Qualitative Brand Image Analysis for a Global Brand

An Intercultural Perception of the Brand Image through Brand Personality

Master Thesis in International Marketing (EFO 705)  Mälardalens Högskola Västerås

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Abstract

The cultural differences in the consumers' perspectives are an important factor that affects the image of brands around the world. A brand's image may be affected even though the company gives the same message across different cultures. In order to analyze these effects, the authors have conducted a qualitative study, chosen the chocolate brand Kinder and studying how Kinder's brand image perception varies in four different cultures by conducting 16 in-depth interviews. The data was afterwards categorized, analyzed and compared to each other in order to find differences and similarities of the brand image in the interviewee's perspectives. This work’s focus is on the problem how the cultural differences can affect the perspective of individuals brand image even though this one can try to have a global standardized image.

Problem Statement

Are images from global brands are perceived differently between different nationalities and within a culture.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to reveal cultural differences in brand image perception, using mainly the concept of brand personality, “a set of human-like attributes associated with a particular brand” (Aaker, 1997). In order to indicate differences, the authors will look moreover into cultural elements that help to understand and detect the variations.

Method

The results are only based on primary data retrieved from 16 qualitative interviews, including people from four different nationalities.

Conclusion

Global brands seems to have a similar brand image within a country, but the comparison of the four nationalities implicates that the perception of the brand varies between the countries, hence, the brand image is not consistent between the cultures.

Key Words

Brand Association, Brand Perception, Brand Personality, Culture
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1. Introduction

Nowadays, brands are introduced all over the world and companies try to establish certain brand image in different countries. Even though global marketing strategies are implemented and brand identities are described, the issue of globalization leads to the question: “How global are global brands?” (Hsieh, 2002). Although brand image has become a part of a company’s brand identity, the consumer’s perception of the image might differ. Considering global brands, cultural difference in the brand image perception suggest itself. Consumers of the brand, in every one of these countries, do not necessarily perceive the brand in the same way, since culture shapes a person’s and society’s “values, norms and beliefs, perception and behaviour” (Steenkamp, 2001).

The authors of this paper have chosen Kinder to research on this topic because this chocolate brand is present in many countries around the world, with nations that indicate noticeable cultural differences. Nevertheless, Kinder aims to have the same image positioning internationally. This gives the authors a path to investigate if the perception if the brand image actually differs from culture to culture, as well as if the perceptions differ individually. The thesis will not only investigate what personality traits the experimental subjects associate with Kinder, but also investigate if there are cultural differences within the perception of these subjects. To measure differences or similarities concerning the image, associations and brand personality traits will be collected. The authors will particularly focus on gathering information to see if cultural similarities or differences can be traced among the consumers' perspectives towards the brand.

The research undertaken to investigate this topic was collected in a qualitative methodical way. The data that was gathered describes how the brand is seen in four different countries, and an inter-cultural comparison of the results was made using this data.
1.1 Problem Statement

Brands are expanding globally with their products constantly and due to that reason the need emerges to find out if the consumers from the different parts of the world react on the brand in the same way or if there are differences in the perception of brand images between different cultures, like assumed by Foscht et al. (2008). Differences could for example indicate that the company, which is communicating the brand, has to reconsider how to position the brand for the consumers to realize higher brand equity. Whereas studying international marketing strategies, including media operation and advertising content could be seen as one way to explore cultural differences, brand image analysis puts the consumer in the focus instead (Hsieh, 2002). Brands are supposed to give a meaning to products (Keller, 1998), but the consumer’s understanding of that meaning might differ, depending on the cultural background or individual differences. That implies that research should focus on the individual itself and explore the deeper meaning of brands, naming, brand personality and brand image. Moreover, it should reveal how these brand aspects are shaped through various associations that the consumer can connect with the brand.

1.2 Aim

The aim of the master thesis will be to study the brand image of Kinder and more specifically, to what extent consumers with different cultural background experience the image of a brand similar. The main object of study will hereby be the aspect brand personality, which is described as “a set of human-like attributes associated with a particular brand” (Aaker, 1997). Cultural elements will help to understand the variations amongst cultures, and moreover, the study aims to detect the brand perception on an individual basis. The object of interest in this study will be the chocolate brand Kinder that represents a good example of a brand that has expanded its products to many countries in the world. Moreover, Kinder-products have been known in these countries for years, thus, the brand is not too new to be studied for brand images and brand associations can be collected from the respondents. Furthermore, the global distribution and communication of the brand makes it a perfect object of interest to investigate on cultural differences towards the perception of the brand image.
The research is based on primary data, retrieved from qualitative in-depth interviews. The sample group consists of two European (Spanish and German) and two Asian (Iranian and Thai) cultures as they differ, according to Hofstede (cited in Ghauri & Cateora, 2006) in many cultural aspects. The concepts supporting the research derived from a comprehensive literature research, focusing on brand-related subjects, such as brand associations, brand image and brand personality, as well as cultural impact on the aforementioned concepts.

1.3 Strategic Question

The authors are interested in brand image of Kinder and how it is perceived individually, as well as if there are similarities within a culture and between cultures. Regarding the purpose of the thesis, the strategic question will be:

How is the global brand Kinder perceived differently between different cultures?

1.4 Research Questions

To examine the cultural differences in brand image perception, the authors work with the following research questions.

RQ 1: What impact had brand identity on the perceived brand image?
RQ 2: What associations shape the brand image?
RQ 3: What brand personality is connected with the brand image?
RQ 4: How are the associations that people perceive in the brand structured similarly or differently across nations?
1.5 Delimitations

Research on brands show a variety of fields, such as brand strategy or brand equity, as well as brand identity. Not all parts can be taken in consideration, partly to the time limitation, but mainly forced by the selected research design, which will be a qualitative study. That delimitates the scope of the study in this way that the study will mainly examine brand images and its connection to the consumer, whereas company related brand issues will be left out to a great extent.

Moreover, the authors are aware of the fact that the research used exclusively primary data in form of qualitative interviews that only contain a small amount of respondents. Consequently, the results that analysed don’t build a valid basis for repetition. The results may even vary, taken other cultures as research subjects and another brand as the object of investigation.
2. Kinder Chocolate- An Overview of the Brand

Kinder is a confectionery brand that is produced in Germany from the German offspring of the Italian chocolate manufacturer Ferrero (Markenmuseum, n.d.). This chocolate product line was among the first one in the world that was especially targeting children (Ferrero, 2010). The first Kinder chocolate bar was introduced to its home market Germany in 1967. Its unique feature has been and still is the visible milk parts in the chocolate and Kinder was also the first chocolate brand that divided the big chocolate bar into eight smaller bars that were individually wrapped (Markenmuseum, n.d.).

Kinder chocolate is currently in 40 countries available, amongst other, China, Thailand, all European countries and North and South America. The company Ferrero communicates Kinder in every country the same way; the chocolate bars have the smiling boy on the package and the surprise eggs have the same package everywhere as well (Markenmuseum, n.d.).

Figure 1: Kinder products, Source: Ferrero (2010).
3. Literature Review

The authors approach the brand aspects that can be perceived and that are relevant to answer the research question. A comprehensive literature research has lead to the conclusion that brand identity, image, associations and personality are crucial factors that determine the brand image (e.g. D. Aaker, 2000; J.L. Aaker, 2001; Keller, 1998). As the research focuses not only on individual brand image perception, but also on differences between cultures toward the brand images (J.L. Aaker, 2001; Foscht et al., 2008), therefore, the authors of this paper consider culture as a dependent variable. The focus remained to be brand personality and the method does not allow to indicate specific cultural differences. Therefore, culture as a concept and influencing factor will be studied, but brand associations and personality will be centred.

3.1 Culture

According to Dake (1991), who proposes that culture “provides a collectively held set of customs and meanings, many of which are internalised by the person, becoming part of personality and influencing transactions with the social and physical environment” (p. 78), research on culture should concentrate rather on the individual perceptions than on big groups.

Steenkamp (2001) summarizes different definitions of culture with the brief statement that cultural values, norms and beliefs are shaping a society’s perception and behaviour, as well as dispositions. According to Foscht, Swoboda, Morschett and Sinha (2008), other culture-related studies indicate that cultural factors, such as language, religion or values have an impact on how people perceive and evaluate their environment. Transferring this knowledge to international marketing and brand perception, studies show that “consumer behaviour [...] is critically reflective of patterns of persistent personality traits, described as national characteristics” (Hsieh, 2002, p. 49).
3.2 Brand

Keller (1998) borrows the definition from the American Marketing Association to explain the concept brand: “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of the intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (p. 2). Brands are always created and are supposed to give a product-meaning to the consumer, which means in other words, that different attributes will be associated with that product. Keller (1998) also mentions that not only physical products can be branded, but also services, retailers and distributors, people and organizations, sports, art and entertainment tools (e.g. movies, etc.), but also geographical locations (pp. 10-15). Based on this definition, one can go one step further and define different brand elements, for example the brand name, symbols, package, logos, etc. (Keller, 1998).

From the marketer’s perspective, the concept of brand equity plays a central role when it comes to branding. Brand equity basically represents the so called “added value” that the products gain through branding (Keller, 1998, pp.42-43). “Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer has a [...] familiarity with the brand and holds [...] unique brand associations in memory” (Keller, 1998, p. 50).

3.2.1 Brand Associations

According to Munzinger, Berens and Kuntkes (2004), the consumer’s memory is full with associations towards a brand. These associations form the basis for spontaneous imaginations and are developed either through own experience, brand communication, relationships to the brand or through experience from the peer group. They all together form the brand image a consumer has about a specific brand in his mind (Skopos, n.d.). Keller (1998) classifies brand associations into three categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes as demonstrated in Figure 2 below. A comparing study by Grace & O’Cass (2002) shows that not all dimensions are revealing in the consumer’s mind when thinking of a brand. Consequently, the Figure below indicates (red circles) the important brand dimensions that are named by Keller (1998) and Grace & O’Cass (2002). Furthermore, the same study (Grace & O’Cass, 2002) reveals further brand associations
that hold meaning to a consumer, which are the core product, packaging, brand name, country of origin and word-of-mouth.

