

Brand Image Formation

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The article consists of five parts, where the first part formulates the problem, aim and objectives of the article. The aim of the article is to conduct a study of brand image and provide recommendations for brand image enhancement after theoretical analysis of the process of brand image formation. The aim is achieved with the help of the objectives formulated that seek: 1) to define and prove the conception of brand image theoretically, 2) to analyze the process of brand image formation, 3) to carry out the research on brand image, 4) to provide recommendations for brand image strengthening. The tools of classical marketing do not help answering the question why some brands are so unique or why the image of particular brands is better in comparison with others. Therefore, the article analyzes the problem how a positive brand image should be developed.

The second part of the article reveals the conception of brand image. Various models of brand image are presented and the importance of brand positioning in the process of positive brand image formation is proved in the same part as well.

The third part introduces and describes the modified model of brand image formation, enumerating three and the main phases of brand image formation that are brand identity, brand positioning and brand image.

The results of the empirical study of brand image are presented in the fourth part of the article. Conducting the empirical study of brand image the methods of qualitative and quantitative studies were employed. The aim of the empirical study was to examine Fizz brand image. The summary of the results and the recommendations for Fizz brand enhancement are presented after the empirical study of Fizz brand positioning and Fizz brand.

The last part provides the final conclusions for brand image formation.

Keywords: *brand image, brand identity, brand positioning.*

Introduction

The urgency. A company striving to achieve better results in the market in comparison with its competitors needs to acquire and retain particular uniqueness that cannot be imitated and would provide a competitive advantage. One of such resources that can hardly be imitated is brand image, possessed by the company.

Brand itself does not ensure the competitive advantage of the company in the market. Good results are achieved just by those companies which are capable of managing their brands, rendering brand identity, determining brand elements and defining brand uniqueness

and equity. The development of brand image as well as its strengthening helps to retain a position in the market for a company under the conditions of intensive competition.

The problem. The conception of brand image combines the identification of brand image with intangible assets of the company that needs to be managed in order to use it efficiently. Under the conditions of globalization brand becomes one of the core tools in competitive market. It is extremely important to increase brand's equity due to the fact that consumer's attitude towards a particular brand influences consumer's behaviour. Seeking to get consumer's attention and make him/her choose a good of the company from many other provided in the market, companies should single out their goods among other competitive goods by performing theoretical and empirical studies. Therefore, the article analyzes the problem of how a positive brand image should be formed.

The object of the article is the process of brand image formation.

The aim of the article attempts at conducting a study of brand image and providing recommendations for brand image enhancement after theoretical analysis of the process of brand image formation.

The objectives of the article are:

1. To define and prove the conception of brand image theoretically.
2. To analyze the process of brand image formation.
3. To carry out the research on brand image.
4. To provide recommendations for strengthening brand image.

Research methodology includes systemic and comparative literary analysis, secondary data analysis, qualitative and quantitative studies. The qualitative studies are based on the method of a focus group while the quantitative studies employ the method of a questionnaire survey.

The Conception of brand image

In marketing literature great attention is focused on brand image which is studied from *company's and consumer's* perspectives. The approach of company is directed towards the improvement of marketing activity, connected with strategies of brand positioning and retaining of a positive brand image. Consumer's approach is based on a consumer's attitude towards the interpretation of brand image and brand equity. The significance of brand in the market is influenced by company's ability to evaluate the fact how consumers interpret brand image

and company's ability to manage the strategy of brand positioning, adequately revealing brand's equity to a consumer (Kotler, 2001).

Marketing literature provides a great number of brand

image definitions. The table below indicates brand image conceptions of various scientists that are used while analyzing the conception of brand image in the article (table 1).

Table 1

Conceptions of brand image

Source	Main meaning	Conceptions of brand image
Park (1986)	Functional, symbolic and experience image	Brand image is not a simple phenomenon of understanding, affected by communication activity of the company. This is a consumer's understanding of a complete brand set, developed by a company.
Keller (1998)	Conception	Brand conception, reflecting associations of a consumer's conscious.
Aaker (2002)	Associations	How is a brand conceived by a consumer

Brand image associations are classified into concrete categories. G. Hankinson's (2005) classification is presented in the second table, which indicates various models of brand image. The majority of the models group the associations into two categories: *functional associations* that indicate tangible features of good; and *emotional or symbolic associations* that reveal intangible features, reflecting consumer's effect on social approval, self-expression or self-esteem (Keller, 1998; Hankinson and Cowking, 1993; de Chernatony, 1989). Other authors (Keller 1998; Park, 1986) indicate the third category, defined as experience. The associations

are linked with consumer feelings, experienced while consuming a good or a service and the stimulation of inner need or variety satisfaction (Park, 1986).

Researcher Keller (1993; 1998) includes one more category of associations that is brand conception, combining the entire brand evaluation by a consumer. Brand associations play a very important role in the development of brand strategy. Scholar D. A. Aaker (1997) claims that brand associations have meanings that need to be grouped. These meanings should determine brand positioning; therefore, brands that are well positioned provide an attractive set of strong associations.

Table 2

Models of brand image

Authors	Functional associations	Symbolic associations	Experience associations	Brand conception
Hadkinson and Cowking (1993)	Functional attributes	Symbolic value	-	-
De Chernatony and McWilliam (1989)	Functional dimensions	Symbolizing dimensions	-	-
Park (1986)	Satisfaction of functional benefit	Satisfaction of symbolic benefit	Satisfaction of experience benefit	-
Keller (1998)	Functional benefit	Symbolic benefit	Experience benefit	Brand conception, indicating a universal brand evaluation

Source: G. Hankinson 2005:25

Keller's (1998) model reveals the idea that brand cognition consists of brand recognition and brand image as indicated in Figure 1. Brand image is detailed and expanded due to its complexity. Brand image is the result of suitability, intensity, uniqueness and brand associations characteristic for a consumer.

Keller's (1998) model indicates various types of brand associations, such as *attributes* that may be item associated and non-associated, *benefit* that can be functional, experience and symbolic and brand *conception*.

Advertising outcome is frequently more addressed than the process itself while seeking for a successful branding, possible to be attained in different ways (D. Aaker and E. Joachimsthaler, 1997). However, the impor-

tance of advertising should not be rejected as advertising helps to develop brand recognition, cognition and image that, in turn, help retaining brand leadership. According to Doyle (1989), brand image is composed of many elements of brand identity where advertising is one of the most important as it informs consumers and is inseparable from brand positioning within consumer minds. Scholars D. A. Aaker and E. Joachimsthaler (1997) state that communication through the means of mass media becomes inefficient and expensive; thus, a majority of organizations in the process of brand cognition and brand association development and rendering choose alternative channels of communications and develop loyal consumers in such a way.

Analyzing brand image as a component part of branding it should be emphasized that conveying brand identity to a consumer, strategic development of brand image is of a significant importance. From the perspectives of organizations branding enlarges consumer's

loyalty, increases sales and helps expanding and retaining the market place (Gregory, 2001). The management of brand image becomes one of the most essential factors for the increase of brand equity as well as company's.

