WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT YOU
- How to measure brand identity and brand image of a small design company -

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ABSTRACT

The idea of this thesis originates from the standpoint that the understanding of who you are, who you want to be and what impression you actually make, is the start of a successful reciprocal relationship. The thesis solves two tasks. First, it offers a methodology of measuring brand image and brand identity and therefore contributes to the development of the research base. Second, presenting a case-study of a small scale company it applies the methodology and analyzes the congruency between brand image and brand identity from the communication perspective of SMEs. In a result the developed methodology is tested and a contribution to the deeper understanding of brand nature is made.
SUMMARY

The thesis intends to illuminate the gap in methodology concerning the measurement of brand image and brand identity in the context of their natural environment, which is communication environment. Although it is widely researched that brand identity and brand image exist only in the communication environment, there is a lack of studying of brand image and brand identity in the connection to the communication channels. The fact that the case-study company is of a small scale is not reflected on the way the brand image and brand identity are measured, though it does dictate the certain way of communication the company chooses. Therefore SME branding issue is being also highlighted in the thesis, in particular SME branding communication.

The aim of the study is to measure brand image and brand identity of a small company and therefore to contribute to a deeper understanding of how identity and meaning is created, through different ways of communication between companies and customers.

The core principle of the current research is to conduct an in depth analysis with the help of mainly qualitative methods. The authors believe that in order to form an understanding of brand identity and brand image and to see how they interrelate qualitative methods are more appropriate than quantitative ones as they allow to reveal the true meaning of brand and to identify the values, assumptions, associations, attitudes, feelings that stand behind and form the brand identity and brand image.

The developed methodology proved itself as efficient and brand image along with brand identity were described. The thesis resulted in a question how to define the congruence between brand image and brand identity itself. In addition a number of supplementing conclusions were made.

Key words: brand identity, brand image, communication channels, SME branding.
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1. INTRODUCTION

‘You cannot win the hearts of customers unless you have a heart yourself’

In the period of globalization, mass production, high-pace of everyday life individuality and personal relationships are still of great value for a human being. People want to stress their uniqueness and life position by choosing some brand and rejecting others. In the conditions of a severe competition companies try to do their best in order to predict wishes, to find a sweet spot of their customers and to create long-lasting relations with them. Nevertheless it is hard to surprise customers nowadays who are tired of the abundance of brands and commodities, which are constantly being imposed on them. In the opinion of the authors, only those brands, which have consistent values, which are authentic and sincere, can attract people’s attention today. However even they face numerous problems and obstacles in communication processes.

The idea of this thesis originated from the standpoint that the understanding of who you are, who you want to be and what impression you actually make, is the start of a successful reciprocal relationship. This meaning fits into the actively researched but inexhaustible concepts of brand identity, brand profile and brand image. This thesis is focused on brand identity and brand image.

1.1. Problem background

The concepts of brand identity and brand image were researched by such scholars as Kapferer (1997, 2004), Aaker (1996), Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), Keller (2008) and others. Nevertheless further wider and deeper investigation is needed in order to clarify the linkage between brand identity and brand image.

‘Having an identity means being your true self, driven by a personal goal that is both different from others’ and resistant to change’ (Kapferer 1997: 91). Identity is the company’s perception of brand. According to Kapferer (1997) image is both the result and the interpretation of the identity. Brand image relates to the consumer’s perception of the brand.

‘Brands can only exist if they communicate’
(Kapferer 1997: 105).

Brand image and brand identity exist in the communication environment (Nadnan 2005). Therefore these notions cannot be researched in isolation from their natural environment; and changes, happening in it should be considered. ‘Communication nowadays is no longer just a technique, it is a feat in itself’ (Kapferer 1997: 93). According to Nadnan (2005) many changes are taking place in today’s business climate. There is a saturation of markets and information overload, rapid development of consumer-generated media, overlap between physical and electronic markets. These are just some tendencies in the nowadays communication environment. These changes carry new opportunities as well as higher risks. Being aware of the current tendencies is essential for marketers in order to direct the message, make sure that it is received and if possible get respond in a most appropriate and efficient way in order to build reciprocal fruitful and sincere relationships with the customers in a result.

Most of researches deal with brand image and brand identity of large enterprises while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remain aside. SMEs operating with limited resources have a number of particularities when talking about branding and marketing communication comparing to large companies. This thesis focuses on brand image and brand identity in the context of SMEs.
As Juntunen et al (2010) declares, there is a gap in knowledge on brand building in the case of small businesses. They support their opinion by citing to Opoku, who states that small businesses lack the resources of large companies and brand management can rarely receive the priority it deserves (Opoku 2007 cited in Juntunen et al 2010). Boyle believes that there is a lack of guidance for entrepreneurs to take an unconventional approach to branding (Boyle 2003 cited in Juntunen et al 2010). Branding is important in SMEs, it ads customers’ value and encourages SMEs’ growth (Juntunen et al 2010). 99.8 per cent of all companies in Europe are SMEs and that on average between 2002 and 2008 the number of jobs in SMEs of EU-27 increased by 1.9 % per annum, while the number of jobs in large enterprises increased by only 0.8 % per annum. The conclusion can be made that SMEs have a considerable economical strength in Europe (European Commission 2009). Admittedly, the economic crisis affected SME performance, but a number of experts see business opportunities in today’s situation on the market. ‘It is a time when companies have a chance to establish an advantage over weaker competitors’ (European Commission 2009). We live in a relationship economy (La Forge 2011). Being innovative, ‘real’ and close to your customers is the crucial issue nowadays. As the authors believe that in times when relationships are of a great value on the one hand and there is a lack of knowledge in the branding area of SMEs on the other hand the topic of the research and the case chosen is relevant to each other and to the current situation on the market.

1.2. Problematization

The idea of this thesis originated from the standpoint that understanding of who you are, who you want to be and what impression you actually make, is the start of a successful reciprocal relationship. How well a company communicates the brand identity is reflected on the image of brand that the customers create in their minds. It is vital for the company to be aware of that image since it points out in what direction the company should continue to develop (Kapferer 2003).

A company will often use branding strategies to communicate its identity and value to consumers, Gehani states (2001). ‘If the communication fails it can result in customers experiencing that the company does not offer what it promises. This misconception may create wrong brand associations, which are driven by the brand identity’ (Aaker 1996: 84). This exemplifies the problem which may arise because of inconsistency of the company’s promoted identity and the customers’ perceived image of the company. Therefore the topic raised in this research is worth undivided attention and thorough investigation.

Strong long-lasting relations between the company and customers can be created and maintained by strengthening identity-image linkage (Nadnan 2005). The problem is that both the brand identity and brand image are not constant notions. They tend to change and evolve over time. Moreover companies may face the “identity crisis”, says Kapferer (1997), who draws a parallel between companies and teenagers. When the identity structure of teenagers is still weak, they tend to move from one role model to another. ‘These constant shifts create a gap and force the basic question: ‘What is the real me?’ (Kapferer 1997: 91).

Psychological and personal characteristics, including demographic and lifestyle variables, influence the buying decision process. Inevitably personal aspects are in the heart of the brand image formation process, which is being completed by the influence of external factors, such as opinion of others or actions of competitors. The particular interest for the authors is to use qualitative methods and to describe how the psychological and personal characteristics are mirrored in the brand image.
The investigation of such issues as brand image and brand identity will never lose its topicality as well as the research of human beings never will. The issues of emotions, feelings, personal attitudes are inexhaustible.

1.3. Aim of the study and research questions

According to Menezes and Elbert (1979) researchers often face the problem of choosing appropriate measurement methods in their investigation. In spite of the fact that a lot of techniques of measuring brand image have been developed in the field of branding recently, there is still a lack of academic information of measuring brand identity (Driesener and Romaniuk 2006). The authors intend to develop a methodology which would allow to measure brand image and brand identity in a way that they could be compared.

The aim of the study is to measure brand image and brand identity of a small company and contribute to a deeper understanding of how identity and meaning is created, through different ways of communication between companies and customers. In accordance with the aim the following research questions are raised:

A. How to measure brand identity and brand image?

B. Can the congruence/incongruence between brand identity and brand image be explained by communication channels of a small company?

The better the understanding of the perception of brand is, that customers have and the perception of brand that management teams and employees have, the more efficient the communication between a company and its customers will be. The tailored methodology and the results of the current project can be implemented by other researchers and companies as well, especially when dealing with brands that contain elements of place-of-origin, and are presented on different markets.

1.4. Case Study

G.A.D is a furniture company situated on Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea. It was established in 1997. G.A.D is a small company with 25 employees, 20 are engaged in the production and 5 constitute a management team. The company has a wide network of retailers, which are located in Sweden (47 retailers) and in Great Britain (8 retailers).

The company’s vision is not only producing furniture but making it “real”, using solid materials and age-old proven carpentry techniques. As Swedish furniture is worldwide known for its simple design and quality, the company promotes Gotland not only as the place of origin but also as the place where natural recourses can be found.

G.A.D’s products are of a high price category and the production process is complex and includes handicraft techniques. The unique cultural environment of Gotland and the small size of the company are the peculiarities of the company which have their effects on branding and communication.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. What is a Brand

Originating for the practical purpose of differentiation between companies and products a brand has become more and more complex notion over the years. People want to consume with meaning. ‘Consumers endow the products and brands they buy and use with meanings, over and above their sheer functional value’ (Lannon and Cooper 1983).

Choosing the specific brand urges people to express themselves, to emphasize their values, tastes, style of life and sometimes, even mood. ‘Since brands can act as self-expressive devices, users prefer brands which come closest to meeting their own self-image’ (Chernatony and McDonald 1998: 121).

Admittedly, whereas there are people who make a cult from brands, which add essential meaning and colors to their life, there are people who perceive brands as simple marks and judge functional value of products. At least they say so. But there are some doubts whether it is possible to choose a product without any prejudices, associations and feelings, which are the characteristics of a brand not of a pure product with its functional objective features.

According to Fournier ‘a brand has no objective existence at all: it is simply a collection of perceptions held in the mind of the consumer’ (Fournier 1995: 15). She researches consumer-brand relationships defining brand as a relationship partner. In general, personification of a brand is a sound and widely researched concept. Brands, having own personalities, are equally known as real people: singers, film and sport stars etc. (Arnold 1992). Brands can be treated as close friends, someone you grew up with and you can rely on (Randall 2000). This fact can be explained by the brand’s ability to communicate rich sets of messages and allow customers to feel related to the product, service or the company.

Being meaningful to people a brand is a powerful tool for companies to manifest themselves and to build the relationships with customers in a result. Since the concept of brand is complex and often absolutely intangible, companies in order to build their brands try to express themselves in the most beautiful words and they put them on paper, on websites, on walls, just everywhere, but that is not enough. It can only be considered as a reference point. The employees should live the brand, share the values of the founder, find inspiration in them and discover new ways of doing things (Ind 2007). ‘If the values are truly felt and lived, without them being written down, then employees can quite effectively live the brand’ (Ind 2007: 73).

Brand is the reflection of actions, values, attitudes of persons who are united around the certain idea, which carry some meaning into their life.

2.2. Brand identity and brand image

A single person or a group of people starts the company from the idea, from the solution to some kind of problem they can offer to the society. Here where the idea and personality meet the brand identity is started to be formed. When the interaction and communication begins and the message is sent to the consumers and other audience, brand image arises. Therefore brand identity comes from the sender and brand image, being both the result and the interpretation thereof, comes from the receiver of the message (Kapferer 2004). In other words, brand identity is the brand perception of a company, which is formed based on company’s values and ideas. Brand image is the perception of the consumers (and other participants of communication), which is formed mainly under the influence of the company’s message, consumers’ personalities, opinions and messages of other actors, such as company’s competitors. It is impossible for a company to have a clearly fixed one brand image. As every individual has own unique perceptions, opinions and
associations, the brand image varies from person to person, but it can have some common features.

Preferring one brand to another customers choose that brand identity which is closer to them, that somehow reflects their individuality and personal values. Today is a time of harsh competition, when brands have to promote themselves, emphasizing own distinctive features. A complete and clear brand identity is an essential pillar for the brand in order to be chosen and retained in consumers’ lives.

The brand image and brand identity cannot be totally congruent. First, the competition and ‘noise’ alter the message being sent (Kapferer 2004). Second, the consumer creates brand image by reacting not only towards what the company says intentionally but also to what it does not mean to say and to what it does or does not. Park et al states, brand image is not just a complex of perceptions created by the company’s communication activities alone. ‘It is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the firm’ (Park et al 1986). Third, people perceive and judge the world through their own prism of personality, knowledge, experience and even temperament. ‘The image lies in the mind of the beholder and is conditioned at least as much by the nature of the beholder as by the nature of the object itself’ (Bullmore 1984 cited in Dobni and Zinkhan 1990).

