

A STUDY OF HOW REPEAT CUSTOMERS CAN AFFECT BRAND IMAGE IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

25 Maj 2009

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Master Thesis

25 May, 2009

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Abstract

The fashion industry is one of the most exciting and fast-moving industries in the world and the companies within the fashion industry are driven by the reputation of their brand. (Hines and Bruce, 2001) Some celebrities and athletes use their names as a label so that the wearer associates the clothes with the person, and therefore that brand takes on the image of the celebrity. This research is concentrated on the customers of a particular fashion company, Björn Borg. In the fashion industry, it is not only important who is wearing the brand, but also who is not wearing the brand, which leads to the aim of this paper: **Can a company sacrifice its brand image if it holds on to all of its customers, including those outside of its target market.**

From our research, we were able to draw the following conclusions:

The customers within the target group associate the brand with some of the characteristics of customers outside the target group and, thus, the image of Björn Borg is slightly different from what the company would like their image to be. Our analysis reveals that there are many who associate the brand with older people. In a way, the older customers may influence the younger ones into thinking the brand is for an older age group. Also, many associate the brand with the “average joe” and with the tennis player despite the efforts of the company to create a special brand, not average, that stands apart from the tennis player, Björn Borg. Therefore, our study indicates that a company can sacrifice brand image if it holds on to all customers including those outside their target market.

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Prologue

Burberry is a brand that has been around for a relatively long time in the fashion industry. In 1901 it made its entrance by making uniforms for soldiers and created the famous “trench coat.” Movie stars such as Audrey Hepburn and Ingrid Bergman were early patrons of the brand, however, over time the brand became associated with conservatism and tradition. In the 1990’s the brand was revamped and became associated once again with icons, only this time the icons were pop stars and athletes and the demand for Burberry filtered down to the wannabees and thugs. The label then decided that “too much of a good thing can be bad,” meaning that if everyone, including thugs, was wearing the label, the brand’s image would become associated with the wrong customers. They actually took their label off of many of their products so that people would not associate certain people groups with the brand. Instead of being fashion for everyone, they wanted to be at the cutting edge of the industry, so they have gone through many changes to make sure that their brand does not get too old (their first problem) or get too widespread (second problem). In 1997, a new CEO was hired to implement the changes and from that time to 2004, the sales went from £250 million to £670m and the year from 2003 to 2004 showed 13% higher sales, an incredible feat in the fashion industry. (Barton et al 2004)

1. Introduction

"We want to offer a real luxury and not to open our doors to the consumption of young girls who can put the designer handbag of their dreams on their arm with less than 300 Euros. We are not interested in that."
- Giancarlo Di Risio (CEO Versace)

The fashion industry is one of the most exciting and fast-moving industries in the world. What drives companies within the fashion industry is the reputation of their brand. (Hines and Bruce, 2001) It is important to know what’s “in” and what’s “out” and who is wearing the clothes. Professionals rely on the assumption that using a celebrity to endorse a brand will result in increased consumer recall of the brand (Costanzo, 2005) and it has

become a popular marketing trick to get celebrities and movie stars to wear certain brands on different occasions (Crane, 1999). Some celebrities and athletes even use their names as a label so that the wearer associates the clothes with the person, and therefore that brand takes on the image of the celebrity. Consider, for example, the brand Björn Borg and its sporty stylish image, Air Jordan shoes, Liz Claiborne which has a sophisticated older image, and the Jessica Simpson clothing line, known for its girly look.

It is however not only important who is wearing the clothes, but also who is not wearing the clothes, as in the example of Burberry. If the wrong people are wearing their clothes, then a company could suffer, especially in the area of brand image. Some companies take extra precautions to make sure that only the right people wear their clothes. An example of a company taking the above mentioned concerns into consideration is Versace. In an interview with Giancarlo Di Riso, the CEO of Versace, he expresses how important it is to have the right customers (Leisa Barnett 2009). Versace wants to offer real luxury and they are not interested in selling discount goods to young girls. Further on, Giancarlo Di Riso maintains that the Versace customer is looking for something exclusive and that their customers are not put off by paying top price for the collections. According to him, luxury houses that offer significant discounts have a negative impact on the sector and that the high-end market therefore should be more protected. This problem could affect not only high-end fashion companies but all companies in the fashion industry.

The previous examples provide insight into different ways that fashion becomes popular and stays popular. One is the trickle-down effect, where the upper-class begins wearing a fashion and then it trickles-down to the middle and lower classes, thus causing the upper class to change their fashions in order to stand out from the lower classes. The other model is a bottom-up model where, rather than wealth or status, age becomes the main decider in what is fashionable. The younger crowd sets the fashion; younger people often being in lower socio-economic groups and part of other various subcultures. (Crane 1999) According to Crane (1999), since the 1960's, the latter model has been the main way that fashions are set. However, there is debate over whether or not older customers are desirable customers. Carrigan and Szmigin (1999) discuss the pursuit of youth in

marketing, with a focus on how older consumers are different in the current older generation than older consumers of previous generations. They say that older consumers are more savvy than they used to be and are of great importance to businesses because there are more over 50's in the population, and they have more money to spend than young buyers. Taking the examples above into account, both theories of trickle down and bottom up are still important in the fashion industry, but there are other methods that are increasingly important. As mentioned previously, famous celebrities give their names to labels in order to increase the popularity of a brand. (Costanzo, 2005)

1.1 Problem Discussion

We find the fashion industry an intriguing industry to study because it is a fast moving industry where companies must adapt quickly. In this industry getting the “right” customers ensures that the companies can build their image the way they want it. After reading stories such as those mentioned at the beginning of this paper as well as hearing about a similar situation in a Swedish fashion company, we wanted to investigate the idea of repeat customers and their effects on brand image further. This research focuses specifically on customers and how their behaviors towards brands and their feelings towards other repeat customers of the brand could affect a fashion company's image. We are concentrating our research on the customers of a particular fashion company, Björn Borg, a famous Swedish apparel brand that is known for being sporty and stylish; modern, yet rich in its heritage, as well as having a distinctive recognizable design on all of its products. This study is concerned only with the Swedish market because of customer accessibility and due to the location of the company's headquarters. The brand started out by its association with the tennis player Björn Borg. But today, according to the company, the brand has a clear identity and a strong position in its markets and the brand stands on its own merits, distinct from Björn Borg as a person, although it has come to our attention through different conversations that some people may still associate the brand with the tennis player (Björn Borg webpage). We chose the company Björn Borg because it is a successful company that appears to reach out to many different lifestyles, which is confirmed by their campaign “Love for all.” Therefore, they have

customers of all ages, some who started out associating the brand with the tennis player and others in a younger generation who like the label because it is popular and trendy. However, as image is so important in the fashion industry, does an innovative modern company like Björn Borg really want to keep all customers? In other words, is retaining all customers really profitable in the long run for Björn Borg?

After sorting through much literature on the importance of customer retention, it was hard to find anyone who had taken into consideration the fact that certain industries, for example the fashion industry, do not always want to keep the same customers. We have performed an exploratory study into whether or not a fashion company sacrifices its brand image for the sake of retaining all customers. It is important to have and manage a good relationship with customers. The long term goals for companies in the fashion industry is to maintain a strong brand image, however, the short term goals are to make a profit. Retaining customers can increase profit in the short term. The process of retaining customers can seem long term, but not when compared to building and maintaining brand image. The company needs to know if there is a point at which the customer is causing the brand image to suffer.

Our aim was to investigate if a company can sacrifice its brand image if it holds on to all of its customers, including those outside of its target market. The contribution of this study is to help companies within the fashion industry understand that they need to be aware of who their repeat customers are and who their target market is in order to maintain long term success with their brand image. In order to perform this task, we had to choose one company to look at, as stated above, and we decided on the company Björn Borg. After looking at our aim, we decided that in order to research our aim, we needed to look at the following sub-aims:

1. How is the Björn Borg brand perceived by the Björn Borg managers, their current customers outside the target group and the customers inside Björn Borg's target group?
2. Are the target group and the repeat customers one and the same?

3. How are the perceptions of brand image according to repeat customers within and outside the target market different from each other and those of the Björn Borg managers?
4. Does the target group associate the brand with a demographic and/or psychographic group other than themselves?
5. Do some still associate the brand with the tennis player and or do customers easily distinguish the brand from the tennis player? Does Björn Borg necessarily need to make a transition from the tennis player to a brand that stands on its own and is this even possible?