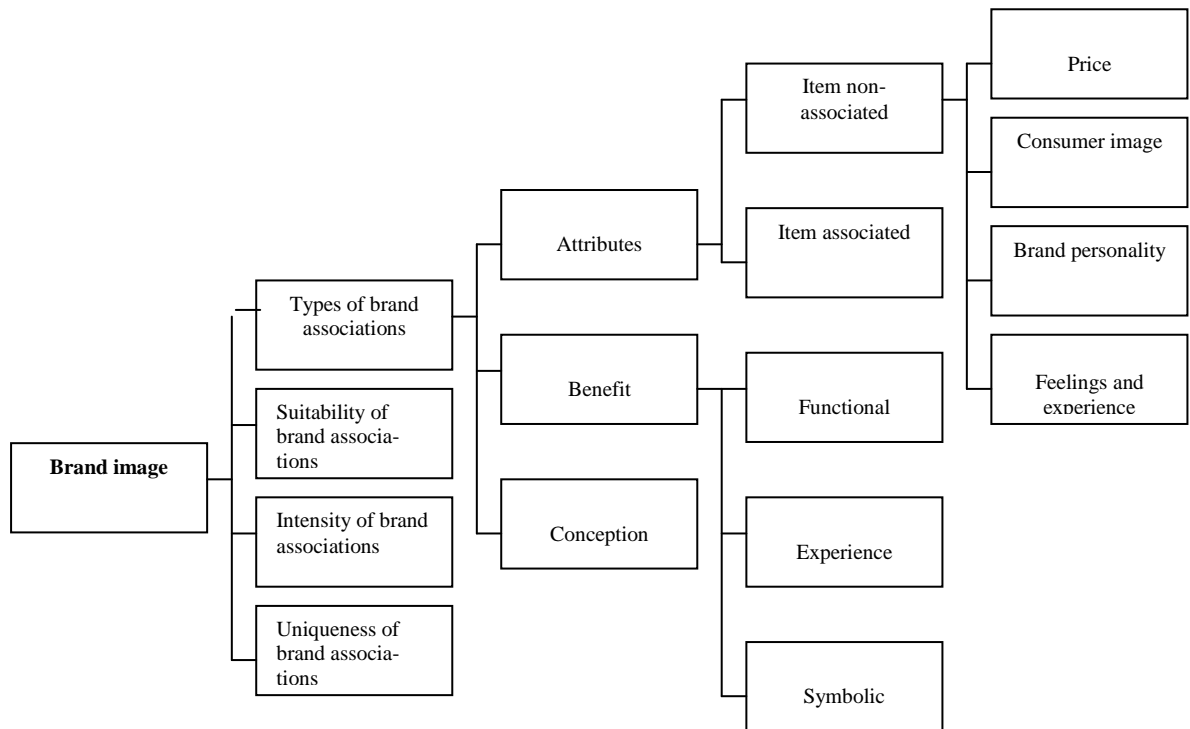


Figure 1. Model of brand image (Keller, 1998:94)

Positioning importance

Brand *positioning* is extremely important in the process of brand image development. A method used for brand introduction is defined as positioning activity. The decoding of brand image in the target market depends on

positioning strategies, carried out by a company and the way a message is created and rendered to consumers.

Different conceptions on brand positioning defined by various authors are presented in the table below (table 3).

Table 3

Positioning conceptions

Source	Conceptions of brand positioning
Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000)	The statement of brand identity and equity is actively expressed for the target audience.
de Chernatony (2001)	The process ensures the competition of a brand in the market and allows taking a different, significant and precious position in the consciousness of the target market consumers.
Kapferer (2003)	Emphasis of distinctive features that provide distinction in comparison with competitors and become attractive for society.

The majority of marketing specialists claim that positioning depends to a greater extent on efficient marketing communications such as advertising and sales promotion. Other researchers such as S. Dibb and L. Simkin (1992) state that positioning is affected by pricing, distribution and the nature of a good.

Position is usually defined by attributes/ equity that are important to a specific consumer group (for example, *price could be of major importance for visitors of Kwik*

Save shop, the level of services might be important for Hilton visitors and quality, environment and socialization could be important while choosing a restaurant).

G. J. Hooley (2001) identifies the following phases of the process:

- identification of competitors
- singling out of decision making attributes
- evaluation of decision making attribute

significance

- identification of competitor position according to the most important attributes
- identification of consumer needs
- preparation of a positioning map
- selection of the desired position
- selection of positioning strategy

Forming a clear and consistent brand image, brand positioning becomes the background of marketing activity. Marketing professionals spend millions of dollars every year seeking to create and retain brand image. Their efforts are not fruitless and the proof of it is a strong brand image (for example, *Marlboro or Pepsi*). Theorists and practitioners (Levy, 1955, Park, 1986, Reis and Tront, 1986) note that the development of brand image, communication and maintenance make up the core for long-term success. (For example, *the success of Harley Davidson positioning is authentic motorcycle experience*).

It has to be noted that brand positioning in the market is not static especially in those cases when brand combines several item categories. The whole of similarities and differences helping to retain brand authenticity in one category may cause harm to the same brand within another category. In spite of the problems, connected with it, brand positioning remains a significant factor, conditioning the success of brand.

Brand image development process

Defining the development of brand image, it should be marked that a strong brand should have a rich and clear identity, adequately passed to the target market. Image should reveal brand concept together with real experience, corresponding to brand understanding. A recent consumer searches and wants to experience something unique and peculiar, what is associated with a brand. A mismatch of brand image with a consumer's expectations gives a chance to competitors. Brand identity includes the desired meaning of a brand that would be decoded in the target market. Seeking to perform efficiently, brand identity should differ from that of competitors and be developed in a way, comprehensible to consumers.

Scientist Park (1986) states that brand success in the market depends on the choice of brand identity, the usage of identity developing image, and the guarantee that the image adequately transfers brand identity, chosen by a company, differentiating it from competitors and responding to a desired consumer's equity. While Kapferer (2003) claims that brand image is the most efficient way of communication with consumers and reveals the significance of brand identity.

D. Aaker and Joachimsthaler E. (2001) mark the process of brand image development (figure 2).

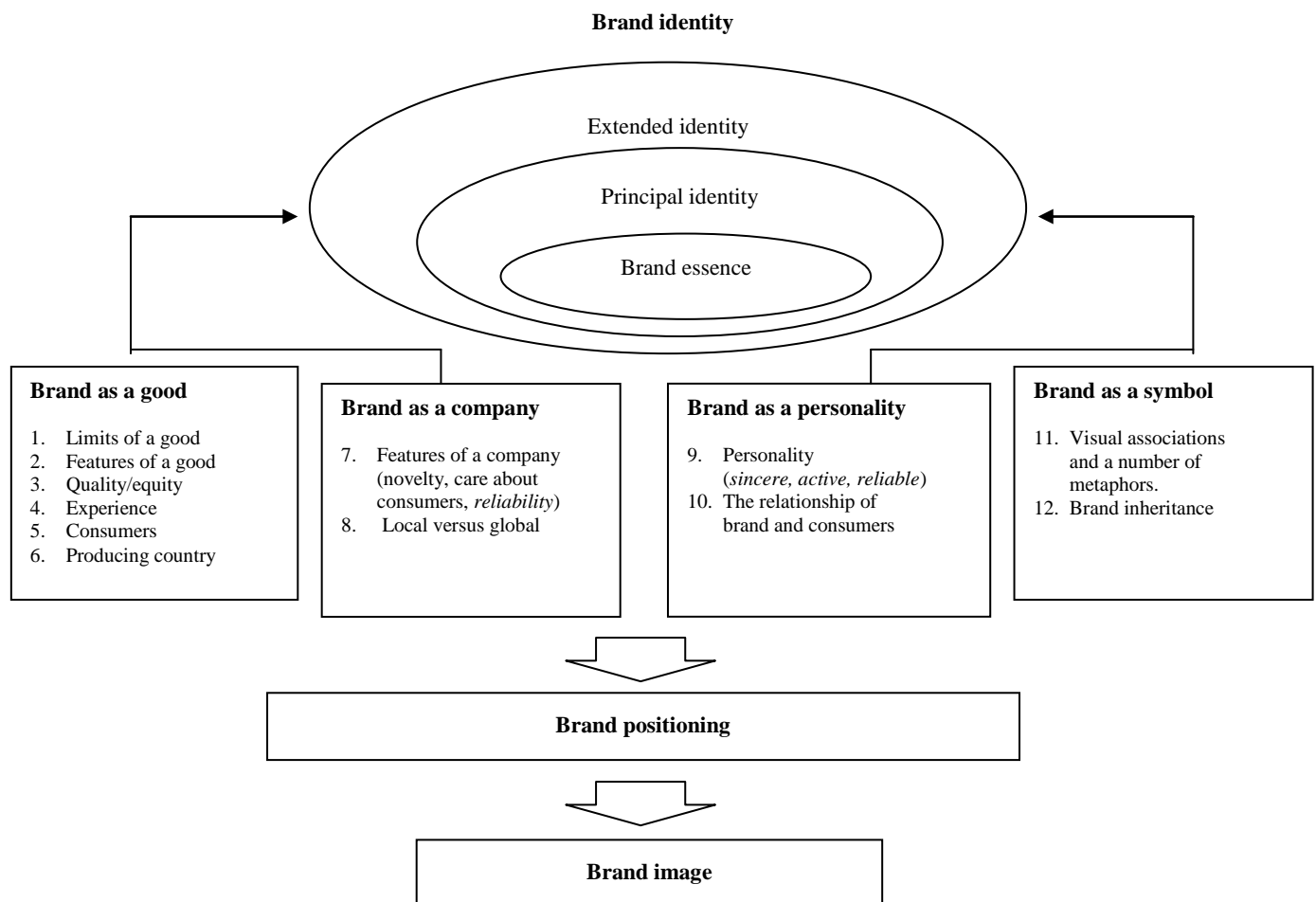


Figure 2. Modified process of brand image development (D. Aaker and E. Joachimsthaler, 2003:54)

