In recent years, Acne has experienced a rapid growth. Between the years 2004-2006 the turnover increased from 42 MSEK to 187 MSEK.¹⁹ Today, Acne distributes its jeans via 500 retailers in 27 different countries as well as in its own concept stores, however still with the ambition to represent creativity, high fashion and a modern framework for individuality.²⁰ This paradox, growth and commercialization on one hand and individualism and uniqueness on the other hand lay the foundation for our problem definition.

1.3 Purpose and problem definition

The purpose of our thesis is to investigate to what extent the brand image is coherent with the brand identity of a rapidly growing fashion company. In order to do so, we will compare students' perceptions of Acne Jeans with the values that the brand intends to represent. Consequently, the ambition is to create a more profound understanding of managerial aspects concerning the communication of symbolic value in the fashion industry.

¹⁴ Acne, 2008-04-18

¹⁵ Acne, 2008-04-18

¹⁶ Interview with Mikael Schiller, the CEO of Acne, Andr en Meiton et al, 2002

¹⁷ Acne Jeans, 2008-04-10

¹⁸ Veckans Aff rer, 2008-04-21

¹⁹ Hauge, 2007, pp. 12

²⁰ Acne Jeans, 2008-04-10

In order to fulfill our purpose we seek to answer the following questions:

- ❖ To what extent is the brand image coherent with the brand identity?
 - Do associations differ between students in possession of Acne clothes and students not in possession of Acne clothes?
 - How do early adopters perceive the brand?

1.4 Target group

Our study is mainly directed towards the academic field, focusing on students with knowledge in business studies. Furthermore, we have concentrated our efforts on adopting a strategic brand management approach when executing this research, therefore, we also direct our study towards managers in general and more specific managers within the fashion industry.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter we will present our theoretical framework based on the unique characteristics of the fashion industry and fashion consumers' need for and manifestation of individuality and uniqueness. Furthermore we will highlight theories on the subject of strategic brand management with the aim to ensure consistency and long-term success of a brand's image.

2.1 Understanding the Fashion Industry

"You look around and you see everyone wearing the same symbol. I don't like that because it's like following the herd!"²¹

- Stephen Carr

Numerous researchers have tried to explain how fashion starts and spreads, who comes up with new trends, who are the first to follow them and what stimulates fashion diffusion and innovation. Early research argued that fashion trends move through society and social classes. According to such research, fashion trends are launched by the upper class, and later copied by the lower classes through a so-called trickle-down theory. Wanting to differentiate themselves from the lower classes, the higher classes initiate changes in trends, which drive the cycle forward, with the class competition as a motivation for fashion change. The trickle-down theory has, however, since the 1960's been criticized for being outdated. Rather, it has been argued that fashion often starts as sub cultural tendencies initiated from the streets, and that trickle-up or trickle-across theories are better suited for describing fashion movements.²²

The classic product life cycle cannot always be applied to fashion. In contrast, the fashion life cycle can be described in several ways. There is a natural cycle based on the different seasons where the weather will determine the types of purchases. Moreover, there are trends that will not be affected by season and not have mass appeal but that will attract specific groups of consumers,

²¹ Clifton & Maughan, 2000, pp. 28

²² Hauge, 2007, pp. 18, Law et al., 2004, pp. 362-363

teenagers for example. Also, a product can move from a mass market to an exclusive market or vice versa.²³

However, fashion tends to follow a cycle similar to the classic product life cycle. The fashion life cycle illustrates how fashion products move from initiation to decline through three phases; introduction, acceptance and regression. In the introduction phase, only a few people will have discovered the product, the consumer innovators and early adopters. These will be followed by a larger group of people during the acceptance phase and eventually the product will experience less interest from the consumers during the regression phase.²⁴ Further, it is claimed that the consumers who come up with new trends as well as the consumers who first adopt them, generally have a strong desire for expressing individuality and uniqueness.²⁵

2.1.1 Consumer's need of individuality and unique offerings

A consumer's need for uniqueness can be defined as a person's seek for individuality in relation to others through acquisition and utilization of consumer goods with the purpose of developing and expressing its distinctive personal and social identity.²⁶ The need of feeling different from others arises when a person perceives that its identity is threatened as a result of being similar to others.²⁷ One manifestation of uniqueness is the avoidance of products or brands that have become commonplace, on the contrary, products that are perceived to be outside the norm in a social context may serve as symbols of uniqueness.²⁸

The act of moving away from the norm is called counterconformity. Research has identified three different aspects of counterconformity behavior; making a creative choice, by selecting a product that is acceptable yet original in relation to others. The second choice is making an unpopular selection that is considered to be 'unacceptable' and third, consumers may make a 'minority choice'. However, the individuals with a high need for uniqueness are likely to enact all of the

²³ Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994, pp. 65

²⁴ Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994, pp. 59-68

²⁵ Goldsmith et al., 1999, pp. 7-18

²⁶ Solomon & Rabolt, 2004, pp. 402, Belk, 1988

²⁷ Cooper et al., 2005, pp. 331

²⁸ Tian, Bearden & Hunter, 2001, pp. 51-53

counterconformity responses in product choices.²⁹

In general, the desire for unique offerings will increase consumers' efforts to acquire and possess goods, services, and experiences that few others possess. More specific manifestations of this desire include an increased tendency to acquire and use products that are scarce, innovative, customized, and/or outmoded as well as an increased tendency to shop at small, unique retail outlets.³⁰

2.2 The concept of branding

“A product is something made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by the customer. A product can be copied by a competitor and quickly outdated; a successful brand is unique and timeless!”³¹

- Stephen King, WPP Group London

2.2.1 The meaning of brands

One of the most basic assumptions in business is that companies or brands need to have a perceived competitive advantage in order to be successful. One has to be perceived as better than the competitors in some way, otherwise there will not be a reason for consumers to choose the product of one company instead of another's. But most important, the consumers need to realize the advantages of the company and they need to be able to identify the origin, the sender of the product.³² The uniqueness of the brand has to be efficiently communicated to a thoroughly selected target group in order to differentiate and achieve growth.³³

In branding theory it is often argued that a superior product is no longer a guarantee for success. The fast, technological development has increased the speed in which imitations of products appear on the market, in turn this has shortened the product life cycle. The need for increased speed of innovations and a more intense price war has in turn led to an increased importance of

²⁹ Tian & McKenzie, 2001, pp. 171-172

³⁰ Lynn & Harris, 1997, pp. 604

³¹ Biz Community, 2008-04-11

³² Nilson, 1999, pp. 59-60

³³ Fombrun, 1996, pp. 312, Keller, 2000, pp. 42

brands as competitive advantages.³⁴ From a company perspective, brands can function as carriers of information and symbols of certain life-styles to attract consumers. Further, brands can represent an opportunity to achieve financial growth by adding value to the products. From a consumer perspective on the other hand, a brand can be a source of information and a perceived guarantee for quality when the brand itself strongly represent certain attributes. Quality as an attribute could however be difficult to evaluate, therefore, consumers tend to look for signals of quality, such as price. Furthermore, as the information that is communicated through the brand can be of both rational and emotional character, brands will not only be carriers of information to the consumers, they will also have symbolic importance. This is essential in the creation of a unique brand image.³⁵

Moreover, the ultimate motive from a company perspective to invest in brand building is to achieve Brand Equity, which can be defined as an added value that a strong brand provides to the offering. Brand Equity can be divided into five parts; Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty, Brand Associations, and Other Proprietary brand assets, such as patents and registered trademarks.³⁶

2.2.2 Brand identity

In contrast to brand image, the brand identity refers to what a company strives to become, or how it want to be perceived by the consumers. Brand identity thus represents the company perspective and not necessarily how the consumers actually perceive the brand. Two researchers dominate the area of brand identity, David A. Aaker and Jean-Noel Kapferer. While traditional marketing researchers, such as Philip Kotler, argue that the brand should be considered as a prolongation of the product, Aaker states that the product is only one of the perspectives that can be communicated through the brand. The theories of Aaker take part from a perspective where the brand is analyzed from four different views, the brand as a product, person, organization and symbol. Moreover, each perspective consists of a set of underlying dimensions. The product perspective includes associations to the product attributes and quality as well as the users, usage

³⁴ Melin, 1999, pp. 8

³⁵ Aaker, 1996

³⁶ Ibid

and the geographical origin of the brand. The personality of the brand refers to the character of the brand, for example competence, honesty, sophistication or excitement. The third perspective of the brand as an organization is about expressing something about the company through the brand, as being global or to communicate certain values. The brand as a symbol concerns visualizing the brand identity through the trademark or other visual expressions such as the clothes of the personnel.³⁷

Kapferer has developed a psychodynamic influenced model consisting of six dimensions to describe and codify brand identity. Three of the dimensions represent external communication processes of the brand identity through the physics, relation and reflection of the identity. The physics refers to a visual concept of the brand, the relation is what connects the company to the consumers and the reflection is a spontaneous description of the target group. In addition, the model of Kapferer includes three internal dimensions consisting of the personality, culture and self-image. The personality defined by the company is not entirely static; in contrast it will develop through the relation and interaction with the external environment. The culture is the fundamental values of the company, these will inspire the brand which will be a reflection of the deeper underlying culture. The self-image says something about who the consumers would like to become and be perceived as being as the result of choosing or rejecting a certain brand.³⁸

2.2.3 Brand image

Brand Image is how the consumers perceive the brand, the company and its products and it can be described as both a reflection and an interpretation of the Brand Identity. However, the image that the company seeks to communicate through its brand identity is not always coherent with the consumers' perception of the image. The image will be based on the associations the consumer has of the brand and the associations can develop from many different sources of information such as price, advertisements but also from the consumers' own experiences. A clear Brand Identity will facilitate the creation of a Brand Image and will further increase the credibility of the brand.³⁹

³⁷ Uggla, 2002, pp. 41-42

³⁸ Uggla, 2002, pp 43-44

³⁹ Nilsson, 1999

Another aspect that could have influence on brand image is the uniqueness of associations, which refers to the “unique value offering” of a brand. This distinguishing attribute represents a competitive advantage over rivals and is essential to a brand’s long-term success.⁴⁰ Despite the fact that common associations create category membership and “point of parity”, they are still desirable to a certain degree. However, it is fundamental that some of the associations are not only favorable, but also unique. These distinctive characteristics will lead to a differentiated response and represent the “point of differentiation” in a marketplace categorized by several comparable alternatives and relentless competition.⁴¹ If managed effectively, the distinct characteristics of a brand increase the ability to attract and retain customers, achieve strategic partnerships, and create a deeper meaning to consumers. A firm’s achievement highly depends on identifying and communicating its distinguishing attributes, aspects that make the brand unique. This is important in order to create a distinct buying experience in the mind of the consumers, to consistently live up to brand promises and ultimately manifest the uniqueness of the brand with regard to consumers’ perception.⁴²

