

The Brand Identity of a Local Company in the Liberec Region

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Abstract: Building a strong corporate identity and brand is currently an opportunity for companies to reach out to new customers and increase brand trust and brand value across markets. Therefore, for a company to become well-known and successful, it needs to constantly build its brand to make it stand out from competing products and strengthen its position in the eyes of the customer. This scientific paper thus focuses on describing and analyzing the brand identity of a syrup producer in the Liberec region. The result part analyzes the corporate identity of the Kitl company and its key factors. This part further focuses on analyzing brand identity through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and presents the results of the EFA. The results also explain the key elements of brand identity and explore the impact of socio-demographic variances on brand identity factors. The scientific paper's discussion focuses on deriving recommendations that could help Kitl build a strong brand identity and increase the overall brand value of the company. The final part of this paper discusses the limitation of marketing research and research results.

Keywords: brand identity; local brand; brand value; exploratory factor analysis

JEL Classification: M31

1. Introduction

Building a company's identity is one of the most important aspects of marketing for any company that wants to succeed in today's competitive world. Unfortunately, however, many companies do little to address the issue of identity or do not build it as a complete marketing ecosystem. Their identity is then very fragmented on the outside and the public tends to have a negative perception of it (Kornum, 2017). Yet identity plays a fundamental role in brand perception (Aaker, 2003). Customers choose brands whose identity matches the vision and mission of the company and the identity of the customers themselves (Příbová et al., 2000). A well-constructed identity has an impact on the loyalty of customers, who can identify with the brand and build a positive rapport with it. This loyalty is then manifested in repeated purchases of the brand and positive "Word of Mouth" (Lin & Sung, 2014). Companies must take care to build their brand identity so that it is convincing for customers.

This paper focuses on a company called Kitl. Kitl s.r.o. (Ltd.) was established in 2005 in Jablonec nad Nisou with the idea of producing medicinal wines. After its initial success, it began to expand its portfolio. Originally a producer of alcoholic beverages with herbal mixtures, the company soon came to offer an extensive range of non-alcoholic beverages as well. Its first fruit syrup was launched on the market in 2012. Kitl now offers twelve different

flavors of syrup. The company builds its identity through a well-thought-out marketing strategy, which includes the use of a whole range of marketing communication channels. The main idea of the strategy as a whole is to present the brand as that of a local company using high quality ingredients to make delicious products. On the other hand, the company strives to implement an intensive distribution strategy. The brand is available in a number of supermarkets (such as Billa), in large e-shops (e.g. Dr.Max), in local health food stores, and on markets. In addition to these distribution channels, customers can buy lemonade made from Kitl syrup at McDonald's. The company's distribution strategy, therefore, does not reflect the communicated brand identity based on localness, quality, and a premium brand.

The research team was interested in determining the main factors of this brand's identity and the attitude towards it as shown by member of generation Z, represented by university students in a situation where they can buy syrups practically anywhere. The members of generation Z were born between 1996 and 2010. Many studies have shown that this generation has a different attitude towards brands, and therefore has a different perception of brand identity. At the same time, this is the emerging generation, which will be the segment with the greatest purchasing power in a few years. It is therefore important to focus on this generation and determine what attitudes it has towards brands and how companies should adjust their marketing mix to fully reflect the special requirements of this generation (Spitznagel, 2020).

The main objective of the research was to evaluate Kitl's ability to build a local brand identity in a situation where an intensive distribution strategy is used.

1. Research question: What are the main factors of Kitl's brand identity?
2. Research question: What are students' attitudes towards the individual attributes of Kitl's brand identity?
3. Research question: What are the main socio-economic characteristics that influence students' attitudes towards the main factors of Kitl's brand identity?

2. Theoretical Part

According to AMA (2022), brand can be defined as a: *" name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers."* A brand can also be described as a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity, and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). Branding strategies are built on the interdependent frameworks of competitive brand positioning, value chain development, and brand equity management (Karlíček, 2018; Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Keller, 2007). According to Aaker (2003, p. 60), brand equity can be defined as: *"A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers."* According to Keller (2007), brand equity is the effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of a brand, with the effect occurring when the brand is known and when the consumer possesses favorable, strong, and unique brand associations. Many tools and concepts can be used as a tool for creating favorable, unique, and strong

associations (e.g. brand knowledge, brand image, brand recognition). The following paragraph describes one of these tools: the concept of brand identity.