3.2.2 Brand Image

Brand image is a term that refers to the characteristics that are in the consumer’s mind when recalling a brand. Consequently, “brand image can be defined as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1998, p. 93). Thus, according to Belen del Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias (2001), brand associations (e.g. Keller, 1998; Grace & O’Cass, 2002) shape together with the brand identity the total meaning of a brand for the consumer. Furthermore, Dressler & Duhm (2005) state that the brand image is a construct of attitudes the consumer developed over the time to the products. These attitudes are subjective perception images and all images together form a holistic and complex brand image.

That indicates that the concept of image is closely related to the concept of attitudes, which can be broadly defined as positive or negative reactions of individuals that are aroused by a learned or constant disposition to a specific stimulus (Schlagentweith, 2008, p. 37). Based on that definition,
one can see that attitudes are always directed towards something (e.g. a product or a brand) and they can only emerge, if the person has had any experience or interaction with this object. According to Schlagentweith (2008), the newest attitude research agrees that attitudes consist of two components, which are namely cognition and affection (emotion). The cognitive component describes the knowledge a person has about the object and the affective component illustrates the emotional evaluation towards the object (Schlagentweith, 2008, pp. 37-38). Combining the understanding of attitudes with brand image, Trommbsdorff (2008) defines brand image as “a subjective perception of a brand that is based on verbal and pictorial associations and represents, by the means of attitudes, an overall judgement of a brand based of convictions and feelings”1 (p. 152). Attitudes, both cognitive and affective, are a relevant aspect of research, because they determine the consumer’s behaviour (Trommbsdorff, 2008).

International marketing research on attitudes also shows that they are influenced significantly by culture (Onkvist & Shaw, 2009). This assumption is encouraged by Belk’s (1996) suggestion that consumers with different cultural background connect different meanings to brands. Moreover, an inter-cultural study by Park & Rabolt (2009) supposes that “brand image performance is influenced by cultural characteristics” (p.715), which implicates that brand associations, hence, brand image perceptions vary across cultures.

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1 Note that the authors translated the quote from German to English, but as the translation is very close to the original statement, the authors decided to quote it as a statement.
3.2.3 Brand Identity

Whereas every marketing and brand-responsible department of a company tries to set a specific image of the brand in the consumers mind that image does not necessarily matches with the actual image the consumer finally perceives. In literature, terms about branding are not always consistent (Grace & O’Cass, 2002), consequently, the authors distinguish strictly between the terms brand image and brand identity. In this thesis, brand image only refers to the consumer’s associations. In contrast to brand image, brand identity refers to the company’s perception of the brand and how it should be perceived from the consumers. D. Aaker (2002) suggests that the brand identity can be seen from four different perspectives, each containing of several dimensions. Summing up all dimensions, in total Aaker (2002) comes to the result that the identity of a brand is build up on 12 dimensions (see Table 1). These elements should be considered by the company when they design a brand communication, but it does not include the consumer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand as a product</th>
<th>Brand as an organisation</th>
<th>Brand as a person</th>
<th>Brand as a symbol</th>
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<td>4. Uses</td>
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<td>6. Country of Origin</td>
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Table 1: Brand Identity System- Aaker (2002, p.79), adjusted by the authors.

Using D. Aaker’s (2002) model, one has to state that not all dimensions are equally used for the branding process. Some aspects play a smaller role than others and for some companies several parts are not taken into consideration at all. Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000), p.43) also propose that successful brands don’t have to use all aspects and all dimensions, but rather concentrate on the core benefits for the consumer.
3.2.4 Brand Personality

Numerous studies (e.g. Aaker, 1997, Aaker, Benet-Martinez & Garolera, 2001, Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003, Keller, 1998) show that brands seem to have a personality. Exploring the symbolic and intangible aspects of the brand can help to understand why consumers might react or behave irrational when choosing a product (Lorenz, 2008). Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) propose that a brand personality is the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for brands. The term brand personality, consequently, contains the entirety of human characteristics, for example gender, age, but also personality traits, such as reliability, friendliness, humourless or similar constructs. Brand personality is a construct that reveals how consumers feel about the brand instead of what physical characteristics they associate with it (Keller, 1998, p. 97).

Schlagentweith (2008) indicates that brand personality can be seen as the intersection of brand identity and brand image. He argues that brand identity has one component that describes the brand as a person, whereas brand image, described earlier as the perceived meaning of a brand from the consumer, can include personality as an attribute that is associated with the brand (p.40).

In accordance with Arora & Stoner (2009), several researchers have investigated why brands are associated with personality traits and what functions the personality of a brand could have for the consumer. One explanation is connected to the self-congruity theory (Graef, 1996). Consequently, brands that are congruent with similar personality characteristics like the self-concept the consumer have established about himself are more preferred than brands that differ from the self-concept (Graef, 1996). Other studies reinforce the theory that consumers compare and identify themselves with brands and personalize them, which also leads to a stronger preference of brands (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). Moreover, brand personalities also help the consumer to differentiate the different brands that are on the market and a positive brand personality has an effect on purchase decisions (Freling & Forbes, 2005).

In order to measure brand personality, Aaker’s (2001) research and extended framework on personality dimensions and traits are widely accepted (Arora & Stoner, 2009). The model is a combination of J.L. Aaker’s (1997) brand personality scale (BPS) based on American consumers and the extension of her own research on Japanese and Spanish culture (Aaker et al., 2001).
Aaker (1997) initially established a scale, consisting of five “distinct personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness” (Aaker, 1997, p. 353, see also Appendix 1, Figure 9). Each dimension consists of facets that represent the character of the dimension. Sincerity has, according to Aaker (1997) the facets down-to-earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful, whereas Excitement can be identified through daring, spirited, imaginative and up-to-date. Competence has the three facets reliable, intelligent and successful; Sophistication, is a dimension that can be described best with upper-class and charming and Ruggedness contains the facets outdoorsy and tough (Aaker, 1997).

Furthermore, she remarks that these dimensions have “important implications for researchers examining the perceptions of brand personality across cultures.” (Aaker, 1997, p. 355). In her following research (Aaker et al., 2001), she examined how the structure of brand associations varies across cultures and could identify two more dimensions in the Japanese and Spanish culture: Peacefulness (described with attributes like peaceful, affectionate or naive) and Passion (marked through intensity and spirituality). In Appendix 1, Table 3 shows personality traits that represent all dimensions. Aaker’s (2001) study furthermore suggests that associated brand personality can differ individually, depending on individuals’ needs, socialization and self-views. Additionally, cultural differences are also connected with the variations and Sung and Tinkham (2005) claim that “cultural differences should be predictive of variations in the way even global brands are perceived, despite the fact that many are marketed with a standardized strategy” (p.337).

More specifically, Sung and Tinkham’s (2005) study compared the structure of personality dimensions across two cultures and came to the conclusion that culture-specific differences are more likely to find in cultures that vary significantly in their values, beliefs and languages, such as Asians and Western nationalities.
3.3 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

De Mooij and Hofstede (2010) claim that “the Hofstede model of national culture has proved to be a useful instrument for understanding consumer behaviour differences across cultures” (p. 104). Hofstede’s model (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010) is based on a qualitative research that enabled him to divide cultures in four dimensions. The countries are ranked in these dimensions on a scale, so relations between each country can be seen. Hofstede’s initial research results from the 1970’s are supported by many other researches (more than 200 external comparative studies) and correlations to consumer behaviour could be indicated (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2010).

*Masculinity/Femininity*

The dimension of masculinity and femininity described the role of gender in the society of a country. To define a female-characteristic country, we can say that is the one that is low on masculinity, which implicates that it is high on femininity, values like teamwork and equal salary are descriptive. On the contrary, traditional roles, such as men have more power than women and competition is more valued than teamwork, characterize a masculine society (Hofstede, n.d.). Applied to consumer behaviour, this means for example that in masculine cultures, men are the decision makers for bigger purchases, whereas women are mainly responsible for grocery shopping. In these countries, status buying behaviour is also more dominant than in female-characteristic countries (Foscht et al., 2008).

*Power Distance*

Power distance is a dimension that refers to the importance of power, in other words, countries with large power distance, people’s positions in their professional life are more important than in societies that are characterized with low power distance. Hierarchies play a dominant role in large power distance societies, which also influences the personal life (Foscht et al., 2008).
Individualism/Collectivism

Individualistic countries give priority to the rights of each individual, whereas the collectivistic countries see the responsibility in the group and social networks play a much bigger role. For brand management, this dimension has also an implication, as collectivistic countries feel a stronger pressure to conform within the society. That doesn’t imply that individualistic countries don’t want to conform in society, but in general, the pressure from the society is less and the individual freedom is higher (Foscht et al., 2008).

Uncertainty Avoidance

Countries that show strong uncertainty avoidance show more fear of future happenings and try to fight against potential future threats. In these countries the society plays a big role to control this with regulations and laws. On the other hand, countries with low uncertainty avoidance, accept days more the way they come, which is again expressed in less emotional stress. Moreover, these countries are also characterized with a higher degree of openness to other opinions, different from the own ones (Kale, 1989).
4. Conceptual Model

In order to assemble the different aspects of all topics, the authors studied the factors that involve the brand association of an individual, taking in context the cultural values that the user/consumer has. Hence, the comprehensive literature research and the research methods leads the authors to a conceptual framework that includes aspects from Keller’s (1998) research about brand knowledge and assumptions that culture influences brand perceptions (Park & Rabolt, 2009; Foscht et al. 2008). In addition, the authors modified the framework according to the qualitative research design.

![Conceptual Model](image)

Figure 3: Conceptual Model: Authors' adaptation of Keller (1998) and culture as a dependent factor.