2. Theoretical Construction

“He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast.”- Leonardo da Vinci

As previously stated, the aim of this study is to research whether or not Björn Borg could sacrifice brand image by retaining customers outside of its target market. We find these questions very relevant because they will affect the company’s marketing strategy as well as the company’s long term goals in terms of maintaining their brand image. Furthermore, ideas about customer retention are relevant today and important to those trying to figure out how to use them in the fashion industry. Companies need to know when their customers are causing the brand image to suffer. Considering the brand image role within the fashion industry and this image being so important, successful customer retention could mean that the brand image is suffering which is important for all companies within the fashion industry to understand. In order to perform our investigation, we first must look at the theories behind the ideas we are researching. Step one is looking first at what a target group is and how they are chosen. After understanding what a target group is, we can then look at how the target group influences the brand image as well as its view of the image. Step two of our study includes a deeper discussion of the target market which can be understood by looking at segmentation

variables. We first consider the idea of what a customer is. We also look at the long term and short term goals of a company within its strategic planning because the type of (or lack of) strategy of a company determines if a company will succeed or fail (Kay 1996). The last steps in our research deal with customer retention. We will take a closer look at the theories behind these terms in the next section.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Target Marketing

According to Hawkins et al (1998), target marketing is the segment of a larger market in which a company focuses its marketing efforts. The idea is to provide a particular customer segment value while making a profit. Some things to consider are the size and growth of the market, cost of providing value, and the intensity of competition. There is a stress put on having a different market strategy for different target groups. Sometimes only the advertising needs to be different between the two groups, at other times the whole product needs to be different. (Hawkins et al 1998) Target groups are chosen through deciding which segmentation variables the company wants to focus on and then forming their market segment; companies will use more than one variable to pick their target group (Kotler et al 2003). Although there are many ways to define segmentation variables, Kotler et al (2003) provides one of the most well-known set of variables. He divides the variables into different groups and says that most marketers believe it is better to start with the behavioral variables and then go on to the other variables, which can be grouped together. This group contains three segmentation variables: geographic (nations, cities, neighborhoods), demographic (age, gender, income, and occupation, etc.), and psychographic (values, social class, and lifestyle). Behavioral variables are consumer knowledge, attitude, use, or response to a product and this variable is used alongside certain characteristics variables in order to form a target market. (Kotler et al 2003). The market that is targeted affects the way the company creates the brand image. Companies will use a combination of the variables that fits best to their desired brand image. After deciding which target market segments, a company must choose how they will position their product. Positioning refers to how a product is defined in the minds of consumers in relation to competing products; i.e. how the product is different or better than others.

Positioning a product in the right way can lead to a strong competitive advantage. However, if it is not, then it can lead to a number of problems, one of them being confused positioning where the consumer is unsure of the position the company is trying to take, which can lead to lower sales.(Kotler et al 2003).

2.1.2 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the way a brand is represented in people's minds. It includes how the target market interprets the brand's attributes, buyers of the brand, and benefits. Brand image also refers to the way one feels or thinks when the brand name is mentioned. (Hawkins et al, 1998) A brand image should convey a distinctive message that communicates the product's major benefits (Kotler et al 2003). According to Oxenfeldt and Swann (1964), an image that is clearly communicated can protect it from its competition and establish the brand's place in the market. However, image cannot be created over one night and it has to be supported by everything the company says and does (Kotler et al 2003). As the company performance is dependent on the image, managing the image is therefore extremely important (Park et al 1986). Maio (2003) discusses the importance of brand management on long term strategic company planning. In her discussion of corporate sustainability, Maio (2003) also states that "*brand management practices and the discipline itself must become more connected to the longer term strategic initiatives of the corporation and the evolving preferences of its stakeholders.*" (p237). The function of brand management must be a long term goal because it is an asset that can drive some of a company's market capitalization. Short term goals are not viable for long term sustainability. (Maio, 2003)

2.1.3 Customer

There are different definitions of who a customer is and when a customer really is a customer. According to Swift (2001) the word customer contains four types and groups of customers; consumers, business to business, channel/distributor/franchisee and internal customers. Swift defines a consumer as a "retail customer who buys the final product or service, usually an individual or a family" (2001 p. 4). This is the definition we will use in our research. According to transaction theories, the customer is a customer only when

he or she is buying a good. However, when looking at a customer from a relationship perspective, the customer is always a customer when the relationship has been established. Furthermore, according to the relationship perspective, the customers should always be treated as customers, even though they do not make purchases at a specific time. (Grönroos, 2002)

2.1.4 Customer Retention

As stated previously, company performance can be affected by the presence of retained customers. Recently, much research has been placed on the importance of loyal customers because they mean so much in dollar signs for a company; it has, for example, been said that loyal customers are 5-6 times less expensive to plan a marketing strategy for than new customers (Rosenburg and Czepial, 1984 and Pfeifer, 2005). Thus, there are many researchers talking about the importance of retaining customers (Hennig-Thurau, 1997 and Grönroos, 2002). In this research we only discuss retained customers, not loyalty; however, because they are closely related terms, we will briefly discuss loyalty to help establish a definition of customer retention for this research.

It is not an easy task to define what a loyal customer is; there are almost as many definitions as there are researchers. In Robert Gee's article (2008), the author examines customer loyalty and tries to combine different definitions. The lack of a clear definition makes it difficult to see what drives customer loyalty, how to measure it and how it is different from customer retention. Some definitions of customer loyalty focus on the attitude of the customer. (Gee 2008) Using the attitude focus, Oliver (1997) describes customer loyalty as a deep commitment to return and buy a product continuously in spite of situation and competitor's marketing schemes. Other researchers use patterns of previous purchase to define customer loyalty. An example of this type of customer loyalty is given by Uncles et al as "an ongoing propensity to buy the brand, usually as one of several" (2003). The propensity to repurchase the brand means that the customer does not necessarily need to repurchase the brand a certain amount within a given period of time, but rather that they patronize a brand continuously and are involved in a long-term relationship with a company. This definition will be used in this paper when talking

about customer retention, or as we talk about it from the customer's point of view, repeat customers.

It is important to consider whether value is always captured by long-term relationships and, second, who is likely to gain the most value from such a long-term relationship. (Szmigin, 1998) Relationships can and should be mutually beneficial for both the buyer and the seller. (Grönroos 1996) However, this is not always the case. Not all customers want, or gain from long-term relationships and not all relationships may be mutually beneficial (Szmigin, 1998). Previous research has been done on the question of whether it is really worth it to spend more money on customer retention than on acquiring new customers (Pfeifer 2005). Other researchers have questioned the same types of things, such as does a repeating customer make a desired customer? (Wang et al 2004, Reinartz, W. and Kumar, V, 2002 and Petrick, 2004) These studies come from a different perspective as they are studying very different types of companies in different industries. Petrick (2004) researches the cruise industry within tourism to discover if returning customers are more profitable than new customers. His result is that although returning customers are less risky and are marketers through word-of-mouth, the new customers are much more likely to spend more on their trip, so it is still in question which is a better customer (2004). Reinartz and Kumar (2002) seriously question whether all repeat and returning customers are profitable and they stress that a company needs to know when to lose or drop some of their repeat customers. Some of the issues that the previous researchers dealt with are also featured in our research; however, we focus specifically on the fashion industry

2.1.5 Summary of theory

In our study, we looked at how a brand image can be affected by repeat customers outside of the target group. We did this by looking at the theories of brand image and target market and explaining how interrelated they are. After looking at how the brand image affects the target market and vice versa, we investigated the theory of who a customer is to decide and establish who the customers of Björn Borg are. After the idea

of customers was explored, we needed to understand what customer retention is and take a critical look at the reasons and theories which support retention. These theories helped to guide our research in order to bring us to an answer to our main question.

3. Method

"It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something." - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Our research was carried out together with the company Björn Borg. Our research population included two managers at Björn Borg, the target group of Björn Borg as well as the actual customers of Björn Borg. The aim and sub-aims of our research could best be reached by taking the following steps:

1. Conducting interviews:

Finding out how the Björn Borg brand is perceived by Björn Borg managers through semi-structured interviews with the PR/event manager and the Sales Manager.

Finding out what two sales clerks think about who the customers are and what they think about the Björn Borg image.

2. Administering questionnaires:

Finding out whether or not the target group and the repeat customers are one and the same, which is done through looking at certain segmentation variables, for example demographic and psychographic, and comparing to see if they match.

Finding out, through the questionnaires, how Björn Borg's current customers outside the target group and those inside their target group perceive the brand.

Finding out, through the questionnaires, if customers connect the brand to the tennis player.

3. Analyzing the findings:

If the Björn Borg managers, the repeat customers and members of Björn Borg's target group perceive the brand differently: finding out the differences through analyzing the questionnaires and the interviews.

3.1 Research Design and Research Strategy

This research has an inductive approach and is of the exploratory nature. We are using exploratory study because, according to Saunders et al (2007), exploratory studies are particularly useful when the aim is to clarify and get a deeper understanding of a problem. Furthermore, our exploratory research can be seen as a pilot study which, according to Gummesson (1988), can be used as a basis for future research; for formulating a more precise research question or a testable hypotheses. Exploratory research is also used when seeking to understand what is happening and to find new insights and to assess phenomena in new light. In this research, we are looking at repeat customers from a new perspective and we are exploring their impact on a brand's image. There are three principal ways of conducting an exploratory study: a search of the literature, interviewing experts in the subject and conducting focus group interviews (Saunders et al 2007). This research will include two of these three methods; we will use relevant theories and conduct interviews with experts, i.e. managers at Björn Borg. We did not conduct focus group interviews, we did however do questionnaires of the interview-administered type.