According to Nadnan (2005) by strengthening identity – image linkage, brand loyalty can be created and maintained. She means that ‘the gap between ‘company reality’ and ‘consumer perception’ has to be minimized or eliminated’ (Nadnan 2005: 268). With this statement Nadnan shows her agreement with the thought that has been originated earlier. De Chernatony cites Dutton and Dukerich and Marziliano in her article: ‘When the gap between brand identity and brand image becomes noticeable, this acts as a trigger for change’ (Dutton and Dukerich 1991 and Marziliano 1997 cited in De Chernatony 1999: 14). She makes a clarification when the gap appears between brand identity and brand reputation the better match should be ensured. De Chernatony (1999) claims that brand image cannot be an indicator for change as it does not capture the fluctuation of the customers’ perceptions over time in contrast to brand reputation. The authors admit that brand image varies over time, but brand identity is not an absolutely stable substance also. Moreover changes in brand image are often caused by changes in brand identity.

Admitting that it is essential for the company to know the brand image in order to sustain and develop brand identity Aaker claims that there is a threat for companies to get into the ‘brand image trap’. It is the situation when a company only tries to capture the image and make it into a brand identity. They let the customers dictate what the brand is (Aaker 1996). As a result the customers loose their interest and the company – its individuality and ‘driving force’. ‘Creating a brand identity is more than finding out what customers say they want. It must also reflect the soul and vision of the brand, what it hopes to achieve’ (Aaker 1996: 70).

Kapferer’s standpoint is that brand identity is the prevailing concept (Kapferer 2004). Moreover ‘with time brands do eventually gain their independence and their own meaning’ (Kapferer 2004: 99). He admits that brands cannot be cut off from the public, but paying too much attention to image can make companies to focus on the appearance and not enough on essence (Kapferer 2004). The same idea has been expressed by De Chernatony (De Chernatony 1999).

The authors’ idea is that managers should be fully aware of what kind of identity brand actually has and what impression it makes. These notions are quite ambiguous as they consist of people’s individual impressions, feelings, associations and attitudes. To identify them precisely is impossible as well as to measure them in numbers. But what managers can and should do from the authors’ point of view is to try to understand and describe these meanings. Once they have
done it the future aims and plans of the brand are to be clear and can be managed successfully. And what is even more important this helps to answer the question of who you are, the difficult one by itself and because of the fact that the true brand is living its own life, it constantly changes and develops like persons do.

2.3. Brand Personality

Companies, products and brands are deeply integrated in the today’s life of people. Whether they want it or not the mentioned above actors have found their places in people’s life. How they coexist is the complex ambiguous question and there is an appealing task for researches to get it resolved. Therefore it is not a surprise that many concepts connected with brands, as the emotional representatives of companies and products have emerged for the recent years. Some of them are: brand experience, brand personality, brand trust and brand love. They are all interrelated and overlapping. We are going to focus on some of them, which we consider to be the most relevant to the current research and essential for answering the research questions.

As we are living, according to La Forge (2011), in the relationship economy, good relationships between companies, customers and brands are important for sustaining the situation when companies and customers are happy, in other words when companies are profitable and customers are satisfied. Obviously, relationships are possible between persons. Therefore in the research and business world companies and brands are considered to have their own personality and are seen as persons. It is not a new concept, but the authors believe that it will become more and more popular and important in the relationship economy. Taking this into account authors could not research brand identity and brand image without introducing and analyzing the brand personality concept.

The authors have faced two problems. First, how to define brand personality and second, how to differentiate between brand personality and customers’ personality, especially while having a discussion and collecting data from interviewees.

The definition of brand personality presented by Aaker (1997) is one of the widely used. Aaker states that brand personality is ‘the set of human characteristics associated with the brand’ (Aaker 1997: 347). She has also developed A Brand Personality Scale, intended to measure brand personality, which has become considerably popular among researchers. But both the definition and brand personality scale have been criticized by Azoulay and Kapferer. They provide the following argumentation: ‘ Whereas psychologists have worked over years to exclude intellectual abilities, gender, and social class from their personality definitions and scales, adopting J. Aaker’s loose definition of brand personality may take us to ignore their results, and therefore to use the term ‘brand personality’ to designate ‘any non-physical attribute associated with a brand’, including intellectual abilities, gender, or social class’ (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003: 150). Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) claim that the definition of Aaker is loose and confusing, saying that inner values, physical traits, pictures of the typical users are also human characteristics that can be associated to a brand but they belong to different facets of brand identity such as cultural facet, relationship facet, the brand reflected consumer facet and the brand physical facet. Along with these facets there is a facet of brand personality.

Azoulay and Kapferer based on their argumentation provide their own definition of brand personality: ‘Brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands’ (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003: 151). The aim of the new definition is to separate the concept of brand personality from other human characteristics which can be associated to a brand (Azoulay and Kapferer 2003).

Keller refers to the definition of brand personality introduced by Olson and Allen: ‘Brand personality is the human characteristics or traits that consumers can attribute to a brand’ (Olson
and Allen 1995 cited in Keller 2008). Keller adheres to the definition of brand personality which is even broader than the one introduced by Aaker. He claims that by answering the following questions the meaning of brand personality will be concluded: ‘If the brand were to come alive as a person, what would it be like? What would it do? Where would it live? What would it wear? Who would it talk to if it went to a party (and what would it talk about)?’ (Keller 2008: 369).

In this research the authors decided to refer to the definition of brand personality introduced by Azoula and Kapferer (2003). The list of personal traits was composed by the authors in a way that it excludes intellectual ability, gender and social class.

The questions presented by Keller, answers to which according to him identify brand personality, will be used in the research (pictures technique). But at the same time the authors believe referring to Kapferer that these questions will mainly reveal such facets of brand identity (if asking the company) and brand image (if asking customers) as user imagery, brand relationship facet or/and cultural facet. However along with some of these facets brand personality may also be revealed.

Keller claims that brand personality and user imagery may not always agree (Keller 2008: 369). The authors in continuation of how brand personality was defined consider brand personality and user imagery to be incomparable notions. Brand personality can be compared with customer’s personality, but user imagery in the context of this research has a broader meaning. Along with customer’s personality it includes such characteristics as age, social class etc. The researchers though support the idea of Keller but put it in a following way: brand personality and customer’s personality may not always be the same. One way to explain this is that people may look for brands which do not represent themselves but which add virtually certain traits to the personality they want to be. Here the second problem, which was faced by the authors, should be introduced in a more detailed form.

During the interview the customers might start to tell about brand personality and finish with describing their personalities instead. It happens very naturally for the customer as they tend to project their personalities to brand and vice versa. The task of the authors is to distinguish between brand personality and customers’ personalities. While conducting interviews the authors should be very observant and attentive in order to see if brand personality and customer’s personality are really congruent or if they are not. The interviewee could describe the typical customers and their personalities in a way that they want to see themselves. In other words, they want to be congruent with their ideal self-images, which they complete (often unconsciously), by using a certain brand.

2.4. SME branding communication

Consistent communication is essential in brand building (Aaker 1992 and Balmer and Gray 1999 cited in Juntunen 2010: 4). The way company chooses to communicate is a crucial step towards building relationships with existent and potential customers as it influences directly the efficiency of message delivering and its meaning itself. While the traditional communication tools are constantly being improved the rapid development of information technologies has presented a number of new communication opportunities as e-commerce, database marketing, off-the-screen selling etc.

SMEs unlike large companies often cannot take the advantage of new communication opportunities as they have scarce financial and time resources. The lack of the attention to SME branding and knowledge about it also hamper brand communication of SMEs. Wong and Merrilees (2005) found in their research (when analyzing 8 case studies) that SMEs had a narrow interpretation of what branding is. Some of the promotional activities were considered to be important to branding but were not seen as critical for SME’s business. Such kinds of interaction
as personal selling and face-to-face communication were seen as crucial part of their marketing communications.

‘As small business must often rely on networking and word of mouth to create strong, favorable, and unique associations, avenues such as public relation through existing network such as in house-publications, charity events, low cost-promotions and sponsorship can be a very effective and less costly means of brand enhancement’ (Abimbola 2001: 8). In addition Abimbola (2001) claims that in the situation when the extension of brand is needed, the resources are limited and the competition is strong innovations occur.

2.5. Country-of-origin concept

The concept of the country-of-origin is considered to be one of the most influential factors while speaking about customers’ perceptions of brand. Associations and judgments of brand can be greatly influenced by branding of the country of origin, its reputation and/or stereotypes hold about it (Aiello et al 2009). ‘Indeed, consumers tend to evaluate products more favorably when the products originate from or are made in countries that enjoy a positive image or perceptions’ (Liu and Johnson 2005: 87).

People usually are more loyal to the products originated in developed countries while they can be suspicious of the products made in developing countries. Moreover, specific regions of the country where the product is made can also influence customer’s choice. The examples of product stereotyping can be English tee, French perfumes or Swiss watches.

Country’s stereotypes and reputation which are formed in the social environment might become so strong that it can be used as standards while evaluating similar types of products from different countries (Tse and Gorn 1992). When little is known about a brand, reputation of a country of origin might be the crucial factor when making a buying decision.

Sweden is known and recognized for its minimalistic style of design and high quality of products. The island of Gotland is known as a special and picturesque place where unique nature and natural recourses can be found. Such stereotyped Swedish and Gotlandic peculiarities can also be related to the case company as people associate G.A.D furniture with Gotland and Sweden. Therefore, it is concluded by the authors, that the country-of-origin is not a pure demographic variable, but it is a factor which influences brand associations and consumers’ judgement of a product.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Methods

The core principle of this research is to conduct an in depth analysis with the help of mainly qualitative methods. The authors believe that in order to form an understanding of brand identity and brand image and to see how they interrelate qualitative methods are more appropriate than quantitative ones as they allow to reveal a deeper meaning of brand and to identify the values, assumptions, associations, attitudes and feelings that stand behind and form the brand image. Gardner and Levy (1955) declare that a variety of concepts and methods are being taken from sociology and psychology to understand and solve marketing problems. ‘They are especially useful for arriving at an understanding of the attitudes and feelings which make up the image of a product and a brand’ (Gardner and Levi 1955: 35). Along with qualitative methods quantitative methods are also to be applied as they can help to form a better understanding of the researched subject.
3.1.1. Qualitative methods

A face-to-face interview is a widely used technique in qualitative research. It’s based on a direct meeting between interviewer and interviewee. By using such a method it is possible not only to obtain a lot of extra information with the help of intonation, voice, body language of the interviewee, but also use projective techniques to encourage the answers. According to Knapik (2006) the advantage of a face-to-face interview is spontaneous reactions of both respondents and researchers that cannot be repeated by any survey. Gummesson (2000) stresses the importance of nonverbal language and mentions that researchers should not underestimate it when choosing the method of the research.

Laddering is a qualitative one-to-one interviewing technique which is used to understand how consumer perceptions and brand knowledge ranges from attributes (A) to purchase consequences (C) to personal values (V). The method helps to reveal personal motivations regarding specific brand’s products and elicit interrelation of attributes, consequences, personal values for an introduced product. According to the method, first, the interviewee is to be asked about the distinctive features of the brand then the chain of ‘Why is it important to you?’ questions is to be followed (Reynolds and Gutman 1988). Personal values are in the core of the decision to give preference to one product instead of the other but it is not so easy to identify what exact values of a person play the role in buying a certain product. Hence laddering technique is the one which is to be applied to get a better understanding of customers’ values which stand behind the buying decision.

Projective techniques can be defined as indirect and unstructured ways of revealing both emotional customers’ relationships with brands and their true thoughts towards products (Donoghue 2000). ‘Projective techniques are not used to measure (that is more the territory of other techniques such as surveys), but to uncover feelings, beliefs, attitudes and motivation which many consumers find difficult to articulate’ (Webb 1992 cited in Donoghue 2000: 47).

The authors are going to use the type of projective techniques which is based on revealing what customers associate with the brand. This technique suggests that a person is given a list of words or a number of pictures and being asked to pick those he/she associates with the brand. It is supposed that researchers can look into emotional aspect of customers’ relationship with the brand (Donoghue 2000).

3.1.2. Quantitative methods

In order to analyze communication environment a standardized questionnaire will be used. The aim of the questionnaire is ‘to ensure that differences in responses to questions can be interpreted as reflecting differences among respondents, rather than differences in the processes that produced the answers’ (Saniscalco and Auriat 2005: 3). Self-designed standardized questionnaires are going to be used in order to collect the information about communication channels of the case company.

3.2. Research Model

The research model consists of two parts. The first part is intended to reveal brand identity and brand image. The second part discloses the communication channels of the company and customers with the help of a questionnaire.

In order to reveal brand identity and brand image the authors take the Brand Identity Prism proposed by Kapferer (2004) as a base and develop the model in three steps:
1) the interpretation of 6 facets of Kapferer’s Brand Identity Prism;
2) 6 questions revealing brand identity;
3) 6 questions revealing brand image.

As it was mentioned above in a point 2.2. Kapferer thinks that companies should focus more on the sending side of brand marketing and less on the receiving side. Therefore he developed the brand identity prism not brand image prism. In the current research the authors intend to investigate both concepts, brand identity and brand image, with the help of the brand identity prism proposed by Kapferer. Thus two prisms will be developed and analyzed in a result.

![Brand identity prism (Kapferer 2004: 107)](image)

**Figure 1** Brand identity prism (Kapferer 2004: 107)

The interpretation of Kapferer’s six facets:

1. Physique. The brand’s physical specificities and qualities. Objective features which immediately come to mind (Kapferer 2004). The sum of a brand’s basic characteristics (Apéria and Back 2004). The authors decided to include here not only physical and objective characteristics of brand but also the first and strongest associations with the brand, which might be quite abstract. The reason for this is that the authors consider the first associations being crucial when determining and describing the perception of the brand people have.