The second picture shows brand identity and the conceptions, connected with it. Twelve categories of brand identity elements are enumerated for four purposes: brand – *good* – good limits, features, quality/equity, experience, consumers, country producer; *organizing* – company features, local orientations versus global; *personality* – brand personality, brand and consumer relationship; *symbols* – a set of visual associations and inherited brand metaphors.

It should be noted that the structure of brand identity consists of principal identity, extended identity and brand essence. Typically, brand identity should possess from six to twelve parameters and only in this case it can reflect that what should be achieved with a help of a brand. J. Kapferer (2003) singles out the prism of brand identity that determines six elements of brand identity such as physical appearance, personality, culture, relationship, consumer's self-image and consumer reflection.

According to D. Aaker and Joachimsthaler E (2003), all parameters of principal brand identity should reflect a construction strategy, usefulness and at least one association that should differentiate the brand and get the attention of consumers. Principal brand identity will not change even though the brand might be transferred to another markets or good categories. If consumers accept the brand according to its principal identity this means that the brand achieved its aim. The principal brand identity reveals to consumers and company employees that what is the most important.

Extended brand identity combines all identity elements that are not included into the primary identity and are subdivided into groups based on their importance. Principal brand, identity contains from two to four parameters that describe brand image narrowly. However, sometimes it is more purposeful to set a more narrow approach that determines brand essence, which can be defined as an idea, entailing a brand's soul. Researcher J Kapferer (2003) states that brand essence originated from a wish to generalize brand identity and positioning. Brand essence includes the principal value that is offered (for example, *Volvo is the safest car*).

Summing up theoretical studies of Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2003), Kapferer (2003), Keller (1998), de Chernatony (2001) and other authors it becomes obvious that the rendering of brand identity to consumers plays a significant role in the process of developing positive brand image. the correspondence between brand identities, revealed while building brand image, and the coding of meaning by consumers should exist.

Empirical study of Fizz brand identity

Research methodology. The study of brand image employs a general marketing approach. The research process, conducting the investigation of *Fizz* brand image is based on the marketing research suggested by L. G. Shiffman and L. L. Kanuk (1987). The researchers L. G. Shiffman and L.L. Kanuk suggest starting marketing research by setting out the research *aims* and *hypothesis* that are formulated afterwards (Hypothesis is an unconfirmed statement or some possible solution that can be confirmed or denied applying empirical data.). In the sec-

ond stage of brand investigation, secondary data is gathered and analyzed. If data is not sufficient for achieving study objectives, the primary research is devised and will constitute the third stage of the study. Scholars L. G. Shiffman and L.L. Kanuk suggest using qualitative and quantitative studies. First of all the method of qualitative studies is chosen and the interview plan and its place is constructed and scheduled. Gathering of qualitative data and its analysis is completed later on. Qualitative research terminates with a report preparation and the results of the research are used for quantitative studies. Therefore, the method of quantitative studies is chosen and tools for quantitative data collection are planned. After the research, the results received are analyzed, presenting final conclusions

The aim of the research is to examine the image of Fizz brand.

The hypotheses formulated are presented below:

1. *Fizz* brand selection is related to functional features of the brand.
2. *Fizz* brand selection is related to symbolic features of the brand.
3. *Fizz* brand selection is related to experience features of the brand.
4. *Fizz* brand consumers chiefly identify themselves with a cheerful, stylish, vigorous and young girl.
5. Principle features of *Fizz* brand *personality* are cheerfulness, vitality and softness.
6. Consumers while drinking cider *Fizz* image themselves as a cheerful, youthful, modern and active person.

Design, course and results of qualitative studies

Research method. For the purpose of conducting this type of study the method of focus group was selected. A focus group indicates *a method of qualitative data collection when information is gathered during a planned discussion group* (V. Dikčius, 2005).

Research place, time and sampling frame. The qualitative research took place in April 15, 2006. The focus group included eight respondents who are the residents of Kaunas city. The respondents selected were student-girls, aged 21-25, who like drinking cider *Fizz*. The discussion of a focus group took place in the bar under the name *Kokočia* and lasted about 45 minutes.

Analysis of results. *The influence of brand while selecting light beverages.* After the qualitative study of *Fizz* brand image was completed, it became obvious that brand itself influences the selection of light beverages. The majority of the participants stated that they consume only well known and well advertised brands. Some of the participants noted that brand determines the quality of a good, which, in turn, conditions the choice of those items. However, it can be stated that brand has a smaller impact on light beverage selection in a bar or a restaurant. The majority of the respondents claimed that they frequently order light beverages without naming a concrete brand.

Fizz brand associations. Fizz brand is frequently associated with tastiness, apples and pears. In addition to this, the respondents identified the associations of bubbles, sweetness, ice rocks, straws and quality. Fizz brand is not so much associated with hot summers.

Physical appearance of Fizz brand. Analyzing the opinion of the respondents about the physical appearance of Fizz brand it became clear that the opinions of the majority coincides while stating idea that the logo of Fizz brand catches a consumer's eye. Most of the participants singled out the sound of Fizz brand name as well as the association of the fizz of the cider. All the participants of the survey unambiguously agreed on the attractiveness of Fizz fruit emblems. One of the members stated that "<...> the perfect fruit emblems make one swallow saliva in the mouth".

Consumer reflection of Fizz brand. Seeking to analyze a consumer's reflection as an element of Fizz brand identity the respondents were asked to define the consumer of Fizz cider. Most of the participants determined the consumer as a young, 18-25 years old, free, cheerful, vigorous, and willing to relax person. Therefore, it is possible to make an assumption that one of the factors for selecting Fizz cider is a wish to be similar to the consumer of Fizz cider.

Besides, it has to be noted that carrying out the investigation of brand consumer reflection, non-target market consumers (of older age), who choose Fizz brand had be questioned in order to find out the reason of their choice. Here it is possible to make an assumption that elder people consume Fizz cider seeking to be younger, more cheerful and active. However, due to the lack of time and funds, the research with non-target market consumers was not conducted.

Fizz brand relationship with consumers. Analysing the relationship of Fizz brand with consumers it is possible to mark to ways of communication:

- *direct communication with brand that is Fizz cider,*
- *marketing communications.*

The majority of the respondents identified direct communication with Fizz cider when defining their consumption environment. It is possible to enumerate places of direct communication with the cider, repeated by the respondents. They are an entertaining party, a bar, a coffee-bar and nature. In addition, the majority of the participants identified Fizz cider tins with aluminium foil as the care of Fizz brand consumers.

Examining the second way of communication with consumers it should be noted that the majority of the participants indicated the advertising of TV and various actions organized. Most of the participants stated that it were good to be aware of the assortment of Fizz cider and it's production. Besides, the respondents would like to have more information about the caloric content, ingredients and the price. Analyzing *sales promotion* (various lotteries and actions) as another element of marketing communications the opinions of the respondents were different. Some of them claimed that they would like to see more events, lotteries and games organized (*here the*

majority of participants identified games with a possibility of winning quickly, in real time and having the prize taken in a market place) while another stated that such events were not so much important for them as they did not participate.