Due to the exploratory nature of our research, we found that the most suitable strategy would be to do a survey. The survey strategy allowed us to collect a large amount of data from a sizeable population in an economical way. (Saunders et al 2007) As is suggested by Saunders et al (2007), we used and triangulated multiple sources of data, which means that we used different methods to collect our data. As mentioned above, we have

conducted interviews and questionnaires and hence we have both qualitative and quantitative data. Bryman and Bell state that combining quantitative and qualitative research is entirely possible because qualitative research facilitates quantitative research and vice versa. Using both methods can aid the understanding of the research performed. (Bryman and Bell 2003) Some downsides to using triangulated data could be that using too many methods can be a little confusing when trying to combine and analyze the data. However, we also realized that even though we used different methods, we could have varied the methods even more, such as doing focus groups to obtain more in-depth information/data

3.1.1 Sample

The sample for this research was chosen mostly by convenience sampling. Bryman and Bell (2003) state that this method is used mainly because of the accessibility of the respondent(s). We needed to pick a fashion company that was available to us for research and was located close to where we live. We choose the company Björn Borg because it is a successful company that appears to reach many different lifestyles. The company also tries to reach different target markets through the different stages of their underwear concepts and then they try to keep all those different customers they have attracted with each concept.

Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2003) give another reason for choosing convenience sampling that also corresponds to how we picked Björn Borg. They state that sometimes a chance presents itself to gain data from a company that is too good to pass up and although it is subject to the negative aspect of generalizations, it can also be used in as a springboard in a case that has not been researched much before. (Bryman and Bell 2003) We stated earlier that it was hard to find studies done on our topic and although there are limitations to our study, we think it is of great benefit that Björn Borg was willing to work with us and it can be helpful to future research done on this topic.

Our first contact at the company was the PR/Event manager, Rocky af Ekenstam Brennicke, and she helped us to get in contact with the Sales Manager Margareta Bjurling. We choose to do an interview with the PR/Event manager because of her knowledge about the company and about the market Björn Borg wants to target. It was important for us to get another person's opinion about who the customers are as well as her thoughts about who the target market is, and therefore we conducted the interview with the Sales Manager. The interview with the Sales Manager was very similar to the one we conducted with the PR/Event Manager.

Our questionnaire respondents were also picked by convenience sampling. We handed out questionnaires to people in both Stockholm and Uppsala as well as to certain groups on the internet. In order to reach the youngest age group, our questionnaires were handed out in a local high school. The people that were chosen were the most accessible to us. The only criteria we had was for the second questionnaire where we asked if the potential respondent was a customer of Björn Borg. Convenience sampling risks getting homogeneous responses and can be prone to bias (Saunders et al. 1007). However, we realized that it was difficult to obtain many different respondents of different age groups and psychographic groups by handing out the questionnaires at a few different locations. We made an effort to get as many diverse respondents as possible by our different location choices.

3.1.2 Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

Since credibility is very important in research, we have paid close attention to two important emphases on research design: reliability and validity. "Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about" (Saunders et al 2007). One threat to validity is history; i.e. if something recently happened to Björn Borg that could affect the customers' thoughts and feelings towards the brand. Björn Borg had some problems with their underwear and they had to recall some products. However, this was not a huge thing and we did not find anything on our questionnaires that indicate that this could be an issue.

There are also some threats to reliability, and we are especially concerned with subject and participant bias. We do not believe that this is a big concern for our questionnaires, however, since we used convenience sampling some of our results could reveal some bias. We are aware of the fact that some of the interviewees may be biased and respond what they are supposed to, or what their managers want them to respond. We believe that this research has a good reliability, due to the high respondent rate on the questionnaires (which were given out in different places to many different types of people). It may not be possible to reach the same conclusions in other industries; we do however believe that similar conclusions will be reached in future studies performed in the fashion industry. However, variances could occur in companies which are positioned very differently from Björn Borg.

3.1.3 Limitations of our study

Our research was limited in a few ways, the first one was time and the other big limitation was location. We were only able to talk to customers in Sweden and there is always a cultural effect when just looking at one country. Also, we were only able to talk to customers who were in Stockholm and Uppsala the same day we were there. We did some questionnaires online and did therefore reach people outside Stockholm and Uppsala; however, this was only a small part of the sample. Due to these limitations, we were not able to do a large enough questionnaire that is really representative of the Swedish customer base. While the three youngest age groups were reached fairly easily, the older two groups were difficult to find due to our time limitation, however, we felt that these age groups were the least important for our study and therefore focused on gathering good data from the groups we could reach. Although we can still gain insights from our study, we realize that a larger study would be more precise.

3.2 Interviews

3.2.1 The pilot interview

The first step in our research was to conduct one semi-structured interview with the PR/Event manager. The aim with this pilot interview was to get information about the

brand and the customers. After the pilot interview, we decided to do complementary interviews with the Sales Manager and two sales clerks. The pilot interview was the foundation for the other interviews and the questionnaires.

Bryman and Bell (2003) outline the types of questions that should be used in a semi-structured interview such as introduction, probing, follow-up and direct questions. We had prepared probing questions in order to keeping the interviews going smoothly and to get more in-depth information.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we followed the advice from Saunders et al. (2007), and made the interview questions clear and avoided theoretical concepts. We also tested the interview questions on friends and family. As previously stated, it was very critical that the interview questions were based on our theoretical framework. The interview questions included questions about Björn Borg's target market and segmentation variables, their brand image and how their image relates to their target market. Some of the questions referred to short term vs. long term company goals; i.e. focusing on retaining customers vs. target market. To help with the ease of comparing our questions to the reason why we used those questions, we have included a full operationalization of the interview questions alongside the interview in the appendix (See appendix 1).

Directly after the interview was conducted, we made a summary of our notes. We included notes about the surrounding, when and where the interview took place and our feelings about the interview. The transcribing of the interview took place within a week from the day that the interview was conducted and while it was still fresh in our minds.

3.2.2 The second and third interview

Our second and third interview took place at a Björn Borg concept store in Stockholm. We conducted two short interviews with sales clerks who worked at that store. We were interested in finding out if they would have a different point of view than the managers because they have a different vested interest in the company. Their job is to sell the products to customers who enter the store, not to figure out how to sell and promote the

products. Although the sales clerks' interviews only reflect the opinions of two people, we still believe that their observations can add to our research due to their close interaction with customers on a daily basis. We asked the clerks three questions and therefore did not record the interviews; it was easier to write down their answers. Occasionally we needed to go further in depth with the questions, but that was also easily recorded on paper. The interview questions were based on our previous findings from the first interview (see Appendix 2).

3.2.3 The fourth interview

The fourth and last interview conducted was with the Sales Manager at Björn Borg. We wanted complementary information about the target group and the image Björn Borg wants to communicate. Due to time issues from the Sales Manager's side, we sent the interview questions in an e-mail and got them back one week after. This limited the opportunity for asking probing questions, however in the e-mail she told us that if we needed more information or clarification we could give her a call or send her a new e-mail. After looking through the answers we got, we felt they were very satisfying and therefore we felt no need to ask for more information. The questions sent to the Sales Manager were very similar to the questions asked in the pilot interview (see Appendix 3).

3.3 Questionnaires

Step two in our research process was to get primary data through two questionnaires. The respondents from the first questionnaire were both current customers and non-customers and for the second questionnaire the respondents were customers within and outside of the target group of Björn Borg. The variables we wished to collect through our questionnaires were opinions (e.g. about the brand), behaviors (e.g. if our respondents are customers and if they plan to buy something in the future) and attributes (e.g. age and gender).

The first questionnaire was of the interview-administered type and was handed out in Stockholm, inside a Björn Borg shop as well as outside other popular fashion boutiques. The questionnaire was of the structured interview category, which means that we met the

respondents physically and asked them to fill in the questionnaire while we were waiting. (Saunders et al. 2007) Bryman and Bell (2003) make clear the advantages of using the questionnaire over the actual structured interview: it is cheaper, faster, free from the affects of the interviewer, and convenient. Some disadvantages are the anonymity and inability to probe further. For our study, the advantages were more important than the disadvantages. Furthermore, in the first questionnaire, only category and list questions were asked. We felt that this would keep the questionnaires easy to code and understand.