The process of exposing the own brand associations in the self-exploratory study led to the conclusion that the respondents maybe are not aware of personality traits they connect with the brand. Hence, expressing the associations by considering features, such as price, user image, experience and attitudes will shape the personality of the brand that can be categorized in different dimensions (Aaker, 2001). These dimensions do not remain unaltered or independent. They affect each other and are affected by both internal and external factors, which furthermore affect the brand image.
The literature study indicates that all internal aspects (brand associations, brand personality) are determined by cultural values; consequently, different cultural background will have an impact on the overall brand image. This means that associations are made by consumers through some sort of judgement. These judgments are controlled and or influenced by their own cultural backgrounds. These culture-related associations might give the traits that a consumer thinks as part of the personality of the brand. These two variables together, brand association and brand personality, shape one part of the consumers brand image. On the other hand, the main brand messages are standardized globally in a way that they directly seek to affect the brand image. Additionally, the authors include brand identity in their conceptual model, because as an external factor, it affects the brand associations as well (Schlagentweith, 2008). All aspects together reveal the brand image and help to answer the research questions (indicated with RQ).
5. Method

The whole study is of qualitative nature and the following figure (Figure 4) shows the procedure of the research. The authors used in-depth interviews in order collect primary data to investigate the brand personality and eventually discover differences between cultures in the brand image perception. Before the interviews were conducted, the authors both wrote a self-exploratory story (see Appendix 2) with the intention to use the associations to develop a guideline for the interview and to test the conceptual framework. After the interviews were conducted, the authors interpreted the data and draw conclusions. The authors developed the interview structure based on the two self-exploratory stories, which correspondents to an inductive approach. That enabled us to set categories, which is also recommended by Berg (2004).

![Figure 4: Process of collecting data (author’s own schematic description.)](image)

The interview guideline did not entirely derive from the self-exploration. The authors also studied several research designs and results regarding brand image, brand personality and related topics. The results from the literature study also helped us to form concepts that support the content analysis. The content analysis was an interpretative approach, which means that the authors interpreted the data from the interviews. As relevant concepts are already built before the interviews were conducted, the research had a symbolic interactionism approach (Berg, 2004).

Symbolic interactionism presupposes that society is an inter-linkage of social actions, which means in other words that this connection evokes actions that need interpretation. Society is generally seen as a constant process of interactions and sees human actions not as static, but subjective interpretations and interaction that form reality by learning (Reiger, 2009). “Objects, people, situations, and events do not in themselves posses meaning. Meaning is conferred on these elements by and through human interaction” (Berg, 2004, p. 9). The interviews will be
used to present individualistic perceptions and to interpret these by considering aspects such as culture and individualistic differences.

5.1 Anthropomorphism

The set of variables that have to be analyzed first, are the ones related to brand association. To avoid having abstract concepts, since all the respondents may use in their different languages different adjectives and figures of speech to describe the brand, and in order to have a better image of what the interviewee think, the authors will use anthropomorphism as a tool to analyze the brand perception of the interviewees. This will help standardize and catalogue the data and create a better general view of how the brand itself is looked by consumers.

Anthropomorphism is the tendency to extend human attributes to non-human domains (Boyer, 1996). Or in other definition, it "describes the tendency to imbue the real or imagined behaviour of nonhuman agents with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions." (Epley et al., 2007, p. 865). Our study will be based on using this tool to collect and analyze the data from Kinder, as doing anthropomorphism with the brand. Anthropomorphism uses behavioural descriptions of imaginary or tangible actions (e.g., the brand is new) to represent an agent describing it with humanlike characteristics (e.g., the brand cares about me) (Epley et al., 2007). This allows the researchers to materialize and put in an imaginary, but easy to elaborate image, a non physical entity such as Kinder.

The authors are also aware that using anthropomorphism as a tool may vary according to the interviewee's culture. One feature of an anthropomorphism is the ability that it has to predict the variety of independent variables in everyday life, such as disposition, situation, development and culture (Epley et al., 2007). This fits the research, because the dimensions that were the focus of research can be found easier with this tool, as a way to let freely the consumers talk about a brand in a simple, everyday language. Therefore, the authors of this paper think using anthropomorphism as a tool will make a better way of collecting data from the perception of the consumer that couldn't be reached easily otherwise.
5.2 Data Gathering

The process of data collection includes several steps, which are explained in the following section. Before a qualitative interview could have been designed to collect the data, the authors collected some concepts and similar studies to get a theoretical knowledge. This data, which is presented in the literature review, functions as supportive data in order to create the conceptual framework. Thus, the following chapter will explain the process of gathering primary data.

5.2.1 Self-exploratory Study

Both authors wrote down their own associations towards the brand Kinder and analysed the material. While writing the stories, the concepts from the literature review were considered and included. Consequently, the stories include the individual experience, past and present, the user image, product related associations (that included brand identity aspects as well) and the brand personality.

The self-exploration had two functions: First, the authors got involved in the product and discover it by themselves by finding personality traits they associate with it. In addition, the exploration stories indicated first possibilities for differences of the brand perception between cultures, as both authors have different cultural backgrounds (German and Mexican). That set, on the one hand, a good basis for the understanding of the opinions from the interviewed participants later in the process. On the other hand, the material from the process was used to shape the conceptual framework. Resulting from the framework, the second function of the self-exploration was that the generated ideas could be discussed and used in order to set up a semi-structure for the interview. The main impacts were that the interview part of culture was widely open to give more room for interpretations. Additionally, the authors discovered that the projective task for the brand personalisation should come rather at the end, after the interviewees got cognitively involved with the brand and the previous associations helped to express a brand personality.
In order to avoid the self-reference criterion\(^2\) the authors didn’t use any of the material for the analysis. Moreover, the whole research design was based on an individual basis (implied by the qualitative method) and therefore, the data from the interviews are unique and the authors self-exploration stories are not influencing factor.

### 5.2.2 In-Depth Interviews

“In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation” (Boyce & Neale, 2006). In-depth interview research assumes that the individual that gets interviewed is not aware of all reality constructs. The interview is then used as a method in order to reveal the fact and furthermore, to reveal unconscious or semi-conscious reasoning (Aghamanoukjan, Buber & Meyer, 2009, p. 418ff). The primary advantage of using in-depth interviews is simply that the research can collect rich (detailed) information about the object of interest. The aim of the authors is, to provide a comfortable environment for the participants, so they can provide us with a lot of information as they can relax and talk freely (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

According to Aghamanoukjan et al. (2009), the areas of application for qualitative interviews are amongst others, motive- and attitude studies (which includes e.g. price perception, product design, brand preference, etc.), image studies or usability tests which are helpful in product development. They also mention that qualitative interviews can be used as a tool to manage the challenge of investigating cross-cultural phenomena. Due to the method of in-depth interviewing it is easier for the marketer to consider the intercultural differences that might occur and that would be harder to detect in quantitative research (Aghamanoukjan, Buber & Meyer, 2009, p. 420).

The interview, as well as the self-exploratory, will cover the following aspects: Brand personality, personal brand experience, brand perception, which includes factors, such as taste,

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\(^2\) Self Reference Criterion describes the circumstance that people tend to conclude from their own understanding and cultural values to other people’s behavior (Ghauri & Cateora, 2006).
name, package, design, and price, etc. Furthermore the product usage (when, how, or if special rituals are involved, etc.) will be an issue as well. That might be covered in the section of brand experience. Moreover, the interviewer will also bring up competitors and see, if the respondent can differentiate the brand and if so, what factors contribute the differentiation. If the participant will mention aspects of country of origin, this will be considered as well. More factors might be discussed if they will appear as an issue brought up by the interviewee.

One part of the interview will also be structured by projective methods. We would like to have the respondents to personalize the brand in order to find “hidden” perceptions. Projective techniques are indirect methods that are trying to discover hidden attitudes, opinions or emotions, which are unconscious for the consumer himself and hence not easy to present in closed questions. Moreover, projective methods can also help to avoid the effect of social desirability³ (Gröppel-Klein & Königstorfer, 2009, p. 539).

In terms of the in-depth interviews, that means in practice, after the warm up and the involvement with the product and the brand, the interviewees will be asked to characterize the brand, which will be a verbal projective, according to Gröppel-Klein and Königstorfer (2009).

The respondent will be the active part and with the high involvement that is asked from the costumer in that phase of the interview, the authors intent to design the interview even more interactive. The creative part will not only contribute to the entirety of the brand image, but it will hopefully also make the interview more fun for the participants and motivate them to be more engaged (Gröppel-Klein & Königstorfer, 2009, p. 548).

5.2.3 Sampling Group

The sample for qualitative research is not supposed to be as broad as in quantitative research, where numbers and statics are important. As Hofstede’s work in the area of culture and cultural differences is widely accepted (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010), the authors used the four

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³ Social Desirability is a phenomenon that describes that people often answer (not even unconsciously) in a way they believe is socially accepted and correct. That leads to a bias in the survey/research (Fisher, 1993).
dimensions to select the sample group, because there are significant differences that characterize the culture of each nationality. The cultures selected for this research are Iranian, German, Thai and Spanish and each group should contain of four people. The selection is based on the assumption that there are significant differences in European and Asian culture. Looking at Hofstede’s study about cultures and differences in the dimensions, we chose countries that have not too many similarities. This will be essential for the evaluation of the data, when culture could be an influencing factor. Using a sample group that differs significantly will make it easier to explain differences of brand images with cultural background.

The following Table 2 shows the characteristics for each nation that was selected for the sample group. Each highest rank is indicated with the red numbers and the lowest values are shown with green. Hence, the table can be read on a way that Thai culture, for example, is high in collectivism, whereas Germany’s value clearly identifies the culture as more individualistic. The differences appear in every dimension, which means for the research that all selected cultures are clearly different from each other in many dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Power Distance</th>
<th>Uncertainty Avoidance</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Masculinity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
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</table>

Table 2: Hofstede’s cultural dimension- Values for the four selected nations. *Source: Ghauri & Cateora, 2006, pp. 75-76)*

The groups are mixed in gender, so we chose two female and two male interviewed subjects for each nationality. All participants are in the same age group, between 21 and 29 years old, which enables the participants to name past and recent experiences. Moreover the small gap of the participant’s age variety makes the small sample more equal and the authors don’t have to consider the factor age as a significant influencing factor.
The requirements for the participants are, besides that they have to have the cultural background from the nationality they belong to (means they grew up in the country) that they speak English, German or Spanish to an extent that the authors can have an extensive interview that covers all aspects. Furthermore, they all must have had an experience with the product/brand that will be the object of study. All requirements were tested in pre-tests before the interviews were conducted.