Fizz brand culture. The analysis of Fizz brand culture was related to the culture of the company. Summarizing the opinion of the respondents it is possible to assert that there were two types of opinions prevailing. For some of the members the inner culture, environmental protection, charity and support of Fizz brand producer (Stock company Ragutis) was significant while for others not. It is possible to mark that a part of the respondents greatly emphasized the activity of environment protection. One of the respondents indicated that for her "<...> it was important to be aware of the fact that I choose the product of such a company that takes care of environment protection because <...> the company shows in such a way that it is concerned not only with the profit while polluting the nature". Another part of the respondents claimed that while purchasing Fizz cider they never thought of environmental protection, or charity and support activities of the company.

Fizz brand personality. Researching on Fizz personality as an element of brand identity the focus group members were asked to characterize Fizz brand as a person. The majority of the participants enumerated such features of Fizz brand personality as *free, cheerful, youthful and vigorous.*

Consumer's self-image of Fizz brand. Aiming to investigate consumer's self-image the members were requested to indicate their personal characteristic features, identifying themselves as Fizz cider consumers. The majority of the respondents stated that drinking Fizz cider they imaged themselves as a cheerful, free, active and independent person. The answers completely coincided with the answers on Fizz brand personality.

Design, course and results of quantitative studies

Research method. For the purpose of conducting quantitative study of Fizz brand positioning and image survey methods were selected. *Survey is a method for gathering marketing data while questioning respondents face-to-face, via the telephone, post or in a mixed way (Urbonavičius S., Pranulis A., Pajuodis A., Virvilaitė R, 2000).* This method allows finding out the opinion and attitude of consumers.

Sampling frame and size. Pranulis (1998) defines sampling frame as a part of a unit selected for research that can represent the society and provide the data needed.

Stratified sample includes Lithuanian residents with the age range from 18 to 25. The respondents were randomly selected. In such a way 70 students dwelling in Kaunas city were interviewed.

The research range was calculated by applying recommendations, suggested by V.I. Paniott (V.A.Jadov, 1987), presented in the table below.

Table 4

INDEX NAME	QUANTITATIVE EXPRESSION
Size of general unit, N	300 000
Sampling size, n	399
Probability of reliability, P	0.95
Selection bias, Δ	0.05

Due to the fact that the study was carried out just by one person and the amount of time and funds needed to interview 399 respondents it was decided to interview 70 respondents.

Survey place and time. A mixed type survey method was employed for the study. Some of the respondents interviewed were master students from the faculty of

Economics and Management in Kaunas University of Technology. The respondents were given the questionnaires during their lectures. Another part of the questionnaires was emailed. The survey took place in April 2006.

Study results. Functional benefit of Fizz brand. The third figure presents the selection of cider Fizz, influenced by functional benefit. It is obvious that the strongest qualities of Fizz brand are perfect taste, a reasonable price and good flavour. It was agreed with these qualities by 77 %, 71% and 65% of the respondents. Thus, it is possible to note that physical appearance of the brand gets lower attention, though a bigger part of the respondents (53%) claimed that their choice was influenced by the appearance of a bottle or a tin, while another part of the respondents (41%) had no opinion regarding the attractiveness of Fizz brand logo and its colours. Still the same percentage of the respondents indicated that their choice was affected by attractive logos and colours of Fizz brand.

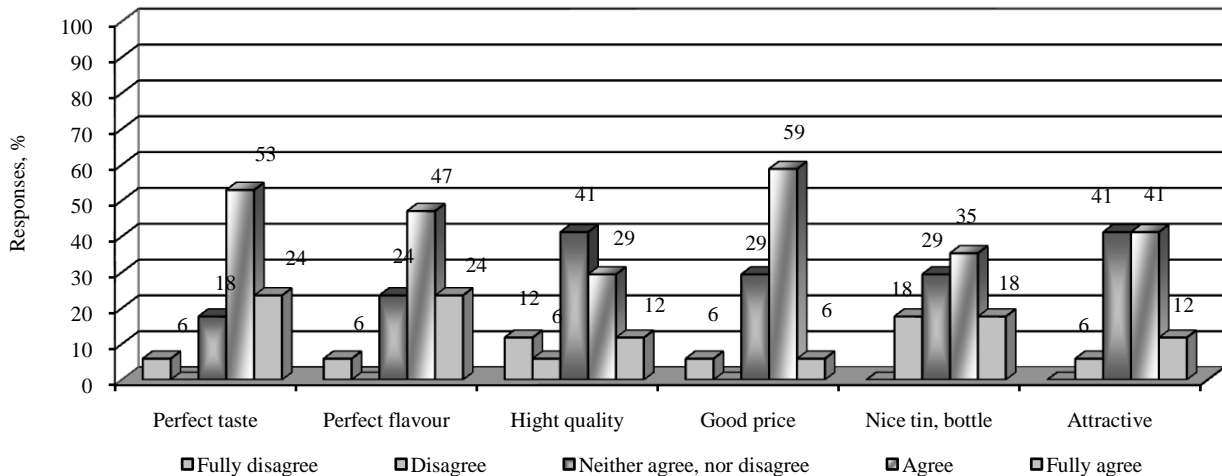


Figure 3. Evaluation of functional qualities of Fizz brand

Symbolic benefit of Fizz brand. Figure 4 exhibits the selection of Fizz brand, influenced by symbolic benefit. The figure shows that the choice of Fizz brand is not conditioned by symbolic benefit. The majority of the re-

spondents unambiguously stated that the choice of Fizz brand did not influence the popularity of the respondents, respect of their friends, higher social status or image of the respondents.

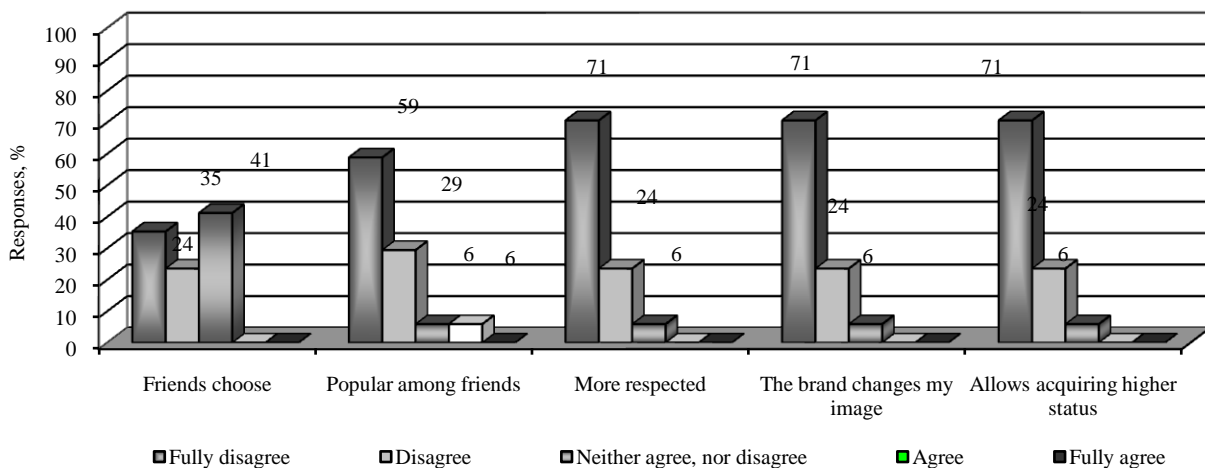


Figure 4. Evaluation of symbolic qualities of Fizz brand

Experience benefit of Fizz brand. Figure 5 reveals the choice of *Fizz* brand conditioned by experience benefit. Examining the results it is possible to note that the majority of the respondents do not associate the choice of *Fizz* brand with experience benefit. It is possible to single out two qualities of *Fizz* brand that are associated with consumer experience. They are possibility to relax and the provision of cheerfulness. Correspondingly 41 % and 35% of the respon-

dents agreed with such qualities. Besides, the majority of the respondents had no opinion about this type of *Fizz* brand features, conditioned by experience benefit.