After obtaining the results of the first questionnaire, we realized that we wanted to go a little deeper into the mind of Björn Borg customers. We formulated a very similar questionnaire, however some questions were slightly changed and the questionnaire was only directed towards customers, inside as well as outside the target group. The questionnaire was handed out in Uppsala and also distributed over the internet. In order to only get customers, we asked everyone we handed it out to if they were customers. On the online questionnaire, we added a question where we asked if they had ever bought something from Björn Borg. This was an easy way to filter out the non-customers. The second questionnaire included both open and closed questions. Our open questions asked about the respondents' opinions about why they may discontinue using the brand as well as to get any extra comments the respondent may want to add. When conducting the questionnaires, we were aware that open questions are time consuming to code and therefore we kept them to a minimum. Aside from the open questions we used category questions and list questions.

Our aim was to get 100 respondents total from both questionnaires, and we got 62 from the first questionnaire and 100 from the second for a total of 162 questionnaires. We closed the second questionnaire when we received 100 responses.

3.3.1 Questionnaire Format

The questions on the questionnaires were sorted in a logical order so that it will be easy for the respondent and the interviewer to follow. It is said that the acceptable length of a questionnaire (of the type structured interview) can vary from a few minutes in the street

to over two hours in a more comfortable environment. (Saunders et al. 2007) Our questionnaires did not take more than a couple of minutes to finish. Since we handed out the questionnaires personally, we did not have to worry about respondents who did not send their questionnaires back or who forgot to answer them.

To avoid unnecessary mistakes, we pilot tested the questionnaires before we handed them out. We tested the questionnaires on experts, such as our supervisor, and also on friends and other students who could be potential respondents. We used the pilot to find out how long the questionnaire took to complete, if any questions were unclear etc. (Saunders et al. 2007) The pilot questionnaire helped us see if there were any mistakes and also helped us understand where we needed to add or change certain alternative answers. The first questionnaire was a semi test pilot because we used the first questionnaire along with its responses to form a second questionnaire focusing on the customers. The changes in questions from the first to the second questionnaire were based on the first questionnaire responses and a couple of new questions were also added for clarification purposes. In order to identify if the respondents were within the target group the questionnaire included questions about the respondents' age and their concerns about appearance. There were also questions about the respondents' thoughts and feeling about the brand and its image. The respondents also answered questions about who they think the brand is for. Finally, respondents were asked if there were situations which would cause them to stop wearing the brand.

These questions are referred to and operationalized in appendixes 4 and 5 alongside the questionnaires for ease in comparing the operationalization to the actual questions. The explanation for how the questionnaires were coded is also found in Appendix 5 directly after the operationalization.

4. Empirical findings

"The grand aim of all science is to cover the greatest number of empirical facts by logical deduction from the smallest number of hypotheses or axioms." -Albert Einstein

4.1 Qualitative Data

4.1.1 The company Björn Borg

The trademark in its present form was registered in the late 1980s and established in the Swedish market in the first half of the 1990s. The underwear concepts in particular have gone through changes in the last 10 years, moving from the original basic concept to the fun concept followed by the introduction of the Grand Slam concept this year, which is an attempt to return to Björn Borg's heritage. Björn Borg's growth has increased in the last three years and they currently operate in 14 countries. Björn Borg sells products in five areas: clothing, footwear, fragrances, bags and eyewear and the cornerstones of the brand are stylish, sexy, sporty and comfortable. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.)

After the interview with the af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb), we realized that head office mainly deals with the underwear line. The company owns the headquarters, the brand, the Swedish market and currently, the U.S. market which is being launched. Other international markets are owned by distributors in those markets who run it locally. The brand and communication in all markets, however, is owned by the headquarters, as well as the product development. Underwear and shoes are owned by the headquarters, but sunglasses, bags, and perfume are all licensed out. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.) Taking this into consideration we looked at the company's 2008 report located on their website (Annual report 2008). According to the report, 80% of sales is in clothing and 80% of the clothing sold is underwear. Only 6% of sales is in shoes. We can see that underwear is by far the biggest seller and influencer of the brand image and therefore, the target group of the underwear embodies the company's brand image.

Björn Borg is on the middle-high range of the market, as one of the market leaders in the segment premium underwear (Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm. 29 Apr.). Björn Borg's vision is to be an internationally established fashion brand. The company is on the stock market and therefore their short term goal comes down to results and figures. The company has

to handle short term thinking and long term goals and balance them. However, this is tricky and something Björn Borg is struggling with everyday. Generally it is becoming a more short-term focused company. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.)

Today, the brand Björn Borg stands on its own apart from the tennis player. According to af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.), the reason for this transition is that people are growing away from the tennis player – we should not forget that it was 30 years ago that he was most popular. However, even though the brand is growing apart from the person Björn Borg, af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.) states that the importance of the heritage is growing. Björn Borg is proud of its heritage and they want to celebrate it. The company is also proud of being Swedish and call themselves a Swedish brand. af Ekenstam Brennicke believes that the majority of the customers in Sweden buy products from Björn Borg because of the association to the brand and their products rather than an association with the tennis player. She believes that this is the case no matter the customers' age. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.).

4.1.2 Björn Borg's Target Group

According to af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.), Björn Borgs's target group consists of people who are aware of their appearance and interested in fashion. Approximately 60 percent of the customers are male and 40 percent are female and the target age group is between 18 and 25 years old (af Ekenstam Brennicke, pers. comm. 26 Feb. and Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm. 29 Apr). However, Björn Borg also acknowledges that they have a very broad target market when it comes to age and demographics. This is due to the fact that some are familiar with the brand thanks to the tennis player Björn Borg and some are familiar with the brand thanks to their strong position within their product segment. The consumer that knows the brand in regard to their heritage is a bit older, approx. 35-50, the consumer that knows the brand in regard to their underwear brand is a bit younger, approx 18-25. (Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm. 29 Apr.).

Around half of the customers who come into the shop are buying gifts for someone else, which raises the question whether or not Björn Borg should direct its marketing toward the “boyfriend” or “son” who is wearing the product or to the “girlfriend” or “mother” who is buying the product. One explanation as to why there are more male customers than female customers could be that guys stick to one brand more than girls tend to do. Girls tend to “cheat” on their brands and switch back and forth more frequently. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.).

Björn Borg has different concepts, and the one that most people are usually aware of is the Fun concept. It has existed for 10 years, and is young and vibrant with a lot of colors and patterns. The line was launched as an attempt to reach a younger market and has been very successful. Another concept that has been re-launched is the basic line (it used to be called originals). The line consists of underwear with the same colors as the fun concept but without the patterns. Their newest line is the Grand Slam and it is going back to Björn Borg’s heritage. The style is a little older and comes with a signature tennis headband. The targeted age group for the Grand Slam line could be from 30 and above. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.) According to Bjurling (2009, pers. comm. 29 Apr.), the major part of the company’s budget is used to communicate to their target market (retaining and attracting customers).

4.1.3 Brand Image

Brand image is important for the company. Even though it appears to have changed over the years, Björn Borg is still innovative and unexpected. The campaigns 15 years ago looked totally different; however even then, they were innovative, corny, funny and unique. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.). Furthermore, af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers comm., 26 Feb.) believes that it is the uniqueness that has made the company so successful in maintaining the brand image over time. Another reason is that the products have not been altered that much, they are basically the same. The style has been altered, for example when it was in style to have high-waist or low-waist, but the base is that the brand is sporty (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.).

The female sales clerk believes that the brand is sporty. She also supplemented her answer by saying that most of the customers who come in are sporty. Also, according to her, the image is classic and comfortable. (Female sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) The male sales clerk thinks that the image Björn Borg wants to create is made by reaching those who care and know about style. Those who exemplify the image of the company also buy other more expensive brands. However, he does not feel that the company has reached the level that they want and according to him, many people who come in to the store do not convey the image that Björn Borg wants. He thinks that the reason for this is the economic crisis, so the customers who would normally buy this brand are cutting back and those who are buying the brand do not have the right image. (Male sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.)

4.1.4 Björn Borg customers

Björn Borg defines a customer as someone who has bought underwear from them. They also have consumers to whom Björn Borg could probably sell something, but who have not bought anything yet. A good customer is someone who comes back and buys more products. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.)

When we asked the sales clerks what age groups normally come in to the shop, we received two very different answers. The female sales clerk (2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) answered that it is normally those in the 18-25 range who come in the store. The male sales clerk (2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) answered that there is a huge range of age groups that come in the store but if he had to narrow it down to one group, then he would say the people who came in shopping for someone else, mainly “moms” between 35 and 45. We asked them both a follow-up question about whether the people buying products are buying for themselves or buying a present. The female sales clerk said that many are buying for themselves, however; she also said that the “older customers and girlfriends” are buying gifts for someone else. She did admit that many people who come in to the store who are older are buying a gift for someone else. (Female sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) The male respondent answered quickly that most of the sales were gifts for someone else. (Male sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.)