2.3 Communicating the brand identity

“A great brand taps into emotions. Emotions drive most, if not all, of our decisions. A brand reaches out with a powerful connecting experience. It’s an emotional connecting point that transcends the product.”⁴³

- Scott Bedbury, Starbucks & Nike

2.3.1 Communication of symbolic value

It is important to understand the difference between functional and symbolic value with regard to the different needs they satisfy; functional brands satisfy immediate and practical needs and symbolic brands satisfy emotional needs such as those for self-expression, individuality and uniqueness, and their practical usage is only incidental. For example, in the category of wristwatches, the brand Casio would be considered a functional brand since its usefulness lies primarily in its ability to tell the time correctly. The brand Movado, on the other hand, would be

⁴⁰ Keller, 2003, pp. 72

⁴¹ Apéria and Back, 2004, pp. 50

⁴² Hannington, 2004, pp. 3

⁴³ All About Branding, 2008-05-16

considered a symbolic brand since it is used primarily for its status and uniqueness appeal and its ability to tell the time is only an incidental reason for its usage. Once a concept is selected for a brand it should be maintained over the brand's life for sake of consistency of the brand image. This is of highest importance and a cornerstone to ensure long-term success of a brand's image and to facilitate sustainable growth.⁴⁴

The fashion industry as well as the value associated with fashion merchandise rests mainly on symbolic substance and the way in which it stimulates experiential reactions of consumers.⁴⁵ Due to the fact that consumers constitute and express their sense of self and individuality through clothes, companies within the fashion industry have to focus on the production and communication of symbolic value in order to appeal consumers.⁴⁶ Coincidentally, one of the main functions of a successful brand is to provide a channel for the consumer to express himself. Therefore, branding becomes essential in the apparel sector, as the symbolic value is very high. Competing in an industry where self-expression, fashion and symbolic value are sky high, brands and strong brand identities provide a channel for consumers to achieve all of the above parameters.⁴⁷ A firm's capacity to imbue its products with a valuable set of symbolic meanings could be seen as a long-standing, hard-to-imitate distinctive competence useful to distinguish one's brand from competition.⁴⁸

In the following parts of this chapter we will highlight different communication strategies for fashion companies in order to communicate symbolic value and distinguish the brand from competition. Moreover, these strategies enable companies to create brand meaning, affect consumers' buying decisions, establish a unique brand image and ultimately leverage consistent and sustainable growth.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Bhat & Reddy, 1998, pp. 32-35

⁴⁵ Power & Scott, 2004

⁴⁶ Hauge, 2007, pp. 4

⁴⁷ Venture Republic, 2008-04-15

⁴⁸ Gobé, 2001, pp. 143-144

⁴⁹ Keller, 2003, pp. 7-20

2.3.2 The origin of goods and brands

The consistent use of outsourced manufacturing in the fashion industry raises an interesting question regarding products' origins. This due to the fact that the origin of fashion garments is highly important for consumers to determine its value.⁵⁰ It is well known that some countries have a more positive fashion connotation than others. Associations with fashion capitals such as London, New York, Paris and Milan certainly provides added symbolic value to fashion products.⁵¹ In addition, consumers of fashion are dubious about clothing produced in low-cost countries. Claims of uniqueness, exclusivity and quality are more difficult to assert when clothes are made in low-cost countries used by other less fashion-conscious brands. In order to avoid becoming associated with a low-cost origin and maintain an individualistic brand image, fashion companies should focus on the manifestation of intangible assets such as the underlying ideas, design, origin of the brand name, marketing, distribution and presentation of the fashion items.⁵²

2.3.3 Retail allocation

Where products are presented and sold is important for the symbolic value and the brand image. When it comes to build a strong brand image, the choice of distribution channels has become of highest importance.⁵³ This choice could be seen as a balancing act between exclusivity, being represented in the right stores and accessibility, being represented in enough stores. A trade-off occurs between short-term economic gain of a wide distribution and the potential long-term rewards of exclusivity. However, companies not focusing on the mass-market, instead emphasizing individuality and fashion content, have to maintain an aura of exclusivity associated with the brand. In order to convince consumers that the offered products represent unique symbolic value, the products should be presented in the same locations as brands with similar aspiration, preferably in flagship stores or concept stores where only one brand is sold. This provides an extensive opportunity to control the consumers' experience and the perception of the brand.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Cook & Crang, 1996, 131-153

⁵¹ Gilbert, 2006

⁵² Hauge, 2007, pp. 6-8

⁵³ Gobé, 2001, pp. 159-184

⁵⁴ Hauge, 2007, pp. 8-9

2.3.4 Famous designers

The involvement of famous designers can be used as an effective tool in the constitution of garments' symbolic value. This is of relevance both for companies that want to add more fashion content to their product lines and also for firms that want to maintain an already unique and design intensive image. The power of creative and mythical star designers such as John Galliano, Karl Lagerfeld and Alexander McQueen lies in their ability to imprint clothes with symbolic value.⁵⁵ Some of these star designers have also become well-known, global, glamorous celebrities and brands in their own right⁵⁶ by possessing an instinct for anticipating, visualizing and creating fashion items before consumers even know they want them.⁵⁷ Moreover, celebrities and stars that are regarded as reliable trendsetters of taste will bring with them a rich fantasy world to which consumers aspire and form an attachment to. Their impact on the economic value can not be underestimated when it comes to the reinforcement of the brand image.⁵⁸

2.3.5 Media as information channels

In the fashion industry media communication is of highest importance with regard to knowledge transfer from fashion companies to consumers. The use of fashion magazines has become essential in order to produce symbolic value and affect consumers' perceived value. The available information of what is trendy, looks good or is fashionable is to a high extent the effect of media exposure.⁵⁹ The role of fashion magazines, reports and journalists are to provide helpful consumer guidelines concerning which trends to adopt, which designers and brands that best capture the trends.⁶⁰ For fashion companies to succeed in the long-rung the constitution of fashion knowledge is fundamental. Establishing and nurturing the relationships with fashion journalists and magazines is of highest strategic importance in order to communicate and associate the right value to the brand.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Weller, 2006

⁵⁶ Tungate, 2005, pp. 120-123

⁵⁷ Molotch, 2005, pp. 31

⁵⁸ Tungate, 2005, pp. 120

⁵⁹ Hauge, 2007, pp. 9-11

⁶⁰ Brown, 1998

⁶¹ Tungate, 2005, pp. 125-130

2.3.6 Sales staff and fashion embodiment

The frontline sales staff can have a sufficient impact upon consumers' perception of a brand. When the shop assistants are wearing current stock and with appropriately fashionable hairstyle and make up, they signal what is fashionable to customers, and how they might look in the "right" clothes.⁶² The fashion sales staff is, more or less, expected to embody a certain image by wearing the clothes for sale and display fashion competency.⁶³ Therefore, the sales staff can be seen as the living embodiment, a reflection, of a brand's identity. Furthermore, employees are crucial in order to communicate symbolic value to customers.⁶⁴ This can be done in different ways such as the sales staff's physical appearance, shop displays, webpage presentations, newsletters or how the sales staff talk about and assess certain values to products or brands.⁶⁵

2.3.7 Fashion Innovation

Product innovation is probably the most important activity in most companies as unique value offerings are of fundamental importance for successful brands.⁶⁶ In the fashion industry, innovation is of even higher importance due to the specific characteristics and conditions of the business area. New designs are developed, at some time high costs, and at the introduction of every new design, previous designs become outdated. A new design will initially target the early adopters. As fashion spreads, the group will eventually contain a large portion of late adopters as well and the design will no longer attract the early adopters, if not a new design is launched. Moreover, the increased speed of which imitations of successful designs appear is an incentive to continuously innovate.⁶⁷ However, to be successful in the fashion industry in the long-term perspective, fashion brands must create an image of being innovative in the minds of the consumers. In order to represent something unique, companies in the fashion industry should offer trend-right, brand-name products with innovative designs.⁶⁸

⁶² Pettinger, 2004, pp. 178-179

⁶³ Leslie, 2002, pp. 63

⁶⁴ Gobé, 2001, pp. 169

⁶⁵ Hauge, 2007, pp. 16-17

⁶⁶ Nilson, 1999

⁶⁷ Pesendorfer 1995, pp. 773

⁶⁸ Knight & Kim, 2007, pp. 271

3. Methodology

In this chapter, we will detail our choice of research approach and practical approach. We will continuously discuss critical aspects of our chosen methodology.

3.1 Research design

Important aspects when conducting an academic study are to choose which design and method to adopt in order to approach the identified research question.⁶⁹ Consequently, when executing this thesis the following research design and method has been undertaken (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Research Design*, Source: Saunders et al., 2007 (own interpretation)

First of all we have performed a comprehensive literature study with the aim to further increase our understanding of the chosen subject, prior research and theories regarding branding and fashion. Based on the literature study, we have constructed a theoretical framework underpinned by already existing theories. The theoretical framework has been used as a foundation when composing the questionnaire. Further, the questionnaire will be used as our most important tool when gathering primary data. In this thesis we have conducted a questionnaire study with a number of respondents at Stockholm University. In order to increase the proportionality of the sample, data has been collected at different faculties. Further, we have administered questionnaires containing questions and statements to a sample of 130 students. The collected data will then be analyzed and, finally, conclusions will be drawn.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Malhotra & Birks, 2007, pp. 94

⁷⁰ Saunders et Al. 2007, pp. 10

3.2 Practical approach

The practical approach when conducting this study has been based on the collection of information from an extensive literature review, secondary sources and the conduction of a questionnaire study. The data collection process is detailed as follows.

3.2.1 Literature review

Our theoretical framework is represented by the findings from an extensive literature research on books, articles published both in journals and on the Internet and information presented on various websites. The theoretical framework, underpinned by already existing research, represents the starting point of the subject matter, upon which further data collection is derived. Moreover, the theoretical framework will assist in how to approach the primary research and the arrangement, content and conveyance of the questionnaire. The achieved information from the literature research has also enabled us to cover the area of study in general and to recognize the particular variables of interest for further investigation.

In order to understand the fashion industry, several sources of information have been used. Some of these have been articles published in Swedish newspapers and books written by journalists or brand managers with a profound understanding of the industry. These have been used as a complement to scientific data in order to achieve a deeper insight in our area of research. However, one of our most important sources of information regarding general theories on fashion marketing is the book written by Bohdanowicz, senior lecturer in marketing at the university of Greenwich business school and Clamp, enterprise manager at Craydon College. Moreover, the work of Solomon, human sciences professor in consumer behavior, has been used in order to understand the consumers' motivation with respect to fashion and to describe the characteristics of early adopters. In addition, several others academic sources of consumer behavior have been used, among them, the academic papers of Tian, Bearden and Hunter should be mentioned.