The Economic Times (2022) defines brand as the name of a company, product or service that is created with the aim of building an identity. According to Aaker (2003, p. 60), identity is: *“a unique set of associations that strategists of the world of commercial brands strive to create and maintain. These associations represent what the brand represents and at the same time indicate a certain promise to customers by the manufacturer.”* The concept of identity is thus shaped in a company through vision, corporate culture, the personality of its leaders; brand positioning; marketing communication and other factors that the company sets and adheres to in the long term (Mindrut et al., 2015). The work of de Chernatony (2002) states that, in addition to the above, the concept of identity also includes moral image, goals and values, which together form the individuality of a business. Another important factor that affects the strength of the brand and the strength of the identity itself is the emotions that customers feel towards the brand (Janonis et al., 2007). As is evident from the above, the management of a corporate identity depends on many different factors, which, when used correctly, help to build a positive image of the company – i.e., what the company wants the brand to represent in the customer's mind. Mindrut et al. (2015) say that: *“If a potential customer can relate to previous experience with the identity of a brand, he surely developed a brand image and is more likely to prefer that specific brand”*. Identity is thus an integral component of the overall value of the brand, which helps to set the overall direction, meaning and purpose of the brand in the selected market (Aaker, 2003). Last but not least, use of the concept of identity also helps companies define a competitive advantage and make their brand stand out from competitors.

3. Methodology

This scientific paper was created in cooperation with a marketing employee at Kitl. The main objective of the collaboration was to determine students' attitudes and preferences toward brands of syrups. Only the part focusing on brand identity related to the Kitl brand was chosen for this work. The Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) method was used to collect the data, and an online questionnaire was created (more about the questionnaire design and respondents can be found in the following subchapters).

3.1. Questionnaire Design

An online questionnaire was created to collect the data. Before the real data collection started, a pilot version of the questionnaire was provided to a small group of students. After the pilot version was tested, all the necessary comments and needs were included in the final version. The final version of the questionnaire was created in Google Forms. It consisted of the of 27 questions (6 related to the socio-economic characteristics and 21 related to the Kitl brand). A Likert scale was used to determine the attributes of the brand identity. The questionnaire contained a set of socio-economic questions, which we asked with a set of closed, single-answer questions. To determine the respondents' attitudes towards syrups, a closed question with four possible answers was created: positive attitude – I buy syrups, positive attitude – I don't buy syrups, negative attitude – I buy syrups, negative attitude –

I don't buy syrups. The attitude towards syrups and the socio-economic questions were used as independent variables in an analysis of variance. The data were collected between March 2021 and May 2021. The questioner focused on five main fields of researched area:

1. Attitudes in the field of syrups and beverages,
2. Kitl brand knowledge and experience,
3. Preferences and perceptions of Kitl brand,
4. A lifestyle of respondents,
5. Respondent demographic classification.

3.2. Respondents

The respondents of this questionnaire were Czech students from the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University of Liberec. The students were chosen from all student programs and all forms of these programs. This group of respondents was selected on demand by the CEO of Kitl. According to Hair (2015), the student respondents should meet the following criteria:

- the respondents should possess the information the research project is designed to collect,
- the respondents are accessible,
- the respondents have knowledge of the topic of interest,
- the respondents are available during the time frame.

All the students from the group of respondents met the above criteria, thus:

- The students represent an interesting potential segment of customers for developing new Kitl products.
- The students' consumption behaviors and perceptions resemble those of typical users; this has been confirmed by different industry sources (Grimm, 2005; Hayes et al., 2006; O'Cass & Grace, 2004).
- The student segment is homogeneous. That means that this homogeneous segment can reduce non-controllable confounding variables (Matzler et al., 2006).
- Students know about and are familiar with branding issues. Many branding researchers consider the use of student respondents to be preferable to the use of other groups (Yoo et al., 2000).