2. Personality. The brand has personality. ‘The way in which it speaks of its products or services shows what kind of person it would be if it were human’ (Kapferer 2004: 108).

3. Culture. Each brand has a culture from which it originates (Apéria and Back 2004). ‘Here the culture means the set of values feeding the brand’s inspiration’ (Kapferer 2004: 108). Countries of origin are great cultural sources for brands (Kapferer 2004).

4. Relationship. A brand symbolizes a certain type of relationship. ‘This facet defines the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand. This has a number of implications for the way the brand acts, delivers services, relates to its customers’ (Kapferer 2004: 110).

5. Reflection. The brand’s perceived client type. The company should reflect the customers as he/she wants to be seen as a result of using the brand (Kapferer 2004).

6. Self-image. ‘If reflection is considered to be the target group’s external reflection, the self-image is the customer’s internal mirror. We create a picture of ourselves through our attitudes to the brands we use’ (Apéria and Back 2004: 65). Kapferer states that ‘through our attitude towards certain brands we develop a certain type of inner relationship with ourselves’ (Kapferer 2004: 111). In some cases when the brand reflection differs greatly
from the self-image, the company faces difficulties and problems (Kapferer 2004). According to the authors self-image can be better understood when the values which are in the core of buying decision are known.

6 elements of Brand Identity Prism were analyzed and 6 questions were concluded by the authors in a manner that when getting the answers to them from the management of the company the precise picture of brand identity is to be completed. The questions are:

1. What makes the brand different? What are the signs which make the brand recognizable? (These questions reveal the Physique of brand).
2. With what kind of personal traits does the company describe the brand? (This question helps to determine the facet of Personality).
3. What cultural features of the country of origin (place of origin) are reflected by the brand? (The question discloses the facet of Culture).
4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize? (This question reveals the Relationship facet).
5. What kind of customer’s image does the company see and promote? (The question discloses the Reflection).
6. According to the company what kind of self-image does the customer have? How he/she benefits from the brand? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision? (These questions reveal the self-image of the customer according to the company).

Brand identity is the vision of brand that the company has whereas brand image is the customers’ perception of brand. Therefore in order to elicit and describe brand image the authors interpreted 6 questions stated above in a way that they can be addressed to the customers but revealing the same field of interest and describing the same facets.

1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she thinks of the brand?
2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?
3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the brand? What features exactly?
4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize according to the customer?
5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?
6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? How he/she benefits from the brand? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?

The questions are addressed to the managers of G.A.D (also to their retailers) and to the customers. In most of the cases the above questions aiming to reveal brand identity and image will not be asked directly but they will be interpreted by the interviewers. As the deep meaning of brand is intended to be revealed the authors have developed the interviewing technique based on projective techniques and in-deep discussions. The interviewing technique is described further.

The second part of the research model deals with the communication channels. The survey based on questionnaires with multiple choices is to be conducted. In addition secondary data such as websites and journals will be analyzed.

3.3. Interviewing technique

The following interviewing technique is to be applied when revealing both brand image and brand identity.
Steps of the interview:

1) ZMET.

The authors decided to use Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) to elicit customers’ conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings (goals, needs, desires and values) regarding G.A.D.

The participants are asked to prepare different kind of pictures from any sources, such as, for example, newspapers, personal photo albums, journals or even to make some new photos by themselves, which would represent their thoughts, feelings, associations with the brand. During the interview they are to describe each picture and explain why they have picked it, after that they are to assemble their pictures into a collage (Olson Zaltman Associates 2011).

ZMET technique consists of 10 steps, which are listed in the Appendix #11. According to this technique the interview is to be held for approximately 2 hours (Zaltman and Coulter 2005).

In the current research ZMET technique would be applied in a simplified way. First, some of the steps can be generalized in one. Second, the time of the interview is reduced to 20 minutes. The reason for this is that ZMET technique is only a part of the methodology used in the current research. The comparison technique, words and pictures technique and also questionnaire will be used and make the methodology completed.

The authors decided to give as much freedom to the interviewees as possible and to minimize interference. They believe that the way the interviewees interpret the task and guide the discussion is researchable itself. Thus, if the meaning and constructs are revealed by the interviewees during the free discussion, some of the steps of ZMET technique can be left out by the interviewers and are not to be imposed on the participants. Also the steps can follow each other in different order. On the other hand, the authors admit that following strictly each step of the technique could reveal deeper meaning.

2) Pictures technique.

‘With the pictures and words technique, the subjects are given a number of words and pictures and are asked to choose those they associate with a brand or product and to explain their choice’ (Donoghue 2000: 49). The pictures represent people of different emotional state, age and appearance (Appendix 1). When interviewees choose the pictures and describe people represented there they make a projection of themselves, which helps the authors to conclude brand personality, user imagery and often some other aspects, such as values.

3) Words technique.

This technique elicits brand personality (Appendix 2).

4) Questionnaire for customers and for management team of G.A.D and retailers.

The questionnaire is used by the authors to define the communication channels (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4).

3.4. Sampling selection

The interviews were conducted with the customers, management team and retailers of G.A.D.
The interviewees, who represent the customers of G.A.D were chosen according to their willingness to participate in face-to-face conversation, ability to speak English and their residence. Those customers were chosen who live or reside on Gotland.

The total number of interviews with customers was 7. The number was not established at the beginning of the research but in the process of it, when the authors were able to determine the common tendencies. The interviews were conducted in the rooms for group studying of Gotland University library where the calm and private atmosphere could be provided. The interviews were recorded, what allowed the interviewers to capture all the information without being distracted by putting down the notes. This ensured the accuracy of the data interpretation in a great part.

Three people of the management team, including CEO of the company were interviewed. As the CEO is the founder of the company and his values and ideas are in the core of the brand identity the free manner interview is considered to be essential and the most appropriate in this case. Another free manner interview was conducted with the two managers of G.A.D and the interview structured according to the developed methodology was conducted with one of them. All interviews with the management team took place at the showroom of G.A.D in Gotland and were recorded.

The authors consider conducting the interview with the company’s retailers to be essential complement to the research. The retailers have their own communication strategies, culture and values and therefore influence both the communication and the brand identity of G.A.D. Two of the most representative retailers were chosen. Both of them are situated in Stockholm. The interviews were conducted in the shops of the retailers.

3.5. Reliability and validity

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is a quite dynamic and creative process where the results are interpreted by the authors themselves and may include their own bias (Taylor and Bogdan 1998). As the aim of qualitative studies is to understand rather than to explain human experience, the reliability of qualitative research is quite difficult to assess (Stenbacka 2001). Although the authors tried to stay objective while interpreting the interviews they admit that it is impossible to ensure a total objectivity.

To avoid misunderstandings the questionnaires concluded in English were translated into Swedish and offered to the interviewees as well. In order to achieve qualitative validity the summaries of the interviews were sent to the interviewees. As the interviewees commented positively upon all the findings, the authors were able to conclude that gathered information was valid and interpreted correctly.
4. ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA

**Physique**
Gotland, handicraft, quality, streamlined simplicity, honest

**Personality**
Honest, reliable, humble, self-confident

**Culture**
Nature of Gotland, Swedish quality and simple design, Scandinavian design (simple, light colors)

**Relationship**
Awareness, environment, family

**Reflection**
They are middle age, well-educated and well-off people, who are aware of what they buy

**Self-image**
I am intelligent and successful
I go for the best
I am special
I am a long term thinker

**G.A.D = Honest**

*Figure 2* Brand identity prism of G.A.D
Based on the results of the interviews, which are presented in the Appendix 9 and 10, two prisms are concluded (Figure 2 and 3). The striking difference is that the company first of all sees G.A.D as honest but the customer – as exclusive. These meanings have been expressed in a more or less explicit way while revealing each of six facets.

Both the customers and the company see G.A.D as reliable, courteous, calm, honest, mature, self-confident ambitious, realistic, open, rational and friendly. While the company completes brand identity with such descriptions as humble, reserved and caring the customers see it as generous, optimistic and energetic.

The company has a stronger association of G.A.D with the family than the customers have, who associate it more with personal harmony. Their relation of G.A.D to children is also weak.

‘Environment’ in the relationship facet of brand identity and ‘nature’ in the same facet of brand image mean that while company concerns about environment and long term thinking customers want to be simply close to nature. Long term thinking for them is more connected with reasonable investment which they make when buy G.A.D furniture. Though, this idea is also being promoted by G.A.D.

‘Social distinctiveness’ in the Relationship facet of the brand image prism is quiet similar to the ‘awareness’ of brand identity prism. But while ‘awareness’ means here that the customer is aware of the quality, ethical issues, design and costliness of the furniture ‘social distinctiveness’ stresses more the role of G.A.D as a status symbol.

‘Reflection’ and ‘self-image’ are quite congruent. The only thing is that in addition to the company’s perception the customers see themselves more as easygoing persons, who enjoy nice living.

Figure 3 Brand image prism of G.A.D
Both the company and the customers firmly connect G.A.D to Gotland and in general to Scandinavia. In addition the customers strongly relate G.A.D to Denmark, because of its exclusiveness, nature and art.

The basic standpoint of this thesis is that brands only exist and act in the communication environment. Therefore, the way a company chooses to communicate is crucial as it affects the meaning of the message itself.

The fact that customers see G.A.D as an exclusive company can be explained by such reasons as clean and minimalistic design, natural materials, craftsmanship and of course a set of associations and feelings that the brand evokes. But the authors conclude that the certain brand image is being formed also under the influence of the way the company communicates. The analysis of the communication shows that the communication channels which are used by the company are relevant and efficient in general. All 8 interviewees (there were 7 interviews conducted with 8 persons) consider that there is enough of information about G.A.D presented. Returning to the impression of exclusiveness which the customers have, first it can be formed due to the company’s favor with the indirect advertising (what the authors mean by the indirect advertisement here is explained in Appendix 7), which does not make customers feel that the advertisement is being imposed on them. Although two out of 8 interviewees saw and remembered G.A.D furniture being used in TV programs, the authors consider it to be positive result as such type of advertisement often has its effect on the subconscious of people. Second, 2 – 3 interviewees appreciate the fact that there is no information about G.A.D on Facebook (one of them though checks the homepage of G.A.D and even thinks that it could be more information presented there) because they think that it is cheap and not exclusive for companies to be on social networks.

The company does not actively develop and promote such channel as the Internet but it plans to do so. 3 out of 8 people check the homepage of G.A.D. 2 of them would like to see more information there. Half of the interviewees want to see G.A.D on other internet websites such as Facebook and websites about design. Taking into account the fact that the interviewees think that in general there is enough information about G.A.D, the conclusion can be made that the customers would like to see more information of the entertainment type than of informative one. Therefore the authors assume that by concentrating too much on informing and notifying consumers companies forget to simply communicate with them, to speak about ‘nothing’ like people often do with their close friends.

By analyzing the brand image and brand identity prisms, in particular reflection and self-image, it can be concluded that the customers of G.A.D know what they want, they like to decide for themselves what is best for them. Based on this finding the authors think that the company’s choice of catalogue as the main source of message communicating and the way the company delivers the catalogue is justified. The essential information which the company wants to share with its customers is presented there in a quite detailed way. Moreover the company has extended the catalogue recently. What is important here is that it does not send the catalogue on a mandatory basis to all of their customers but the customers come to the shop and take it by themselves or call and order it when they feel they need it. The efficiency of the catalogue can also be proved by the results disclosed with the help of the questionnaire. All of the interviewees have seen the catalogue. Half of them consider the information presented there to be both interesting and relevant. 2 of the interviewees think that there is enough information. In addition it can be justified that the company does not use radio or TV advertisement as the customers might perceive it as too intrusive. The company chooses the published advertisement in the specialized design magazines instead.
4 of the customers usually read more than half of the magazines, where G.A.D is presented. Though not in all magazines they see the information or advertisement of G.A.D. Half of the customers think that the information about G.A.D is interesting and easy to read. Other half includes the person who thinks that there is enough of information about G.A.D in the magazines, the other person who does not remember whether he has seen G.A.D in the magazines or not, the person who thinks that the information is not interesting and one person who does not read presented design magazines at all. Generally it can be concluded that such company’s channel of communication as design magazines is quite efficient and relevant. The company plans to use it actively further on.

It has been revealed that visiting the shop is a crucial step of the buying decision process for all of the customers interviewed. For half of them checking the catalogue is an essential part along with the visits to the shop. According to the customers it is important for them to see and touch the furniture by themselves before buying it. Moreover they like to speak about it, to discuss it with the staff at the shop. According to the managers of the company, retailers and observations of the authors the communication in the stores and guidance in all the steps of the buying decision process is what the company and retailers are doing, moreover they plan to improve the service in the future. This can explain the finding of the authors that some of the customers associate G.A.D with friendship (Appendix 10).