Fizz brand consumer's self-image. Figure 6 indicates consumer's self-image of *Fizz* brand. The figure shows that the respondents, consuming the cider chiefly identify themselves as a cheerful, modern, active, youthful, emotional, and informal citizen consumer.

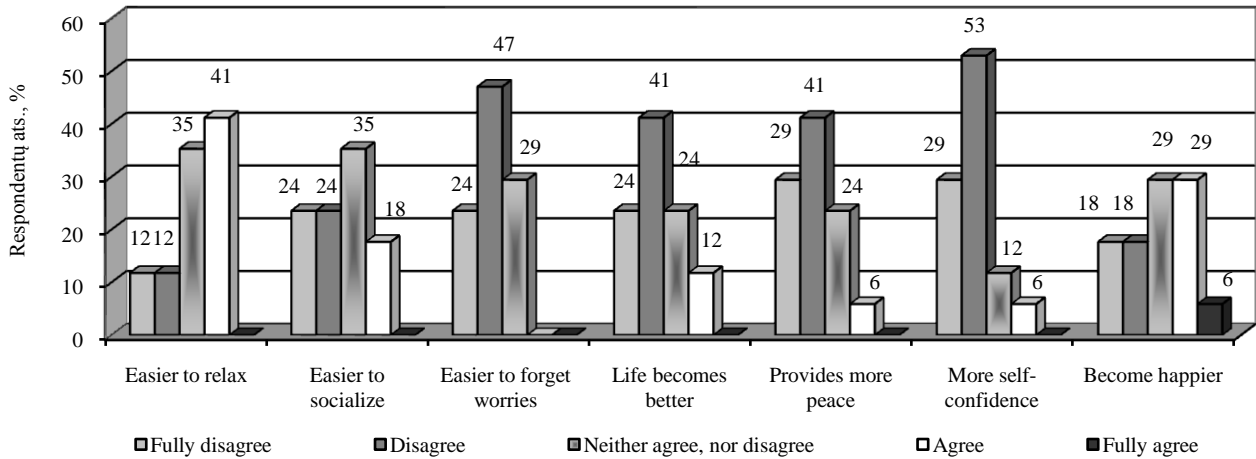


Figure 5. Evaluation of experience qualities of *Fizz* brand

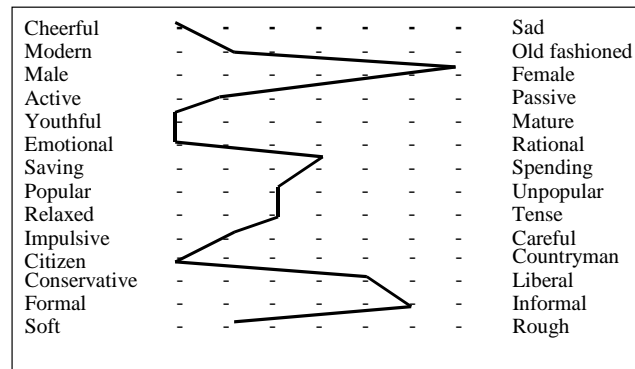


Figure 6. Evaluation of *Fizz* brand consumer's self-image

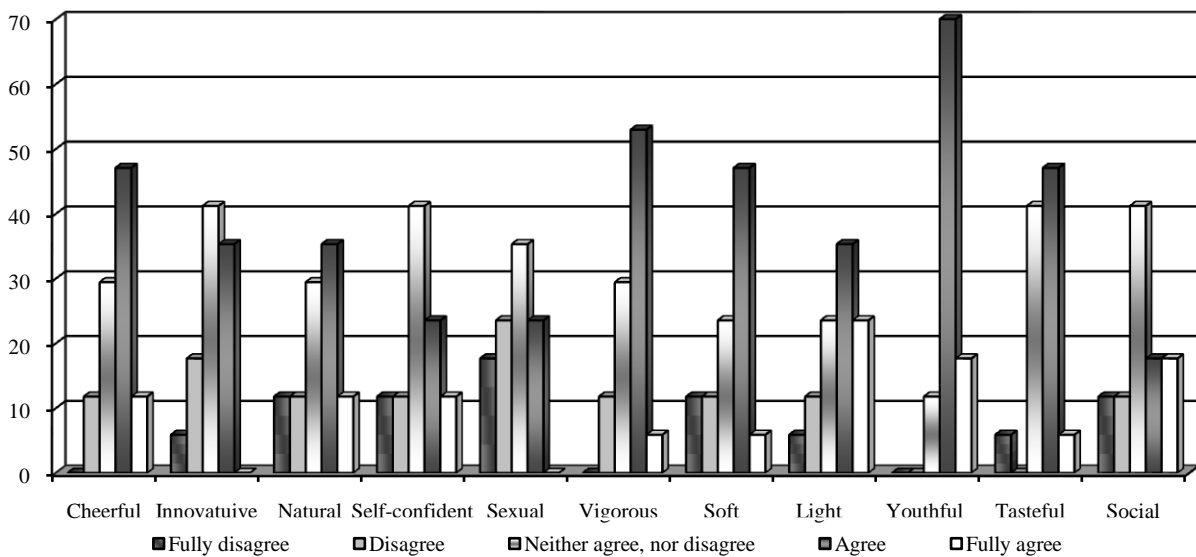


Figure 7. Evaluation of *Fizz* brand personality

Fizz brand personality. Figure 7 presents the personality of *Fizz* brand. The figure provides the idea that the majority of the respondents agrees or completely agrees with the statement that *Fizz* brand is youthful (88%), light (59%), cheerful (59%), vigorous (59%), tasteful (53%) and soft (53%). In addition, a bigger part of the participants disagrees with sexuality as a personality feature of *Fizz* brand. The opinions of the respondents differentiated mentioning such features as naturalness, innovations, sociability and self-confidence and some of the respondents claimed that they agreed the brand to have the mentioned features of *Fizz* brand personality, while others disagreed, and the percentage of the answers was practically similar. Summarizing it can be mentioned that there is no common opinion about personality features of *Fizz* brand.

Fizz brand consumer reflection. It is obvious that *Fizz* consumer would like to be a cheerful, young, stylish,

energetic and sport-like woman who is a show star, surrounded by friends.

Fizz brand relationship. Figure 8 presents the evaluation of *Fizz* brand relationship with consumers, emphasizing marketing communications. The figure clearly indicates that consumers evaluate advertising most of all and 59% of the respondents stated that advertising was important or very important. The evaluation of various loyalty programs is lowest as 65% of the respondents claimed that loyalty programs were unimportant or not important. Examining price discounts and the importance of the actions organized a part of the respondents regarded it to be important and very important while another indicated it as unimportant and not important. However *Fizz* price discounts are still important for 53% of the respondents, but various actions organized are not important for the same percent of the respondents.