5.2.4 Questions’ Relevance for the Interview

The authors will use open questions (see Appendix 3), which will be related to the topics presented below. The order how the parts are presented below does not necessarily match with each interview conducted, as the interviews were semi-structured and the respondent was shaping the process of the conversation mainly.

The general usage of the Kinder products will be the first set of questions. These questions will relate on places, times, ways and special details on how the chocolates are consumed. They will on the one hand bring the consumer back to memories and get him/her cognitively involved with the brand and furthermore, these question help to see how the products are consumed in a similar or different way. Another related area is the previous experiences with Kinder that the individuals had, which includes questions that will cover the individual's history with the brand, in order to see possible emotional and social linkages with the brand.

On the topic about the sensorial perception when products of the brand are consumed, the researchers will ask questions that will focus on how the interviewee thinks the product itself is, since cultural and personal background may or may not provoke a different physical experience. On the next section of questions, named Kinder in their cultures, the researchers will gather data on the brand itself and explicitly if there is some association in their country with the brand, if there is something special about it in each of their own cultures. It has to be noted that the research design is conducted in a way to find out cultural differences in general, but not specifically.
The next set is about concepts in association with the brand Kinder. These questions will relate to how the rituals and perception itself may have other variables, such as general chocolate consumption in the country, ways of advertising of the brand, customs and other things in order to pinpoint what the main factors are that affect consumers, besides the brand itself, on their perceptions. At last, the researchers will do imaginative and relational exercises with the interviewees (projective techniques). These will help the interviewers to make a physical representation of the brand personality itself, helped by attributes that the interviewee will give in relation to the brand.
5.3 Data Analysis

Firstly, the self-explorative studies were analyzed, respectively the concepts from the literature review that appeared to be relevant. According to this analysis, the authors’ assumption towards the concepts’ relevance were assured and the guideline for the interviews could be created. Moreover, the self-exploration also indicated that personality characteristics are not easily expressible without getting involved with the brand via associations of all kind. Consequently, the stories influenced not only the guideline for the interview but also the conceptual framework.

The interviews were recorded and the interviewer took also notes during the interview. The interviewer had the guideline for the interview in front of him/her and used it to (semi-)structure the progress of the conversation. When the respondent answers more specific to one of the points on the guide, the interviewer noted that briefly.

The audio recordings are subsidiary to the notes, in case the interviewer missed to quote essential statements from the interviewee. The interviews will not be transcribed entirely for the simple reason that the interviews are hold in different languages and the transcript of the material would be biased by the authors’ translation. Furthermore, the authors are aiming an interpretative approach which enables us to be more freely in the transcriptions. A summary of each conversation can be found in the analysis part.

Before the data from the interviews were studied, Kinder’s brand identity became a part of the research because the brand image is influenced by the company’s communication as well (D. Aaker, 2002). But as the main focus of the study is the consumer’s perception, the brand identity will just be presented briefly and the subjective and individual perception of the identity reaches higher importance. The later analysis shows also that parts from Kinder’s brand identity are included in the consumer’s perception and influence the perceived brand personality.

Semantic networks were used to categorize and map the associations that were expressed by the respondents (see Appendix 4 till 7). As the interviews were semi-structured, individual, and in different languages the statements that could be collected varied from person to person. To illustrate the results in a decent style, the authors used semantic networks, as suggested by
Dressler and Duhm (2005) to show the associations and connections that each individual had. To categorize and visualize the data in the semantic networks was the first step of the analysis. Therefore, the authors used key words from the statements the interviewees gave and grouped these keywords to one of the association topics from the questionnaire (product association, user profile, brand personality, past experience or culture). To prepare the answers from the semi-structured interviews for a comparison, the data was organized in patterns as can be seen in the networks in appendix 4-7. Every colour represents a topic for the associations and is arranged in the network at the same spot.

Subsequently, the networks and associations are summarized and compared in order to find patterns in the brand perception in general and in brand personality in specific.

The next step required a categorization of the statements, thus the individual perceptions were comparative within the nationalities and across the different cultures. In order to compare the perceptions, associations from the interviewees were matched with attributes from Park and Rabolt (2009)\(^4\) (see Table 3 in Appendix 1), as well as with traits from Aaker’s et al. (2001) extended scale of brand personality (Table 3 in Appendix 1). All traits identified from the interviews could be linked to one of the dimensions from the brand personality scale from Aaker (Appendix 1, Table 4). In some cases, the respondents already used the exact term that was also in Aaker’s list and if the respondents did not always use the exact term that could be found in Aaker’s list, the authors matched the spoken expression, because according to Sung & Tinkham (2005) many attributes could be seen as synonyms. As colours were already used for the semantic networks, a similar method was used for the analysis again. To classify the dimensions, Table 3 (appendix 1) was used and the colours there reflect the colours for the dimensions from the interviewees that were then again used in the analysis that is presented in Table 4. So, traits that belong to the dimension excitement are coloured red, sophistication is represented by purple, sincerity by yellow, and so on (compare Table 3 and 4 in appendix 1).

For the analysis and comparison, the authors assumed that the more traits could be classified with one dimension, the more determined was this dimension for the brand image.

\(^4\) Some of the characteristics were redundant and others were equal with Aaker’s et al. (2001) scale. In this case, the authors only worked with the applicable elements. After the personalities and brand perceptions were pictured, the different cultures were compared using mainly Aaker’s et al. (2001) personality dimensions (Appendix 1, Table 4).
6. Findings and Analysis

Besides the analysis of the brand identity, the research is exclusively based on primary data that was gained with qualitative method. The method allows the authors to mix the findings and analysis. The presentation of the findings from the interviews are interpreted and summarized, using cultural backgrounds as a cluster. Following, a comparison is made that illustrates the similarities and differences in the brand image.

6.1 Kinder’s Brand Identity

Brand as a Product

The Kinder product range is driven by the desire to be different: “each product created has to meet the requirements of children and the parents who feed them” (Ferrero, 2010). There are two Kinder product approaches according to the company: kids line and count line (Ferrero UK, 2010). Their main products are Kinder Surprise, that is designed to appeal a toy to play with and finally the pleasure of eating chocolate, Kinder Chocolate bars, Bueno and Happy Hippo employed the groundbreaking technique of moulding wafer (Superbrands, 2010).

![Kinder products](image)

Figure 5: Kinder products- French selection (Ferrero France, 2010).
Ferrero (Ferrero UK, 2010) states on its website that the target audience has consistently been parents. The brand shall reassure them that Kinder is a good choice for treating their own children. This has led to campaigns that approach parents about product launches of Bueno, Happy Hippo and Kinder Chocolate (Ferrero, 2010). All consumer promotions for the Kinder brand are selected on the criteria that they fit with the brand values and will help to grow equity (Ferrero, 2010).

*Brand as Organisation*

Kinder has also developed an umbrella brand strategy for all current and future products supporting it with a leading share of voice within the children’s confectionery market (Superbrands, 2010). In the past, Kinder’s fame has been driven by the success of Kinder Surprise, which still retains the number one novelty chocolate position (Ferrero, 2010). Each new product launch over the past three years has been supported in the same way (Superbrands, 2010). As stated earlier in this paper, Ferrero aims a global marketing strategy for Kinder, which is for example supported by a uniform design of all products in the brand range in every country (compare Figure 5). But on the other hand, the communication of the products is not uniform. Ferrero provides different commercial clips on the national web-pages (e.g. Ferrero UK, Ferrero France), which could be seen as an indications that the communication of the products vary from country to country and is rather local than global. But a comparison of these clips shows clearly that the themes for the products are exactly the same, just the language differs. Summing up, it can be said that the brand can be seen as a global brand, because more features (e.g. brand name, design, and target group) are presented to different consumers in the world the same.

*Brand as Person*

Speaking of the chocolate bars branded by Kinder, the package has the same image of a little smiling boy in all 40 countries Ferrero is distributing the products to (Markenmuseum, n.d.). From the company’s understanding, not only children enjoy their products, also young adults trust the brand, because they have previous experience from their own childhood and developed a brand-customer relationship over the time. Thus, adults are also targeted, but with the intention to consume Kinder-products and remember their "inner child" (Ferrero UK, 2010).
Brand as Symbol

Another product that is associated with the brand all over the world is the surprise egg, that has an “iconic egg shape and unique 3 in 1 experience of milk chocolate, white chocolate and stimulating toy” (Ferrero UK, 2010). Comparing the different country-web pages of Ferrero, design and colours (red and white splashes) are everywhere the same, the visual imagery is consistent, as stated above in Brands as Organizations (compare Figure 5).

Summary

Kinder is a global brand, which presents its products with the same features concerning quality, product design and package. The communication via commercials differs in each country. In a nutshell, the analysis above showed that the brand has the chocolate bars and the Surprise egg as their core products and that these products are branded with the same design, are connected with the same person and target for the same audience, hence, a global brand strategy.
6.2 Consumers' Brand Perception

After the qualitative interviews and presenting the collected data in semantic networks (see Appendix 4 till 7) has been done, the following section will analyse patterns, similarities and differences in the brand perception for each country. All semantic networks follow the same structure, which derived from the interview guideline. The associations could be clustered in five categories: Product Associations, User Profile, Brand Personality, Past Experience and Culture (marked with different colours in the Appendixes 4-7). This first categorization indicates that all respondents from all countries have several associations to each of these features. This was the first crucial outcome that had an implication for the later interpretation of the data, because that makes it even more comparable. According to the conceptual model, the authors assumes that imaginations about user profiles, past experience and general product associations shape the brand personality and the semantic networks strengthen that assumption. Moreover, none of the respondent’s answers must have been taken out of consideration, because there has never occurred a lack of associations; hence, the overall interpretation is more consistent.

Iranian Brand Perceptions

Iranians perceive Kinder as a global, successful brand, whose sweet special taste arouses pleasant and positive feelings. The perception of the price varies within the respondents, most think the price is reasonable and appropriate for an imported chocolate, only one Iranian woman experienced the product as very expensive and an extreme highly appreciated luxury product. Although the understanding for the price was not similar, all four interviewees said that the product is imported from Europe/Germany and has a good quality and ranked the brand as a luxury good. One more aspect that was associated with Kinder chocolate was that it is unhealthy for the reason of gaining weight when eating too much. One respondent (male, 26 years) said: “You cannot eat it regularly otherwise it will make you really fat. […] A typical person who would by Kinder doesn’t care about healthy nutrition.”