50% of the customers inside the Björn Borg shops are buying their underwear as presents; the typical customer could be a mother, in her late 30s or early 40s that buys the underwear for her teenage son. (Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm., 29 Apr.) According to af Ekenstam Brennicke, the consumer's age does not matter that much and she does not believe that it could damage the brand if a sixty-year old is wearing the fun-line. Furthermore, she says that she knows that there are a lot of forty-five to fifty-year-olds who wear the brand and the company does not have anything against it. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.)

We asked af Ekenstam Brennicke and Bjurling if there are some customers Björn Borg does not want to attract. Af Ekenstam Brennicke answered that a while ago she saw a picture of a criminal who wore a Björn Borg hoodie. This is not the image Björn Borg wants to have and she said that if this happened more often then it could be damaging to the brand. However, af Ekenstam Brennicke also mentions that it can be good publicity if the product is seen on the "right" person. It is important to attract opinion leaders that have the power in spreading the word. They prefer not to have heavy criminals swagger around in their product, but otherwise, everybody is welcome. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb. and Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm., 29 Apr)

af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.) also states that Björn Borg sells volume products and compares Björn Borg with a tooth-paste company in the sense that they would not say no to any customer, even though she admits that some customers might be "more fun than others". Furthermore, she states that of course they want a lot of trendy and beautiful people wearing the brand because then others will follow, and hence they have models showing their clothes. However, since it is underwear and people wear it underneath other clothes. it not as sensitive as it may be for other companies (af Ekenstam Brennicke mentions Louis Vuitton as an example). She also means that those who are showing off the product are probably within the right target group because they have the low waist line and a fairly nice body; otherwise they would probably cover it. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.)

4.1.5 Customer Retention

To retain customers, Björn Borg has a client club with approximately 10,000 members. They also use technology to involve the consumers. One example of this is when customers send pictures to Björn Borg (some are published on the Björn Borg web-site). Other examples are the Björn Borg dating site and facebook groups. Af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.) stresses that it is easier for the company to keep the old customer instead of chasing new ones. Furthermore, she mentions that some regular customers are collecting the different patterns from the fun line because they think it is fun to have all models. She says that once the customers have tried the underwear, they seem to be addicted. However, at the moment, Björn Borg is working on and putting a lot of effort into finding new customers for new styles, etc. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.)

Björn Borg has a thorough ground to stand on, something that af Ekenstam Brennicke thinks is really important in order for the customers to know what the company stands for and who they are. Björn Borg tries to let the customers in and in that way let them feel like they are a part of the company and af Ekenstam Brennicke thinks it is important to listen to the customers, to get influences and maybe alter some things. However, if the company would just move from one direction to another no one would understand what is happening and that could damage the company. (af Ekenstam Brennicke, 2009, pers. comm. 26 Feb.)

The concept of retaining customers is growing in importance for Björn Borg. Their next campaign (AW09) is actually based on consumer involvement, and to award their existing customer/fan. (Bjurling, 2009, pers. comm., 29 Apr.)

4.2 Quantitative Data

The first questionnaire revealed that 85% of the 62 respondents we asked had purchased a Björn Borg product at some point. In the second questionnaire, all 100 respondents were customers of Björn Borg, with 49% of the respondents men and 51% women. In the second questionnaire, the ages of the respondents were divided as shown in Figure 1.

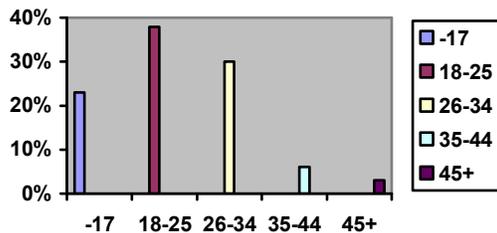


Figure 1- Ages of respondents in Quest. 2

87% of respondents in questionnaire 2 were repeat customers (buy the brand and stated that they will continue to do so in the future). 57% of the respondents were repeat customers outside of the target group. This answers sub-aim two: are the repeat customers and the target group one and the same? Looking at the response from questionnaire 2, many customers are outside of the target group.

Almost half of the customers questioned in the second questionnaire had also bought the brand as a present for someone else. 71% of those who bought the brand as a present gave it to someone in the two youngest categories. 72% of respondents in the second questionnaire thought that their appearance was either important or very important.

4.2.1 Perceptions of Björn Borg's target group

We asked customers outside and inside the target group who they believed was the target age group of Björn Borg. The responses are shown in a graph in Figure 2. Most respondents thought the brand was for the 18-25 years old. The largest disparity occurred in the -17 age group; 25% of the target group and 45% of those outside the target group believed that this was a target group, a 20 point difference.

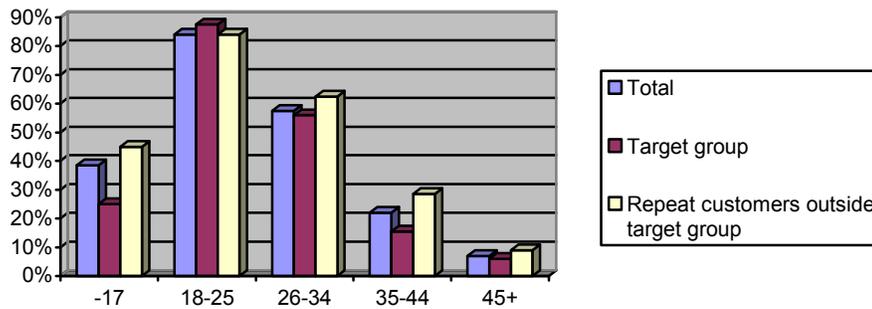


Figure 2- Target age of BB acc. to customers, Quest. 2

In comparison, the first questionnaire resulted with 74% of respondents believing that the company focuses on the 18-25 age group, 42% said 26-34, 21% for the under 17 age group, while only a few believed that older people are included in the target market (13% and 5% for the 35-44 and 45+ groups respectively). As we can see from the results from both questionnaires, many respondents thought that the company was targeting the 18-25 age group, which was also the largest age group of the respondents. Also, most of the respondents said, along with the 18-25 age range, that their own age was one of the target groups. In the second questionnaire we asked a detailed question about which types of customers the respondents thought the company was targeting. The results are shown in Figure 3. Most of the customers believed that the company was targeting sporty, youth and trendy groups. However, there were some slight discrepancies between which groups those outside the target group and inside the target group chose. Those inside the target group were more inclined to pick the youth whereas those outside the target group believed the brand was more targeted towards sporty people. There were also many within the target group who chose the average Joe as one of the target groups of the brand.

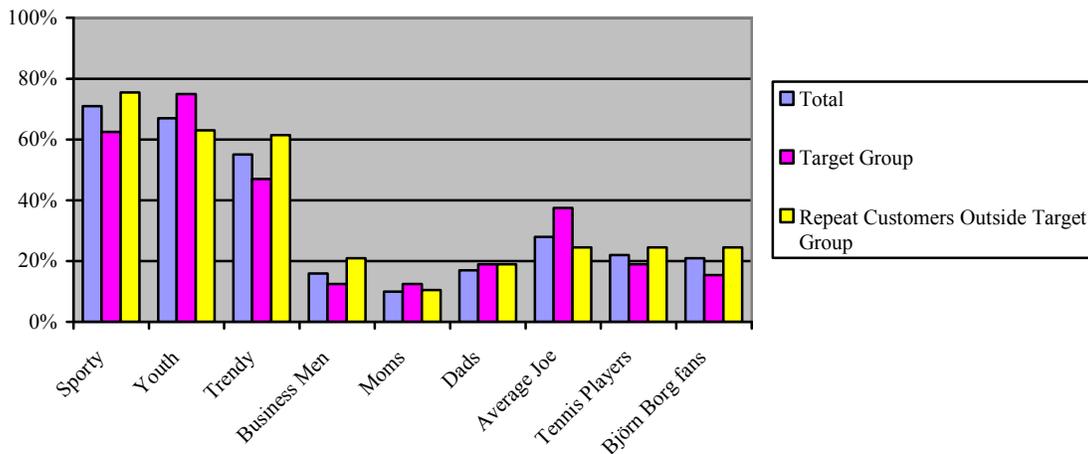


Figure 3- Target group of BB acc. to customers, Quest. 2

4.2.2 Perceptions of Björn Borg’s brand image

The perceptions of the target group and the brand image go hand in hand. The way customers perceive who the brand is targeted towards also reveals what image they believe the company has. However, some questions we asked focused solely on the image apart from the target group. One of the main questions relating to image was the questions that asked about the connection of the brand to the tennis player. 55% of the respondents from questionnaire 2 think of the brand before the tennis player. 40.5% of the respondents in the age group 18-25 thought of the tennis player before the brand, 48% of the respondents in the 26-34 years old, 83% of the 35-44 years old (however, only 6 respondents were in that age-group) and all 3 respondents in the oldest age-group think of the tennis player before the brand.

42% of those in the target group think of the tennis player before the brand and 46% of the respondents who are repeat customers outside the target group think of the tennis player before the brand.