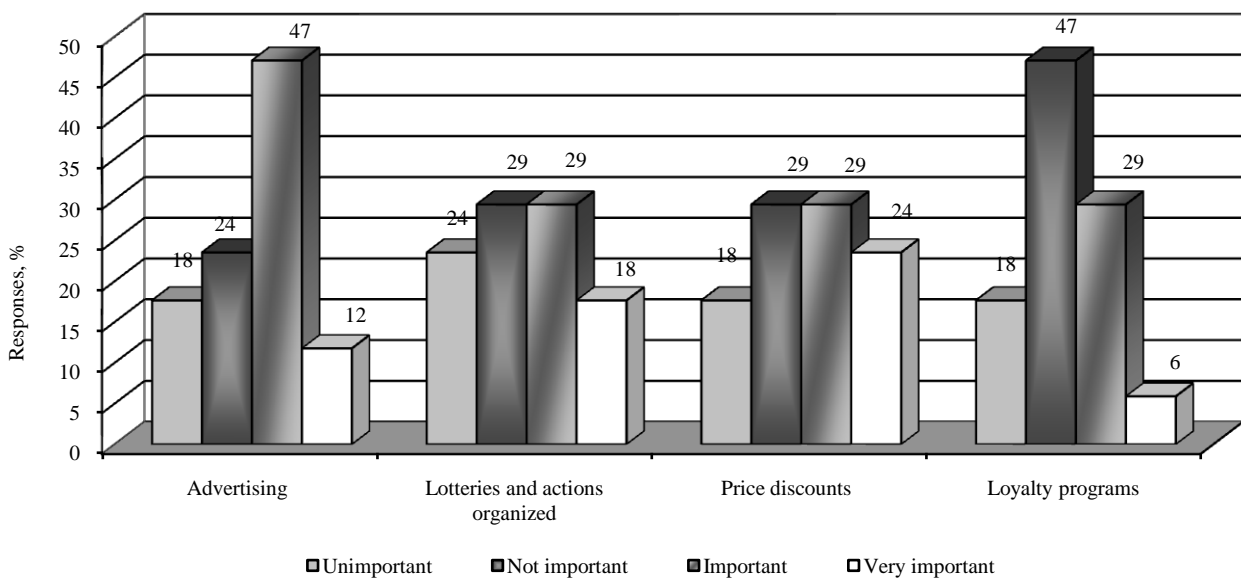


Figure 8. Evaluation of *Fizz* brand relationship with consumers.

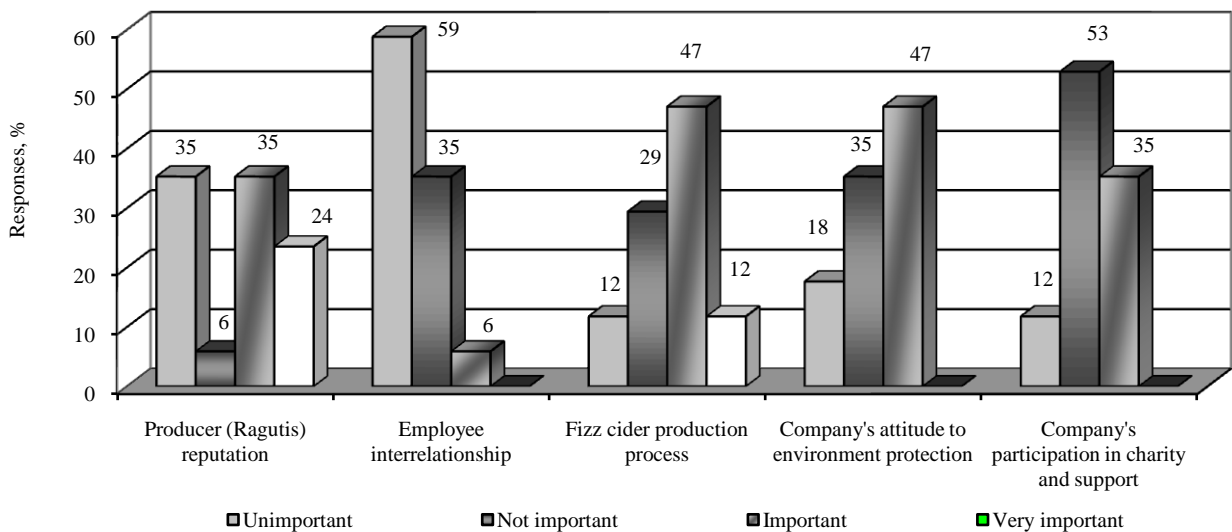


Figure 9. Evaluation of *Fizz* brand culture

Fizz brand culture. Figure 9 provides the evaluation of *Fizz* brand culture. *Fizz* brand culture is associated with company's culture. The figure clearly shows that consumers evaluate the reputation of the company and the process of cider *Fizz* production very much (59% of the respondents marked it as important or very important). Besides, company's activity for environment protection seems to be important for choosing cider for almost a half of the respondents (47%). The participation of the company in various support and charity events and employee interrelationship appeared to be the least important. 65% and 94% of the respondents marked it as unimportant or not important.

After the completion of empirical research of *Fizz* brand positioning and *Fizz* brand image it is possible to provide the following summarizing of the results:

- The majority of the respondents claimed the choice of *Fizz* brand to be conditioned by perfect taste, a reasonable price and a good flavour. Therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed, stating that the choice of *Fizz* brand is based on functional benefit of the brand.
- The respondents unambiguously claimed that the selection of *Fizz* brand is not associated with higher status, higher respect from friend and other symbolic features of *Fizz* brand benefit. Therefore, the second hypothesis is not confirmed and it is possible to make an assumption that the choice of *Fizz* brand is not conditioned by symbolic benefit of the brand.
- The majority of the respondents did not associate the choice of *Fizz* brand with experience benefit; however, evaluating separate features of *Fizz* brand experience benefit such as becoming more cheerful or relaxed it can be noted that the majority of the respondents agreed and had no opinion. Thus, it is possible to state the partial confirmation of the third hypothesis.
- The consumer of *Fizz* cider would like to imagine herself as a cheerful, young, stylish, vigorous, sport-like woman and a show star, surrounded by friends. This allows confirming the fourth hypothesis.
- *Fizz* brand personality features that were singled out most of the time were youthfulness, lightness, cheerfulness, vigorousness, tastefulness and softness. This confirms the fifth hypothesis.
- The respondents consuming *Fizz* cider associated themselves with a cheerful, modern, vigorous, youthful, emotional and informal citizen consumer. This confirms the sixth hypothesis.

Recommendations for strengthening Fizz brand image:

- Taking into consideration the fact that the choice of *Fizz* cider is based on functional benefit and paying attention to the quality and the taste, the producer should seek for the highest quality, use natural ingredients and implement the standards of global quality management in the company.
- The company should implement the system of en-

vironment protection, due to the fact that consumers are more and more interested in the company's culture while choosing *Fizz* cider.

- Seeking for successful communication with consumers the following marketing communications means could be used: *advertising* on TV, Internet, and the press and in the market place; *promotion* while organizing actions, momentary games, where prizes are taken immediately, price discounts and various actions with bars, clubs and restaurants.
- Within the positioning statement it should be emphasized that *Fizz* is devoted to cheerful, rampageous and independent youth, and is characterized by light, fresh and soft taste, is of high quality and a reasonable price.
- Taking into consideration that all consumers, drinking *Fizz*, identify themselves with a young, cheerful, stylish, vigorous girl, surrounded by friends, who should be depicted in advertisements.
- Consumers should be informed about the production process, calories and assortment of *Fizz* cider.
- Bearing in mind the fact that consumers conceive *Fizz* brand not only as light, tasteful and youthful but cheerful, vigorous and soft, the producer should organize parties in bars, clubs and restaurants, emphasizing *Fizz* cider as the drink of the party.

Conclusions

After the completion of theoretical studies of brand image formation, the following conclusions can be made:

- After the analysis of the conception and models of brand image, provided by various authors, it was noted that the majority of authors identified functional and symbolic dimensions of brand image. Besides, brand image was associated with experience while consuming a particular brand.
- Summarizing the opinion of various authors, it is possible to conclude that the choice of brand positioning strategy is connected with brand identity. Positioning is exploited as the aspect of specific identity in a certain time, market and against accurately defined competitors.
- Analyzing the identified processes of brand image building it was noted that decisions, connected with positive brand image were suitable only then when consumers understood brand identity correctly.

After the completion of empirical studies of Fizz-brand identity and image relationship the following conclusions can be made:

- The choice of *Fizz* brand is conditioned by functional brand benefit. The majority of the respondents claimed that the selection of *Fizz* brand was influenced by perfect taste and flavour.
- The choice of *Fizz* brand is not associated with symbolic benefit. The respondents unambiguously

stated that they did not identify the choice of *Fizz* brand with a higher status, bigger respect from friends or other symbolic features of *Fizz* brand benefit.