German Brand Perception

In the case of Kinder, German consumers remarked high quality or a reasonable price with the brand. Furthermore the brand was perceived as global and strong and the visible milk part in the
chocolate bars, as well as in the eggs was named as a unique feature that no other brand can
compete with. Besides that, rituals like cooling the chocolate in the fridge to experience a better
melting pleasure (Male, 23 years old, Appendix 5) or collecting the small toys that come with the
egg, as well as bringing the chocolate as a present for friends support the positive brand attitude
that was traced in the German brand perception.

Thai Brand Perception

The Thai perception of Kinder is strongly related to the fact that it is an imported product. The
fact that is from western origin appears to be one of the most important factors in the perceived
quality that justifies a higher price in all the interviewees’ views. It is considered unhealthy, but
yet delicious, so it is more like a treat than real food (see the semantic network on Appendix 6
from Thai female, 27). And even though the brand is known to be targeted to children, the
products themselves are seen as young and hip, being consumed and well seen by young people.
It is not considered a luxury item, but it is not meant to be purchased as an everyday product.
Another thing to note is that the name itself of the brand is not recognizable by the interviewees
at the first glance, but the design and colours are well known and bring much more information to
them.

Spanish Brand Perception

Spanish people consider Kinder as a traditional brand, that has been known by them since they
were children. There are many rituals involving acquiring the brand, but all of them were
considered trivial, so the brand itself is part of an everyday basis for the interviewees. Since the
first consumptions were experienced in the early childhood years of the correspondents, there are
many stories and memories linked to the brand. The four Spanish interviewees were aware that
was marketed as a product for children, but that was bought by some adult. It is reflected in the
Spanish interviews that Kinder is perceived as a brand with European origin, but no relevance on
this aspect to be mentioned furthermore. And the price is not considered as an important factor.
6.3 Iranian Perception of Kinder’s Brand Personality

Collating all four individual association networks from Iranian consumers, it is evident that the brand perception in general is considerably alike within the nationality. All four respondents could remember the brand from their childhood and connected mostly positive memories with the brand. Although the first contact with Kinder was years ago, most respondents are still quite regular users of Kinder chocolate. Comparing the data from the interview, the authors noted that the Iranian female interviewees used a much more affectionate language to describe their relationship and their associations to the brand then the male respondents. For example, one female 27 years-old Iranian said “First thing that comes to my mind is the tender and delicious taste. [...] It’s just yummy. I love it” whereas the male Iranians had a more neutral way of describing their associations. Moreover, all Iranians remember from the past that the products had always been some special treat, either as a reward for good school grades (Male, 24 years old) or as a speciality for special occasions.

*Excitement*

Talking about Kinder, the respondents mentioned their *excitement* when they either ate the chocolate or when they got the eggs. The fact that for most Iranian sampled persons eating Kinder was a special treat, the *excitement* about it was all the more distinct. Especially for the eggs, the excitement and *curiosity* was a big topic. Collecting the toys from the eggs is, according to the interviews, popular in Iran and so it the chocolate in general. Linking the own experience to the typical user image, it is no surprise that a typical Iranian Kinder consumer is *funny* or *curious* and *playful* (see Appendix 4). These characteristics can also be found in the personification of the brand. *Playful* and *funny* are the strongest traits that are associated with Kinder, followed by *fun* and *friendly* (compare Appendix 4).

Another personality trait that can be categorized in the excitement dimension (Aaker, 2001) is *young*. Even though only one respondent personalized the brand as a young child (Male, 24 years old, see Appendix 4), the authors identified the trait *young* in associations, such as kids, good present for kids or the association “Kindergarten” (compare Appendix 4).
Sincerity

Ranking the personality traits in Aaker’s (2001) scale, Iranians have furthermore a strong association to facets that are connected to the Sincerity dimension. Whereas associations to the own childhood and the brand were connected with fun and light-hearted traits, the personification tasks shows that the brand doesn’t seem to have such a consistent young image in the country. The person that was associated with Kinder was twice “Santa Claus” and attributes chosen to describe him were conservative and old-fashioned. Certainly, funny and playful were named as well, but the overall perception is a rather traditional and reserved character. Iran is a Muslim country and Christmas is not a typical part of the culture, so the authors tried to scrutinize the reasons that lay behind that association. None of the interviewee could explain why Santa Claus came to their mind when thinking of Kinder, but the authors have two suppositions. On the one hand, Santa Claus is a Western-society figure, who represents Christmas, which is the embodiment of special treats and Kinder is linked to special childhood memories and seen as an imported European (Western) product, so the combination of both could have led to the association. Another hypothesis is that the colours red and white, which are not only a brand association to Kinder, but also the colours of Santa Claus, could have influenced that perception in certain ways.

Even if the person is not seen as Santa Claus, sincere personality traits such as politeness and child-friendly are associated with Kinder (see Appendix 4). Additionally, traditional values and a calm and reserved character completed the description of the brand. All these characteristics spread over the respondents answers show that not only excitement, but also sincerity is a strong part of the brand image for Iranian consumers.

Competence

First of all, all respondents personalized Kinder as a male person, which leads to the assumption that masculine traits, such as strength and rationality (see Appendix 1) influence the overall brand perception. Furthermore, competence-related features like loyal, intelligent and neat were linked to the brand (compare Appendix 4). Not only the brand as a person is described as intelligent, but also the typical user image is perceived as rather educated and smart.

Sophistication & Passion
Sophisticated and passionate attributes that are associated by Iranians for the brand Kinder are not so many, because Excitement and Sincerity preponderate more. The only trait that belongs to Aaker’s (2001) dimension of sophistication is Western, which refers in the Iranian consumers’ perspective to the imported chocolate from Germany/Europe. Associations, such as “cool design” and the usage of combining a good glass of red wine with the chocolate (see Appendix 4) could be interpreted as the traits classy and cool, which are categorized as Sophistication.

Moreover, the semantic networks reveal also connections to the brand personality dimension of Passion. Taste description like delicious and yummy can be interpreted as satisfaction and as both female interviewees claim that they love the chocolate and it is their favourite, the trait passion could be associated with it. In addition, all respondents perceive Kinder more or less as a luxury brand, hence, an equivalent personality trait could be found extravagant, which as well belongs to the passion dimension.

6.4 German Perception of Kinder’s Brand Personality

Comparing the four individual semantic networks, one can see that there are similarities in the image of the brand Kinder of the German consumers. First of all, all respondents draw the brand back to their childhood and can name many childhood memories. That could be seen as an indication that the perception of the brand has been shaped over many years. None of the respondents could remember the first time they had the chocolate. One male interviewee answered regarding that question was:

“I don’t know when I had the first experience with Kinder, it has somehow always be around.”

In general, the association networks show that everybody experiences the brand as something positive, no one could name a negative experience, quite the opposite was actually the case, all childhood memories that were connected to Kinder were very positive and one female respondent’s immediate respond to her feelings towards the brand was “I am just happy, every time I eat the chocolate” (see Appendix 5, Female, 26 years old).
Excitement

All networks demonstrate that the brand has been and still is popular. One statement that reinforces the popularity comes from a German woman, 24 years old, who said that she thinks, “Kinder chocolate is an all-rounder. It is always liked at parties, as small presents and even in India, people loved it. You can actually say, everyone likes the taste of the chocolate”. Aaker (2001) has included the trait popular in the dimension of excitement (see Appendix 1) and the authors want to note here, that in the case of the brand Kinder and the German perception, popular should not be seen as a description of the acceptance of the product, but as a personality aspect that is connected with the brand.

The personification task clearly indicates that the person Kinder is perceived as an open person with a lot of friends that is social, hence popular. Moreover, one trait that is also associated by every German is young and fun. Young is quite obvious related to the name Kinder. As the brand and the brand name is German and means children in English, the connection to young is quickly made. Moreover, the brand communication is clearly children driven and also perceived like this by the respondents. Everyone could recall commercials that showed kids enjoying the chocolate. Even more characteristic seems to be the picture of the boy on the cover of the chocolate bars. Every German respondent could remember his face, but ranked it as rather unattractive instead of cute. No one seemed to like that boy’s face (compare “Ugly child on the package”- Appendix 5 in every network) and three of the respondents called him “Milksop”, which describes a person who is soft and weak and an effeminate person (Soanes, 2008).

Young and young at heart were also a typical image of the user and the personification of the brand. The German respondents all described the brand as a relatively young person, not older than 30 years. The attribute fun appears mostly to questions regarding the past experience, but it shapes the overall perception of the brand. Additionally, the four German respondents experience the brand as open-minded, sociable, playful, active, likable and youthful (see Appendix 5). Another personality trait shaping that dimension and was named in connection with the brand is cheerful. The authors interpreted the term party friend and not conventional (see Appendix 5, first and third network) as cheerful and fun. In summary, most personality-connected characteristics that could be linked to Kinder are traits from the Excitement dimension (Aaker 2001).
Sophistication

One difference that could be recognised was between the respondents from the Eastern part of Germany and the Western. East Germans also all said that they don’t remember when their first experience was, but that it must have been after the reunification because before that the chocolate wasn’t available. Looking at Aaker’s (1997; 2001) scale of brand personalities, there is one personality trait called “Western” that seems appropriate in this case for East Germans. As the German reunification was a remarkable event in the German history, it apparently shaped the culture and the image of some products and brands. That the brand image is shaped by this can be seen clearly in associations one male German, 23 years old (see last semantic network in Appendix 5) has given in the projective task in the interview. He personalized the brand in the appearance of a person, which for his understanding equals the stereotypical “West-German”. The term he used was “Spick and Span- West German”, which represents for him a person, always wearing collar-shirts, having the hair gelled back, shaved clean and appearing to be extremely arrogant and too self-confident.

