



CHALMERS
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Assessing Brand Equity and Perception of a Lighting Company Brand

A case study of a lighting company

Master's Thesis in Management and Economics of Innovation

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CHALMERS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Gothenburg, Sweden 2021
www.chalmers.se

REPORT NO. E2021:061

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Gothenburg, Sweden 2021

Acknowledgements

During the spring semester of 2021, this master thesis was conducted at Chalmers University of Technology. This thesis was performed in collaboration with the company Aluwave and the topic was discussed and developed together.

First and foremost, we would like to thank our supervisor Robert Andersson at Aluwave for collaborating with us. Robert was present throughout the entire thesis process and was helpful and accommodating in providing us with information, knowledge of the company and the topic itself.

Additionally, we would like to acknowledge our supervisors Pamela Nowell and Tomas Karlsson at Chalmers University of Technology. Your support, insights and advice have been a valuable contribution to our thesis, and we are grateful for your involvement in the thesis process.

Lastly, we would like to thank all the interviewees who participated in the interviews and were dedicated and contributed with meaningful insights.

Emma Schöön and Gia Thai, Gothenburg, 2021

Abstract

This research aims at evaluating how the customers of the lighting company Aluwave perceive the brand 'Aluwave' and if their perception differs from how Aluwave perceive themselves. Based on the findings of the perceptions of the brand, the aim is to identify the value of the brand and the potential gap of the brand to develop implications for future strategy.

Aluwave has a history of being an anonymous sub-supplier for the lightning industry, with no focus on brand management. Aluwave is currently in an expanding phase and as a result, they have begun focusing on their brand. This includes becoming more visible towards their customers and creating a stronger name for themselves.

In order to reach the aim of the thesis a qualitative method was used. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with two representatives from Aluwave and four interviews with customers of the company. This was conducted with the reason to gather insight of their individual thoughts and perception of the brand and acted as a base of the thesis.

The overall brand value was identified to be at a medium level, consisting of strong perceived quality and brand associations whilst brand awareness and brand images was weaker. Further, it was identified that there is a gap between Aluwave and the customer regarding if the brand is perceived as environmentally oriented. Additionally, it was acknowledged that Aluwave has a fragmented identity within the organization, making it difficult to communicate a clear picture for the customers and that reaching conformity within Aluwave is the strongest implication for the future.

Key words: brand, brand strategy, brand equity, brand elements, B2B branding

Glossary

Term	Definition
Brand	A brand is a name, symbol or a sign that identifies a company's products or services
Brand Archetype	A universal known character that gives the brand a personality and human characteristics
Brand Associations	The attributes of a brand that comes to mind for the consumer when mentioning the brand
Brand Awareness	Consumer's ability to recall or recognize a brand and its products
Brand Equity	The value of the brand
Brand Extension	Utilizing an established brand's name on a new product
Brand Identity	A set of visible elements that form an image and distinguishes then brand in the mind of the consumer
Brand Image	A consumer's perception of the brand
Brand Loyalty	The positive association connected to a product or service which result in the consumer repeatedly continue to purchase the product
Brand Mission	A statement that clarifies a brand's purpose and objectives
Brand Personality	A collection of human characteristics that are connected to a brand
Brand Position	The place in the mind of the consumer that the brand owns and how it distinguishes from its competitors
Brand Promise	The value a company promise to provide to the consumer
Brand Vision	A statement that describes the future of the brand

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the subject and the case company of the thesis. The problem definition will be described and thereafter the research questions of the thesis will be formulated, as well as the aim and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background

Large companies like Snickers and The Body Shop have all successfully differentiated in the fierce current competitive landscape by building a strong brand (Keller, 2012). In today's modern world, new communication technology has created an interconnected world with more transparency than it has ever been before (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). An individual, a company, a brand and even a country is accessible to a higher degree than ever and exposed and observed by people all over the world. Additionally, technological development will have the effect of levelling the competition, making success based on product quality more uncertain and difficult to reach (Todor, 2014). Having a strong brand does not only imply creating awareness, it includes accurate exposure of the corporate soul and brand promise for anyone to take in. The greater access and control of information that the customer has, the more it enables the customer themselves to create their own perception about the brand. It is therefore today almost impossible for companies to not share their values, mission and relevance with the world. The transparency and easy access to information makes any company vulnerable to scrutiny (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006).