- The choice of *Fizz* brand is partially associated with experience benefit, due to the fact that a big part of the respondents indicated such features of experience benefit as becoming more cheerful or relaxed.
- Enumerating consumer's reflection it has to be stated that the consumer of *Fizz* cider would like to see herself as a cheerful, young, stylish, vigorous, sport-like woman – show star, surrounded by friends.
- The following features of *Fizz* brand personality were indicated in the majority of cases. They were youthfulness, lightness, cheerfulness, vigorousness, tastefulness and softness.
- *Fizz* brand has a meaningful name, positive associations, attractive logotype and colourful emblems.
- The respondents, while consuming *Fizz* cider, identify themselves with a cheerful, modern, active, youthful, emotional and informal citizen consumer.
- Consumers evaluate the reputation of the company the production process of *Fizz* cider most of all. It can be stated that a big part of the respondents is interested in environment protection activity of the company.
- Advertising and price discounts are evaluated most of all in the relationship of *Fizz* brand and consumers. Loyalty programs and price discounts are not important.

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Prekės ženklų įvaizdžio formavimas

Santrauka

Įmonė, norinti rinkoje pasiekti geresnių rezultatų nei konkurentai, turi įgyti ir išlaikyti unikalumą, kurio negalima imituoti ir kuris suteiktų konkurencinį pranašumą. Vienas iš tokių sunkiai imituojamų išteklių yra įmonės turimas prekės ženklas.

Prekės ženklas pats savaime neužtikrina įmonės konkurencinio pranašumo rinkoje. Gerų rezultatų pasiekia tik įmonės, sugebančios valdyti prekės ženklą, perteikiant jo identitetą, apibrėžiant jo elementus, unikalumą bei vertę. Prekės ženklų įvaizdžio kūrimas ir stiprinimas padeda įmonei išlaikyti pozicijas rinkoje intensyvios konkurencijos sąlygomis.

Prekės ženklų koncepcija apima prekės ženklų sutapatinimą su įmone, nematerialiuoju turtu, kurį būtina valdyti norint jį efektyviai panaudoti. Globalizacijos sąlygomis prekės ženklas tampa viena iš

pagrindinių priemonių konkurencinėje kovoje. Kadangi vartotojų požiūris į prekės ženklą turi didelę įtaką vartotojo elgsenai, būtina didinti prekės ženklo vertę. Siekiant, kad vartotojas pasirinktų būtent šios įmonės prekę iš daugelio siūlomų rinkoje, įmonei būtina išskirti prekę iš konkurentų, atlikus prekės ženklo įvaizdžio teorinius ir empirinius tyrimus.

Problema. Kaip formuoti teigiamą prekės ženklo įvaizdį.

Straipsnio objektas – prekės ženklo įvaizdžio formavimo procesas.

Straipsnio tikslas – teoriškai išnagrinėjus prekės ženklo įvaizdžio formavimo procesą, atlikti prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimą ir pateikti įvaizdžio stiprinimo rekomendacijas

Straipsnio uždaviniai:

- Apibrėžti ir teoriškai pagrįsti prekės ženklo įvaizdžio sampratą..
- Išanalizuoti prekės ženklo prekės ženklo įvaizdžio formavimo procesą.
- Atlikti prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimą
- Pateikti prekės ženklo įvaizdžio stiprinimo rekomendacijas

Tyrimo metodika. Sisteminei bei lyginamoji mokslinės literatūros analizė, antrinių duomenų analizė, kokybinis bei kiekybinis tyrimai. Kokybiniam tyrimui naudojamas fokusuotos grupės metodas, kiekybiniam tyrimui naudojamas anketinės apklausos metodas.

Prekės ženklo įvaizdžio samprata

Marketingo literatūroje daug dėmesio skiriama prekės ženklo įvaizdžiui. Prekės ženklo įvaizdis nagrinėjamas dviem požiūriais – *įmonės* ir *vartotojo* požiūriais: įmonės požiūris, orientuotas į marketingo veiklos pagerinimą, susijęs su pozicionavimo strategijomis bei teigiamu prekės ženklo įvaizdžio išlaikymu. Vartotojo požiūris- tai vartotojų pagrįstas požiūris, kuris orientuojasi į prekės ženklo įvaizdžio interpretacijas ir prekės ženklo vertę. Prekės ženklo reikšmė rinkoje priklauso nuo įmonės sugebėjimo įvertinti, kaip vartotojai interpretuoja prekės ženklo įvaizdį, ir nuo įmonės gebėjimo valdyti prekės ženklo pozicionavimo strategiją adekvačiai perteikiant vartotojui vertę. Marketingo literatūroje esama daugelio prekės ženklo įvaizdžio apibrėžimų. Keller (1998), Aaker (2002) nuomone, prekės ženklo įvaizdis yra susijęs su asociacijomis, kurios atsispindi vartotojo sąmonėje.

Daugelyje modelių asociacijos grupuojamos į dvi kategorijas: *funkcinės asociacijos* – apčiuopiami prekių ar paslaugų požymiai; *emocinės ar simbolinės asociacijos* – neapčiuopiami požymiai, atspindintys vartotojo poveikį socialiniam pritarimui, saviraiškai ar savigarbai (Keller, 1998; Hankinson ir Cowking, 1993; de Chernatony, 1989). Kiti autoriai (Keller 1998; Park, 1986) pateikia ir trečiąją kategoriją – patyrimą. Šios asociacijos siejamos su tuo, ką vartotojai jaučia vartodami prekę ar paslaugą, bei su vidinio poreikio stimuliacija ar įvairovės patenkinimu (Park, 1986).

Keller (1993; 1998) prideda dar vieną asociacijų kategoriją – prekės ženklo sampratą, kuri apima visą vartotojų prekės ženklo įvertinimą. Prekės ženklo asociacijos yra svarbios vystant prekės ženklo strategiją. Aaker (1997) teigia, kad prekės ženklo asociacijos turi reikšmes ir jos turi būti grupuojamos. Šios reikšmės turi apibrėžti prekės ženklo pozicionavimą. Taigi gerai pozicionuojami prekių ženklai pateikia patrauklų stiprių asociacijų rinkinį.

Prekės ženklo įvaizdžio kūrimo procesas

Apibrėžiant prekės ženklo įvaizdžio kūrimą, reiktų pažymėti, kad stiprus prekės ženklas turi turėti turtingą ir aiškų identitetą, kuris būtų adekvačiai perteikiamas tikslinei rinkai. Įvaizdis turi perteikti prekės ženklo koncepciją su realia patirtimi, atitinkančia prekės ženklo supratimą. Dabartinis vartotojas ieško ir nori patirti ką nors unikalios ir ypatingos, susijusio su prekės ženklu. Prekės ženklo įvaizdžio neatitiktis vartotojo lūkesčiams suteikia progą veikti konkurentams.

Prekės ženklo identitetas apima norimą prekės ženklo reikšmę, kuri būtų atkoduojama tikslinėje rinkoje. Norint veikti efektyviai, prekės ženklo identitetas turi skirtis nuo konkurentų ir turi būti kuriamas taip, kad būtų suprantamas vartotojams.

Park (1986) teigia, kad prekės ženklo sėkmė rinkoje ilgam laikotarpiui priklauso nuo prekės ženklo identiteto pasirinkimo, identiteto naudojimo įvaizdžiui kurti užtikrinimo, kad prekės ženklo įvaizdis

adekvačiai perteikia įmonės pasirinktą prekės ženklo identitetą, išskiriant iš konkurentų ir reaguojant į norimą vartotojų vertę.

Pažymėtina, kad prekės ženklo identiteto struktūra susideda iš pagrindinio identiteto, išplėsto identiteto ir prekės ženklo esmės. Tipiniu atveju prekės ženklo identitetas turi turėti nuo 6 iki 12 parametrų. Tik tuo atveju jis adekvačiai atspindi tai, kuo prekės ženklu norima pasiekti. Kapferer (2003) išskiria prekės ženklo identiteto prizmę, kuri apibūdina šešis prekės ženklo identiteto elementus: prekės ženklo fizinę išvaizdą, asmeniškumą, kultūrą, santykius bei vartotojo savaivaizdį ir vartotojo atspindį.