The well-cited theories of Aaker professor of marketing, Kapferer, professor of marketing strategy and Keller, professor of marketing, all specialized in branding theories, have been fundamental in order to highlight the area of branding in general. More specifically, their theories

have been meaningful to describe the concepts of Brand Identity, Brand Image and Brand Associations, which are key notions of our thesis. Regarding theories on brand management in the fashion industry, the findings from the dissertation of Hauge, researcher at Uppsala University have been particularly useful. His dissertation is a qualitative study on several Swedish fashion companies, published in September 2007. His findings regarding successful branding strategies of Swedish fashion companies, have been used as a starting point when designing our study, composing the questionnaire and further, in the analysis of the collected data. However, in the theoretical chapter “sales staff and fashion embodiment” has been mentioned as an important aspect when communicating symbolic value. This aspect has been left out in the thesis as investigating the sales staff would have required a study of its own. By this we mean a study of a more experimental character conducted in stores where Acne clothes are sold.

Furthermore, we consider that a detailed discussion of each author would be too extensive for this thesis. As a result we have mentioned the most essential authors within the field of consumer behavior, fashion and branding.

3.2.2 Secondary data

Before investigating students’ perceptions of Acne it was necessary to identify the values that the company intends to represent. By obtaining such knowledge we could determine Acne’s brand identity and further facilitate the creation of a more precise questionnaire. Consequently, this method ensured a comparison between the brand identity and the brand image. The brand identity has been defined based on information from secondary sources such as statements on Acne’s homepage and interviews with the CEO Mikael Schiller and the Creative Director Jonny Johansson published in newspapers as well as in one academic paper. However, identifying the brand identity based on secondary sources could be seen as uncertain with regard to reliability aspects as the information could contain interpretations. In order to reduce that risk we have mainly used quotes, which have been compared with information available on Acne’s homepage. Furthermore, there is a risk that other relevant attributes regarding the brand identity have been left out. However, we have included the most frequently mentioned values in the definition of Acne’s brand identity. As mentioned in the introduction section Acne aims to represent creativity,

individuality, an innovative style and high-fashion design. These values have been used as the definition of Acne's brand identity, which we continuously will refer to in the analysis chapter. Additionally, this definition has been applied when constructing the questionnaire.

3.2.3 Constructing the questionnaire

Primary data is highly important in order to comprehensively answer the research questions. The theoretical basis already at hand, clearly identifies the gap of information that still has to be acquired. The central question of primary research consequently refers to the aim of accomplishment.⁷¹ The stated research questions express the gaps of knowledge about consumers' perception and Acne's brand image. In order to obtain such information and fill the gaps of knowledge we have investigated the consumers' perspective in this study. A sample of 130 students at Stockholm University is the target to empirical research and the centre of our investigation. Before handing out the questionnaire we asked the respondents if they were currently studying at Stockholm University. The questionnaire has been enclosed in appendix 1.

In order to describe the distribution of age and gender, we began by asking the respondents personal factual questions that referred to these matters.⁷² Furthermore we asked the respondents whether they were familiar with Acne or not. The respondents unfamiliar with Acne were excluded from this study, as awareness of the brand was a precondition in order to provide reliable and relevant information.⁷³

Moreover, in order to identify respondents that aligned with the prerequisites of Acne's target group we worded four opening statements. These statements referred to the respondents need of expressing themselves through clothing, the desire to consume apparel that few others possess, the need of buying products that are scarce and to what degree respondents were interested in art and design. As we are seeking to identify perceptions concerning the symbolic value associated with Acne as a brand we have chosen a 5-point Likert-type scale. By using a scale we have avoided asking questions worded in a way that give the respondents the option to only answer

⁷¹ Malhotra & Birks, 2007, pp. 94

⁷² Saunders et al, 2000, pp. 362, Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 264

⁷³ Johannesen & Tufte, 2003

“yes” or “no”. In contrast, the respondents have been asked to answer according to how strongly they agree with each item on the scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”⁷⁴ As a result, the scale have enabled us to achieve more gradate answers. However, in order to allow spontaneous associations to be derived we asked one complementary open question. This complementary question is essential to obtain knowledge about the perceptions without suggesting certain kind of answers and avoid imposing our own expectations on the respondents.⁷⁵

3.2.4 Conducting the questionnaire study

Before conducting the main study, we have tested the questionnaire on a group of ten students with various backgrounds. The test group was selected based on a convenience approach and primarily consisted of our own friends and colleagues. The test group was asked to answer the questions according to the instructions but also to evaluate the language and the user friendliness. Based on the critical remarks of the test group the original questionnaire was modified and reconstructed. The questionnaire was originally constructed and performed in Swedish, however, a target questionnaire in English has been enclosed in appendix 1. In other words, the source questionnaire has been translated to English when analyzing the gathered data.⁷⁶

After testing and reconstructing the questionnaire the actual data collection was performed at Stockholm University on the 5th of May between 10 am and 5 pm. Stockholm University was chosen to reach a wide spread group of students due to its large variety of available educations. In order to reduce the risk of only interviewing students from a specific field of studies we placed ourselves outside the University cafeteria in “Södra Huset”. We also placed ourselves outside the hallway outside the library, in front of the entrance to “Allhuset” and finally we located ourselves in the main university building for business students in “Kräftriket”. At these locations, there was a constant through flow of students. The purpose of selecting different locations within the University area was to include students from different fields of studies. Furthermore, the intention

⁷⁴ Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 264

⁷⁵ Bryman & Bell, 2007, pp. 259

⁷⁶ Saunders et al, 2000

was to achieve answers from a sample that could be considered more representative for students in general.

Primarily we approached and hand-delivered questionnaires to students sitting by themselves. The reason for this was to avoid the direct influence respondents could have on each other if answering the questions and statements together. In that case the approached person did not want to participate in the survey the next single person passing by was approached. While the respondents were answering the questionnaire, we moved away in order to avoid pressuring them, receiving hasty responses and further disturbing them with our presence. The applied method when analyzing the collected data will be continuously detailed in the analysis chapter.

4. The brand associations of Acne Jeans

In this chapter we will present our findings from a questionnaire study administered to a sample of students in the Stockholm region. These findings will lay the foundation for the analysis chapter and further enable us to draw conclusions.

4.1 Respondents' demographics and desire for uniqueness

The total number of respondents in our survey was constituted of 130 students at Stockholm University. Of the original 130 questionnaires distributed, 7 had to be cancelled either due to inadequacies or because the questionnaire contained large sections of missing data, leaving 123 respondents for the study. The average birth year of the respondents was 1983, the oldest participant was born in 1961 and the youngest participant in 1988. Moreover, in this survey 54 male respondents and 69 female respondents represented the division of gender. Among the 123 answers, 12 respondents were unfamiliar with the brand and 111 respondents were familiar with Acne. Out of the 12 respondents unfamiliar with Acne, seven were male and five were female. If the 12 cancelled questionnaires would have been included they might have influenced the final result due to conjectures and inconsistent answers. However, the gathered information from the 111 respondents, familiar with Acne, represents the basis of our empirical findings.

In this chapter we have illustrated findings from 4 of the statements in figures, however, figures representing the findings from the remaining 14 statements have been enclosed in appendix 2. As mentioned earlier in the methodology chapter, we have used a 5-point Likert-type scale. The respondents that for some reason did not answer our proposed statements have been summarized in a column marked by an "X". However, the "X" was not originally included in the scale.

To begin with the respondents were faced with the statement "*I use clothes in order to express my personality*". Most of the respondents partly or totally agreed, one respondent totally disagreed and six respondents partly disagreed. Thirty-five of the respondents answered neutrally. The distribution of all the answers is presented in Figure 2. With regard to the respondents' desire for unique apparel we proposed the following statements "*I prefer clothes that few others possess*" and "*I prefer to buy clothes available in a limited edition*". Concerning the first

statement 14 respondents totally agreed, 27 partly agreed, 35 answered neutrally, 20 partly disagreed and 10 respondents totally disagreed. With regard to the second statement 10 respondents totally agreed, 24 partly agreed, 32 answered neutrally, 31 partly disagreed and 14 respondents totally disagreed (Fig. 3). Furthermore, we suggested the statement “*I am interested in art and/or design*”. Out of the 111 answers, 18 respondents totally agreed, 39 partly agreed, 27 answered neutrally, 19 partly disagreed and 8 respondents totally disagreed.

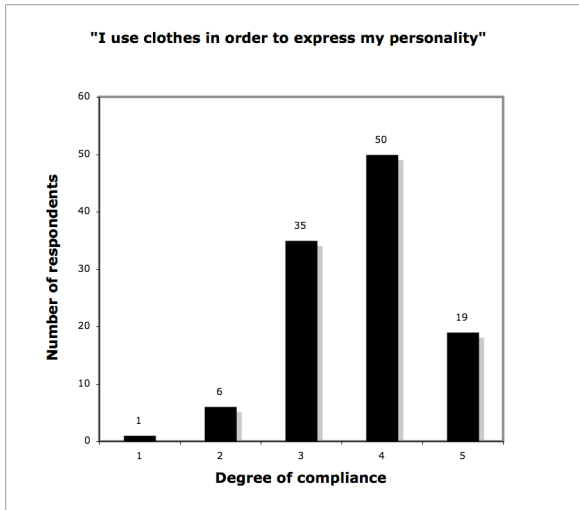


Figure 2. Clothes as mean of expressing personality

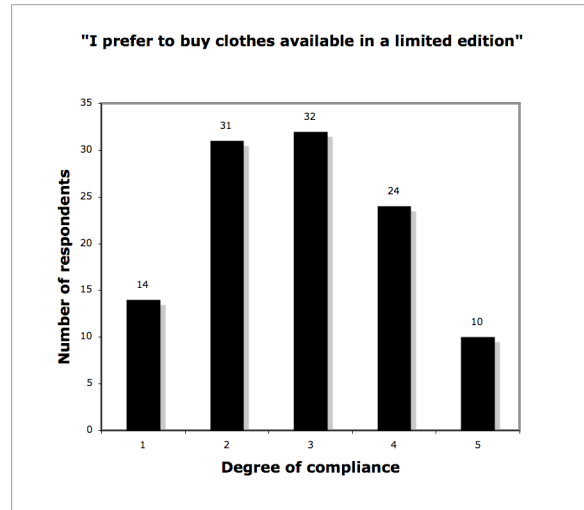


Figure 3. Clothes in a limited edition

4.2 Brand associations

When asking the participants to specify their first three associations when being exposed to the logotype of Acne we received 272 associations distributed among 44 different attributes (Table 1)

Free associations (number of times mentioned)

Jeans	37	Fit	6	Pimples	3	'PK-huset'	1
Expensive	25	Exclusive	5	Cool	3	'Nytorget'	1
Trendy	24	Public Relations	5	Red	2	Long legs	1
Attractive	24	Black	5	Pretentious	2	Ugly	1
Tight	22	Blue	4	Overrated	2	Fresh	1
Swedish	19	Design	4	Green	1	Old-fashioned	1
Clothes	10	Boring	4	Gray	1	Relaxed	1
Fashion	10	Unusual	4	Plain	1	Street	1
Quality	10	Girly	3	Stockholm	1	Interesting	1
Pure style	9	Common	3	USA	1	Bad quality	1
Youthful	7	Average price	3	'Åhlens'	1	Cartoons	1

Table 1. Free brand associations

Among these associations some were referred to more frequently than others, for example; *Jeans* was referred to 37 times, *Expensive* 25 times, *Attractive* 24 times, *Trendy* 24 times, *Tight* 22 times and *Swedish* 19 times. Furthermore, *Clothes*, *Fashion* and *Quality* were mentioned 10 times each, *Pure style* 9 times, *Youthful* 7 times and *Fit* 6 times. The remaining 69 associations were mentioned between 1-5 times each. A summary of all the occurred associations is presented in Table 1.