All of the customers interviewed have recommended G.A.D to somebody. To all except 2 of them somebody has ever recommended G.A.D. All of the customers talk about G.A.D with their friends. This finding can be explained with the conclusion that G.A.D is a status symbol for the customers (relationship facet, Figure 3) and that it contributes to their self-image (facet of self-image, Figure 3). G.A.D is a social brand in a sense that the customers like to speak about it and the brand speaks about them by itself. The authors assume that it might be efficient and promising for such brands like G.A.D to encourage the communication between customers themselves.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Consumer-brand relationships

After the collection and analysis of the data the authors have concluded that the interviewees do not make a simple transaction when buying G.A.D, but they complete their self-image by using it. They have personal associations connected with the brand, moreover brand lives and acts as it is often becomes the topic of a discussion with friends. The authors claim that the brand has a meaning in the lives of the customers interviewed. ‘Consumers are not just buying brands because they like them or because they work well: they are having relationships with the collectivity of brands so as to benefit from the meanings they add into their lives’ (Fournier 1995: 21).

Different ways of company’s communication (being marketing actions) evoke consumer reactions and therefore contribute to the relationship dyad (Fournier 1995). Brand image is the result of communication and consequently consumer-brand relationship. To illustrate this Gotland appears in several facets of the brand image prism. It has been disclosed that some people move to Gotland for permanent living. They really like the place and want to feel that they fit in and belong to it. As G.A.D is actively being promoted as a truly Gotlandic brand buying G.A.D is like making friends with a native person: ‘you are not an ordinary stranger anymore, you are accepted by the group’. When the company stresses its Gotlandic nature for these particular people it means their new living in Gotland and their connection with G.A.D makes them feel, in a new place, more like home.
5.2. Congruence between brand identity and brand image

De Chernatony (1999) ends her article, which was mentioned in the point 2.2 with a list of questions which should be addressed to managers and their staff when the difference between brand identity and brand reputation is disclosed. Some of them are: ‘For each stakeholder group, what actions do people in all departments need to take to strengthen the identity-reputation congruity? Which aspects of the brand identity need changing and will this have an adverse impact on other identity components? For each stakeholder group, what actions do people in all departments need to take to strengthen the identity-reputation congruity?’ (De Chernatony 1999: 16). The questions seem to be reasonable and helpful for managers but the problem is how to define the congruence between brand image and brand identity. When brand image and brand identity are described, differences can be quiet easily recognized, moreover there could be striking differences in the crucial attributes of brand. But is it always bad? The problem is to conclude whether the discrepancies are problematic or vital for the success of brand. This problem was touched upon in the point 2.2 when the brand image trap proposed by Aaker (1996) was introduced. Therefore when interpreting and making use of the revealed brand identity and brand image managers and researcher should be careful and analytical in order not to confuse ‘healthy’ reflection and problematic discrepancy. The results from the current research are the perfect illustration of this point. The company sees and promotes itself as honest, environmentally oriented which puts quality and the desired result above the price. In order to reach the outstanding quality the company chooses to use traditional approaches with the combination of modern techniques in its production process. They are true to their style and find beauty in streamlined simplicity. There is nothing explicitly said and emphasized about the exclusiveness and belongingness of the product to the high-price category but the customers, as it was revealed, see G.A.D as exclusive. When buying it they stress their individual taste and status. Should the company start to emphasize this kind of qualities with the intention to narrow the gap and attract more customers or should it considers this as a vital reflection and change nothing? The exclusiveness here is in general a positive characteristic, which is in the core of the brand image but it might become negative if the company starts to speak about it by themselves.

The authors claim that the interpretation of the discrepancies between brand identity and brand image, the revealing of the linkages between them is a crucial moment before taking actions and revise brand identity.

5.3. Brand identity and brand image: communication perspective

Brand identity and brand image exist in the communication environment, where the messages are being exchanged and the meaning is being created. The way the communication is handled influences the meaning of the message itself. Contrariwise being aware of brand identity and brand image allows developing an efficient communication strategy. ‘Each element of the identity should be compared to the current brand image and heritage in order to clearly specify the communication task’ (Aaker 2000). The results of the current research support this idea.

The point that the customers describe brand as exclusive can be partly explained by the company’s way of communication, which is neither intrusive nor intensive.

As it was revealed the customers might need more information of entertaining kind. Therefore by sending the same message in the entertaining manner it will reach the customer and add some value to the brand image.

A number of tendencies which are peculiar for SME branding communication were disclosed. Only traditional ways of communication are promoted by the company. The internet marketing is intended to be used but because of the lack of recourses such as time and money the process
has not been started yet. It was also revealed that the small size of the company positively influences brand communication as, according to the customers, it makes the company exclusive and personal. When the company is small or medium the ideas and values of the founder are pronounced. Therefore the consistency in the presentation of the organization and the continuity of customers’ experience can be provided (Ind 2007). This partly explains the consistency of brand identity and brand image that was revealed. Although it should be taken into account that only the customers of Gotland were interviewed. The results might differ greatly in other parts of the market where G.A.D operates, for example in England.

5.4. The analysis of the developed methodology

The interviewing technique proved itself as efficient. The substantial amount of information and meaningful associations could be disclosed during 30 minutes time. All four parts of the interviewing technique: ZMET method, pictures and words technique and comparison task are essential according to the authors. When ZMET method was impossible to use as 2 interviewees did not manage to bring the pictures it was much harder for the authors to reveal the meaning. The authors tried to carry out the steps of the interview in the sequence they were presented. Only the comparison task can be done in any order. Later the developed steps of the interview were added with the free manner presentation, when the interviewees were suggested to share some information about themselves which they would like to present. It allowed understanding the context of the relationships between the brand and the customers. Although it was not possible to reveal a full context in such way, it was a relevant accomplishment to the interview.

For the aim of comparison it was important to conduct the interview in the same way with customers and representatives of the company. The authors think that it was also efficient to make some free manner interviews with the management team of the company in addition. Unlike the customers managers working with their marketing strategies are able to describe their brand identity quiet directly.

The research model proved to be efficient and helpful tool for structuring the responses so that the analysis could be made. After concluding the table with answers to the key questions for every interview each of the questions was analyzed separately. The results were represented in the table in a way that shows with what frequency a certain meaning arose. This allowed spotting the general tendencies and concluding the description of all facets of brand identity and image. Kapferer’s brand identity prism proved itself as an efficient tool for visualizing obtained results.

The developed methodology can be applied to both SMEs and large companies. The methodology might not be appropriate in a situation when brand is too weak, in other words when brand identity is not determined, perceived and promoted consistently by the managers of the company or/and when brand image diverse greatly. Although the methodology might disclose the problem of discrepancy the comparison of brand image and brand identity and further analysis might not be possible.

5.5. Concluding remarks

Often the way people perceive themselves and the way others see them are completely different. It is the same with brands. The companies’ attention should be paid not only to the message itself but also to the way it is being transferred and to the impression that it actually makes.

The authors raised the question of how to measure brand identity and brand image of a company. It was answered by developing a methodology of measuring brand identity and image. In the heart of the methodology is the interviewing technique which is based on two standpoints of the
authors. First, people judge products and companies mainly based on their spontaneous feelings, prejudices and associations whereas objective facts play a secondary role. Second, describing others in the same situation helps people to tell more as they might feel discomfort or embellish facts, while speaking about themselves. The interviewing technique proved to be efficient and allowed to elicit the meanings of brand image and brand identity, though the methodology in general might not be appropriate in a situation when brand is too weak.

As the authors believe that the way a company prefers to communicate influences the meaning of the message they raised the question whether the congruence/incongruence between brand identity and brand image can be explained by the way of communication. The study was narrowed down to the brand communication of SMEs. It turned out that the use of communication channels influences brand identity and brand image and so their congruence/incongruence in a great part.

When answering the stated research questions and analyzing the case study the authors arrived at the question: what is the congruence between brand identity and brand image? Is it the similarity of the meanings shared by the company and customers or is it different meanings which are linked and related to each other, causing a ‘healthy’ reflection? The authors conclude that it is important to have a deep understanding of the congruence itself in order not to be misled when developing a marketing strategy.

The case company turned out to have a generally consistent brand which can be to a large extent explained by the relevance of communication channels. However it should be taken into account that the research was conducted with the managers and customers of G.A.D from Gotland and two retailers from Stockholm. The results might be different when analyzing retailers and customers from other parts of the market where the company operates.
REFERENCES


**Internet sources:**


Appendix 1 – Pictures Technique
Appendix 2 – Words Technique

If you are to describe G.A.D as a person how would you describe it?
Om du skulle beskriva G.A.D som en person, hur skulle du då beskriva det?

*Put a tick/markera*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal trait/karaktärsdrag, personliga drag</th>
<th>Your choice (put a tick)/ditt val (markera)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reliable/pålitlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Irrational/irrationell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Caring/omtänksam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Childish/barnslig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Generous/generös</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Impulsive/impulsive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Courteous/artig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Naive/naiv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Humble/ödmjuk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Unambitious/lat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Friendly/vänlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Optimistic/optimistiskt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Unreliable/opålitlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Emotional/känslig</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Rude, impolite/oförskänd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Mature/mogen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Dishonest/oärlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Energetic/energisk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Realistic/realistiskt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Closed/stängd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Honest/ärlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Self-confident/själv säker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Calm/lugn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Rational/rationell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Arrogant/arrogant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Candid, open/open, uppraktiv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Unfriendly/ovänlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Term in English</td>
<td>Term in Swedish</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Mean, selfish/elak</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Pessimistic/pessimistiskt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Open-minded/liberal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Uncaring, unthoughtful/obetänksam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Insecure/osäker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Adventurous/äventyrlig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Reserved/reserverad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Unemotional/okänslig</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Ambitious/ambitiös</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Narrow-minded/trångsynt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Your suggestions/ Egna alternativ**

*Thank you!*
Appendix 3 – Questionnaire for customers

1. How did you find out about G.A.D?

2. Did you see G.A.D catalogue?
   o Yes
   o No

   If yes, what do you think about it?
   o There is enough of information you need
   o There could be more information
   o The information is interesting and relevant
   o Other: ...

   (your suggestion)

3. Have you ever seen G.A.D or heard about it on TV?
   o Yes
   o No

   If yes, what do you think about it?
   o It was relevant and I remembered it.
   o It was not relevant and annoying.
   o Other: …

   (your suggestion)

4. Have you ever read the following magazines (put a tick opposite the one you read)?
   o Sköna Hem
   o Elle Interiör
   o Residence
   o Villa Weekend
   o Form&Design

5. Have you seen an advertisement or any kind of information about G.A.D there?
   o Yes
   o No

   If yes, in what magazines?
   o Sköna Hem
   o Elle Interiör
   o Residence
   o Villa Weekend
   o Form&Design
What did you think of information about G.A.D which was presented there?

- It was interesting and easy to read
- It was not interesting
- It was enough of information
- It was not enough of information
- Other: … (your suggestion)

6. Have you checked the webpage of G.A.D?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what do you think about it?

- There is enough of information
- There could be more information
- The information is clear
- The information is easy to find
- Other: … (your suggestion)

Do you check it regularly?

- Yes
- No

7. Would you like to see G.A.D on other internet websites except of their homepage?

- Yes
- No

If yes, chose where:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Websites about design
- Youtube
- Blog
- Other: … (your suggestion)

8. How did (do) you choose the G.A.D furniture you would like to buy?

- Go to the shop
- Look on the internet
- Look on the internet first and then go to the shop to see it.
Look on the catalogue
Look on the catalogue and then go to the shop to see it.
Call to the shop
Other: … (your suggestion)

9. How often do you visit shops, where G.A.D furniture is presented?
   1 – 3 times a year
   3 – 5 times a year
   5 – 7 times a year
   7 – 9 times a year
   More than 9 times a year
   Other: …

9. Have you ever recommended G.A.D to anyone?
   Yes
   No

10. Has anyone ever recommended G.A.D to you?
    Yes
    No

11. Do you talk about G.A.D with you friends?
    Yes
    No

12. Do you feel that you need more information about G.A.D?
    Yes
    No
If yes, choose where:
   On internet
   In magazines
   On TV
   On published materials of G.A.D
   Other: … (your suggestion)

Thank you!
Appendix 4 – Questionnaire for management team of the company and retailers

1. Do you print any material (e.g. catalogue) which provides information about the store?
   - Yes
   - No
If yes, state what kind: …
Is G.A.D represented there?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Other: …

2. Do you put any kind of commercial on TV?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Do you put advertisement or any other information about the store in magazines?
   - Yes
   - No
If yes, state in what kind: …
Is G.A.D represented there?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Other: …

4. Does the store have a webpage?
   - Yes
   - No
Is G.A.D represented there?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Other: …

5. Do you put any kind of information or advertisement of the store on other internet websites?
   - Yes
   - No
If yes, state on which: …

Is G.A.D represented there?
- Yes
- No
- Other: …

6. What kind of communication channels would you like to develop in future?
- Internet
- Magazines
- TV
- Published materials of the store
- Other: …

Thank you!
Appendix 5 – Interviews with customers

Interview #1 (1 April, 2011)

The interviewee brought 12 pictures. 6 of them were opposite to G.A.D, 2 were both describing G.A.D and contrasting with G.A.D and 4 were describing G.A.D and being associated with G.A.D (see the pictures below). The considerable number of opposite pictures represent that it was easier for the interviewee to describe the brand by contrast, telling what the brand does not represent. From the contrasting pictures it can be told that G.A.D is not associated with cheapness and ordinariness. G.A.D is neither cheap nor ordinary. It is not associated with screaming colors. It is simple, unique and exclusive. The following constructs, attributes were revealed: exclusive design, quality, high price. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988).