According to several authors (e.g., Aaker & Keller, 1990; Martinez & de Chernatony, 2004), these are only a few reasons why brand marketing researchers use students as their questionnaire respondents.

The data collection was based on a simple random sampling method. The total number of Czech students at the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University in Liberec was 923. The author chose every second student from this group of 923 students. From the 462 respondents, the author received 303 responses. The response rate was 65.5%. In the group, 57% of the respondents were women; the remaining 43% were men. The respondents were from different age groups (age range 20-40). Most of the students (54.46%) were from the 20-22 age group. Detailed information about the group of respondents can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents

Demographic criteria	Variables	Counts	
Sex	Men	173	57.1%
	Female	130	42.9%
Age	<20-22>	165	54.5%
	<23-25>	127	41.9%
	<26-28>	6	1.9%
	<29-40>	5	1.7%
Income	X < 5,000 CZK	83	27.4%
	<5,000-10,000 CZK>	118	38.9%
	(10,000-15,000 CZK>	54	17.8%
	(15,000-20,000 CZK>	21	6.9%
	(20,000-25,000 CZK>	7	2.3%
	X > 5,000 CZK	20	6.7%
Population of town/village	X < 1,000	52	17.5%
	(1,000-5,000>	76	25.0%
	(5,000-10,000>	32	10.5%
	(10,000-50,000>	53	17.4%
	(50,000-100,000>	23	7.6%
	X > 100,000	67	22.0%
Living situation	with parents	137	45.2%
	student dormitory	100	33.1%
	shared flat (with friends, other students...)	31	10.3%
	own flat	32	10.5%
	boyfriend's/girlfriend's house	1	0.3%
	rented flat	1	0.3%
	own house	1	0.3%

3.3. Statistics Used

Besides descriptive statistics, specifically location characteristics – mean, median and mode – were subjected to an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), with the aim of creating factors from a data matrix containing a set of scale questions related to the Kitl brand identity. EFA is based on the assumption that dependencies between monitored variables are the result of the action of a certain smaller number of background unmeasurable variables, which are referred to as common factors. Bartlett's test of sphericity (P-value <0.05) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure must be fulfilled in order for the factor analysis to be performed. Certain bands are established for this condition that show how appropriate the use of factor analysis is. $KMO \geq 0.9$ excellent, $KMO \geq 0.8$ good, $KMO \geq 0.7$ average, $KMO \geq 0.6$ less suitable and $KMO \geq 0.5$ borderline use. A varimax rotation was performed in this research to enable better interpretation of the results. The number of factors was chosen according to the Kaiser Rule, where the eigenvalue of the correlation matrix must be greater than one. The interpretation of the factors was based on the factor loads, which represent the

correlation coefficient between the variable and the factor. Loads of ≥ 0.5 were considered significant (Meloun & Militký, 2006).

In order to determine the influence, the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents had on their attitude towards the identified brand identity factors, a two-sample unpaired t-test was performed for variables with two values and a one-factor analysis of variance for variables with more than two values. The condition for the use of the two methods is that we have independent samples from normal distributions that are described by means and variances. In the case of large samples, it is not necessary to determine whether the data are normally distributed. In our case, we did not check the normality of the data. As part of these analyses, the hypothesis H0, that the mean values are the same, is tested against the hypothesis H1, that the mean values differ from one another (Budíková et al., 2010). All the claims were tested at the 95% significance level. In the event that H0 was rejected, and thus H1 was accepted, the analysis of variance further determined which pairs of mean values differed at the given level of significance. Fisher's LSD post-hoc test was used to determine significant differences (Šimonová, 2006).

4. Results

An exploratory factor analysis was performed to fulfill the first research question. In the first phase, 10 variables were entered into the factor analysis, formulated in the questionnaire based on previous communication with the company owner. These are the attributes of the brand identity that the company has formulated for the needs of its marketing strategy. The aim of the factor analysis was to summarize the information contained in a larger number of variables and reduce them to a smaller number of factors. A varimax rotation was performed in this research to enable a better interpretation of the results.