When asked the question “Why did you start buying products from Björn Borg?” only 8% responded that they bought the brand because of the connection to the tennis player. The most popular responses to this question were friends, family, and the advertisements.

Another question relating to brand image was “Why do you buy products from Björn Borg?” The answer choices were quality, design, image, brand name, or other. The percentages of the amount of responses to each answer choice are given in Figure 4. The “other” category had a blank where the respondent could leave an answer. We could group all of the “fill in the blank answers” into two categories: because the products are comfortable and because they look nice. Most respondents bought the product because of the design, followed by quality.

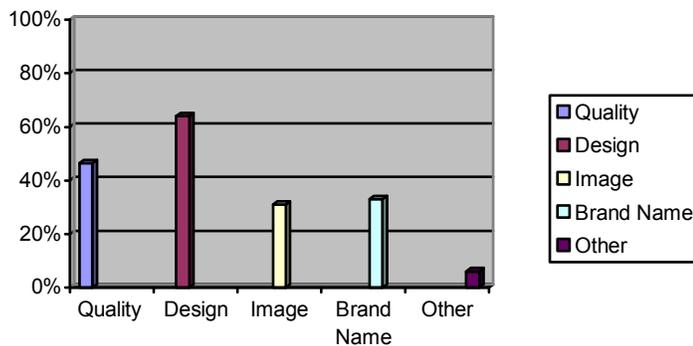


Figure 4- Why do you buy the brand?

4.2.3 Possible situations that could damage the brand image

In questionnaire 2, almost all (97%) of those who had been affected by someone wearing the brand were affected positively. In both questionnaires, respondents were asked if they would stop or start wearing the brand due to certain people wearing it. Of the 62 questionnaires we received, only 4 respondents said that they would stop using the brand if they saw a certain type of person using the brand. More respondents could be convinced to start using the brand if they saw a particular person wearing it. Questionnaire 2 contained a more detailed question concerning this idea. The respondent was given a choice of older, younger or a person who has another clothes style than you. Figures 5 and 6 show how many of the respondents within the target group would stop wearing or buy more of the brand due to the three issues brought forth.

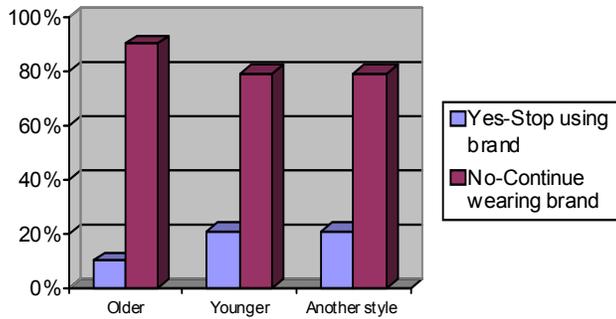


Figure 5- Target group-Stop buying the brand?

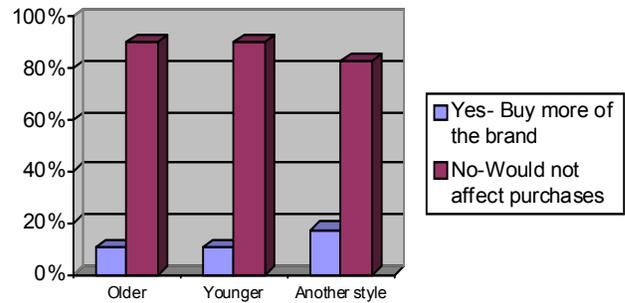


Figure 6- Target group- Buy more of the brand?

Although the percentages of those who said they would stop wearing the brand were low, we can see that out of those who would stop wearing the brand due to older people wearing it, most were in the 18-25 and 26-34 age category. Those who would stop wearing the brand due to younger people wearing it were almost all in the -17 and 18-25 age groups. Finally those who would stop wearing the brand due to someone with another clothes style wearing it were overwhelmingly in the 18-25 age group. Most of the respondents who said that they would stop using the brand for one of these three reasons were men.

4.3 Comparison between qualitative and quantitative data

The following table (Figure 7) shows a side-by-side comparison of the qualitative vs. the quantitative data or the company vs. what the customers responded on the questionnaires.

	<u>The Company Björn Borg</u>	<u>Questionnaires (Customers)</u>
Björn Borg's target group	18-25, cares more than average about their looks. However, also have a very broad target. Current line targets younger customers, next line, maybe not.	18-25, largest group. However, high numbers for the -17 and 26-35 group as well. Also, many customers simply believe that they are the target market. Those outside the target market picked their own age and 18-25 as target market.
Björn Borg's brand image	Image has changed over time. Goes hand in hand with target group. The brand is sporty, modern, and fashionable. The brand is for those who are above average in terms of style. One clerk not sure if the people who are buying the brand truly convey the brand's image. The brand now stands alone apart from the connection to the tennis player.	Overwhelmingly, the questionnaires found that the brand is youthful, sporty, and for fashion conscious people. Second runner up to these was the average Joe category. Many people also thought that the brand was for just about anyone. Almost half of respondents, 42%, thought of the tennis player before the brand and a few even bought the brand due to the connection.

Björn Borg's customers	Customers can be anyone. There are many who buy as a gift to someone else so it is hard to know exactly who customers are. Happy with just about anyone who is not a criminal buying the products. Also state that it is not a bad thing to have people with nice bodies wearing the product.	Customers buy the brand because of design and quality. People of all ages, but more in the younger categories. They like the design, have not really heard about the new line.
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Figure 7- A comparison table of qualitative vs. quantitative data

5. Analysis

“It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious.” - Alfred North Whitehead

As the first two sub-aims were answered in the empirical findings, our analysis follows through the last three sub-aims of our paper. The analysis of the sub-aims leads to the answer of our main question which is found in the conclusion.

5.1 Sub-Aim 3

How are the perceptions of brand image according to repeat customers within and outside the target market different from each other and those of the Björn Borg managers?

87% of the respondents from the second questionnaire were repeat customers. Our definition of repeat customers comes from Uncles et al (2003). Their definition of customers is an “ongoing propensity to buy the brand” (Uncles et al 2003). Therefore, we considered all customers who answered that they would continue to buy the brand in the future a repeat customer, and did not focus on how often they bought the brand. We saw from our second questionnaire that those from outside and inside the target group felt similarly about the target age group, however, one thing we noticed was that most of the respondents put their own age group as a target group, they think that the brand is targeted towards them no matter what age they are. We started noticing more clear differences between the customers within the target group and the repeat customers outside the target group with the question about which type of person the brand is

targeted towards. Overwhelmingly, those outside the target group thought that the brand was sporty; however, for those within the target group, youth received the most votes. Because we allowed the respondents to pick more than one alternative, they could have picked both answers, but still our results show that “youth” was the number one response for the target group market. While we understand that maybe they associate the brand with being youthful, at the same time, Björn Borg is now working with their latest concept which is for an older age group. The new addition could increase confusion in the brand. This relates back to the theory about confused positioning. If a company is not clear on how their product is positioned, it could lead to lower sales. Lower sales has not been the case yet for the company, and this paper was done over too short a time to see if this could have an effect, but it is possible that this could take place and something the company should be aware of.

The managers say that the main buyers are 18-25 years old, but at the same time, they say that the typical customer can be a mom buying underwear for her teenage son. However, when looking closer at the interviews we realize that it is not really clear who the target market is.

Björn Borg thinks of themselves as on the middle-high range of the fashion market and as one of the market leaders in the premium underwear segment. According to the managers, the brand is for those who are a bit more concerned about their appearance than the average person and who in general buys more expensive brands. However, this view is not really shared by many of the respondents: 37.5% of the target group and 24.5% of the repeat customers outside the target group associate the brand with the “average Joe.” This could be a result of the lack of a clear image and/or target group.

According to the male sales clerk, there are many 35-45 year old “moms” coming into the stores and buying products. He also believes that many of the customers are buying products as a gift for someone else. The fact that a lot of people are buying the products as gifts can also create confusion about who the brand really is for; i.e. if there are a lot of people in the age group 35-45 inside the shops, it is not strange that other customers

believe that the brand is for that older age-group as well. The male sales clerk sees this as a problem, since he believes the real target group is younger, between the ages 17-30. As mentioned earlier, it is important to have different strategies for different target groups. Sometimes only the advertising needs to be different between the two groups, at other time the whole product. (Hawkins et al 1998)

Finally, as mentioned earlier in the empirical section, Björn Borg sells volume products and would not say no to any customer (however, Bjurling and af Ekenstam Brennicke acknowledge that some customers are more fun to have than others). This is an indication that more emphasis is put on the short-term goals (i.e. results and figures) than on the company's long term goal. However, as is mentioned in the theory section, the function of brand management must be a long term goal and short term goals are not viable for long term sustainability. (Maio, 2003) Since our questionnaires indicate that some of the customers would actually stop wearing the brand if they saw an older/younger person or someone with a different style wearing the brand, maybe the company should be more careful in their targeting.