V self-esteem
C status symbol
C be special
A quality
A exclusive design
A expensive

The pictures technique allowed concluding the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities. The following pictures were picked: 24, 4, 25, 29, 14, 16 and 11 (Appendix 1). According to the interviewee G.A.D customers are well educated, self-confident and erudite people, who have well-paid job and know exactly what they want. With buying G.A.D furniture they want to emphasize their own exclusive tastes, unique preferences and high status. They do not want to show off with buying many things but they appreciate simplicity and quality. The typical customers of G.A.D do not care about their clothes but they do care about beautiful things in their surroundings. A weak association of G.A.D with family, family life and children was noticed.

As it is supposed by projective techniques the interviewee projects his/her personality, attitudes, values while describing the phenomenon, in our case pictures, which show people of different age, emotional state and appearance. During 30 minutes of free manner conversation interviewee showed himself as well-educated, literate, self-confident person of upper middle class, who knows what he wants and who stresses his individuality by buying things which are not possessed by many people.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, courteous, optimistic, mature, energetic, realistic, self-confident, rational and ambitious person (Appendix 2).

The comparison task showed that the interviewee associates G.A.D with Denmark not with the country of origin Sweden, which represents an important part of brand identity. The interviewee explains: ‘They have very good designers there, it is a small country, quite exclusive, well-off and with high standards’.

The interviewee associate G.A.D with BMW. It might be explained by the fact that BMW cars are of a high quality and durability. They have sophisticated and exclusive design. Also BMW cars belong to high price category. Not every body can afford them. BMW do not position
themselves at least intensively as cars for family. In the case of G.A.D the participant does not have intense associations with family and children as well, but very strong with exclusive design, quality, expensiveness and uniqueness. BMW brand is a strong status symbol. The same was disclosed by the authors concerning G.A.D.

The interviewee associates G.A.D with black and white colors. It can be explained by the color of the furniture itself as there are no bright colors in G.A.D furniture. But if to look deeper, black and white colors are clean colors, which are always in fashion. They might symbolize timeless design of G.A.D, simplicity and exclusiveness at the same time.

When asked to choose what is more represented in G.A.D design or quality, the interviewee said that these two attributes are very close but design is still on the first place for G.A.D.

By analyzing the questionnaire the researchers concluded that according to the interviewee there is enough of information about G.A.D presented (Appendix 3). The predominant channels of communication are G.A.D catalogue and G.A.D showroom, which is being visited by the interviewee for 4 – 5 times a year. The participant considers the information in the catalogue to be interesting and relevant.

The information from the catalogue and shop occurred to be the most influential when making buying decision. Such communication channel as interior design magazines is also considered to be relevant means of communication. According to the participant the information presented in the magazines is interesting and easy to read. TV as one of communication channels was not mentioned by the interviewee, what can be explained by the fact that G.A.D does not promote this channel intensively. Though the company’s webpage has not been checked by the participant he is willing to see the company on other Internet websites, particularly on Facebook. Purchasing G.A.D furniture was not a recommended decision, though the interviewee has recommended G.A.D to others himself. The questionnaire states that G.A.D can be one of the topics to be discussed with friends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she thinks of the brand?</td>
<td>Exclusive design, black and white colors, unique style, nice materials, quality, simplicity, functionality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?</td>
<td>Reliable, courteous, optimistic, mature, energetic, realistic, self-confident, rational, ambitious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the brand? What features exactly?</td>
<td>The participant associates G.A.D with Denmark as they have very good designers there, small country, quite exclusive, well-off, high standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize according to the customer?</td>
<td>Social distinctiveness as brand is a status symbol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
<td>People of upper-middle class, who know what they want. They want to have not many things but what they really like, things which have style and tell story how they appreciate life. They do not want to be like everybody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
else, they want to be special. They have high esteem, they are self-confident, practical. But also it can be dreaming people, who are not so sure of themselves. They think factually. Do not need too many things to show off. Know what is good in life. Make choices all the time. Individualistic, do not afraid to be different. Intellectuals. Do not care too much about their clothes, but they aware of it. They know how to behave. They go for the best, have taste of their own. They are happy.

| 6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision? |

The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #1:

1. ![Image 1](image1.png)
2. ![Image 2](image2.png)
3. ![Image 3](image3.png)
4. ![Image 4](image4.png)
Interview #2 (7 April, 2011)

The interviewee brought 5 pictures, which represent her thoughts and feelings about G.A.D (see the pictures below). The strongest associations are evoked by the picture of stones. The interviewee explains that the stones have simple shapes, they are bright, smooth and clean and they are perfectly finished like the furniture of G.A.D. Also the stones represented on the pictures are the part of Gotland, where the interviewee has spent her youth. And according to the interviewee ‘G.A.D is Gotland’. There is a strong emotional link between G.A.D and Gotland.

The second picture reveals that the interviewee associates G.A.D with sheep. Sheep are one of the main symbols of Gotland.

One of the 5 pictures represents negative feelings towards G.A.D. The card with shiny elements of golden color shows that while there are people who appreciate the quality of G.A.D, and understand the design, there are also people who might buy G.A.D only as a sign of belongingness to a certain class, a symbol of status.

The picture representing the Gotlandic rocks, which have a very sophisticated form was chosen by the interviewee for the reason that the rocks are of an unexpected shape and very genuine. She explains: ‘If something of G.A.D sticks out it does not surprise but it is always genuine and not bizarre’.

The picture with the interviewee’s dog sitting on the porch of the house represents home feeling and calm feeling. ‘It is simple but because of this simplicity it is very beautiful’, the interviewee says. While associating G.A.D with home the interviewee does not associate it with family and children at all.

The two pictures that would represent feelings of the interviewee were not found by her. The one would represent a modern house with a lot of widows, air and light. ‘It would be very beautiful but also uniform’, the interviewee says. The house symbolizes the contemporary, new way of living nowadays. It stresses the taste of its hosts and their status. The second picture would represent the Hotel Fabriken Furillen. It has many pieces of G.A.D furniture. The hotel is situated on the Furillen Island which is connected to the island of Gotland. It is housed in the old industrial building and has modern design. It is considered to be an extraordinary and exclusive combination of industrial environment and nature. The interviewee states: ‘The hotel is typical, comprehensive G.A.D’. She adds that it is Gotlandic, exclusive, clean and clear-cut.

According to the interviewee G.A.D looks good in a countryside house as well as in an apartment in the big city. Moreover it can fit in a very unusual environment such as Fabriken Furillen Hotel.

During the interview the following constructs, attributes were revealed: calm and soft colors, simplicity, beauty, Gotland. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988). In a result two ‘ladders’ were concluded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A beautiful</th>
<th>C calm feeling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C rest from work</td>
<td>V personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V harmony</td>
<td>C explore own personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C speak with another language (of shapes and colors)</td>
<td>C freedom in choices and actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pictures technique allowed the authors to conclude the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities. The following pictures were picked: 21, 25, 29, 17, 9, 4, 16, 2, 6, 11, 27, 1, 24, 20 (Appendix 1). According to the interviewee the customers of G.A.D are the people, who appreciate beautiful things, nice life and personal harmony. They have good taste. They do care how they look, how they are dressed. They can be both in business and in art fields. In most of the cases the customers of G.A.D have a good income and have succeeded in their careers. Sometimes they are too materialistic.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as mature, self-confident and calm (Appendix 2).

During the discussion the interviewee showed herself as an intelligent, energetic and communicative person.

When comparing G.A.D to country the interviewee mentioned Gotland and the Nordic countries, though not exactly Sweden, but the strongest association is with Denmark, in particular its northern part Skagen. The interviewee associates G.A.D with Danish design. Choosing specifically Skagen can be explained by the fact that Skagen is a very picturesque place with beautiful nature, which has been a source of inspiration for many artists and designers. Moreover Skagen with long beaches and being surrounded by the sea can remind Gotland, which is the first and the strongest association of the interviewee.

The interviewee associates G.A.D with calm and soft colors, which can be both faded and bright. It can be explained, by the statement of the interviewee that the main benefit of G.A.D for her is that the G.A.D furniture is calming.

When the interviewee was asked to compare G.A.D with a car, she picked SAAB as they produce exquisite and high quality cars of the reasonable prices. 'At their field they have the same handicraft, engineering handicraft as G.A.D has’, the interviewee adds.

The interviewee knows about G.A.D as the showroom is situated near the place she lives. The interview discloses that the most predominant and efficient communication channels are visits to the company’s shop. The company’s catalogue is considered to be quite relevant and informative channel as well. Neither G.A.D commercial on TV nor design magazines were mentioned by the interviewee as the way of communication. G.A.D webpage usually is not checked by the interviewee and there is no particular wish to see the company on other internet websites. Going to the company’s shop is a core step in buying decision. According to the interviewee visits to G.A.D showroom usually exceed 9 times a year. G.A.D furniture is being recommended by and to the interviewee and it can be one of the topics of discussion with friends. The questionnaire shows that the interviewee considers that there is enough of information about the company presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #2</th>
<th>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she think of the brand?</th>
<th>The G.A.D furniture is calming. It represents Gotland. G.A.D is basic and exquisite at the same time. Perfectly finished shapes. Calm, soft, faded and bright colors. Beauty in simplicity. Genuine.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the</td>
<td>Mature, self-confident, calm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of</td>
<td>Skagen, Denmark as G.A.D is associated with Danish design and Skagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer</td>
<td>is a picturesque, inspiring place with beautiful nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>associate the brand? What features exactly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize according to the</td>
<td>Home, relations with inner self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
<td>People who are over 55 years old with good income, who behave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uniformly. Sometimes they are too materialistic. And also people who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have good taste appreciate quality and design. They do care how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they look, how they are dressed. They can be both in business and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in art fields. They look healthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true</td>
<td>Intelligent person who appreciates beautiful things, nice life and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
<td>personal harmony. Values: harmony, personal development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #2:
Interview #3 (12 April, 2011)

The interview was conducted with a family couple. In most of the aspects they have congruent perception of G.A.D. Those issues where their opinions differ are mentioned and described in the current summary.

The interviewees brought the pictures of Gotland as they associate strongly G.A.D with the island because of colors, nature and natural materials of Gotland used in the furniture (see the pictures below). One of the interviewees also adds that Gotland is very special place for many Swedes. According to him, they might associate G.A.D with Gotland because of minimalistic style, clean lines and light colors of the furniture.

The chosen pictures represent the nature of island, its picturesque places. All the pictures were made by the interviewees themselves and that makes the images special and warm for them. The interviewees appreciate the fact that G.A.D uses natural materials from Gotland and solid handicraft. They also like that the pieces of furniture have tag ‘made in Gotland’ rather than ‘made in Sweden’, explaining that this is what the tourists like. The interviewees seem to be proud of living on Gotland and to have the furniture which represents the unique island.

The picture of a sunset shows the contrast of colors which G.A.D uses in the furniture. The picture with the ship in the mist is being associated with G.A.D and compared to the works of Skagen artists because of the clean lights and water.

During the interview the following constructs, attributes were revealed: Gotland, small company, signed furniture, minimalistic, clear-cut design, quality, craftsmanship, natural materials of Gotland. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V personal development</th>
<th>V self-esteem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C expression of personality</td>
<td>C feeling of uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minimalistic, clear-cut design</td>
<td>A signed furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A quality</td>
<td>A small company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A craftsmanship</td>
<td>A Gotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A natural materials of Gotland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Gotland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the pictures technique the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities was completed. The following pictures were chosen: 13, 25, 9, 29, 12 and 6 (Appendix 1).

One of the interviewees associates G.A.D with family but not with children on their own. According to her they probably would have different furniture at their rooms.

All of the pictures accept the one represents smiling people, who look happy and calm. They are successful and look beautiful. They care how they look like and so, according to the interviewee, they should also care how their home looks like, they want to see beautiful things in their surroundings. Often they are interested in music and art. The customers of G.A.D are happy and share their happiness with the people they love. They feel secure, they are confident and calm.
The customers of G.A.D can be both married and single. They are not very young people as the furniture is quite expensive. During the discussion the interviewees showed themselves as intelligent, communicative and also calm people who like to have beautiful, unique and of a high quality things at their home, things with meaning, that represent their personalities.

The words technique reveals that both interviewees describes G.A.D as reliable, caring, generous, courteous, friendly, optimistic, energetic, realistic, honest, calm, open-minded and ambitious person (Appendix 2). The following descriptions which interviewees pick are not congruent: humble, self-confident, rational, candid, open and adventurous.

The interviewee says: ‘G.A.D fits very well with the nature’. Moreover according to the interviewees it can look good in any house and any environment even in a very unusual and unexpected milieu such as the designed hotel Fårösunds Fästning. It is housed in a former fortress and has rough and massive walls, though the interior in a part of the hotel has modern design and G.A.D furniture fits perfectly there.