Besides the “Spick and Span- Western German” association (Appendix 5, German, Male, 23 years old), all other persons perceived the brand as attractive. Matching these characteristics with a trait from the BPS, we could find good looking, which belongs to the dimension of Sophistication (Compare Tabel 3, Appendix 1). This dimension has been the second strongest from the German perspective, which can be seen in the respondents’ answers towards the appearance and character of the brand as person. Associations like modern, stylish or poised complete the picture of an out-going, but a bit shallow personality (Party-friend, Small-Talk Partner, etc- compare all semantic networks in Appendix 5).

5 „After the end of World War II the country [Germany] divided into the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany)[...] In November 1989 the Berlin Wall (A barrier between East and West Berlin. It was built by the communist German Democratic Republic in August 1961) was opened and the communist monopoly of power collapsed. Following economic and monetary union with the Democratic Republic in June 1990, a Treaty of Unification was signed in August and unification took place in October. Since then, the country has consisted of 16 Länder, or states, each of which has wide powers over its domestic affairs” (Wright, 2006).
**Competence**

The third dimension of brand personality that can be identified from this qualitative research is *Competence*, which has facets such as reliability and success (Aaker 2001). Regarding Kinder, the German interviewees connect most notably *masculinity* and *intelligence* as personality traits, followed by *strength* and *stability*. The later attributes are rather connected to the brand itself as direct associations, one female respondent, for example said “*Kinder is an extremely strong brand with a high recognition value. You can get and see it everywhere and the products have a really good image*”. The fact that everybody connects the brand to their childhood and still is a user of the products nowadays can be seen as an indication for a *stable* brand image.

**Sincerity and Passion**

Only a few traits were named that could be categorized as parts of the dimension *Sincerity* and even fewer for *Passion* (see Table 4, Appendix 1). Tradition, which can be matched with the trait *traditionally*, is the strongest association in these two dimensions. Kinder is seen as a traditional brand that has been consistent over many generations and this seems to have an effect on the general brand image. Another attribute that was linked to the personality of Kinder was *child-friendly*, which was either directly expressed (Female, 24 years old, Appendix 5) or indirectly with the user-image of persons that are *childish thinking* (Female 26 years old, Appendix 5).

The only association that can be drawn to the Aaker’s (2001) *Passion* dimension is *satisfying*. None of the respondents named that trait directly, but all had not only positive feelings, but more than that. The taste was experienced as very *delicious* and more than one attribute was found by each interviewee to describe the taste. The authors consequently interpreted positive taste descriptions, as well as attributes like *indulgence* and *pleasant* as *satisfying*. 
6.5 Thai Perception of Kinder’s Brand Personality

As three of the users had two specific products in the top of their mind (Kinder Surprise and Kinder Bueno), they had both experiences as children, in the past, and as grownups. All of them found the chocolate sweeter than others, making this attribute a stimulus in some cases for its consumption, and a detractor in others (Appendix 6). All stimuli that initiated building an attitude towards Kinder in the four interviews with Thais were positive. There is an overall liking of the products in Thailand and a positive attitude towards all of them in general.

Excitement

On the *excitement* scale (Aaker, 2001), the correspondents saw attributes related to *popular, trendy* aspects. It is notable that they all were aware of the fact that the brand is meant to be for children, and still the perception was of a *cool*, as described by the male 24 years old interviewee (Appendix 6).

*Sociable* is other personality trait that the interviewees found in Kinder. They all had friends that had consumed the product, had given them the product, or even family members. The other factors that are related to the Aaker's scale of brand (2001) in the answers of the interviewees, reflect a *Fun, Popular, Trendy, Cool, Youthful* image of Kinder products. The answers reflect that it is *trendy* and well seen to be a consumer of Kinder products, even if the perception of the brand in Thailand seems to be aimed at young children as seen in Appendix 6. But three of the four young Thai people interviewed were consumers, or knew other young consumers. We can furthermore say that some of the elements on the brand identity that Kinder uses to advertise itself, are relevant to the Thai’s perception of Kinder, but do not make a difference when it comes to consume the products. In other words, even though the brand is seen as made for children in Thailand, young people find it trendy to consume.

Sophistication

In the personality traits in Aaker’s et al. (2001) scale, *sophistication* is the traits that Thai people see Kinder the most related to. We can see that the products are *accessible*, but the correspondents still found them *Sophisticated, Upper class, Stylish*, which are more traits of Aaker's scale. The four Thai correspondents answered that they could find in any store the
chocolates. But, as seen on the price perspective, all of them claimed to buy them only once a week, as a treat and they would give it as a present. In Thailand, since cheaper products are also available, Kinder is *expensive* compared to them, but good enough to be consumed regardless of the price factor.

The *western* attribute that they all see in the products is seen as an imported item that has an extra value to the product itself. It is seen as an imported product, sometimes even from an American origin (Appendix 6), which we can infer that in Thailand, this attribute is a good one, maybe justifying the price factor that was mentioned earlier. In two cases in particular (Appendix 6), foreigners were the ones that introduced the brand to the consumers. Matching the associations from the interview with traits from the brand personality scale, the authors find even more evidence for a strong *sophistication* dimension within the Thai consumer, as two respondents associated a *female* person with the brand.

*Competence/ Passion*

The authors can infer that the *passion* attributes found in the four interviewees' answers, might be related to the *western* attribute. *Extravagant* could be a good attribute to summarize the interviewees' views. This means that is not a total common product, as they don't buy it every day, but every week (Appendix 6) meaning that there is some special process to get it, even though you can almost obtain it very easy (Appendix 6).

The attribute *neat* is also present and can be linked to the design that the package itself has. It is perceived as a well made from all the interviewees' answers (Appendix 6).

*Sincerity/ Peacefulness*

The only personality trait that can be mentioned here is *cute*. One (female 24 years old) interviewee mentioned three times this word. Describing the product itself, and during the imaginative exercise. But she should rather be considered as an exception, since the product that was consumed by her varies from the other three interviewees and could have altered the trait which she relates the brand to.
6.6 Spanish Perception of Kinder’s Brand Personality

The first thing that all four Spanish interviewees think about directly is the egg, or Kinder Surprise. It is the first relation to the brand itself. Even in the exercise of the brand personality one of them pictured it as an egg itself (Appendix 7).

**Excitement**

In Aaker’s (2001) dimensions, the *excitement* one is the most mentioned and developed by the interviewees. The *fun* attribute seen by all four correspondents, but also the *sociable* and *friendly* aspects of this dimension are to be mentioned, since all of them related the brand to some personal experience (Appendix 7) with other members of their family or their society, as close friends. In other words, the four interviewees stated a strong perception of the *friendly, familiar* and *popular* traits in the brand.

Moreover, the authors found out that the *approachable* trait of the brand plays a major role in the perception of the four Spanish individuals. All of them stated that the product could be found in specific places. Both female interviewees stated that the product could be found in candy stores. According to both, Spain has very specialized candy stores, so it is a ritual in itself to buy the chocolate there.

**Competence**

The second strongest dimension, according to Aaker’s (2001) scale is the *competence* one. The brand is involved in rituals that are trivial in the interviewees’ everyday lives (Appendix 7), the *consistent* and *stable* traits perceived of the brand in their personal lives can be taken as an important factor that affects their perception towards Kinder. The pattern of consumption could be indicated as *consistent*, and the brand identity was seen as consistent itself, because all of them were found as recurrent consumers of the brand.

Another brand personality traits to be mentioned in this dimension, is that all of them found that the brand has a *male* image. One of the interviewees remembered some advertisement with the boy that is the image of Kinder, but the rest just associated it with fun, casual traits (compare the networks in Appendix 7). Still, the fact that Kinder is seen as a *masculine* brand image, doesn’t
make a decisive factor in the interviewees' perception, but helps to interpret and relate the rest of the attributes that are mentioned.

Peacefulness / Sincerity

The sincerity (Aaker, 2001) dimension is also distinctive for the Spanish brand personalities, as could be seen in attributes like childlike and sweet were present. Kinder was seen as a children's product, as all the interviewees thought it was made for children. But, all of them had bought it recently.

Sophistication / Passion

Only a few traits very actually compatible with the dimension sophistication or passions, as the previous dimensions are stronger determining the Spanish brand image. Hereby, smooth and persistent could be identified, as well as all Spanish respondents agreed that the consumption is and was always satisfying. Furthermore, the extensive associations about the past experience with the brand brought out the personality trait emotional.
6.7 Cross Cultural Comparison

The semantic networks allow the authors to summarize individual perceptions and associations because similarities within the respondents from the same cultural background are conspicuous. The individual intra-cultural analyses lead to the conclusion that each nationality perceives the brand Kinder with different weighting of brand personality dimensions.

In general, the results from the qualitative interview and semantic networks indicate that Kinder is experienced through six out of seven dimensions (Aaker, 2001). The traits could be classified in the dimension excitement, sophistication, competence, sincerity, passion, or peacefulness. The only dimension from Aaker’s (1997; 2001) research that was not traceable was ruggedness, which is described with traits like tough and rugged and not a single individual from the sample group associated similar characteristics with Kinder.

6.7.1 First Dimension

To begin with, the authors noted that all countries associated traits that could be classified as excitement-dimension; consequently this dimension is the most distinctive dimension that determines all four national brand images (see Appendix 8 all Figures). The traits that distinguished the dimension the most, were young, playful, fun and cheerful, as well as popular. The German interviewees showed the strongest associations towards excitement (see Table 4 in Appendix 1) and named much more traits than all the other nationalities. Comparing the strength of excitement as the first dimension for Germans with Iranians, it is evident that degree of severity varies significantly. The interpretation of the Iranian responses could only be matched with eight traits, whereas Germans could name 21 brand personality traits. That implicates that, although the dimension excitement could be identified for all examined cultures as the most descriptive for the brand Kinder, the severity of that dimension is not equal.
Figure 6: German Brand Personality Dimensions.