5.2 Sub-aim 4

Does the target group associate the brand with a demographic and/or psychographic group other than themselves?

Making the association of the target group to those outside the target group was important because of the relation between the target market and the brand image. As stated previously, the target market interprets the brand's attributes, buyers of the brand, and benefits (Hawkins et al, 1998).

According to the questionnaires we did among the target group, many associate the brand with a different demographic group, as well as their own. They have a much broader view of the company's target group. Judging from the questionnaires, it appears that many people think the brand is for all types of people except for rebels. It was harder to judge if the psychographic group was different from the target groups but there was one

question on the questionnaire that related directly to the respondent's psychographic group: how important is fashion to you? We could then compare that to the question about who the company is trying to target. One of the answer choices was "modemedvetna" or translated literally "fashion conscious". The company has stated that their target group includes those who are pretty aware of fashion and their appearance. 47% of respondents within the target group thought that the company was targeting this group. While 37.5% believed that the company was targeting the "average Joe". These results show that although many associate the brand with being very trendy, many also associate it as being "normal".

From our results, it appears that around half of the target group associates the brand with the same demographic and psychographic groups as their own and the other half has a more broad interpretation of Björn Borg's target group.

According to af Ekenstam Brennicke (2009, pers. comm., 26 Feb.), the typical customer is 18-25 years old. This "opinion" was supported by one of the clerks who said the exact same age group. (Female sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) However, the other clerk did not share this view. According him, there is a huge range of age groups that come into the store and according to him; the biggest group were moms in the age group 35-45. Furthermore, the male clerk said that most of the sales were gifts for someone else, while the girl said that many are buying for themselves. (Male sales clerk, 2009, pers. comm., 4 Apr.) During our visit in the Björn Borg shop we did a small observation of the people who went in to the shop and who bought something. Our observation is close to the male clerk's opinions; we saw young teenagers entering the shop as well as guys in their 20's and older women (probably what the male clerk calls "moms").

5.3 Sub-aim 5

Do some still associate the brand with the tennis player and or do customers easily distinguish the brand from the tennis player? Does Björn Borg necessarily need to make a transition from the tennis player to a brand that stands on its own and is this even possible?

Many customers still associate the brand with the tennis player Björn Borg. Almost half of the total respondents think of him first, before the brand. About 20% of the respondents from questionnaire 2 believe the brand is for tennis players and the same number of respondents believe that the brand is for Björn Borg fans. This might not be a huge percentage; however since brand image refers to the way one feels or thinks when the brand name is mentioned (Hawkins et al, 1998), it is important to know that the connection is there.

The brand appears to still be very dependent on his reputation. Although the company says that they want to stand on their own feet, they are also now going back to their roots with their new heritage line. It appears that the two cannot be easily separated, and it may not be necessary for the company to do so. Even though it was 30 years ago the tennis player Björn Borg had his glory days, it seems like he is still well known in all age groups. Our questionnaires show that although many in the two youngest age groups think of the brand before the tennis player, there were almost as many who thought of the tennis player first.

We are unsure why the company feels it is necessary to say that they are somewhat separate from the person, Björn Borg. They have based their brand image on who the tennis player was several years ago, but that is still the person people think of today.

6. Conclusion

"If all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion." - George Bernard Shaw

Aim/Main question: Can a company sacrifice its brand image if it holds on to all of its customers, including those outside of its target market?

Looking at our analysis of the sub-aims, it appears that there are some associations that the target group makes with the characteristics of those outside the target group. As stated in our theory section, the characteristics of those who buy a brand can influence the brand

image (Hawkins et al, 1998). If those outside of the target market have different characteristics, but continue to buy the brand, then the image starts to become associated with that group's characteristics. All the customers seem to see themselves as the target group. There are many who associate the brand with older people. The older customers may influence the younger ones into thinking the brand is for an older age group. There are also many who associate the brand with the "average Joe". This was something the managers were pretty clear about not being a goal of the company. They said the brand was for those who were a bit more concerned about their appearance than the average person and who in general buy more expensive brands. The male sales clerk said that those were not the types of customers who were shopping at the stores. Because so many people associate the brand with being for the "average" person, it appears that it has become part of the brand image among customers outside the company. Many customers also associate the brand with being "youthful"; as the company develops a new line targeted towards older customers, they are potentially creating confusion about the brand's image in the minds of customers.

Our analysis shows that the image is slightly different from what the company would like their image to be. Because of the association customers within the target group make between the brand and the characteristics of repeat customers outside the target market, the brand may be sacrificing some of its brand image. However, because brand image is created and maintained over a long period of time, it is hard for us to say whether these associations can have a long-term negative affect on the brand image. The current image the consumers have created, however, is not a negative one, even if it is different from the company's desired image, and it may be something the company would want to consider as they are currently looking at their long-term goals.

Therefore, our study indicates that a company can sacrifice brand image if it holds on to all customers including those outside their target market. The contribution of this study is to help companies within the fashion industry understand that they need to be aware of who their repeat customers are and who their target market is in order to maintain long term success with their brand image.

However, we can also look at the other side. Björn Borg is a successful company. Somehow, even if the brand image is confused slightly, they still manage to reach many different groups. Could it be that the reason they are so successful throughout the age groups is that the “soul” of the company has not changed, as Af Ekenstam Brennicke stated, or that their brand image is so strong that it can appeal to all generations. They do not sit on one product for so long that the “trendiness” of it becomes old and stale.

7. Suggestions for further research

“There needs to be further research before we really get excited about it.” – Chris Higgins

As stated in our limitations section, a larger study would provide a more accurate look at customers and their behaviors and allow researchers to do more in-depth research, such as conducting focus groups. A study using different methods could add to the statistical data in order to test the results and strengthen the implications of this study. A similar study over a longer period of time could reveal more effects of some customers in relation to other customers. Also, it could be interesting to focus on different age groups, especially the younger age group and its effect on older buyers. It could also be beneficial to take two or three companies and compare them. Another suggestion for further research would be to study who the company should focus its marketing efforts on: the actual buyer or the wearer of the product.

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Appendix 1- Interview Questions – Pilot Interview

1. Name:
2. Position:
3. How long have you worked at Björn Borg?
4. What is the current market position of Björn Borg?
5. What is Björn Borg's target market (Target market theory and market segmentation)?
6. Has the target market changed over the time you have worked here?

Has it been hard to transition?
7. What does the brand Björn Borg stand for (brand image is important for survival and to make a profit)?
8. How does the target market influence the brand image Björn Borg has (brand image is created through the target market)?
9. How important is the brand image to the company?
How has the company been so successful in its branding?
10. You say on your website that BB is a brand that now stands on its own feet apart from the tennis player. Why is this important to the company to make this transition?
11. Do you believe that people buy the brand because of the association to the tennis player? Is there a certain age/ demographic group that tends to do this?
Is this something that you would like to "change"/could it damage the brand image?
12. How much does of a percentage of total advertising costs does BB spend on advertising to its target market? How much on retaining customers?
13. How does Björn Borg balance the long and short term company goals (theories of long and short term goals)?
14. What are those goals?
15. How do you define a customer?

16. Who are the most regular customers of Björn Borg? Do you think they are inside your target group?
17. Do you know if Björn Borg has many repeat customers?
18. Do you think retaining customers are important to the company? Why/why not?
19. What are methods used to retain customers?
20. Is more emphasis placed on attracting new customers or retaining?
How is this done?
21. You want to attract some customers, are there some you don't want to attract?
22. Is there a point at which you would not want a particular customer anymore?
23. What are factors that make a customer to Björn Borg a "good customer"?

The interview questions

Questions 1-3 are questions about the interviewee, to find out how long they have been with the company and what their current position with Björn Borg is. Questions 4-6 focus solely on Björn Borg's target market. We asked these questions to find out which segmentation variables the company was focusing on. Once we understand these variables, we can better understand who their target market is. Questions 7 and 9 are about the company brand image. Because of the importance of brand image, the company should have a clear understanding of their brand's meaning. As described previously, target market and brand image are interrelated. Question 8 was developed to ask the interviewee about the connection in order to see its practical implications. Question 10 came from the idea that companies use celebrities to endorse their brands. Question 11 also uses this idea as its background; however, it also relates to the theory that not all customers are good or wanted customers. In order to find out how much Björn Borg focuses on its target market vs. retaining customers, we asked question 12. This question reveals whether the company puts more emphasis on the long or short term goals. Question 13 and 14 were also focused on the long and short term goals of Björn Borg. Question 15 introduces the section of questions involving the idea of a customer. There are many definitions of customer and we wanted to find out what the company considers a customer to be. Question 16 asks the interviewee to look at the demographics of a typical Björn Borg customer to find out if the regular customer and the target group are the same. Questions 17-20 ask questions related to retaining customers and the company's view of this practice. In questions 21 and 22, we tackle the idea of "unwanted customers." Question 21 asks about the unwanted customer in relation to attracting or not attracting a specific customer while 22 asks about that point in the customer lifecycle where the customer becomes more of a burden to the company. Finally, question 23 deals with the factors surrounding what a "good" customer is in the specific case of Björn Borg.