Moreover, the questionnaires included various predetermined statements concerning associations with the brand (Table 2). The result shows that 10 respondents totally agree and 47 partly agree with the proposition that Acne represents high quality, whilst 7 respondents totally disagree and 6 partly disagree with the statement. Thirty-six respondents answered neutrally. Further, 53 respondents partly- or totally disagree with the statement “*Acne is for people who want to stand out in a crowd*”, whereas 17 respondents partly- or totally agree. With regard to the respondents’ perception of Acne’s clothing as being mass-produced 5 respondents totally agreed and 21 partly agreed, in contrast 18 respondents totally disagreed and 33 partly disagreed.

When proposing that Acne communicates individuality 47 out of the 111 respondents answered neutrally. None of the respondents totally agreed, 14 partly agreed, on the contrary 48 respondents did not think of Acne as representing individuality, ranging from 32 respondents that partly disagreed to 16 that totally disagreed. The answers to the statement “*I perceive Acne as being commonplace*” show that 13 respondents totally agreed and 38 partly agreed, whilst 1 respondent totally disagreed and 26 partly disagreed. Thirty-three of the respondents answered neutrally. On the contrary, 5 respondents totally agreed with the statement of Acne as being exclusive and 7 respondents totally disagreed. Those who either partly agreed or partly disagreed were equally divided into two groups of 30 respondents each. Thirty-nine of the respondents took a neutral standpoint with regard to the statement.

The answers to the statement “*I perceive Acne’s clothes as well-tailored*” tell that 4 respondents totally disagree and 12 respondents partly disagree, whereas 9 respondents totally agree and 44 respondents partly agree. The respondents who did not answer the different statements have been summarized in the column marked by an “X”. A number of respondents have also answered by

marking number 3 on the 5-point scale, in other words these respondents have taken a neutral standpoint with reference to the statement. A summary of all answers is presented in Table 2.

Associations according to statements	1	2	3	4	5	X
Acne represents high quality	7	6	36	47	10	5
Acne is for people who want to stand out in a crowd	16	37	40	16	1	1
Acne represents mass-produced clothes	18	33	34	21	5	
Acne communicates individuality	16	32	47	14	0	2
I perceive Acne as being commonplace	1	26	33	38	13	
I perceive Acne as being exclusive	7	28	39	32	5	
I perceive Acne's clothes as well-tailored	4	12	37	44	9	5

Table 2. *Brand associations according to statements*

Moreover, 76 of the respondents did not possess any Acne garments, whilst 35 of the respondents did possess Acne clothing. Among the 35 respondents who did possess Acne garments 18 respondents answered that they usually purchased them at retailers, 7 respondents acquired their clothes in the concept store at Norrmalmstorg, 5 respondents bought Acne items in 'PK-huset' and 1 respondent usually went to Lilla Nygatan at Södermalm in order to buy Acne clothes. Three of the respondents marked the option "Other location", 2 of these mentioned 'Barkarby Outlet' as the place they most frequently visited in order to buy Acne clothing. The third respondent who had marked the option "Other location" normally bought Acne garments on the Internet. One of the respondents who did possess some Acne garments chose not to name the location of purchase.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to name the primary reason out of five different options for choosing the selected purchase location. The options of reasons for choosing a location of purchase were "A trendy shopping area", "Accommodating sales staff", "A convenient location", "An exclusive shopping area" and "Other reasons". The respondents who did not answer the question have been summarized in the column marked by an "X". A summary of all answers and the distribution between the different reasons for choosing a specific location of purchase is presented in Table 3.

Location of purchase		Reason					
Total answers	34	Trendy	Sales staff	Convenient	Exclusive	Other reasons	X
Norrholmstorg	7	1	1	5			
Lilla Nygatan	1			1			
Pk-huset	5	2	2	1			
Retailers	18	2	1	10		4	1
Other location	3					2	1

Table 3. *Reasons for choosing a location of purchase*

Additionally, we proposed a statement claiming that, “*Acne represents a Swedish origin*”. With this statement, 12 respondents totally disagreed and 18 respondents partly disagreed, whereas 17 respondents totally agreed and 32 respondents partly agreed. A number of 32 respondents have answered by marking number 3 on the 5-point scale, in other words these respondents have taken a neutral standpoint with reference to the statement.

With regard to the respondents’ inspiration from fashion magazines as well as their perception of Acne’s frequency of exposure in such magazines, we proposed the following statements “*I get inspired by fashion magazines*” and “*Acne is frequently exposed in fashion magazines*”. Concerning the first statement 6 respondents totally agreed, 22 partly agreed, 33 answered neutrally, 27 partly disagreed and 23 respondents totally disagreed. The answers of the second statement tells that 8 respondents totally agreed, 30 partly agreed, 49 answered neutrally, 11 partly disagreed and 7 respondents totally disagreed. Six of the respondents did not provide an answer to the statement.

Regarding the statement “*Acne is a symbol of innovative design*”, 2 of the respondents chose not to answer. None of the respondents totally agreed and 24 partly agreed, whereas 7 respondents totally disagreed and 30 partly disagreed. Forty-eight of the respondents took a neutral standpoint with reference to the statement.

To end with, the respondents were faced with a statement proposing *“I prefer to buy clothes from designers that I am familiar with”*. Out of the 111 respondents, 107 respondents gave their answer to this statement. Among those respondents, 34 took a neutral standpoint, 6 totally agreed, 25 partly agreed, 16 totally disagreed and 26 partly disagreed. In addition, the respondents were asked whether they knew of Acne’s designer Jonny Johansson or not. The result shows that 14 of the respondents were familiar with Jonny Johansson, while 97 of the respondents were unfamiliar with him. For those who knew of Acne’s designer the following two attendant statements were proposed *“I associate Jonny Johansson with an individual style”* and *“I associate Jonny Johansson with creative design”*. None of the respondents totally agreed with the first statement, 5 partly agreed, 5 answered neutrally, 2 partly disagreed, 1 respondent totally disagreed and 1 respondent did not answer. Concerning the second statement 1 respondent totally agreed, 3 partly agreed, 6 answered neutrally, 3 partly disagreed, none of the respondents totally disagreed and 1 respondent chose did not answer. The answers from these two statements are presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

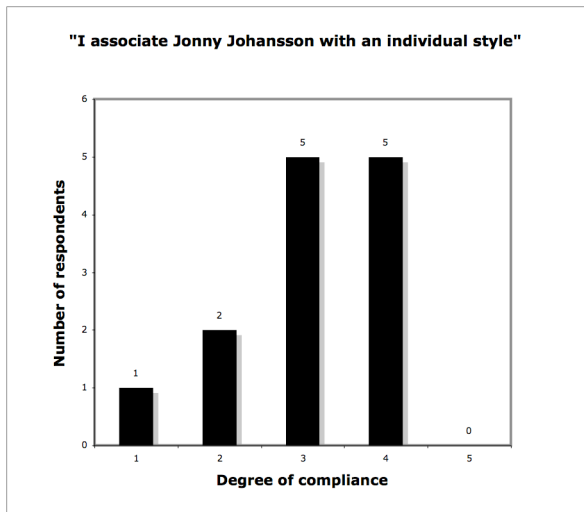


Figure 4. *Jonny Johansson and individual style*

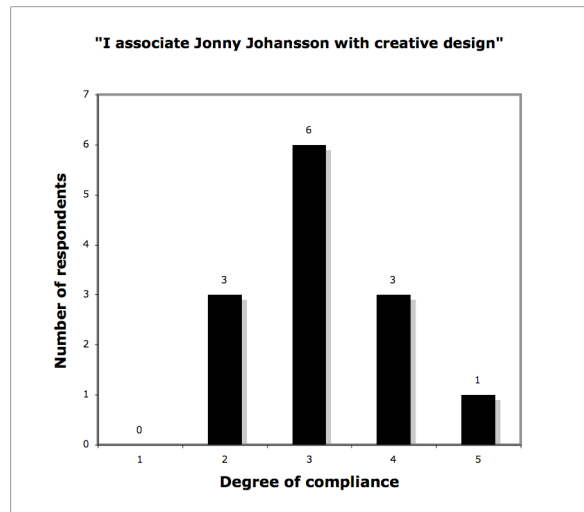


Figure 5. *Jonny Johansson and creative design*

5. Analysis

In this chapter we will perform an analysis. The data from chapter four will be interpreted and put in to relation to our theoretical framework in order to pinpoint similarities and differences. First we will examine if the brand image among students is coherent with Acne's brand identity, second, we will analyze if perceptions differ with regard to possessions of Acne garment, finally, the perceptions of early adopters will be identified and presented.

5.1 Students and brand associations

In order to facilitate the analysis of the collected data the Likert-type scale has been concentrated in to three different categories; low-, neutral- and high level of agreement with the proposed statement. The category "low" represents disagreement with the statement and refers to the respondents that originally answered 1 or 2 on the scale, whereas "high" represents agreement with the statement and refers to the respondents that originally answered 4 or 5 on the scale. The respondents that answered 3 are represented by the category "Neutral". The respondents that did not answer the statements are presented in the category "Missing value". All values are presented in percentages (Table 4). In this section we will perform a comparative analysis with the aim to assess to which extent the brand identity is coherent with the brand image of Acne.