It was mentioned by the interviewees that a service provided in the shop on Gotland is on a high level and this makes the process of choosing and buying the furniture smooth and nice. But they add that the previous location of the shop was better to them as it was more cozy, calm and comfortable.

The interviewees like that the company is small as it makes it nice and special.

G.A.D furniture is being signed by the person who has made it. It shows that he/she is proud of his/her work and this gives a special feeling according to the interviewees. So that they feel that the furniture is special, ‘alive’ and that the customers of G.A.D are special.

When comparing G.A.D with the color, one of the pictures that the interviewees brought was chosen. It represented beige and grey stones, the stones which are 400 million years old. ‘I really feel that Kristian (the designer and CEO of G.A.D) has been able to back to basics’, the interviewee explains.

According to the interviewees their own awareness of G.A.D company was built through company’s advertisements and good reputation, recommendations of friends and own dwelling on Gotland. The company’s catalogue is considered to be interesting and relevant but one of the interviewees thinks that sometimes there is too much of information. The other interviewee adds that when there is less information it is easier to find what you need. Also the interviewees state that the good catalogue is very important. As long as there is a good catalogue there is no need to put many pieces of furniture on display at the shop. At the same time before making a decision to buy furniture it is essential for the interviewees to look at it and to feel it first.

There was nothing seen or heard about G.A.D on TV. 4 out of 5 magazines were mentioned by the interviewees as ones they have ever read. In one of them the information about G.A.D was seen by the interviewee. The other interviewee does not remember in which exactly magazine she has seen the information about G.A.D. Both interviewees agreed that the information presented in the magazine is interesting and easy to read.

The company’s webpage is checked only by one interviewee and not on regular basis. The information presented there is considered to be clear and easy to find though there can be more information according to the interviewee. Both interviewees are willing to see the company on other internet websites, particularly on Facebook, Helagotland.se and websites about design.
During the interview it was disclosed that visiting G.A.D showroom and checking the catalogue are essential steps while buying the company’s products, the number of visits usually vary from 3 to 7 times a year. According to the interviewees it was revealed that G.A.D can be a topic of discussion with friends as well as it is recommended by and to the interviewees. The questionnaire shows that there is enough of information about G.A.D available. The most predominant communication channels of the company and interviewees are catalogue, visits to the company’s showroom and specialized design magazines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she think of the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the brand? What features exactly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize according to the customer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview #4 (26 April, 2011)

The interviewee brought 5 pictures which she associates with G.A.D (see the pictures below). 3 of them represented several pieces of G.A.D furniture, which are the favorite for the interviewee and the most typical products of G.A.D according to her. The picture of the light room with few pieces of furniture was chosen by the interviewee to show the importance of light colors, simplicity in design and minimalism of interior. It was stressed further in the interview that light colors and simplicity gives an opportunity to the interviewee to relax after the hard working day, to enjoy peacefulness and beauty of the furniture. This thought can be developed in a way that the interviewee finds in G.A.D the opportunity to cope with stress and realities of everyday life. The fourth picture shows the strong association of G.A.D with nature, in particular the nature of Gotland. The strongest link was revealed between G.A.D and Gotland. Gotland is not only a place of residence but it is an object of admiration and love for the interviewee. According to the interviewee G.A.D is a part of Gotland, its symbol and therefore valuable and important for her.

During the interview the following attributes are revealed: quality, light colors, ‘clean’ and at the same time smart design, costliness. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988). In a result three ‘ladders’ were concluded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V harmony</th>
<th>V self esteem</th>
<th>V reasonable investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C relaxation</td>
<td>C status symbol</td>
<td>C durability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A light colors</td>
<td>C simplicity</td>
<td>C saving of space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simple design</td>
<td>A expensive</td>
<td>A functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A gotlandic</td>
<td>A quality</td>
<td>A quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the pictures technique the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities was completed. The following pictures were chosen: 16, 23, 7, 18, 27, 6, 24, 14, 9, 4, 25 and 12 (Appendix 1). According to the interviewee the customer of G.A.D can be a person who works at the kitchen as well as CEO of a big company but they value and appreciate quality things in life. The interviewee associates G.A.D both with family, children and with single people. The average customer of G.A.D according to her is healthy, well-off, self-confident, satisfied and happy. During the discussion the interviewee showed herself as well educated, self-confident person, who is interested in design and chooses things of good quality and durability in spite of high price. By choosing the G.A.D furniture the interviewee stresses her individuality and status.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee sees G.A.D as generous, courteous, mature, energetic, self-confident, candid, open, adventurous and ambitious person (Appendix 2).

The comparison task confirms that the interviewee does associate G.A.D exactly with Gotland, though not with Sweden on the whole. She explains that features and unique signs of Gotland such as sheep fleece and lime stone are broadly used in the furniture and therefore Gotland is an essential part of G.A.D.

The second part of comparison task was to imagine if G.A.D was a car and to name what kind of car would it be. Here was a dissonance as the interviewee does not like cars at all but she does like G.A.D. So she prefers to associate G.A.D with her bicycle which she likes rather than with a car. She explains her choice by describing a bicycle as nice and clean with cozy sheep fleece on its saddle.
The interviewee associates G.A.D with light colors, specifically with beige color. It can be assumed that light colors symbolize harmony, peace of mind and relaxation.

The interviewee thinks that G.A.D can fit everywhere: in different kinds of houses and apartments, either in the countryside or in big cities.

According to the interviewee awareness of G.A.D comes from acquaintance with its designer. The most predominant communication channels are the catalogue, specialized design magazines, and visits to the company’s showroom. Catalogue is one of the favorite and the most relevant way of exploring new arrivals of G.A.D.

The interviewee recognized and remembered the G.A.D furniture which was in the studio of Morning News on one of the TV channels. She was glad to notice the furniture that she knows and it seems she was not annoyed by advertisement as it was not a traditional TV commercial. This is the way of communication the G.A.D company promotes. Therefore it can be concluded that communication effect is reached and the contact is maintained.

Design magazines represent an important communication channel. From 5 magazines listed as the ones where you can read about G.A.D 4 are chosen and in all 4 G.A.D advertisements or articles are noticed. Moreover one more magazine is added to the list. The name of it is ‘Connoisseur Magazine’. It is about luxury goods and lifestyle and it is one of the high price category magazines, it is sold at selected retailers or on subscription.

It was disclosed that the company’s webpage is being checked on the regular basis but according to the interviewee there is still lack of information about some furniture on it. The wish to see G.A.D on other internet websites except the company’s webpage was not expressed by the interviewee.

Visiting the shop is an essential part of the buying decision process. The interviewee needs not only to see the furniture but to touch it before deciding to buy it. The interviewee visits the shop more than 9 times a year.

During the interview it was revealed that G.A.D furniture can be one of the topics of discussion with friends and it is being recommended by and to the interviewee. The interview shows that the communication channels chosen by G.A.D are actively used and according to the interviewee there is enough of information provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she think of the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the brand?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #4:

1. ![Image 1](image1.png)
2. ![Image 2](image2.png)
3. ![Image 3](image3.png)
4. ![Image 4](image4.png)
The interviewee brought 11 pictures that describe her feelings and associations connected with G.A.D. One of them is opposite to G.A.D.

The strongest association is revealed by the picture of Gotland landscape. ‘G.A.D is very much Gotland’ for the interviewee. She clarifies that she associates G.A.D with Gotland because of the stone and the tree and blond color. The furniture is suits with the landscapes of Gotland, with their pureness and clean lines.

The opposite association with G.A.D is represented by the picture of IKEA logo. It might be explained with many reasons, some of them are: different price categories, the IKEA furniture should be assembled by consumers themselves, you do not know where and by whom the furniture is made unlike G.A.D, much shorter time needed to make the IKEA furniture, there is no handicraft, not all of the materials are natural.

The picture of the house says that G.A.D would fit best into modern house with a lot of light but also it can find its place in the old one next to the old furniture. The house can be both in the big city and in the countryside.

The picture of jewelry was chosen by the interviewee as she compares G.A.D to jewelry. You invest money in jewelry and so it does not loose its value over the years. According to the interviewee G.A.D is a reasonable investment that one can also use and enjoy.

The picture of lemons and relaxing man represents the interviewee’s associations of G.A.D with freshness and relaxation. It can be explained that the design of the furniture is modern but at the same time still classic, you can never get tired of it. ‘The idea is that there are not many things around you and no distracting things so you can just be’, the interviewee says.

The picture of royal sign reflects the wish of the interviewee that G.A.D would do furniture for the royal family. It can be easily seen that the interviewee strongly appreciates the company.

The picture of man with spade in the garden shows that ‘G.A.D is close to the nature and that it is for everyone’. Person of any kind, status, profession can have a piece of G.A.D furniture at their homes. G.A.D uses the materials which come from the nature and the furniture keeps the feeling of nature and freshness.

The interviewee appreciates the fact the each piece of the furniture is numbered and signed. She considers it to be a sign of quality.

The interviewee puts the design, which is simple and pure at the first place for her. And then goes quality.

During the interview the following constructs were revealed: calm and clear colors, quality, natural materials of Gotland. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988). In a result two ‘ladders’ are concluded.

- V harmony
- V reasonable investment
- C relaxation
- C durability
- C feeling of nature and freshness
- A quality
A natural materials of Gotland
A calm colors
A pureness and clean lines

With the pictures technique the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities was completed. The following pictures were chosen: 23, 7, 29, 10, 18 and 9 (Appendix #1). According to the interviewee the customers of G.A.D are well-educated, well-off people who might have children living at home. But the children would have other furniture than G.A.D at their rooms, though they would have the same general style, e.g sheep fleece would be there. The customers of G.A.D appreciate furniture of a high quality that does not lose its value over time but even gains like antique. They know exactly what they like. They can be interested in music and art, they love nature. According to the interviewee G.A.D customer can be both elder and young people, who can buy the furniture gradually. They enjoy easy living and live for themselves.

During the discussion the interviewee showed herself as an intelligent, energetic and communicative person.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, caring, generous, courteous, humble, friendly, optimistic, mature, energetic, realistic, honest, calm, rational, candid, open, open-minded and ambitious person (Appendix #2).

When comparing G.A.D to country the interviewee mentioned Sweden, particularly Gotland as she explains the furniture suits perfectly with Gotlandic landscapes and with its’ natural beauty.

The interviewee associates G.A.D with all the shades of grey color because of the grey element used in the furniture. It can be also taken into consideration that grey color might symbolize steadiness, permanency, practicality and solidity. At the same time, according to the interviewee, calm and soft colors of the G.A.D furniture can be shaded with several things of bright colors. In this way they would perfectly harmonize with each other.

While comparing G.A.D to a car, the interviewee chooses Volvo because of Swedish origin and stability.

According to the interviewee found out about G.A.D by visiting the company’s showroom. G.A.D catalogue is considered to be interesting and relevant. G.A.D TV commercials are relevant and memorable according to the interviewee.

4 out from 5 magazines were named by the interviewee as ones she has ever read and the information about G.A.D was seen in each of the magazines. The interviewee thinks that the information about G.A.D presented in the magazines was interesting and easy to find.

The company’s webpage is checked on the regular basis by the interviewee. According to her it is easy to find the information you need there. Moreover, the interviewee is willing to see G.A.D on other internet websites particularly on Facebook.

Visits to the company’s shop which exceed 9 times a year are the main steps in the buying decision process. The interview revealed that G.A.D furniture can be one of the topics of discussion with friends and it is recommended to and by the interviewee. The interview confirms that all communication channels chosen by the company are actively used and there is enough of information provided.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to</td>
<td>Gotland, pureness, clean lines, oak and birch, modern house, quality, calm colors, investment (tomorrow’s antique), G.A.D tag, which is made into the wood. Calming, open. Natural materials. Awareness of by whom and where the furniture was made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his/her mind when he/she think of the brand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?</td>
<td>Reliable, caring, generous, courteous, humble, friendly, optimistic, mature, energetic, realistic, honest, calm, rational, candid, open, open-minded and ambitious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin?</td>
<td>Sweden, particularly Gotland as the furniture suits perfectly with Gotlandic landscapes and with its’ natural beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brand? What features exactly?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kind of relationships does the brand symbolize according to the</td>
<td>Nature, reasonable investment, relationship with inner self (harmony).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>customer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
<td>Well-educated, well off, know exactly what they like, value quality durability, uniqueness. Love art, music, nature. They enjoy easy living and live for themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true</td>
<td>Intelligent, successful, cares about and loves nature. Have a good esthetic taste and like genuine quality things. Long-term thinker. Relaxation, harmony, reasonable investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #5:

1. [Image of jewelry and home interior]

2. [Image of man with garden tools and fruit advertisement]
**Interview #6 (4 May, 2011)**

During the interview the following constructs, attributes were revealed: pride of Gotland, exclusive design, quality, high price. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988).

V self-esteem
C status symbol
C be special
A expensive
A quality
A exclusive design
A pride of Gotland

The pictures technique allowed concluding the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities. The following pictures were picked: 6, 12, 9, 23, 14 and 10 (Appendix #1). According to the interviewee customers of G.A.D are people of middle age, well-off, who have exclusive way of life and enjoy life. Their grown up children do not live with them already. Customers of G.A.D can be both in business and in art. They are not too rational as they like to spend money on exciting and beautiful things. G.A.D can be a symbol of their success and status.