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis

KMO	0.733
Bartlett's test	0.000
Number of variables in the FA	10
Number of factors	3

Table 2 presents the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test, which came out at 0.733. This result shows that the use of factor analysis was chosen appropriately. Bartlett's test was also successful (P-value = 0.000).

Table 3. Results of principal component analysis

Component	Total	% of variance	Cumulative % of variance
1	2.996	29.959	29.959
2	1.644	16.445	46.404
3	1.291	12.915	59.319

Table 3 summarizes information on the total explained variability and the eigenvalues of the correlation matrix. The number of factors was chosen as 3 according to the Kaiser Rule. These three factors together explain 59% of the total variability.

Table 4. Factor analysis, varimax matrix

	Factors		
	Quality and Health	Local Brand	Taste
The syrups are made from quality ingredients.	0.622	0.281	0.338
The syrups are healthy.	0.739	0.104	0.097
The syrups are harmless to health.	0.640	0.069	0.062
The syrups are suitable for daily consumption.	0.727	0.044	0.274
They are made according to a traditional recipe.	0.675	0.050	0.368
I classify the syrups as premium products.	0.076	0.749	0.298
It is a local manufacturer.	0.000	0.823	0.141
I buy the syrups as the basis for homemade lemonade.	0.194	0.710	0.191
I like the taste of the syrups.	0.100	0.352	0.721
I buy the syrups at McDonald's.	0.094	-0.159	0.741

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

Table 4 presents the results of the factor analysis, namely the set of variables and the resulting three factors into which the variables clustered. We named the first factor Quality and Health. The factor contains claims that indicate that the product is high quality and also beneficial to the human body. In the second factor, named Local Brand, there are claims indicating that the product is local and of premium quality, as well as the fact that homemade lemonade can be made from the syrups. There is therefore an emphasis on tradition associated with the local brand and also the tradition of drinking homemade lemonades, which the company has helped to restore in the Czech Republic through its marketing communication. The last factor is Taste. This factor reflects the fact that customers like the brand due to its excellent taste, so much so that they even prefer it over the traditional sweet drinks at McDonald's.

The answer to the second research question was obtained using descriptive statistics. Table 5 shows the location characteristics of the individual variables. The students agreed the most with the fact that they like the taste of Kitl syrups while, on the other hand, they did not particularly agree with the claim that they would drink Kitl lemonade at McDonald's. Both claims come under the Taste factor. The claim with the second highest level of agreement was about the quality of the ingredients used. This variable belongs to the Quality and Health factor, all of whose variables are given a positive or average rating. The third highest level of agreement was with the claim that Kitl syrups are premium products. This variable belongs to the factor Local Brand, the other variables of which were not rated very positively.

Table 5. Descriptive statistic of individual variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mean	1.72	1.85	2.01	2.12	2.50	2.62	3.34	3.48	3.62	4.27
Median	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	5
Mode	2	2	1	2	3	2	4	5	5	5

Note: 1 I like the taste; 2 They are made from quality ingredients; 3 They are premium products; 4 They are made according to traditional recipes; 5 They are harmless to health; 6 They are healthy; 7 They are suitable for daily consumption; 8 I buy them to make homemade lemonade; 9 It is a local manufacturer; 10 I buy them at McDonald's.

The individual factors identified from the factor analysis were further entered as dependent variables in the analysis of variance, or the two-sample unpaired t-test (research

question 3). The aim was to determine whether the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their relationship to the syrups influence their attitude towards the individual brand identity factors. Table 6 shows the statistically significant results. We can see that only the effect of gender and attitude towards the syrups was demonstrated on two of the three factors. No statistically significant influence was demonstrated for the characteristics of age, size of place of residence, type of household or the income of the respondents. Women and those who have a positive attitude towards the syrups and buy them have a more positive attitude towards the Quality and Health factor. Men and those who have a negative attitude towards the syrups and do not buy them, do not believe so much in the health benefits of Kitl syrups. Respondents with a generally negative attitude towards the syrups have a more negative attitude towards the Local Brand factor, which causes them to not buy the syrups.