The results of our questionnaire study show that a majority of the students associate Acne with high quality as well as creating well-tailored clothes. However, there was no dominating standpoint with regard to whether Acne represents exclusivity or not. Further, it is noticeable that mass-produced clothes were not linked to Acne, nevertheless the brand was perceived as commonplace among the students. This is supported by the fact that almost half of the students discarded the proposition that Acne's clothes stand out in a crowd, nor did they consider Acne to represent individuality. Additionally, Acne was to a great extent perceived as representing a Swedish origin. The result of the answers concerning the innovativeness of Acne's design does not provide a clear opinion, however it weakly indicates that the design was not considered as innovative. Further, the students were of the opinion that being familiar with the designer was relatively unimportant when purchasing clothes. Additionally, a larger relative amount of the

students who knew of Jonny Johansson associated him with an individual style than a creative design. However, most of the respondents did not have an apparent opinion regarding these matters.

According to the theoretical framework all branding efforts should be executed based on consistent communication of a firm's brand identity. This will facilitate the manifestation of a strong brand image that coincides with the intended identity. However, the image will be based on consumers' associations, which in turn are reflections and interpretations of values communicated by the fashion company. Attributes such as innovative style, high-fashion design and individuality are emphasized as important elements in Acne's brand identity. Our study indicates that the students perceived Acne to represent high fashion design to a great extent. We have interpreted high fashion design to include the following associations; quality, well tailored and exclusive, in other words to avoid being associated with mass production. Further, the students' perceptions did not coincide with Acne's intention of representing individuality. In this concept we included attributes such as individuality and if the garment is for people who want to stand out in a crowd. For the image to correspond with the identity to a great extent, the students should also have discarded the brand as commonplace. Moreover, the result of our study provided an uncertain result with regard to Acne as an innovative brand, yet the result indicated a weak disaccordance with the brand identity.

Brand associations among students						
Level of agreement	Low	Neutral	High	Missing value	Total	Number of respondents
Scale	1--2	3	4--5			
Quality	11,7%	32,4%	51,4%	4,5%	100%	111
Well-tailored	14,4%	33,3%	47,7%	4,5%	100%	111
Exclusive	31,5%	35,1%	33,3%		100%	111
Mass-produced	45,9%	30,6%	23,4%		100%	111
Commonplace	24,3%	29,7%	45,9%		100%	111
Stand out in a crowd	47,7%	36,0%	15,3%	0,9%	100%	111
Individuality	43,2%	42,3%	12,6%	1,8%	100%	111
Swedish origin	27,0%	28,8%	44,1%		100%	111
Innovative design	33,3%	43,2%	21,6%	1,8%	100%	111
Buy from familiar designer	37,8%	30,6%	27,9%	3,6%	100%	111
Jonny johansson and individual style	21,4%	35,7%	35,7%	7,1%	100%	14
Jonny johansson and creative design	21,4%	42,9%	28,6%	7,1%	100%	14

Table 4. *Students and brand associations*

5.1.1 Acne - symbolic and functional value

The result of the study shows that respondents associate Acne with both symbolic and functional values. However, the majority of the associations with the brand referred to symbolic value, represented by 72,1 % of all the received associations. On the other hand, the relative frequency of associations concerning functional value was 27,9 %, or 76 associations out of 272 (Table 5). However, the most frequently mentioned association was jeans, 36 times, which we have interpreted as a functional value, as its basic function is to satisfy practical needs. Jeans as a notion could yet be imprinted with specific symbolic meanings in the mind of the respondents, derived by experiences or other sources of information. Expensive was the symbolic value that occurred most frequently, which could have both a positive and a negative significance due to different contextual aspects. Students, probably with limited economic resources, constituted the sample of respondents in this research. Further, this could be a conceivable explanation for perceiving the brand as expensive.

Symbolic value				Functional value			
Expensive	25	Boring	4	'Åhlens'	1	Jeans	37
Trendy	24	Unusual	4	'PK-huset'	1	Tight	22
Attractive	24	Girly	3	'Nytorget'	1	Clothes	10
Swedish	19	Common	3	Ugly	1	Fit	6
Colors	13	Average price	3	Fresh	1	Long legs	1
Fashion	10	Pimples	3	Old-fashioned	1		
Quality	10	Cool	3	Relaxed	1		
Pure style	9	Pretentious	2	Street	1		
Youthful	7	Overrated	2	Interesting	1		
Exclusive	5	Plain	1	Bad quality	1		
Public Relations	5	Stockholm	1	Cartoons	1		
Design	4	USA	1				
Total:					196		76
Relative frequency of occurrence					72,1%		27,9%

Table 5. Symbolic and functional value

5.2 Brand perceptions with regard to possessions of Acne garment

In this section, the brand perceptions will be analyzed and compared based on whether the respondents possess Acne garments or not. In order to enable a comparison between the two identified groups all the values have been presented in percentages. However, the percentages are

based on 35 respondents in possession of Acne garments and 76 respondents not in possession of Acne clothes. Moreover, the analysis in this section will contain 13 out of the 18 statements in our questionnaire. The first 4 statements referring to the identification of early adopters as well as the statement referring to whether fashion magazines inspire the respondents or not, will be further examined in the next section. A table of all relevant measurements has been enclosed in appendix 3.

The distribution of answers with regard to the Swedish origin of Acne reveals some differences between the respondents in possession of Acne garments and the respondents who did not possess Acne garments. An almost equal percentage of each group, 45.7% of those in possession of Acne garments and 43.4% of those who did not, perceived Acne as representing a Swedish origin. However, the respondents in possession of Acne garments were to a larger extent of no opinion concerning to the origin of Acne. Only 14.3% of those in possession of Acne apparel did not consider the brand to represent a Swedish origin and of those who did not possess any Acne clothes 31.6% were of the same opinion. Furthermore, 65.7% of those in possession of Acne garments perceived that the brand as a representative of high quality. The high evaluation of the quality by those in possession of Acne garments could be explained by user related experiences. Another likely explanation for receiving this relative proportion could be that those in possession of Acne clothes have justified their choice of brand by emphasizing its beneficial aspects. It is also of interest to notice that almost half of the respondents that had no experiences of owning Acne items recognized the brand as representing high quality (Table 6). As these consumers had no experience of using Acne garment they could not have evaluated the actual quality of the products. However, the result indicates that Acne has managed to imprint the brand with signals of symbolic character regarding the aspect of quality.

"Acne represents high quality"						
Level of agreement	Low	Neutral	High	Missing	Total	Number of
Scale	1-2	3	4-5	value		respondents
In possession of Acne garment	14,3%	20,0%	65,7%		100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	11,8%	36,8%	44,7%	6,6%	100%	76

Table 6. *Acne and high quality*

Another remarkable difference concerns the perception of whether Acne's clothes are well tailored or not. In comparison to those not owning Acne garment, a substantially larger share of the respondents owning some items perceived Acne's clothes as well tailored. In contrast, a larger share of the respondents who did not own any Acne items perceived the clothes as not being well tailored. Furthermore, it is essential to observe that a larger share of the respondents who did not possess Acne clothes stated that the brand was perceived as unexclusive. Consequently, 44.7% of those respondents also thought of Acne as being commonplace. However, nearly half of the respondents that did possess clothes also perceived Acne as being commonplace, nevertheless a large proportion of these respondents still perceived the brand as exclusive.

Furthermore, none of the two studied groups stated that Acne is for people that want to stand out in a crowd, nor did they consider Acne to communicate individuality. This could be related to the fact that most of the respondents in both groups perceived the brand as commonplace. A logic reason for being perceived as commonplace could be the fact that Acne has expanded rapidly in recent years. It could also be related to the fact that most of the respondents purchase their Acne clothes at retailers with "convenience" as the main reason. Another possible explanation could be whether the respondents perceive Acne to be frequently exposed in fashion magazines or not. Our study indicates that Acne is perceived to be frequently exposed in fashion magazines, especially by the respondents that possess Acne clothes. As emphasized in the theoretical framework, fashion companies need to find a balance between being exposed in enough locations and being exposed in the right locations. This could also be applied when it comes to media exposure, particularly when the company has the ambition to represent values such as individuality and uniqueness. According to the theory, there is a relation between being innovative and being perceived as unique. However, only 15.8% of the respondents not in possession of Acne garment perceive the design as innovative. This could be one of many underlying reasons for not having acquired Acne apparel. On the other hand, among the respondents in possession of Acne clothes 34.3% perceived the design as innovative (Table 7).

"Acne is a symbol of innovative design"						
Level of agreement	Low	Neutral	High	Missing value	Total	Number of respondents
Scale	1--2	3	4--5			
Do possess Acne garment	20,0%	42,9%	34,3%	2,9%	100%	35
Do not possess Acne garment	39,5%	42,1%	15,8%	2,6%	100%	76

Table 7. *Acne and innovative design*

An interesting parallel can be drawn between this result and the perceptions of the distinctiveness of Acne as a brand. These respondents did not consider Acne to communicate individuality nor did they state that Acne is for people who want to stand out in a crowd, yet they still perceived Acne's design to be innovative. As we did not define the concept of innovation in the questionnaire the respondents' comprehension of "innovation" may have varied. Additionally, another reason for perceiving Acne's design as innovative could be that the respondents who did own apparel had more knowledge of Acne as a corporate group. For example, these respondents were more familiar with the designer Jonny Johansson than the respondents who did not possess any Acne clothes. For that reason it is a possibility that eventual associations regarding Acne as a corporate group might have had spillover-effects on the perceptions of Acne's design.

Further it is notable that being familiar with the designer when purchasing clothes is unimportant to the respondents in possession of Acne clothes. In spite of this, 20% of those respondents were familiar with Jonny Johansson, while only 9.2% of the respondents not owning any Acne garments knew of the designer. Moreover, the answers are almost evenly distributed among those who did not possess any garments, ranging between 28.9% and 34.2%. Of the respondents with owner experiences, 42.9% perceived that Acne's designer represents an individual style. An equivalent percentage of respondents without owner experiences took a neutral standpoint. Moreover, there is an obvious dominance when relating those who own Acne garments and perceive Jonny Johansson's design to be creative with those who do not own Acne clothes (Figure 6 and Figure 7).