Appendix 2 - Interview Questions – Second and Third Interview

1. What age group normally comes in and shops at the store?

The first question was asked because they are the front line for the company. They are the ones that deal face to face with customers and therefore could answer this question the best.

2. How would you describe the company's target group?

3. What is the Björn Borg image?

The second and third questions were asked to see if the clerks noticed any difference between the target group and the image of the company. The last two questions could then be compared to the first question in order to see if there is any discrepancy between the image, target, and actual customers.

Appendix 3

The forth and last interview conducted was with the Sales Manager at Björn Borg. We wanted complementary information about the target group and the image Björn Borg wants to communicate. The questions sent to the Sales Manager were very similar to the questions asked in the pilot interview (see Appendix 1).

1. What is the current market position of Björn Borg? Main competitors?
2. What is Björn Borg's target market? (age, sex, appearance, etc)
3. What does the brand Björn Borg stand for?
4. How does the target market influence the brand image Björn Borg has?
5. A) How important is the brand image to the company?
B) How has the company been so successful in its branding?
6. Do you believe that people buy the brand because of the association to the tennis player? Is there a certain age/ demographic group that tends to do this?
Is this something that you would like to "change"/could it damage the brand image?
7. How much does of a percentage of total advertising costs does BB spend on advertising to its target market? How much on retaining customers?
8. What are Björn Borg's short and long term goals and how does the company balance them?
9. Who are the most regular customers of Björn Borg? Are they inside your target group?
10. Do you know if Björn Borg has many repeat customers?
11. Is more emphasis placed on attracting new customers or retaining?
12. You want to attract some customers, are there some you don't want to attract?
13. Is there a point at which you would not want a particular customer anymore?

Appendix 4

Questionnaire 1

1. Kön

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Kvinna	Man

2. Vilken ålderskategori tillhör du?

This question was asked in order to see if the respondent was in the target group.

<input type="text"/>				
-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-

3. Vad är det första du tänker på när du hör Björn Borg?

This question relates to the connection between the person and the brand.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Tennisspelaren	Varumärket

4. Känner du till varumärket Björn Borg?

This question was asked to see how many are familiar with BB.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ja	Nej

5. Har du någonsin handlat någonting hos Björn Borg?

Question was asked to see who customers were.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ja	Nej

Om nej, fortsätt till fråga 11

6. Köpte du produkten till dig själv eller som en present?

(Det går bra att kryssa i båda alternativen)

Question to see who actual users of product are.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Mig själv	Present

Vilken ålderskategori tillhör personen du köpte presenten till?

Same reason as above question.

<input type="text"/>				
-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-

7. Vilket år köpte du någonting från Björn Borg första gången?

Question asked to see how long they had been customers.

<input type="text"/>				
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

8. Varför köper du produkter från Björn Borg

(Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)

Question refers to the brand image.

<input type="text"/>				
design	kvalitet	image	varumärket	annat

9. Anser du att Björn Borg har förändrat sig under åren?

Question asked to see if customers have seen a change in the product over the years.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ja	Nej

10. Hur viktigt är mode, design och utseende för dig?

This question referred to the target group again as the company said that those who care more about their appearance are in the target group.

<input type="text"/>				
Inte alls viktigt	Lite viktigt	Ganska viktigt	Viktigt	Mycket viktigt

11. Varför köper du inte produkter från Björn Borg?

This question was asked mostly to understand why non-customers do not buy the product.

<input type="text"/>				
design	kvalitet	image	varumärket	annat

12. Vilka anser du att Björn Borg riktar sig mot?

This question was asked to understand what people outside of the company think of the brand's image.

<input type="text"/>					
-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-	
<input type="text"/>					
Sportiga	Trendiga	Traditionella	Rebeller	Homosexuella	Annat

13. Har du blivit påverkad av någon som har på sig Björn Borg?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

Om ja var det positivt eller negativt?

Ja	Nej
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positivt	Negativt

14. Skulle du sluta använda Björn Borg produkter om du såg en "viss person" ha på sig märket?

This question along with 13 and 15 were asked to see if one customer could influence another.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ja	Nej

15. Skulle du börja använda märket/ köpa fler produkter om en "viss person" skulle använda varumärket?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ja	Nej

16. Har du hört talas om Björn Borgs nya linje?

(Heritage)

Om ja, Skulle du köpa den?

This question was asked to see if customers are aware of new products

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ja	Nej
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ja	Nej

Appendix 5

Questionnaire 2

1. Har du handlat någon produkt från Björn Borg?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Ja	Nej			
2. Kön	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Kvinna		Man		
3. Vilken ålderskategori tillhör du?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-
4. Vad är det första du tänker på när du hör Björn Borg?	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Tennisspelaren		Varumärket		
5. Varför började du köpa produkter från Björn Borg? (Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reklam	Vänner	Familj	På grund av kopplingen till tennisspelaren Björn Borg	Annat
6. Har du köpt produkter till dig själv?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Ja	Nej			
7. Har du köpt produkter till någon annan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Ja	Nej			
8. Vilken ålderskategori tillhör personen du köpte presenten till? (Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-
9. Varför köper du produkter från Björn Borg? (Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	design	Kvalitet	image	varumärket	annat
10. Hur ofta köper du någonting från Björn Borg?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	1 gång/månad eller oftare	Några gånger om året	1 gång/år	Mer sällan	
11. Kommer du att fortsätta köpa produkter från Björn Borg?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Ja	Nej			
12. Om nej, Varför inte?	<hr/>				

13. Hur viktigt är mode, design och utseende för dig?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Inte alls viktigt	Lite Viktigt	Viktigt	Mycket Viktigt

14. Vilka åldersgrupper anser du att Björn Borg riktar sig mot?

(Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)

<input type="text"/>				
-17	18-25	26-34	35-44	45-

15. Vilken kategori av människor?

(Det går bra att kryssa i mer än ett alternativ)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Sportiga	Ungdomar	Modemedvetna	Rebeller	Affärsmän
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Mammor	Pappor	"Vanlig Svensson"	Tennisspelare	
<input type="text"/>				
Björn Borgs (tennis spelaren) fans		Annat		

16. Har du blivit påverkad av någon som har på sig Björn Borg?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Ja	Nej

17. Om ja var det positivt eller negativt?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Positivt	Negativt

18. Skulle du sluta använda Björn Borg produkter om du såg.....använda Björn Borg produkter?

18a. Äldre personer
18b. Yngre personer
18c. Personer som har en annan klädstil än vad du har

Ja	Nej
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

18d. Annat

19. Skulle du köpa fler produkter om

du såg..... använda varumärket?

19a. Äldre personer
19b. Yngre personer
19c. Personer som har en annan klädstil än vad du har

Ja	Nej
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

19d. Annat

Operationalization of questionnaire 2

The motives behind the questions in the second questionnaire are the same as the first; however, we did change some of the questions after analyzing the results from the first questionnaire. In the second questionnaire, we deleted questions which would have referred to non-customers. In question 13, one relating to how important style was to the respondent, we noticed in the first questionnaire a trend of people tending to take the “safe” answer, right in the middle; and so the middle option was taken away in the second questionnaire, forcing the respondent to choose a side, either they cared or did not care. Also, more options were added in question 15 about who Björn Borg’s target market is. This was done because after the first questionnaire, we wanted to add more options that we knew Björn Borg was not targeting. We deleted the question from the first questionnaire about Björn Borg’s newest line because after the first questionnaire only 2 respondents out of 62 had ever even heard of the line and thus we realized it was too new to be affecting the brand’s image. In the first questionnaire, we asked questions relating to whether or not people would start or stop buying a brand due to a specific person wearing the brand. After getting very little response to these questions and because it contradicted reports that we had read, as stated at the beginning of this paper, we decided to give our respondents more options and added choices for them.

Coding the questionnaires

In order to code the questionnaires, the questions were given a number and the answers were valued as either 1 or 0. 1 signified that a person answered the question positively. 0 signified a negative answer or an alternative answer that was not chosen. In the case of a few questions that could have multiple responses, each response was given a separate number such as 13a, 13b, 13c, and so on. Then we could pull multiple answers to compare to another question when using the function tool in the excel spreadsheet. A few of the questions where the answer was neither yes or no, nor could have multiple responses, were coded with corresponding letters to the answers. We also had one question with a scale that was coded by using 1-5 corresponding to the different places on

the scale. The codes were then entered into an excel spreadsheet in order to easily see and compare the answers. The second questionnaire was done through an online survey website and the answers were automatically coded.