Apibendrinant teorines Aaker ir Joachimsthaler (2003), Kapferer (2003), Keller (1998), de Chernatony (2001) ir kitų autorių studijas, galima teigti, kad nėra abejonės, jog formuojant teigiamą prekės ženklo įvaizdį esminę reikšmę turi prekės ženklo identiteto perteikimas vartotojui.

Prekės ženklo įvaizdžio empirinis tyrimas

Tyrimo metodologija. Prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimuose taikomos bendrosios marketingo tyrimų metodologinės nuostatos. Atlikdami *Fizz* prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimą, remsimės Shiffman ir Kanuk (1987) siūlomu marketingo tyrimo proceso nuoseklumu. Shiffman ir Kanuk marketingo tyrimą siūlo pradėti *tikslų* ir *hipotezių* nustatymu. Tai atlikus, formuluojamos hipotezės. Antrajame prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimo proceso etape renkami antriniai duomenys bei atliekama jų analizė. Jeigu tyrimo tikslams pasiekti šių duomenų nepakanka, projektuojamas pirminis tyrimas. Tai trečiasis marketingo tyrimo etapas. Shiffman ir Kanuk siūlo kokybinius ir kiekybinius tyrimus. Pirmiausia pasirenkamas kokybinio tyrimo metodas, sudaromas pokalbio planas ir numatoma jo aplinka. Toliau renkami kokybiniai tyrimo duomenys bei atliekama analizė. Kokybinis tyrimas baigiamas ataskaitos parengimu. Atlikto kokybinio tyrimo rezultatai naudojami projektuojant kiekybinį tyrimą. Parenkamas kiekybinio tyrimo metodas, sudaromas tyrimo planas ir numatomos duomenų rinkimo priemonės. Atlikus tyrimą, analizuojami gauti rezultatai ir pateikiamos išvados.

Tyrimo tikslas – ištirti *Fizz* prekės ženklo įvaizdį.

Hipotezės:

1. *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas siejamas su prekės ženklo funkcinėmis savybėmis.
2. *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas siejamas su prekės ženklo simbolinėmis savybėmis.
3. *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas siejamas su prekės ženklo patyriminėmis savybėmis.
4. *Fizz* prekės ženklo vartotojas save įsivaizduoja kaip linksmą stilingą, energingą jauną merginą.
5. Pagrindiniai *Fizz* prekės ženklo *asmeniškumo* bruožai yra linksmumas, energingumas švelnumas.
6. Vartotojai, gerdami sūrą *Fizz*, save įsivaizduoja kaip linksmą, jaunatvišką, šiuolaikišką, aktyvų žmogų.

Kokybinių tyrimų projektavimas, eiga ir rezultatai

Tyrimo metodas. Šiam tyrimui atlikti buvo pasirinktas fokusuotos grupės metodas.

Tyrimo vieta, laikas ir imties atranka. Kokybinis tyrimas vyko 2006 metų balandžio mėnesyje. Fokusuotoje grupėje dalyvavo 8 kaune gyvenančios respondentės studentės, geriančios sūrą *Fizz*, jų amžius nuo 21 iki 25 metų. Diskusija vyko bare *Kokočia*. Fokusuotos grupės diskusijos vyko apie 45 min.

Kiekybinių tyrimų projektavimas, eiga ir rezultatai

Tyrimo metodas. Kiekybiniam *Fizz* prekės ženklo pozicionavimo bei *Fizz* prekės ženklo įvaizdžio tyrimams pasirinkta apklausa.

Imties atranka ir dydis. Tyrimo generalinė visuma – tai Lietuvos gyventojai, kurių amžius nuo 18 iki 25 metų. Respondentai atrinkti atsitiktinės netikimybinės apklausos būdu. Apklausti 70 kaune gyvenančių studentų.

Apklausos vieta ir laikas. Apklausiama buvo mišriuoju būdu. Viena dalis respondentų pasirinkta iš Kauno technologijos universiteto, Ekonomikos ir vadybos fakulteto magistrantų. Kita dalis anketų išsiųsta elektroniniu paštu. *Atlikus Fizz prekės ženklo pozicionavimo bei Fizz prekės ženklo įvaizdžio empirinius tyrimus, galima pateikti*

tokius rezultatų apibendrinimus:

- Didžiosios dalies respondentų nuomone, *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimą lemia puikus skonis, prieinama kaina, puikus aromatas. Pirmoji hipotezė pasitvirtino. *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas remiasi funkicine šio prekės ženklo nauda.
- Respondentai beveik vienareikšmiškai tvirtino, kad *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas nesietinas nei su aukštesniu statusu, nei su didesne draugų pagarba, nei su kitomis simbolinės *Fizz* prekės ženklo naudos savybėmis. Antroji hipotezė nepasitvirtino. *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimas nėra siejamas su šio prekės ženklo simboline nauda.
- Didžioji dalis respondentų nesieja *Fizz* prekės ženklo pasirinkimo su patyrimine nauda, tačiau įvertinant tokias atskiras *Fizz* prekės ženklo patyriminės naudos savybes, kaip tapimą linksmesniu ar atsipalaidavimą, galima pastebėti, kad nemaža dalis respondentų pritarė ir neturėjo nuomonės. Trečioji hipotezė dalinai pasitvirtino.
- Labiausiai *Fizz* sidro vartotojas save norėtų matyti kaip linksmą, jauną, stilingą, energingą, sportišką, moterį- šou žvaigždę, esančią draugų būryje. Tai leidžia patvirtinti ketvirtąją hipotezę.
- Labiausiai išskiriami *Fizz* prekės ženklo asmeniškumo bruožai: jaunatviškumas, lengvumas, linksmumas, energingumas, skoningumas, švelnumas. Tai leidžia patvirtinti penktąją hipotezę.
- Respondentai, vartodami *Fizz* sidrą, dažniausiai save sieja su linksmu, šiuolaikišku, aktyviu, jaunatvišku, emocionalių, neformaliu, miestiečiu vartotoju. Tai leidžia patvirtinti šeštąją hipotezę.

Fizz prekės ženklo įvaizdžio stiprinimo rekomendacijos:

- Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad *Fizz* sidro pasirinkimas remiasi funkicine nauda išskiriant kokybę bei skonį, siekti aukščiausios kokybės naudojant natūralias medžiagas, įgyvendinant visuotinės kokybės vadybos standartus įmonėje.
- Įmonė turėtų siekti įdiegti aplinkosauginę sistemą, kadangi vartotojai rinkdamiesi *Fizz* sidrą vis labiau domisi įmonės kultūra.
- Siekiant sėkmingo komunikavimo su vartotojais, naudoti šias marketingo komunikacijos priemones: *reklamą* – televizijoje, internete, spaudoje bei pardavimo vietoje; *pardavimų skatinimą* – rengiant akcijas, momentinius žaidimus, kuriuose prizus galima atsiimti iškart, kainų nuolaidų akcijas kartu su barais, klubais bei restoranais.
- Pozicionavimo teiginyje pabrėžti tai, kad sidras *Fizz* skirtas linksmam, šėliojančiam, nepriklausomam jaunimui, išsiskiria lengvu, gaiviu ir švelniu skoniu, yra aukštos kokybės ir yra prieinama kaina.
- Atsižvelgiant į tai, su kuo vartotojai save tapatina, sidro *Fizz*, reklamoje turėtų būti vaizduojama linksmą, jauną, stilingą, energingą merginą draugų būryje.
- Vartotojai turėtų būti informuojami apie sidro *Fizz* gamybos procesą, sudėtį, kaloringumą bei asortimentą.
- Atsižvelgiant į tai, kad vartotojai suvokia *Fizz* prekės ženklą ne tik kaip lengvą, skoningą, jaunatvišką, bet ir linksmą, energingą ir švelnų, organizuoti vakarėlius baruose, klubuose, restoranuose, akcentuojant vakaro gerimą – sidrą *Fizz*.

Raktažodžiai: *prekės ženklo įvaizdis, prekės ženklo identitetas, prekės ženklo pozicionavimas.*

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