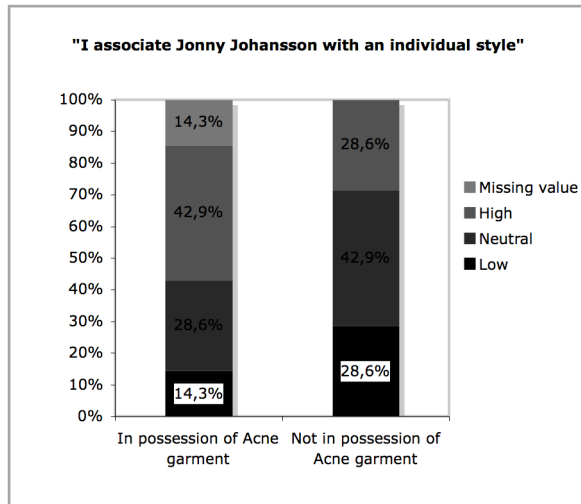


Figure 6. Associations regarding individual style

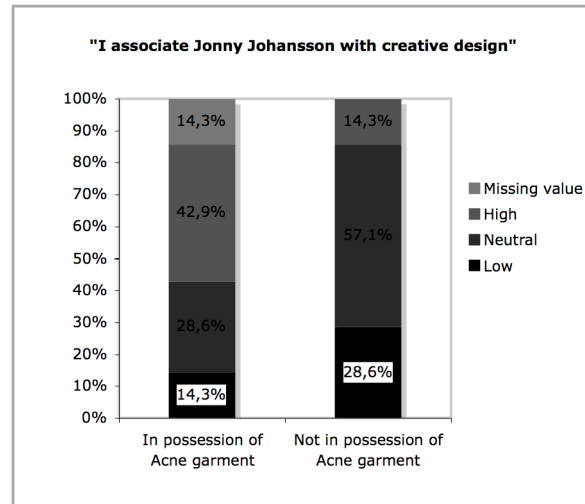


Figure 7. Associations regarding creative design

5.3 Early adopters and brand perceptions

The first 4 statements were proposed in order to identify individuals with a desire to express themselves through clothes, unwilling to wear apparel commonly used by others and those who prefer clothes that are scarce. The fourth statement referred to the respondents' interest in art and/or design. Each statement was used as a filter with the aim to spot respondents that align with Acne's primary target group, moreover, we labeled these respondents as early adopters. Respondents that answered strongly agree or partly agree (4 or 5) on each and every statement mentioned above were filtered and selected. After answering the statement "I use clothes in order to express my personality" 69 of the respondents fit our criteria as an early adopter. Among these 69 respondents 30 strongly agreed or partly agreed with the second statement "I prefer clothes that few others possess". Additionally 14 respondents were disregarded after answering the third statement "I prefer to buy clothes available in a limited edition". At the end, after the fourth statement "I am interested in art and/or design", 12 out of the original 111 respondents remained, which equals 10,81 % of the total sample. The answers from these 12 students represent the brand perceptions of early adopters. It is of further importance to be aware of that the respondents might have answered these statements based on who they would like to be or become. In other words, the statements are more or less directed towards the self-image of the respondents. The relative distribution of all the answers is presented in Table 8.

The brand perceptions of early adopters						
Level of agreement	Low	Neutral	High	Missing	Total	Number of
Scale	1--2	3	4--5	value		respondents
I get inspired by fashion magazines	8,3%	41,7%	50,0%		100%	12
Acne represents a Swedish origin	16,7%	33,3%	50,0%		100%	12
Acne represents high quality	8,3%	25,0%	66,7%		100%	12
I perceive Acne's clothes as well-tailored	8,3%	16,7%	66,7%	8,3%	100%	12
Acne is frequently exposed in fashion magazines	8,3%	33,3%	41,7%	16,7%	100%	12
Acne is for people that want to stand out in a crowd	33,3%	58,3%	8,3%		100%	12
I associate Acne with mass-produced clothes	50,0%	16,7%	33,3%		100%	12
Acne communicates individuality	25,0%	75,0%	0,0%		100%	12
Acne is a symbol of innovative design	33,3%	41,7%	25,0%		100%	12
I perceive Acne as being commonplace	8,3%	25,0%	66,7%		100%	12
I perceive Acne as being exclusive	33,3%	41,7%	25,0%		100%	12
I prefer to buy clothes from designers that I am familiar with	25,0%	50,0%	25,0%		100%	12
I associate Jonny Johansson with an individual style	0,0%	66,7%	33,3%		100%	3
I associate Jonny Johansson with creative design	0,0%	66,7%	33,3%		100%	3

Table 8. *The brand perceptions of early adopters*

According to the theoretical framework the country of origin can be an essential aspect in order to communicate symbolic value. The avoidance of being associated with a low cost origin and instead focusing on the connection to fashion capitals and countries with a positive fashion connotation is of highest importance in order to attract trend conscious individuals. The results of our study show that early adopters evidently associate Acne with a Swedish origin. A majority of the early adopters further associated Acne with high quality.

Furthermore, 7 among the 12 respondents, named early adopters, did possess some Acne garments. The majority of these respondents usually purchased Acne items at retailers. Convenience was the most common reason for choosing retailers when pursuing Acne garments. This purchase behavior could probably be explained due to the fact that the number of retailers exceeds the number of concept stores in the Stockholm area. With reference to our theoretical framework it is essential to find the right balance between exclusivity and accessibility. We have also argued the importance of not being too available when approaching early adopters. However, none of the identified early adopters mentioned exclusivity as a reason for choosing location of purchase. In contrast the statement referring to Acne as an exclusive brand received a low score

of agreement. Moreover, a greater part of the early adopters perceived Acne to be commonplace, yet they still owned Acne clothes. This could be seen as contradictory as early adopters, according to the theory, tend to avoid brands that have become commonplace. These students have also stated that they prefer clothes that few others possess and that they prefer to buy clothes in limited editions. A possible explanation for this contradictory behavior could be that these respondents had purchased some Acne garment before the expansion of the company and that they, at that time, perceived the company as relatively small, unknown and unique. It could also be that the respondents' actions deviate from their standpoints as a result of answering the statements according to who they would like to be or become.

According to the theoretical framework a famous and creative designer could imprint the brand with unique symbolic value and further have a significant impact on the economic value of the firm. Among the 12 respondents only 3 were familiar with Jonny Johansson, the designer of Acne. These respondents did not seem to have a clear opinion about Jonny Johansson as a representative of individuality and creative design. The answers to these statements indicate that the respondents have taken a fairly neutral standpoint. Our research further reveals that early adopters do not prefer to buy clothes created by designers that they are familiar with.

The production of symbolic value in order to affect consumers' perception of what is trendy, looks good or is fashionable is to a high extent related to media exposure. The role of fashion magazines is to provide guidelines concerning which trends to adopt and which designers and brands that best capture these trends. Therefore it is important to be exposed in such magazines in order to inspire the readers. With regard to the perceptions of early adopters, it is evident that fashion magazines inspire these respondents. Only 1 out of 12 respondents mentioned being uninspired by such magazines. Furthermore, these respondents did think of Acne as being frequently exposed in fashion magazines.. However, it could be argued that a frequent media exposure is not an end in itself, especially not for companies that want to represent uniqueness and individuality.

Moreover, to be successful in the fashion industry in a long-term perspective, fashion brands must create an image of being innovative in the minds of the consumer. This can be achieved by

offering products with innovative designs. The answers of the early adopters weakly indicate that they do not perceive the design as innovative. An explanation for this result could be connected to how these respondents have interpreted the notion “innovative”.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter we will focus on answering the research questions based on the analysis from chapter 5. The questions will be answered in the same sequential order as they were posed in chapter 1 and conclusions will be drawn

6.1 Overview

In this thesis we have investigated students' brand associations of Acne Jeans and the result from our questionnaire study has been compared to our theoretical framework. Further, the findings from our study have been applied in order to identify a possible gap between the brand image and the brand identity of Acne, pinpoint differences in associations with regard to the possession of Acne garment as well as identify the brand perceptions of early adopters. Considering our purpose, research questions and method, we will further discuss our findings and conclusions as follows.

6.1.1 To what extent is the brand image coherent with the brand identity?

Acne's intention is to communicate a brand identity that represents symbolic values such as high fashion, individuality and innovative style. The findings of our study show that the image of Acne, based on the associations of all students in the sample, was not entirely coherent with the brand identity. The image represented high fashion to a great extent. However, the image did not include the aspect of individuality, nor did the image coincide with the identity with regard to innovativeness. Therefore, our findings further indicate that it is difficult for growing companies to maintain the original brand image.

6.1.2 Do associations differ between students in possession of Acne clothes and students not in possession of Acne clothes?

Further, our purpose was to investigate if associations differ between students in possession of Acne clothes and students not in possession of Acne clothes. Based on our findings we conclude that there are several differences between the associations of those in possession of Acne apparel

and those who did not own any Acne items. The students that possessed Acne clothes associated the brand with high quality, well-tailored apparel and innovative design to a higher extent than the students that did not own Acne garment. In comparison to the students that possessed Acne items, a larger proportion of the students that did not own Acne clothes disaffiliated the brand as representing a Swedish origin. Moreover, a larger proportion of these students also rejected the brand as representing exclusivity and mass-production.

6.1.3 How do early adopters perceive the brand?

Additionally, our purpose was to identify the brand perceptions of early adopters. Characterizing for the students identified as early adopters is that they associate Acne with a Swedish origin, high quality, well-tailored clothes as well as being commonplace. Furthermore, they did not perceive Acne to be for people that want to stand out in a crowd, nor representing individuality or mass-production. Further, the early adopters did not associate Acne with innovative design and exclusivity. However, the result regarding these two attributes only provided weak indications.

7. Managerial implications and future research

In this chapter we will discuss our findings and emphasize different aspects of managerial implications. Finally we will propose interesting subjects for future research.

The findings of our study have also been analyzed in relation to theoretical management aspects concerning the communication of symbolic value in the fashion industry. As follows, we will discuss how these findings could contribute to the development of brand communication strategies.

As stated in chapter 6, the brand image did not coincide with the brand identity regarding Acne's intentions to represent individuality and an innovative style. However, it could be argued that investigating a general image is of low relevance for companies targeting more specific consumer groups. Therefore, in the case of Acne it should be of importance to direct the brand communication to early adopters as well as to identify their brand perceptions, as they represent the primary target group. Furthermore, with regard to the perceptions of early adopters Acne should focus its management priorities on imprinting the brand with symbolic meanings based on attributes in line with the brand identity such as individuality, exclusivity and innovativeness.

However, it could be questioned whether Acne and fashion companies in general should put too much effort on defining their brand identity. Instead, fashion brands should continuously be investigated from the consumer's perspective as the brand image could be seen as an essential competitive advantage in the long run. Despite all the efforts of communicating certain values, consumers will still interpret the brand identity based on their own knowledge and experiences. As a result, we believe that there will always, to some extent, exist incoherency between the brand identity and the brand image. We suggest that consumers will associate the brand with other values than those expected by the company, yet with positive connotations as an outcome. The students' spontaneous associations when being exposed to the logotype of Acne support this line of argument. The findings from these associations indicate that the brand image consists of several unintended values such as trendy, attractive, pure style and cool. As we see it, these values provide positive symbolic meanings to the brand and do not deviate far from the values

that Acne wants to represent. In conclusion, we believe that considering these aspects before adopting a certain communication strategy could be valuable to firms in general and fashion companies in specific.