During the discussion the interviewee showed himself as intelligent, calm and rational person who knows what he wants and should be fully aware what he buys.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, generous, friendly, optimistic, honest, self-confident, calm, candid, open and ambitious (Appendix #2).

The comparison task showed that the interviewee associates G.A.D with Sweden as he thinks that the design is typical Swedish.

The interviewee associates G.A.D with grey color because of lime stone and other elements of the furniture.

When comparing G.A.D to a car the interviewee does not choose Volvo or Saab as they are too traditional, not exciting. He chooses Lexus as it is a car of his dream and so the perfect one for the interviewee. If drawing a parallel G.A.D is the ideal furniture, which perfectly suits the interviewee. The choice can be also explained by the fact that Lexus is high-quality, expensive and exclusive car and G.A.D is described by the interviewee in a quiet the same way. In addition both G.A.D and Lexus can be considered being a symbol of status.

When asked to name what is more valuable for the interviewee design or quality the interviewee has chosen design. But he also adds that design without quality would not work.

The interviewee does not relate G.A.D to family with small children. ‘You have to be careful when you use the furniture, the surface is not very resistible so it can be easily damaged with some colored food or drinks’.

According to the interviewee G.A.D can find place both in an old house of a good shape and in a modern apartment.
The interviewee is proud of G.A.D as it is a ‘clever’ company which has its roots in Gotland.

The interviewee found out about G.A.D through media, in particular press. The information in the catalogue is seen by the interviewee as interesting and relevant. G.A.D has never been noticed by the interviewee on TV. 2 out of 5 design magazines were mentioned by the interviewee as ones he has ever read. The information about G.A.D was seen specifically in these 2 magazines and is considered to be not interesting. The company’s webpage is not checked by the interviewee and there is no wish to see G.A.D on other internet websites.

Going to the shop and checking the company’s catalogue are the main steps of the buying decision process. As the interviewee is an owner of the building where G.A.D showroom is placed and therefore he can be in the shop very often because of the different reasons including the reason of choosing and buying the furniture, the question of visits’ frequency was considered to be irrelevant.

The interview revealed that G.A.D can be one of the topics of discussion with friends and it has been recommended by and to the interviewee.

Generally there is enough information about G.A.D according to the interviewee. The predominant communication channels are visits to the shop and the company’s catalogue. It was also concluded that G.A.D advertisements in specific design magazines are not efficient because they are not interesting enough.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview #6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What does the customer find special about the brand? What comes to his/her mind when he/she think of the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal trait does the customer describe the brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the customer associate brand with the country (place) of origin? If not, with what countries, cultures does the customer associate the brand? What features exactly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kind of relationships does the brand symbolize according to the customer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview #7 (4 May, 2011)

What the interviewee likes most of all about G.A.D is the design. She likes the fact that G.A.D is produced locally so she can benefit from the regional market and support it at the same time. She appreciates the craftsmanship and skilled work of the people who make the furniture.

According to the interviewee there is a relation of G.A.D to Gotland as she has found out about it when she moved to Gotland and now she continues living there.

The interviewee likes G.A.D because of ethical questions. She likes to know where the furniture is made and that the workers have good salaries. According to her G.A.D might treat their workers in a good way, paying a sufficient salary in contrast to other companies who save on salaries of workers and so keep the prices low. She considers that G.A.D employees work under good conditions.

Even though it is not unique, the signed furniture gives the connection to the people who have made it according to the interviewee. Also it is a quality mark for her.

The interviewee works with antique and old things so she likes that G.A.D has modern design as she can enjoy the different things and relax from the work.

The following constructs, attributes were revealed: design, local production, craftsmanship, quality, expensive. The authors apply laddering method in order to elicit attribute (A) – consequence (C) – value (V) associations consumers have with respect to G.A.D (Zaltman and Coulter 1995, Kelly 1963, Reynolds and Gutman 1988). In a result two ladders are concluded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>reasonable investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>moral satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>ethical concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>good working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>enjoy different things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>craftsmanship</td>
<td>local production</td>
<td>modern design</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the help of pictures technique the description of customers in general and their personalities is concluded. The following pictures were chosen: 9, 7, 1, 23, 2 and 14.

According to the interviewee the customer of G.A.D is a modern, educated person. They care how they look but in a soft way, they are not obsessed with trends. They are people of a middle and upper-middle class, who are often interested in culture and design. They know what they want and they are aware of what they buy. They like the modern way of living. The customers of G.A.D are the people who care about the global social problems. During the discussion the interviewee showed herself as a well-educated, energetic, curious and communicative person.

When comparing G.A.D to a country the interviewee chooses Scandinavian countries, in particular Norway, Finland, Sweden since there is much of wood. Though she does not associate it with Denmark as their approach is too modern.

When comparing G.A.D to a color the interviewee chooses the colors between black and white. ‘Maybe because I like this colors together with my interior’, she explains. It also can be
interpreted by the fact that these colors are classic and simple in a way. These colors are not screaming and so not distracting ones.

The interviewee compares G.A.D with Volvo since it is Swedish and it is a little clumsy.

When describing the house where G.A.D would fit ideally the interviewee states that it should be one with a lot of volume and air. She explains, that the furniture is not neat, it needs space. Though the interviewee has got an impression that the company prefers to present their furniture placing it in the old buildings, she thinks that it looks better in modern ones. The house could find its place in the industrialized surroundings. But it can be both in the countryside and in the city.

The interviewee does not associate G.A.D with family in particular rather with companies of family and friends. She also does not relate G.A.D to young family with small children.

The interviewee has become acquainted with G.A.D after visiting the company’s showroom. According to the interviewee there could be more information in G.A.D catalogue presented, though she has not seen the catalogue for several years. The interviewee has not seen G.A.D on TV.

3 out of 5 design magazines were mentioned by the interviewee as the ones she has ever read. The interviewee could not say whether the information was interested or not as she has seen only the layout of the pictures and she does not remember in what magazines exactly. It might be suggested that the information was not memorable enough.

The webpage of G.A.D is not being checked by the interviewee and there is no wish to see G.A.D on other websites.

Checking the company’s catalogue and visiting the shop are the main steps while making buying decision. Visits to G.A.D showroom usually vary from 5 to 7 times a year.

The interview discloses that G.A.D can be one of the topics of discussion with friends and it has been recommended by the interviewee to others.

According to the interview there is enough of information about G.A.D and the predominant communication channels are visits to the shop and the company’s catalogue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the typical customer of G.A.D?</td>
<td>People of middle and upper-middle class, modern, educated. They know what they want they are aware of what they buy. They like the modern way of living and they care about the global social problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
<td>Modern, aware of what she buys, cares about ethical issues, intelligent. Long-term thinker. Reasonable investment, moral and esthetic satisfaction, harmony.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6 – Interviews with the management team of the company and retailers

Interview #1. Free manner interview with Kristian Eriksson, CEO, founder and designer of the company (3 February, 2011)

The design of G.A.D can be defined as ‘classic contemporary’. It is famous for its streamlined simplicity. People who buy G.A.D are interested in design, which they look at first of all. Then the quality goes. The standards of quality are very high. A lot of work stands behind the furniture. It is not mass production, where they try to make it in a way that the price is as low as possible. ‘We do the high quality furniture first with all the work needed and only then put a price on it’, says Kristian. We tell the people how the furniture is being made, what materials are being used and what feeling the furniture gives. Our customers are the people who appreciate quality. They have quiet good incomes otherwise they are ready to spend some time saving money as they know once they buy a piece of G.A.D furniture it will stay with them through generations.

Often the customers who have bought one piece of furniture come back for the other as they wish to have the complete style at their home. The problem is to get the people to understand G.A.D and to buy their first piece of furniture.

The one way to communicate the message to people is catalogue, where the information of the production process and vision of the company is presented. The other important thing is to communicate the message to the retailers, to introduce the philosophy of the company and explain how the things are being done.

People who understand G.A.D do not need to show off with expensive cars or watches, they know about things and what they worth.

According to the interviewees G.A.D is down to earth, stable, functional, ‘not cosmetic’. When describing G.A.D as a person both interviewees agreed that G.A.D is honest. Though being probably not ideal G.A.D does not try to be someone who he/she is not.

According to the interviewees the typical customer of G.A.D is first of all fully aware of what he/she buys. He/she is aware of environmental issues, quality, handicraft, trends and design. It is a well educated middle age person, who values their personal space. It is a person who has money so they can afford the furniture. It is a discreet person.

According to Martin the ideal place where the G.A.D furniture would ‘live’ is a house in the wealthy countryside of Stockholm but close to the city. It would be a family with children and a dog. They would have a Range Rover, not Lamborghini as it is considered to be very posh.

When asked to compare G.A.D with the country the interviewees agreed that it would be Sweden, because it is famous for its quality.

The channels of company’s communication with customers are: catalogue, show room, design magazines, indirect unpaid advertisement on TV and in magazines, webpage.

Indirect unpaid advertisement here: putting G.A.D on the cover of magazines or in TV shows without mentioning the name of the brand. Indirect unpaid advertisement is the way of communication the company wants to promote and develop. They explain their choice saying that such type of advertising is not intrusive. It makes the customers feel that the advertisement is not being imposed on them but the brand ‘lives’ independently. Usually just a certain number of people can recognize the brand but when they do, it makes them even a little proud that they notice the brand.
Interview #3 (20 April, 2011)

The interviewee is a manager of one of G.A.D’s retailers in Stockholm (Sommarnojen, www.sommarnojen.se). She brought 11 pictures which are associated with G.A.D. The strongest association is Gotland, which is represented on four pictures. In particular sheep, limestone, old stone house and landscape with stones, sea and trees are shown at the pictures. The interviewee associates strongly G.A.D with Gotland because of the natural materials of the island used in the furniture.

One of the pictures represents money as the furniture is quite expensive and people who buy it are usually well off and successful in their career. They might be good at design, have a very well developed design taste or just go for the quality of the furniture.

The picture of the furniture’s element represents the quality and handicap of G.A.D. The Hotel Fabriken Furillen is depicted on one of the pictures. The hotel has many pieces of G.A.D furniture. It is situated on the Furillen Island which is connected to the island of Gotland. It is housed in the old industrial building and has modern design. It is considered to be an extraordinary and exclusive combination of industrial environment and nature. The picture of the hotel represents the exclusiveness of G.A.D according to the interviewee.

The picture of the room with wooden objects stresses that G.A.D is simple, original, and genuine. The picture of wooden board represents the associations of G.A.D and the light beige color.

According to the interviewee G.A.D can fit anywhere both in the apartment and in the countryside house because of the simplicity in design.

As the main advantage of G.A.D quality is chosen.

The pictures technique allowed concluding the description of G.A.D’s customers in general and their personalities. The following pictures were picked: 9, 12, 6, 23, 24 and 27 (Appendix 1). Typical customers of G.A.D are not very young family couple. They look happy and ‘cozy’. The customers of G.A.D often work in business or law.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, courteous, humble, mature, realistic, honest, self-confident, calm, reserved and ambitious person (Appendix 2).

The comparison task shows that the interviewee associates G.A.D with Audi because of the combination of quality and design. She would not associate G.A.D with BMW or Mercedes as these cars are too designed according to her.

The interview reveals that the most predominant communication channels for G.A.D company are the store’s catalogue where G.A.D is presented and the store’s webpage where the information about G.A.D can be found. Neither other websites nor commercials on TV were mentioned as the communication channels by the retailer. During the interview it was disclosed that though advertisement in Daily Press Magazine is used by the store the information about G.A.D is not presented there. According to the retailer such communication channels as magazines and published materials of the store planned to be developed in future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the signs which make the brand recognizable?</td>
<td>Gotland, quality, high standards, beige color, handicraft. Strict, simple, ‘not playful’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. With what kind of personal traits does the company describe the brand?

| Reliable, courteous, humble, mature, realistic, honest, self-confident, calm, reserved, ambitious. |

3. What cultural features of the country of origin (place of origin) are reflected by the brand?

| Modern design (Sweden), traditional, classic (Gotland), light colors, simple (Scandinavia). |

4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize?

| Reserved, calm. Relationships of people through generations (as the retailing company builds summer houses for family to gather over the years; quality and durability) |

5. What kind of customer’s image does the company see and promote?

| Successful in the career well-off people in their middle age, who go for the best, appreciate good quality and handicraft. |

6. According to the company what kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?

| Intelligent, go for the best, calm, satisfied. High quality and durability. |

The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #3:

1. [Image of a house]

2. [Image of a Gotland sign]

3. [Image of a wooden table]
Interview #4 (21 April, 2011)

The interviewee is a manager of one of G.A.D’s retailers in Stockholm (VIDE, www.videform.se). She had been working with G.A.D on Gotland for 7 years and for more than half a year at the retailing store in Stockholm. The G.A.D’s catalogue is chosen by the interviewee as it contains the pictures which fully represent her associations of G.A.D. The landscapes of Gotland, natural materials, the process of producing the furniture are depicted there.