Table 6. ANOVA and t-test to determine the relationship between variables

Factor	characteristic	F-Ratio/t statistic	P-value
Quality and Health	gender	2.214	0.028
	attitude towards syrups	10.08	0.000
Local Brand	attitude towards syrups	4.667	0.003

5. Discussion

Kitl is specific in its effort to build a brand identity that is built on tradition, localness and high quality. On the other hand, it is not opposed to an intensive distribution strategy, which currently also includes a range of homemade lemonades available at McDonald's. The company owner believes in this cooperation and claims that it has resulted in improvements to the company's production process and therefore, better quality products. In addition, he sees the link with McDonald's as a logical step because, as he says, the two companies profile themselves as offering high quality products. In his opinion, Kitl and McDonald's also share the same segment of customers, mainly young people, for whom food quality is a priority (Pšeničková, 2019).

The main objective of this paper was to evaluate Kitl's ability to build an identity as a local brand while using an intensive distribution strategy, including cooperation with McDonald's. The research found that the main factors of the brand identity are the Taste of the syrups, Quality and Health, and Local Brand. These are the dominant attributes of the identity that the company should communicate. The excellent taste of the syrups and high quality are also attributes communicated by McDonald's. The situation is different in the case of the product with health benefits attribute and the local brand attribute. Research conducted by Nielsen showed that the Czechs see the unhealthy nature of the food at McDonald's as its biggest downside, despite the fact that the company tries to communicate the high quality and freshness of the ingredients it uses (Nielsen, 2020). This finding goes against the identity that the Kitl brand is building. The link with McDonald's could result in Kitl lemonades being perceived as unhealthy. However, the research has shown that the respondents do not associate Kitl with McDonald's very much yet. Most of them do not buy Kitl lemonade at McDonald's but tend to buy the syrups for home use. The last factor of the Kitl brand identity, i.e., local

brand, is also problematic in contrast to the global McDonald's brand. The results of the research show that the respondents do not particularly associate the Kitl brand as being the brand of a local manufacturer. This could be a problem for the company in the future. Kitl should use its marketing communication to clearly explain its connection with McDonald's to its customers, so that they do not see it as a national or even international brand. On the other hand, the students report that they like the taste of Kitl syrups, believe they are made from quality ingredients, and see Kitl as a premium brand. These are identity factors that are perceived by customers in accordance with the set brand identity and were therefore not influenced by the established distribution strategy. It is evident that students trust the brand and their trust is not influenced by where they specifically buy the product. This finding contradicts the commonly accepted premise that the entire marketing mix of a brand should be consistent and that the individual tools should complement one another (Karlíček, 2018). With this particular example, we can see that if a company builds its distribution network gradually, future expansion into retail chains and possibly fast-food outlets will not necessarily be a problem. Kitl began to sell its products on markets and in specialized shops offering local produce, and this helped it to build a reputation as a quality brand. It is evident that this is how customers perceive it now, too, when it is already a stable company on the market, whose products are available practically everywhere.

However, it may be said that not all customers see the attributes of brand identity in the same way. We found that women see the brand as being of higher quality and believe more that the products are beneficial to health. People who have a generally positive attitude towards syrups and buy them on a regular basis have a similar view of the brand. The company should therefore work on the segment of men and also those who have a more negative attitude towards syrups, to convince them that they can buy Kitl products without having to feel guilty that they are consuming an unhealthy or low-quality product.

6. Conclusions

This scientific paper focuses on the brand identity of a selected syrup manufacturer. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate Kitl's ability to build a local brand identity while using an intensive distribution strategy. The main factors of the Kitl brand identity were presented based on marketing research and the results obtained from the exploratory factor analysis. These main factors were subsequently described individually with regard to how they are associated with the overall value of the manufacturer's brand. Although we did find answers to all the research questions, it is important to mention that this research does have certain limits. One limitation of the research is the assumption that students from the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University in Liberec were more familiar with the brand than students at other universities in the Czech Republic. This may be due not only to the fact that the university and the manufacturer are based in the same region, but also to the fact that the university and the syrup manufacturer have an established partnership relationship. A more positive relationship to the identity of the selected brand can be created through better knowledge of the brand across the respondents and the factors mentioned above. In order to

generalize the results and conclusions resulting from the research, it would be necessary to carry out research across other universities in the Czech Republic.

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