6.7.2 Second Dimension

The second most descriptive dimension for Kinder varies between the countries. Germans and Thais associate sophisticated personality features whereas Spanish connect more competence-related traits with Kinder, and Iranians link sincerity as second strongest personality dimension instead (compare Appendix 8). Noticeable at this point is that the second dimension for Iranians (sincerity) is almost as highly distinctive as their first dimension excitement. Traits, such as child-friendly or traditional were stated by almost every Iranian respondent, which strengthen this dimension even more. Similarities can be found in the personality descriptions from the Thais and the Germans, as both perceive the brand as rather attractive, modern/stylish and western. But although both cultures associate the same trait with the brand, the influence of culture must be taken into consideration at this stage of the analysis. The German respondents, who associated Western with Kinder, explained that this derived from the childhood experience in the communistic East Germany, whereas Thai interviewees associate Kinder rather with American attributes (compare Appendix 6) instead.
6.7.3 Third Dimension

Besides the Spanish respondents, all other nations’ associations could rank competence as the dimension that influences the brand image (Appendix 8, Figure 29). Firstly, it is distinguishable that all countries link masculinity with the brand (Compare Table 4, Appendix 1). Comparing the Iranian and German associations, it is readily identifiable that not only the amount of associated traits are similar, but the character (facets) of the traits equal as well. Both cultures perceive the brand partly as intelligent and strong or stable. The analysis of the Thai respondents, on the other hand, could only lead to two traits, which are namely masculine and neat and are not so strongly descriptive for the overall brand image.
For the Spanish respondents, *competence* is ranked second and traits for the dimension *peacefulness* could be identified as a third dimension. Spain is the only culture that associates several traits of the *peacefulness* dimension with Kinder. Moreover, they were also the only nation that consistently described a boy in the personification task, which implicates that more attributes like *cute*, *sweet* or *childlike* are characteristic for the Spanish brand personality.

Figure 9: Spanish Brand Personality Dimensions.

### 6.7.4 Fourth Dimension

Iran, Spain and Thai’s brand personality could only be described with four dimensions. Hence, this dimension is the one with the smallest amount of traits that were associated. Furthermore, some dimensions could only be marked with one trait and the authors decided to summarize them and analyse it together. Iranian and Spanish show both a very low trait value for *sophistication* and *passion*, whereas Thais rather perceive traits matching the *sincerity* and *peacefulness* dimension. Both dimensions could only identify one trait and not all respondents were consistent with these traits. For example, *peacefulness* was only described with the term *cute*, which was named only by one respondent; consequently, the trait is not influencing the brand image significantly. The fourth dimension for the German interviewees was *sincerity* and although only two traits could be identified, the value of the dimension is higher than the Thai, Iranian or Spanish, because the statements concerning the *traditional* and *child-friendly* trait were omnipresent in all interviews (see Appendix 4).
6.7.5 Fifth Dimension

Germans are the only culture that possesses five personality dimensions that influence the brand image. The dimension is passion and, similar to the fourth dimension for the Germans, the fact proves that only one attribute is associated with it, but its omnipresent distinguishes it from the other nations and the brand image is also interacted by the trait satisfaction and passion (see Appendix 4).

6.8 Summary

At first view, after the interviews were conducted, the impression arose that brand images seemed to be very individualistic and hard to compare. After defining several attributes and illustrating the results from the interviews in semantic networks, the first similarities were visible. The step by step matching-and comparing process revealed further insight in a more holistic brand image that seems to exist within each examined culture.

Comparing the four selected nations, there is strong evidence that the brand image within a country is quite similar, but between the nations, differences occur. Aaker’s (2001) dimensions of brand personality clearly indicate these variations. The figures 6 till 9 illustrate the analysed specifications for each nation. At this point, it has to be noted that the parameter value might vary, due to different strength of trait associations. Nevertheless, the figures and previous analysis clearly indicate that Kinder’s brand image is not globally consistent and the personality dimensions reveal that the differences that can be connected to cultural differences. Combining the personality dimensions with the brand perceptions that could be matched with Park and Rabolt’s (2009) list, one can find even more evidence for the assumption that the overall brand image is not equal between different cultures.
7. Conclusion

The results from the research clearly indicate that there are differences in the perception of the brand image of Kinder. The results show with very clear similarities and differences to which extent the different cultural backgrounds affect the image of a brand. The qualitative method helped to define the similarities and differences and enabled the authors to compare the image perception by means of brand personality dimensions, which were obtained thanks to the approach taken into gathering the data. Moreover the combination of the literature research and the primary data made it possible to answer the preceded research questions.

The associations that shape the brand image are a combination of product features that have an impact on brand personality. These vary from physical attributes such as price or design, previous experience with a brand, associations about user profiles and influences from the brand identity. Moreover, these associations differ slightly individually and significantly in a cultural comparison. These allowed the authors to verify the validity of the conceptual model that was built according to the various theories used. Since culture plays a major role in the association process, the attributes and traits that the individual gives to a brand are dependent on it. The manifestation of brand personality dimensions showed distinctive similarities within each culture, but all the same, differences between all investigated nationalities. The brand personality of Kinder is perceived differently according to all this aspects in every one of the different cultures. Consequently, it can be concluded that the brand image of Kinder differs between cultures.

The benefits of having done this research are mostly as an exploratory level of research. The research has been able to cover the initial aim stated but the possibilities to continue on the same line of investigation are open to many more possibilities. The results open on the one hand possibilities for a quantitative verification and on the other, future research questions can be derived from the outcome of the study. Such future research could include questions like: If four cultures generate four brand images, do all countries that have Kinder products show significant differences in the brand image perception? If there are at least four different perceptions of Kinder’s brand image, which one matches the closest to Ferrero’s brand identity? That again generates more company-related questions, such as: How is the Ferrero affected by the results? Can the different brand images actually contribute to their success, due to cultural differences?
8. Implications for Kinder

As seen in the analysis part, Kinder consumers have a strong different perceptions towards their brand image. Much of these are dependent on cultural factors that the countries customs themselves provide as cultural baggage to the consumers. In each case, Kinder could take advantage of these differentiation attributes in every market.

In Germany, the interviewees had an overall good image of Kinder, and special rituals are already involved in consuming their products. Furthermore, Kinder could market itself adding to their main company communication this rituals and customs in order to make consumers feel even more familiar with the brand and the ways it is consumed.

In Iran, since it is seen as a luxury product by the interviewees, Kinder could use this as a marketing strategy and position themselves as an exotic product, supported by appropriate advertising. Even limiting the availability of the products themselves may help the brand image to be recognized even more as a really special product.

In Thailand, as the interviewees saw the product as trendy and cool, the changing of the advertising focus may be considered as a good resource to attract even more consumers. The company's efforts to position themselves as a children's product may be counterproductive in the long run, since the brand is seen differently.

In Spain, following the correspondents’ answers, the tradition and everyday life are the main characteristics that can be exploited by Kinder. By continuing this line of thought, new generations could continue to be involved with the brand from a very early age, and continue to keep seeing it as a traditional brand that is in everyone's lives.

The research results suggest that Ferrero should keep in mind cultural differences in the brand perception when positioning the brand globally. Nevertheless, the qualitative analysis presented in this thesis just implies that there are cultural differences in the perception of the brand, but the impact of actual consumer behaviour and consumption must be considered.
Moreover, taken into consideration that culture is a dynamic construct that changes over time (Aaker, 2001), the implications for Ferrero could change as well. The assumption is close that in the long run the process of globalization might form a more cultural-similar population (Hermans & Kempen, 1998).
References


[Accessed 23th May 2010].


Appendix 1: Brand Personality Scale

Figure 10: Brand Personality Scale from J.L. Aaker (1997), p.354.

The red circle indicates the dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excitement</th>
<th>Sophistication</th>
<th>Sincerity</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Passion</th>
<th>Peacefulness</th>
<th>Brand Perception</th>
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Table 3: Combination of Brand Personality Traits and Dimensions from Spanish and Japanese Consumers (retrieved from Aaker, 2001) and Individual Brand Perceptions (retrieved from Park & Rabolt, 2009).

The traits from Figure 10 and Table 3 were matched with the statements from the interviewees.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iranian For Kinder</th>
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<th>Thai For Kinder</th>
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<td>Unique (?)</td>
<td>Good looking</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
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Table 4: Personality Traits and Dimensions for Kinder according to Aaker (2001) and Individual Brand Perception according to Park & Rabolt (2009).

Appendix 2: Self Exploratory

Self exploratory 1: German, Female, 25 years old

Now I am sitting here and I have different chocolate versions from Kinder in front of me and of course I have to admit that this is not my first time that I am eating chocolate from Ferrero Kinder. I try to think back, if I can remember the first situation and I think, I would need a hypnotist in order to find that out because it is too long ago, at some point in my early childhood, I think. So maybe, I should start thinking of products first that I connect with Kinder. First, Kinder Schokolade (Kinder chocolate), the small bar with six sachets filled with all the best from milk comes to my mind. How do I know that is it six? Well, I never counted, but I think, that’s what experts call successful brand communication, because that has been one of the commercial slogans for the chocolate. In my childhood I have different experience with chocolate. I hardly remember many things from my first five years, but I do strongly remember that Kinder chocolate was always a special treat I got from my grandfather. He had so called “West-relatives” and she sent us chocolate and other treats, so the poor little East German children don’t have to suffer so badly. Well, all I remember from these treats are Wrigley’s chewing gum and Kinder chocolate. The chewing gum was not really good because it was old (my granddad loved to save things for worse times, so the gum was actually falling into pieces in the mouth and did not glue together as it was supposed to. Well, the better treat, consequently, was the chocolate. And after the re-unification, the joy about chocolate remained.