Finally, we encourage future research to compare these findings with the perceptions and brand associations of students in other countries. Investigating the dimensions of cultural differences and internationalization processes could contribute to fashion companies as well as to the academic field. It would also be fruitful to examine how fashion companies relate to the notions of brand identity and brand image when developing communication strategies. This study has been restricted to include Acne Jeans, therefore, we suggest that future research should incorporate other firms of the Acne collective in order to evaluate eventual effects of umbrella branding.

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ENKÄTUNDERSÖKNING

Appendix 1. Source and target questionnaire

Hej,

Vi är två ekonomistudenter som för närvarande skriver magisteruppsats inom ämnet företagsekonomi, med inriktning mot marknadsföring, vid Uppsala Universitet. Vi skriver om konsumenters varumärkesperceptioner inom modebranschen och är därför intresserade av din uppfattning.

Du är naturligtvis anonym och svaren kommer endast användas för den här undersökningens syfte.

Vi tackar på förhand för din medverkan!



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

En undersökning om varumärkesuppfattningar

Födelseår: _____

Kön:

MAN

KVINNA

Känner du till varumärket Acne Jeans?

JA

NEJ

Svarade du NEJ på ovanstående fråga så tackar vi dig för din medverkan!

1. Äger du något Acne plagg?

JA

NEJ

Svarade du NEJ på fråga 1, gå vidare till fråga 3.

2a. Om du svarade JA på fråga 2: Var köper du oftast Acne plagg?

Butiken på Norrmalmstorg

Butiken på Lilla Nygatan

Butiken i PK-huset

Återförsäljare

Annat inköpsställe _____

2b. Markera det alternativ som stämmer bäst överens med varför du väljer att handla i ovan valda butik

Trendigt shoppingområde

Personalens bemötande

Lättillgänglig butik

Exklusivt shoppingområde

Annan anledning _____

3. Känner du till Acne's designer Jonny Johansson

JA

NEJ

4. Skriv ner de tre första associationerna du får när du ser:

Acne Jeans

Påstående 16. Jag föredrar att köpa kläder av designers jag känner till

1 2 3 4 5

Tar helt avstånd

Instämmer helt

Om du svarade att du kände till Acne's designer Jonny Johansson (Fråga 3) ber vi dig att svara på påstående 17 och 18. I annat fall tackar vi dig för din medverkan!

Påstående 17. Jag förknippar Jonny Johansson med en individuell stil

1 2 3 4 5

Tar helt avstånd

Instämmer helt

Påstående 18. Jag förknippar Jonny Johansson med kreativ design

1 2 3 4 5

Tar helt avstånd

Instämmer helt

Tack för din medverkan!

QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

Hello,

We are two students currently writing our master thesis in Business Studies at Uppsala University. Our focus is on marketing in general and brand perceptions in specific. In order to conduct our research we are interested in your opinion.

Of course you will be anonymous and your answers will only be used for the purpose of this study.

We thank you for your participation!



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

A survey about brand perceptions

Year of birth: _____

Gender:

MALE FEMALE

Are you familiar with the brand Acne Jeans?

YES NO

If you answered NO on the question above we thank you for your participation!

1. Do you possess any Acne garments?

YES NO

If you answered NO on question no. 1 please continue to question no 3.

2a. If you answered YES on question no. 2: Where do you usually purchase Acne garments?

The store at Norrmalmstorg	<input type="checkbox"/>	The store at Lilla Nygatan	<input type="checkbox"/>
The store in PK-huset	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retailers	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other location of purchase _____

2b. Mark the alternative that best accords with your reason for choosing the above selected location of purchase

Trendy shopping area	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accommodating sales staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
A convenient location	<input type="checkbox"/>	An exclusive shopping area	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other reasons _____

3. Are you familiar with Acne's designer Jonny Johansson

YES NO

4. Write the first three associations you get when you see:

Acne Jeans

The statements mentioned below concern the brand Acne Jeans. We ask you to answer these statements in accordance with your opinion. The scale is ranging between 1-5, where 1 stands for "Totally disagree" with the statement and where 5 stands for "Totally agree" with the statement. Further, 2 stands for "Partly disagree" with the statement, 4 stands for "Partly agree" with the statement and 3 stands for "Neutral" with regard to the statement.

Statement 1. I use clothes in order to express my personality

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 2. I prefer clothes that few others possess

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 3. I prefer to buy clothes available in a limited edition

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 4. I am interested in art and/or design

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 5. I get inspired by fashion magazines

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 6. ACNE represents a Swedish origin

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 7. ACNE represents high quality

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 8. I perceive ACNE's clothes as well tailored

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 9. ACNE is frequently exposed in fashion magazines

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 10. ACNE is for people who want to stand out in a crowd

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 11. ACNE represents mass-produced clothes

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 12. ACNE communicates individuality

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 13. ACNE is a symbol of innovative design

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 14. I perceive ACNE as being commonplace

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 15. I perceive ACNE as being exclusive

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 16. I prefer to buy clothes from designers that I am familiar with

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

If you answered that you were familiar with Acne's designer Jonny Johansson (question no. 3) please continue with the statements 17 and 18. If you were unfamiliar with Jonny Johansson we thank you for your participation!

Statement 17. I associate Jonny Johansson with an individual style

1 2 3 4 5

Totally disagree

Totally agree

Statement 18. I associate Jonny Johansson with creative design

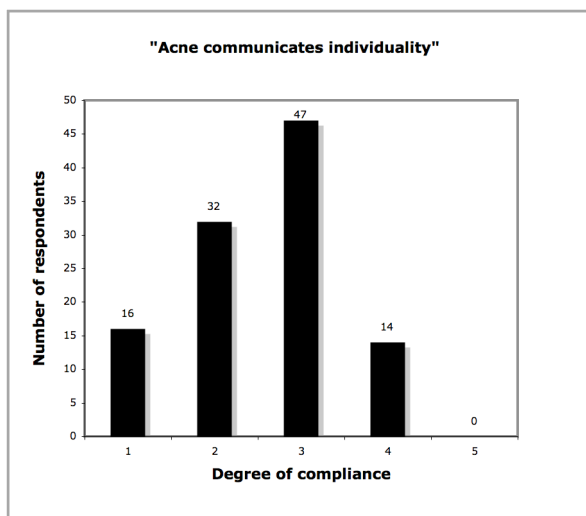
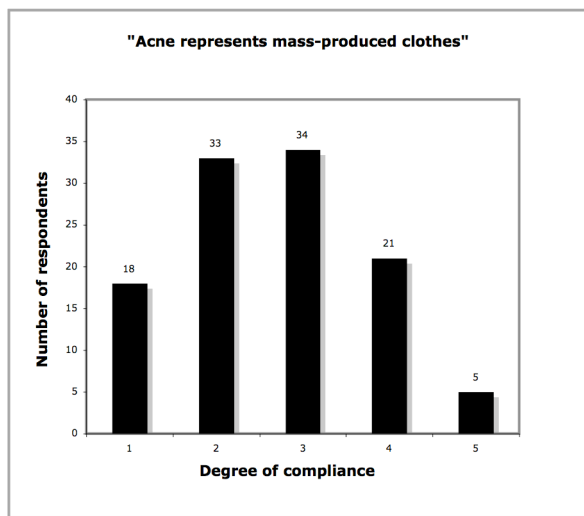
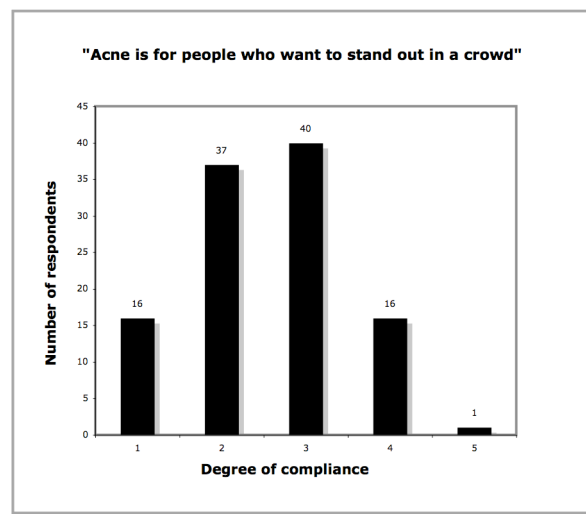
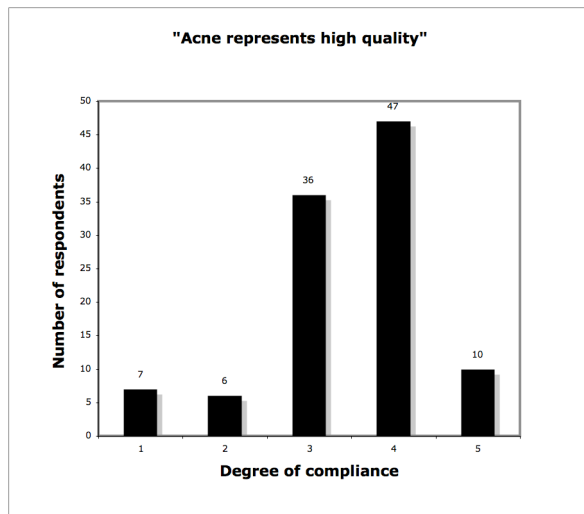
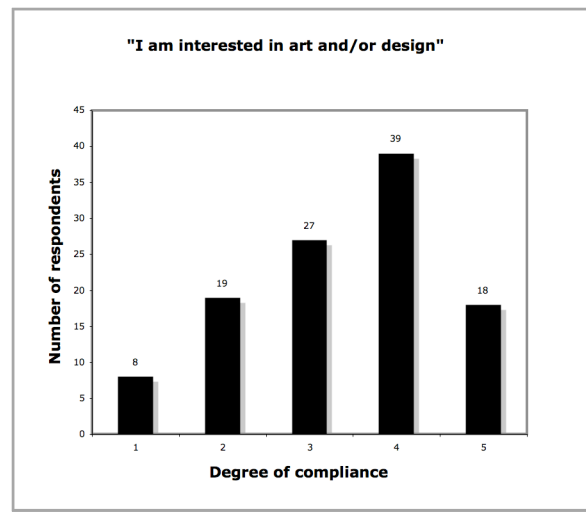
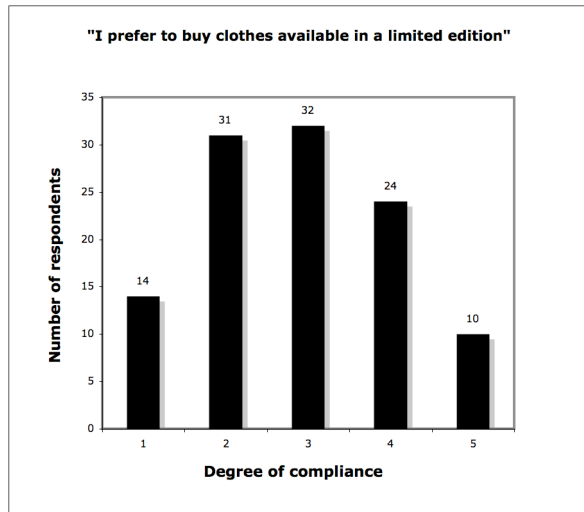
1 2 3 4 5