The interviewee says that G.A.D is genuine, Swedish, strict and simple in a good way. The quality and design of G.A.D go in parallel with each other. The interviewee associates G.A.D with family but not with particularly children as they would not have G.A.D at their rooms. But also she associates it with single people.

With the help of the pictures technique the authors revealed the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities. The following pictures were chosen by the interviewee: 2, 7, 9, 11, 12, 18, 19 and 24 (Appendix 1). According to her the customers of G.A.D can be both young people and elderly people. Especially typical customers are elderly couple, whose children are already grown up and they live for themselves, they have time and money to put into the place they live in. Young people often buy G.A.D because it is ethical and ecologically produced, they want to spend money on things that last. They might also like the fact that it is being produced on Gotland as it makes G.A.D sophisticated.

The customers of G.A.D are well-educated and have a good income. Not everyone understands G.A.D furniture, in particular the design and how much time is needed to make it.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, caring, courteous, humble, friendly, mature, honest, self-confident, calm, rational and open person (Appendix 2).

The comparison task discloses that the interviewee associates G.A.D with Sweden, especially with Gotland. As Swedish design is known for its’ simplicity and quality, and Gotland makes G.A.D look more sophisticated.

Comparing the company with a car, the interviewee associates G.A.D with both Rolls-Royce and Volvo. It can be explained by the fact that Rolls-Royce cars have exclusive design and Volvo cars are practical and reliable.

The retailer associates G.A.D with light colors, especially beige, light brown and grey. These are the colors that are used in the furniture. Also it can be concluded that light colors represent harmony, peace of mind and relaxation.

According to the interviewee there are no printed materials of the store. TV commercial as one of the communication channel is not used by the retailer. Such magazines as Svenska Dagbladet and Mitt I Bromma were listed as ones where the store’s advertisement is being put and G.A.D is being mentioned there. The retailer has a webpage and G.A.D is represented there. Other websites are not used by the retailer as the communication tool. The interview reveals that the predominant ways of communication of the retailer are the store’s webpage where G.A.D is represented and the design magazines where the information about G.A.D can be found. Such communication channels as the Internet, Magazines, and Published materials of the store might be developed in future according to the retailer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. What makes the brand different? What are the signs which make the brand recognizable?</th>
<th>Genuine, Swedish, sophisticated because of Gotland, represents the designer’s personality, the design is strict and simple in a good way. Exclusive and practical at the same time. Beautiful. Handicraft.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. With what kind of personal traits does the company describe the brand?</td>
<td>Reliable, caring, courteous, humble, friendly, mature, honest, self-confident, calm, rational, candid and open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. What cultural features of the country of origin (place of origin) are reflected by the brand?</td>
<td>Such features as good quality and simplicity are reflected in G.A.D furniture (Gotland).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize?</td>
<td>Symbol of status and good taste, expression of ethical and ecological concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. What kind of customer’s image does the company sees and promotes?</td>
<td>People with good income, who understands simple design, appreciate handicraft and quality, concern about ethical and ecological issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. According to the company what kind of self-image does the customer has? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
<td>Intelligent, successful, progressive, sophisticated. Values: ethical and ecological concerns, expression of own position, comfort, self esteem (stress of taste and status)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #4:
Interview #5 (12 May, 2011)

The interviewee is the manager of the G.A.D company (www.gad.se). 10 pictures, which evoke his personal associations of G.A.D were brought to the interview.

The picture of Land Rover was chosen as it symbolizes quality, endurance and country life. According to the interviewee the car could be owned by the people, who are interested in nature and who have environmental concerns as well as by the people who just want to express their style and stress the status. The design of the car is robust, neither posh nor elegant. It can be compared to the G.A.D’s design, which is down to earth and not snobbish.

The next 3 pictures represent the soft transition from the British Arts and Crafts movement, driven force of which was quality, to modernism. According to the interviewee the idea is that it is worth to save, use and value the old traditions and techniques in design and production of the furniture and at the same time bring something new in a soft and harmonic way.

The next 2 pictures represent the furniture of the Shaker style, the main characteristics of which are functionality and simplicity. Quality and durability are of a great importance for the Shakers. According to the interviewee the same is with G.A.D: ‘The furniture is made for many generations as G.A.D never compromises on quality’ and you can never get tired of the design as it is not screaming it is simple and therefore timeless.

The picture of a basket represents the traditional craftsmanship, simplicity and functionality.

For the interviewee G.A.D is associatively connected with the farming and life in the countryside. He mentions the tendency in Sweden of leaving the big cities and moving to the countryside. It happens because of the reappraisal of values. The parallel can be drawn with G.A.D which does not try to catch up with all the modern tendencies which come and go but stays with basic true values and appreciates traditions and craftsmanship.

The picture of diagram represents the company’s standpoint that the business, ecological and social aspects are equally important for G.A.D.

The interviewee associates G.A.D with Gotland as it reflects the culture of it (simple living close to nature), it represents the lines of the Gotlandic landscape, the natural materials, which can be found on the island. Gotland is seen as the source of inspiration for the company.

The interviewee compares G.A.D with an oak tree: ‘Maybe G.A.D wants to be like an oak tree, it is a perfect being’. According to him it symbolizes endurance, strength, heritage, history and quality.

With the help of the pictures technique the description of G.A.D customers in general and their personalities was revealed. The following pictures were chosen by the interviewee: 18, 2, 12, 8, 24, 23, 13, 19, 27 and 10 (Appendix 1). According to him young customers of G.A.D are aware and they are interested in alternative styles. They often live in the city but plan to move to the countryside later. The customers of G.A.D can be people of academic or business world but most of them have simple, ordinary occupations and a common life-style.

The authors conclude that G.A.D is associated with the family having warm relationships. ‘She will buy the first G.A.D furniture and her mother has already three. She loves her mom’, the interviewee says while describing the picture 10.
G.A.D customers can live both in the big city and in the countryside. But the interviewee associates G.A.D more strongly with the living in the countryside. The customers of G.A.D are the people who want to be closer to nature, to find the peacefulness in it and an opportunity to rest from the busy city life.

The words technique reveals that the interviewee describes G.A.D as reliable, caring, courteous, humble, friendly, optimistic, mature, realistic, honest, self-confident, calm, rational, reserved and ambitious person (Appendix 2).

| Interview #5 |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. What makes the brand different? What are the signs which make the brand recognizable? | Quality, endurance, long-term thinking, traditions in design and production in combination with modern elements, robust, simple design, durability, functionality. Gotland. |
| 2. With what kind of personal traits does the company describe the brand? | Reliable, caring, courteous, humble, friendly, optimistic, mature, realistic, honest, self-confident, calm, rational, reserved, ambitious. |
| 3. What cultural features of the country of origin (place of origin) are reflected by the brand? | Gotland: simple living close to nature. |
| 5. What kind of customer’s image does the company see and promote? | People who are aware of what they buy, of environmental issues, design, quality, traditions, craftsmanship. Interesting happy people, who live in the countryside, have a common lifestyle, appreciate and enjoy nature. |
| 6. According to the company what kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision? | Long-term thinker, who appreciate things of high quality but is not obsessed with materialistic goods. |
The pictures brought by the interviewee (ZMET technique), interview #5:

1.

2.
Appendix 7 – Communication of G.A.D and its retailers with the customers

The specific feature of the G.A.D company is that it is small but with a wide net of retailers. Therefore it transfers the message not only directly to the customers but also through the retailers. This fact affects the overall communication as each of the retailers has its own strategy and way of communication. The communication tools of G.A.D and two of its retailers are described below.

The main ways how G.A.D communicates with its customers are the direct interaction in the shop and the catalogue. The communication in the shop is an essential part of maintaining the relationships with customers and basically speaking selling the product. According to the G.A.D company and its retailers the customers want to see and touch the furniture by themselves. They want to speak about it and to know more about how it is made, how it can be used, often they want to discuss where it can fit exactly at their homes.

The catalogue of G.A.D introduces the new pieces of furniture, describes in details the production process and says about ideas and values of the company. Usually customers take the catalogue at the shop of G.A.D or retailers. If they express their wish the catalogue will be send to them directly but it is not being sent automatically by G.A.D. The catalogue is not presented on the company’s webpage. Whereas one of the two interviewed retailers has the catalogue available on its webpage.

The communication channel which is also actively used by the company is the design magazines. G.A.D places its advertisement on 5 – 10 pages of different magazines every month.

The advertisement on TV is the channel that used not intensively by the company but they want to develop it in the future. The type of advertisement which is considered to be the most suitable for G.A.D is an indirect unpaid advertisement. By the indirect unpaid advertisement it is understood here: placing G.A.D on the cover of magazines or integrating the furniture in TV shows without mentioning the name of the brand.

Indirect advertisement is the way of communication the company wants to promote and develop. They explain their choice saying that such type of advertising is not intrusive. It makes the customers feel that the advertisement is not being imposed on them but the brand ‘lives’ independently.

There is not much of information presented on the webpage of G.A.D. There is a minor presence of G.A.D on other internet websites except of their homepage.

According to both retailers which were interviewed the direct communication at the store is essential (Appendix 6). One of them issues the own catalogue and G.A.D is represented there. The second one does not print any materials of their own. Both retailers does not use any type of TV commercial and do not intend to develop this channel in the future. They both do place the advertisement of the store in magazines but G.A.D is mentioned in the advertisement of only one of them. Both retailing shops have the webpage on the internet where G.A.D can be seen. On the homepage of one of them G.A.D catalogue is also introduced. Both stores are not represented on other internet websites. One of them wants to be on other websites in the future.

The communication channels which are used by the retailers are: direct communication at the store, catalogue, webpage and magazines. The channels which are to be developed: internet, magazines and own published materials.
The communication channels which are actively used by G.A.D are: direct communication at the shop, catalogue and design magazines. The channels which are intended to be developed in the future: internet, TV and magazines (especially indirect advertisement).
Appendix 8 – Analysis of the G.A.D catalogue

The catalogue seems to be the main tool of communicating the message to people and one of the main milieus where the elements of brand identity are expressed in words. It has been developed by the company in a way that now it represents much more information than earlier. The information about new pieces of the furniture, the way the furniture is made and also the ideas and values of the company can be found there. In addition some interviews with subcontractors and retailers are presented in the catalogue.

By analyzing the catalogue the authors intend to conclude the meaning which is being transferred by it.

The company identifies its product as ‘genuine furniture made on Gotland’. Gotland is seen as a unique island with rich nature and culture. Using the natural materials of Gotland and process the materials in a natural way make up the strong link of G.A.D with Gotland and nature. Image of chair in the open air in G.A.D catalogue symbolizes the company’s strong relation to nature. Also the issue of health is touched upon. Natural materials will not harm the health, e.g. cause the allergy.

G.A.D promotes the principle of perfectionism. There can be no compromises on quality. G.A.D challenges itself by producing the furniture using the pure handicraft. One of the aims of the catalogue is to show how much time and efforts are needed to produce the furniture which reaches the high standards of quality.

From the catalogue it can be concluded that the furniture is genuine, useful and decorative, fits everywhere, functional and durable though should be handled with care (and the customer is notified about this). Some pieces of furniture are pretty much traditional but with a modern touch. Sheep and sheep fleece is the symbol of Gotland and important attribute of G.A.D.

There is an impression that G.A.D guides its customers while they choose by themselves what size, colors and other modification of the furniture they want. G.A.D also provides the interior design consultation and service.

The websites of subcontractors are stated in the catalogue so that the customer can investigate deeper the production process and who is involved in it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of G.A.D catalogue analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What makes the brand different? What are the signs which make the brand recognizable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. With what kind of personal traits does the company describe the brand?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What cultural features of the country of origin (place of origin) are reflected by the brand?</td>
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<td>4. What kind of relationship does the brand symbolize?</td>
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<td>5. What kind of customer’s image does the company sees and promotes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. According to the company what kind of self-image does the customer have? What are the true values of the customer which are in the core of buying decision?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 9 – Table of results: brand identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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# Appendix 10 – Table of results: brand image

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Appendix 11 – Steps of ZMET

According to Zaltman and Coulter (1995, 1994) the steps of ZMET are:

1. **Storytelling.** Customer describes the content of each picture.
2. **Missed Images.** Customer describes the pictures he/she was unable to obtain and explains their relevance.
3. **Sorting Task.** Customer sorts his/her pictures into meaningful piles.
4. **Construct Elicitation.** A modified version of the Kelly Repertory Grid technique and the laddering are used to elicit basic constructs and their relationships. Customers’ pictures serve as stimuli.
5. **Most Representative Picture.** Customer indicates the picture that is most representative.
6. **Opposite images.** Customer indicates the picture which is opposite to the subject.
7. **Sensory Images.** Descriptions are elicited of what does and does not describe the taste, touch, smell, sound, color and emotion of the concept being explored.
8. **The Mental Map.** Customer creates a map or a causal model using the concepts that have been elicited.
9. **The Summary Image.** Customer, with assistance from a technician, creates a summary image using digital imaging techniques.
10. **Consensus Map.** Researcher creates a map or a causal model involving the most important constructs. OR the Vignette, the participant is asked with the assistance from a technician, to create a vignette or short video that helps to communicate important issues related to the topic.