Thinking about the chocolate, I remember the package. There was always a little boy on the package- in Germany, his name was Günther and now, as I think about it, I remember, there has been a debate about the package, when the company changed the boy’s face. It was still a boy, but Günther was now Kevin and that didn’t help Ferrero. The whole thing got a lot of media attention, but I believe, younger consumers didn’t care about the change, but older people, who knew the chocolate from their childhood days didn’t like the change. I was never really emotionally involved in the debate about the boy’s face, to be honest, it didn’t bother me at all. But I also realize now that my consumption of Kinder chocolate had decreased a lot since my childhood. Most of my memory comes from my childhood!
I also remember several moments with the Kinder-Surprise (or as we call it Ü-Ei). I remember when I was really little, even before I started school, my dad used to have the habit to bring us, my brother and me, Ü-Eggs from the weekly supermarket trip. My brother and I had the habit, or rather skill, to shake the eggs and hear what toy there was inside. We got really good at this and we always aimed for the figures that had not to be build together. The hippos or the crocodiles, or whatever was the toy of the season were our favourites. As soon as we opened the egg and saw that the toy was some normal toy, made of different pieces, we didn’t like it anymore. We collected the figures, but not systematically like many Germans do. We just were happy if we could distinguish the sound when we rattled the eggs. Rattling the eggs was actually a big part of the whole Ü-egg-experience. As a child I could never understand how my parents (or other adults) could just grab any egg and go to the cashier to pay for it! I always spent minutes in front of the shelf, rattling and sorting the eggs. I also believed in the company’s promise: “One figure in every seventh egg”. Although I knew that this was impossible to check, as a kid, I believed, I can track the system and count in various ways to find the 7th egg.

My favourite experience with the Ü-egg from my childhood comes from the first day at school. In Germany, kids get a “Sugar-Cone”, a huge paper bag, filled with sweets and staff. My grandma gave me a huge cone filled just with Ü-eggs! I was so happy and the coolest kid in school. All my friends were really jealous and I felt special. And of course, I opened all the eggs as soon as I could- making sure my brother had to watch how I open them. I wasn’t allowed to touch any.

The ritual of “eating” the egg was also quite unique. First of all, the chocolate wasn’t the most interesting part of the egg. The toy was explored first, before the chocolate got any attention. The yellow part of the egg could also be attached to each other and used as a mini-cup or an egg-cup. And when a little figure was inside, I was happy. If there was a toy in pieces, my dad was happy, because I gave him all the pieces to work it out. I never liked the building-part when I was little. I also remember that I didn’t like the taste of the chocolate that much. That changed later and now, I really like it.

The problem with Kinder chocolate or kinder egg is that the chocolate really quickly melts. Especially the Ü-egg chocolate because it is so thin and I think, I had a lot of chocolate spots on my clothes after eating the egg. Also the chocolate bar melts very quickly and I actually like to
eat that chocolate when it’s cold, coming right from the fridge. Then the milk is not so sweet and I really like the taste.

The name Kinder is, apparently German! I know that the brand is from Ferrero, but in my perception the chocolate was always German, not Italian. I don’t know if that is because the name is German, or because I grew up with Günther on the package. That boy also didn’t look Italian. The name of the brand, with the black K and the red inder is also very easy for me to recognise. Maybe this is because all product packages from the brand are also designed with the red-white background and a white milk glass and a milk drop printed. That brings me to the other products. Besides the egg, the chocolate (and the maxi version of it), I know Schoko-Bons, Kinder Bueno, Kinder Country, penguin and Kinder Maxi King, and Milchschnitte. Although Milchschnitte is not something I immediately connect with Kinder, because the product’s name and the brand are not connected, but the package of the product has the same background- the red and white.

For me, Kinder chocolate is not a cheap brand, but also not an extremely expensive brand. I think, most products are mainly for kids, but brought by parents and there are more products on the market that are cheaper. Nevertheless, Kinder- products are also always easy to pick-up products that are placed near the cashier. There you can at least get the egg and the chocolate bar. The brand, in my opinion, is somehow traditional as well. The face from the chocolate is from the 60’s or 70’s and so, especially the chocolate has some history. Looking at the products, I would definitely distinguish between old/traditional ones and modern products. For me, I would rather buy the ones that I grew up with- so the chocolate and maybe also Kinder country and Kinder Bueno. Kinder Pinguin and Maxi King are not my type of products, and for me they don’t have much to do with the chocolate. Instead these products are developed to reach teenage-customers.

Kinder as a chocolate

If I now try to imagine Kinder would ring my door bell, I open and a person is in front of me, I think, my first idea that come to my mind is, that this is going to be a boy. I don’t know if I am too influences by the boy’s picture from the chocolate bar, but for me, Kinder as a person, is a boy, between 10 and 12, cute little smile, but not the innocent smile, but more a smile that let me think that he had been up to something, like playing a trick on someone.
But in my imagination, the Kinder boy is a little naughty and his hair would be a little messy too. He would wear a T-shirt and wide shorts, stylish, but sporty. Maybe he would even like skateboarding. He is definitely an active boy, who loves to play with his friends outside. He likes soccer and just running around. And he has a lot of friends also. He is very social and his friends are boys and girls equally. He is always invited to every birthday party and the teachers at school favour him as well. His favourite subjects at school are for sure physical education and maybe physics or biology, any subject where he can experiment and try out things. I would say that his parents don’t know everything their child is contriving, and he is thinking up quite a lot of tricks. I would say, he is a single child, no siblings, he gets all attention from the family, even from the grandparents, etc.

It’s hard to imagine what Kinder as a person would look like if the company wouldn’t have given it already a face.
Self exploratory 2: Mexican, Male, 23 years old

As soon as I open a Kinder chocolate, I have this feeling that it is a healthy chocolate. Somehow, the milk part reminds me of my mother always telling me that milk was essential to my bones. But even though I know it is just a marketing strategy.

The chocolate is softer than other chocolates, and also not as sweet. It is really easy to eat a whole box of them without getting tired of it. I have done it plenty of times in my life.

I recognize the Kinder Egg (or Kinder Surprise) as the very image of the whole brand. I remember that from the very early years of my life when my grandmother used to take us to a huge department store and buy us Kinder eggs if we behaved well. I collected the toys, and still have some with me after many many years. Also, it was quite disappointing when a stupid toy (like a puzzle, or one that didn't move or with stupid instructions) came out.

I can't place the time when I tried another Kinder product, but it was already when I was a teenager. And still I looked at it as a luxury. The Kinder Bueno reminded me to some other, much more expensive, chocolates as well.

The packaging and the design always told me something about "warning" for some reason. I can't know the exact cause of this.

I bought a lot of Kinder eggs as presents. To ex-girlfriends and friends in general. Always good just to have a nice extra thing to go with the flowers or a simple birthday card. And never disappointed the receiver, at least that is what I think.

The brand itself tells me that it is from Germany (even though I know now that it is a branch from Ferrero). Especially in this point, I want to say that in my country, Germans have always been seen as good in a lot of things, and their products are expected to be of a good quality.

In general I think the consumers of Kinder products know what they are buying. Since there is a
lot of other choices in the market, but their particular taste is differentiated among the chocolate consumers.

I consider myself a high volume chocolate consumer, so I can state that the chocolates from Kinder in my mind have a good reputation, since I have never had a bad experience.

If I would describe Kinder as a person, I would say it was a girl, young, healthy. She is skinny with red hair and freckles and really light skin. She dresses casually with blue clothes. She likes to go outside and play all the time. She likes milk a lot. She is easy to talk to and makes a lot of "cute" pranks to people. She sings and dances all the time. And she never grows old.

Kinder is one of the brands that I recognize and relate to childhood, including my own. And, even though I don't consider it as a famous brand, I believe it will stay in my memory every time I think of a "nice" chocolate.
Appendix 3: Interview Structure

1. Warm-up
   Introduction to the topic
   Demographic
     Age / Occupation / Gender

2. Free Association with the brand
   What comes first to your mind?
   Product in their top of mind

3. General usage
   Why would you eat it/ Why would you buy it?
   When/Where and How is it consumed?
   Are the special rituals involved?
   When was the first/ last time of usage?
   Why is it good or bad for you?
   Did you have any negative experiences?

4. Previous Experiences
   Friends
   Family

5. Perception
   Taste/Name /Design/Price
   Feeling you get when you eat it

6. User profile of a typical Kinder consumer

7. Company’s Communication/ Word-of-Mouth
   Do you remember any commercials/advertisements?
   What message did you get?

8. Is Kinder popular in your country?
   Why

9. Kinder chocolate as a person
   If the brand Kinder would become human, how would that person be like?
Appendix 4: Iranian Semantic Networks

Appendixes 4-7 show all the semantic networks that were created after the interviews were conducted. In total, 16 interviews were made and each interview was transcribed into a semantic network that shows the associations the respondents have. To organize the results, the associations are marked with different colours, according to guideline of the interview.

**Colour Agenda**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blue</th>
<th>Product Association</th>
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Figure 11: Semantic Network: Iranian, Female, 29 years old
Figure 12: Semantic Network: Iranian, Female, 27 years old
Figure 13: Semantic Network: Iranian, Male, 24 years old
Iranian, Male, 26 years old

Figure 14: Semantic Network: Iranian, Male, 26 years old
Appendix 5: German Semantic Networks

Colour Agenda
Blue – Product Association
Red – User profile
Orange – Brand Personality
Grey – Past Experience
Green – Culture

Figure 65: Semantic Network: German, Female, 24 years old
Figure 76: Semantic Network: German, Female, 26 years old
Figure 87: Semantic Network: German, Male, 28 years old
Figure 18: Semantic Network: German, Male, 23 years old
Appendix 6: Thai Semantic Networks

**Colour Agenda**
- Blue – Product Association
- Grey – Past Experience
- Red – User profile
- Green – Culture
- Orange – Brand Personality

![Semantic Network: Thai, Female, 24 years old](image)

Figure 19: Semantic Network: Thai, Female, 24 years old
Figure 20: Semantic Network: Thai, Female, 27 years old
Figure 21: Semantic Network: Thai, Male, 25 years old
Figure 22: Semantic Network: Thai, Male, 24 years old
Appendix 7: Spanish Semantic Networks

**Colour Agenda**
- Blue – Product Association
- Grey – Past Experience
- Red - User profile
- Green- Culture
- Orange- Brand Personality

![Semantic Network: Spanish, Female, 21 years old](image-url)

Figure 23: Semantic Network: Spanish, Female, 21 years old
Figure 24: Semantic Network: Spanish, Female, 22 years old
Figure 25: Semantic Network: Spanish, Male, 24 years old
Figure 26: Semantic Network: Spanish, Male, 23 years old
Appendix 8: Dimensions Categorized according to National Order

Figure 27: Excitement Personality Dimensions.

Figure 28: Sincerity Personality Dimensions.
Figure 29: Competence Personality Dimensions.

Figure 30: Sophistication Personality Dimensions.