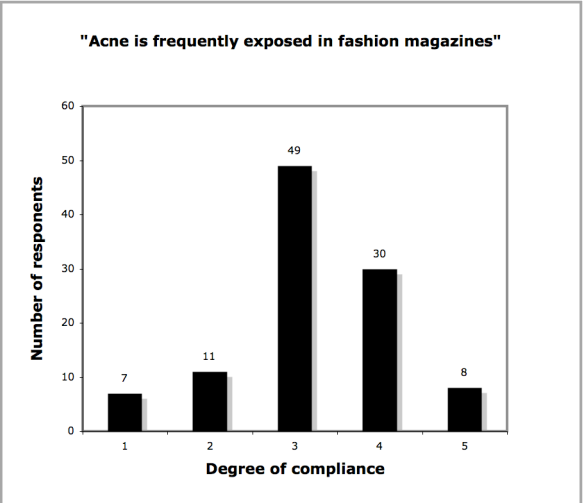
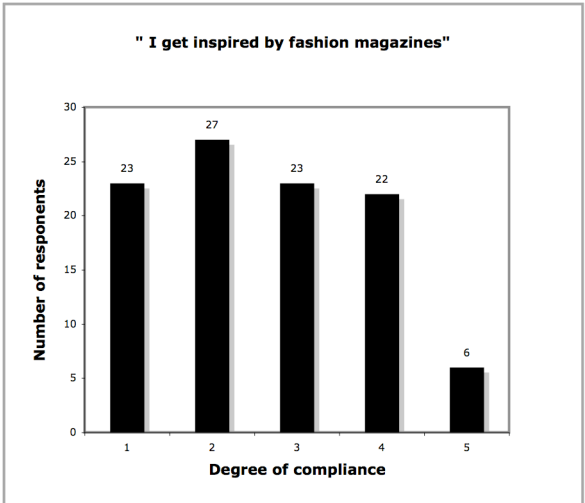
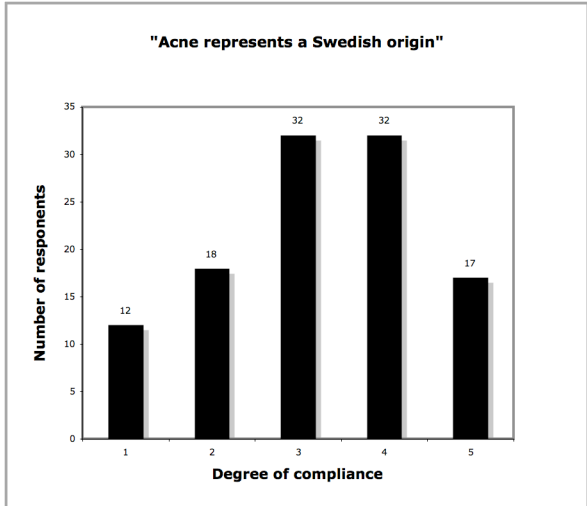
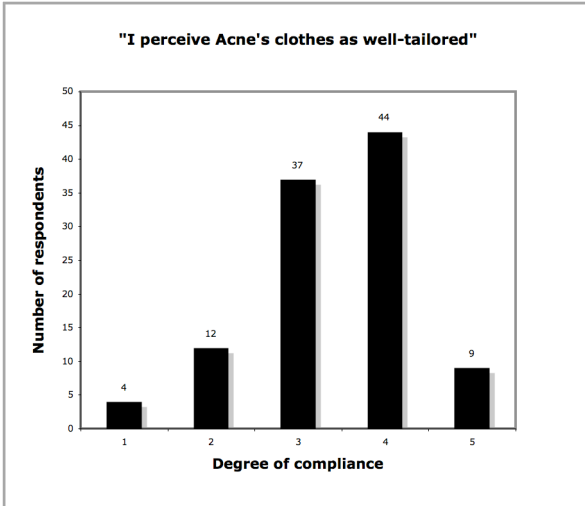
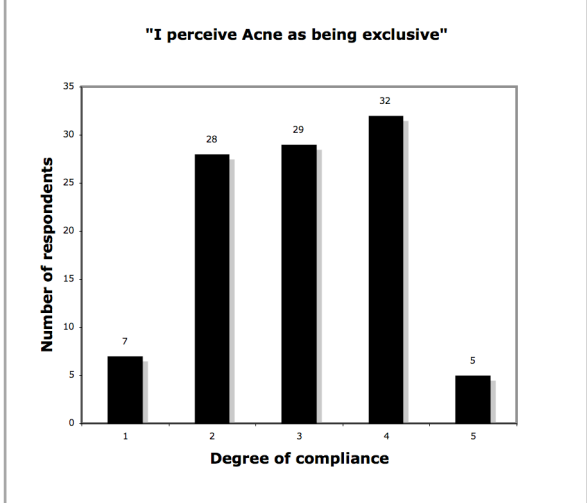
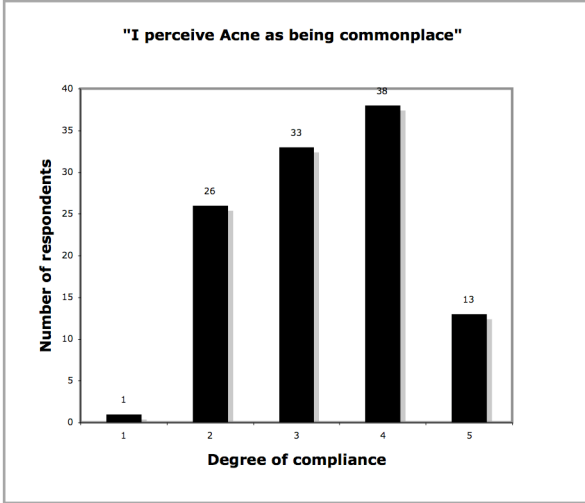
Totally disagree

Totally agree

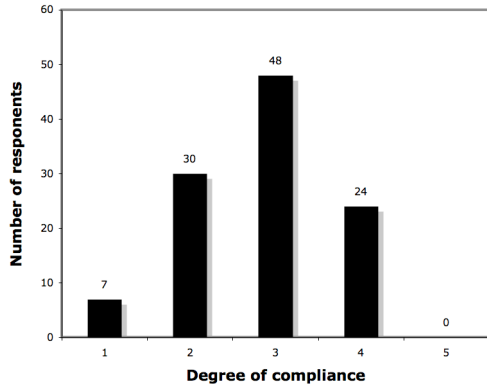
We thank you for your participation!

Appendix 2. Distribution of the received answers

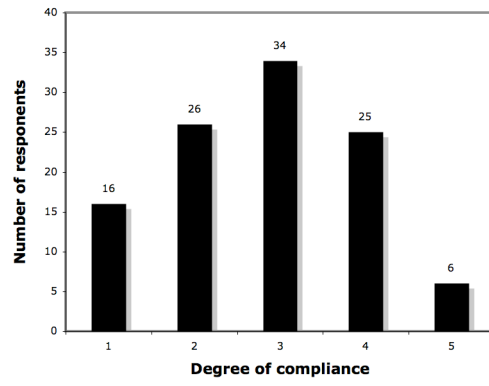




"Acne is a symbol of innovative design"



"I prefer to buy clothes from designers that I am familiar with"



Appendix 3. Associations with regard to possessions of Acne garment

Level of agreement	Low	Neutral	High	Missing	Total	Number of
Scale	1--2	3	4--5	value		respondents
I get inspired by fashion magazines						
In possession of Acne garment	37,1%	37,1%	25,7%		100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	48,7%	26,3%	25,0%		100%	76
Acne represents a Swedish origin						
In possession of Acne garment	14,3%	40,0%	45,7%		100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	31,6%	25,0%	43,4%		100%	76
Acne represents high quality						
In possession of Acne garment	14,3%	20,0%	65,7%		100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	11,8%	36,8%	44,7%	6,6%	100%	76
I perceive Acne's clothes as well-tailored						
In possession of Acne garment	8,6%	25,7%	65,7%		100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	18,4%	36,8%	39,5%	5,3%	100%	76
Acne is frequently exposed in fashion magazines						
In possession of Acne garment	11,4%	40,0%	45,7%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	18,4%	46,1%	28,9%	6,6%	100%	76
Acne is for people that want to stand out in a crowd						
In possession of Acne garment	45,7%	40,0%	11,4%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	48,7%	32,9%	17,1%	1,3%	100%	76
I associate Acne with mass-produced clothes						
In possession of Acne garment	34,3%	34,3%	28,6%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	51,3%	26,3%	21,1%	1,3%	100%	76
Acne communicates individuality						
In possession of Acne garment	42,9%	45,7%	8,6%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	43,4%	40,8%	13,2%	2,6%	100%	76
Acne is a symbol of innovative design						
In possession of Acne garment	20,0%	42,9%	34,3%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	39,5%	42,1%	15,8%	2,6%	100%	76
I perceive Acne as being commonplace						
In possession of Acne garment	22,9%	25,7%	48,6%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	26,3%	28,9%	44,7%		100%	76
I perceive Acne as being exclusive						
In possession of Acne garment	17,1%	42,9%	37,1%	2,9%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	38,2%	28,9%	31,6%	1,3%	100%	76
I prefer to buy clothes from designers that I am familiar with						
In possession of Acne garment	45,7%	34,3%	14,3%	5,7%	100%	35
Not in possession of Acne garment	34,2%	28,9%	32,9%	3,9%	100%	76
I associate Jonny Johansson with an individual style						
In possession of Acne garment	14,3%	28,6%	42,9%	14,3%	100%	7
Not in possession of Acne garment	28,6%	42,9%	28,6%		100%	7
I associate Jonny Johansson with creative design						
In possession of Acne garment	14,3%	28,6%	42,9%	14,3%	100%	7
Not in possession of Acne garment	28,6%	57,1%	14,3%		100%	7