Branding is most often perceived as only being relevant in the business-to-consumer (B2C) market and not applicable in the business-to-business (B2B) market. This is due to B2B products commonly being industrial products, where the determining factors of an objective purchasing decision is based on price, features and performance. A brand can also act as a shortcut of attributes, advantages, trust and values that distinguish, decrease complexity and simplify the decision making (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). In a B2B market, if the customers have a strong connection to the brand, it can help to resist attacks from competition and market change. It can therefore provide competitive advantage and improve long-term profitability. An important aspect to take into consideration is that the company in some instances has their own perception of how their brand is and what it stands for, but how the customer perceives the brand can differ. It is therefore of importance that the company is clear with the communication and positions their brand correctly in order for the customer to perceive the brand the same way.

1.2 Background of Case Company

Aluwave is a B2B technology company that develops and manufactures LED modulus and luminaires for the lighting industry. The company focuses on complex and customized solutions and works closely with their customers in the entire developing phase. (Personal communication, Robert Andersson, January 25, 2021)

Aluwave is a fairly young company, founded through Chalmers Innovation in 2005. In the beginning the focus of the company was to develop Alum, a material for printed circuit boards that dissipates heat from lighting diodes. Their expertise in heat transfer turned out to be useful in order to prevent lighting diodes from overheating. From that on, they transformed from being solely an electronic company to becoming a supplier for the lighting industry with little connection to their original idea. Today, Aluwave is delivering LED modules and finished luminaires to mainly OEMs and wholesalers. The company acts as a supplier and product development partner to their customers and has great technical expertise and efficient manufacturing facilities. (Personal communication, Robert Andersson, January 25, 2021)

Aluwave's main office is located in Mölndal, Sweden and their manufacturing facilities are situated at Hönö, Sweden and in Qingdao, China. The products are mostly LED modules, luminaires, sensors and other lighting related products. Their customers are luminaire and other technical appliances manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors. Aluwave consists of 25 employees in Sweden and 35 employees in China. Their clients are mainly well-known luminaire companies and wholesalers within the industry, office, retail & hospitality, but Aluwave are also active in niche markets within the automotive industry, photo/video, horticulture and UV LED. (Aluwave AB, 2020)

The organization has a history of being an anonymous sub-supplier with no focus on brand management. Aluwave is currently in an expanding phase and realizes the effect branding can have on its customers and business and has now changed their approach towards being closer to the customer and expanding their customer base. The company is therefore putting more emphasis and effort on their brand strategy with the aim to become more visible towards their customers and create a strong name for themselves within the industry. The goal is to expand their customer base and create a competitive advantage. This implies being more visible and public by marketing themselves as well as positioning themselves in the industry. (Personal communication, Robert Andersson, January 25, 2021)

1.3 Aim

The aim of the thesis is to evaluate how the customers and Aluwave perceive the brand 'Aluwave'. In other words, identify if there is a potential gap between the two parties' perceptions and determine what implications it can provide in order for Aluwave to continue to create a strong brand and become more visible in the industry.

1.4 Problem Definition and Research Questions

A brand can be meaningful for a company and a way to differentiate from competitors (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). In order to utilize the potential and create value, it is important to understand the brand and which factors are important in value creation (Srivastava, 2009). In the very competitive business world, it is important to make the most effective and smart decisions in order to not be doomed. Aluwave's historical lack of brand strategy and management puts them in a situation where they can not rely on lessons learned or experience and need to create a comprehensive insight into their brand. Keller (2012) explains that a brand is not created by chance but instead is the result of meticulously implementing, either explicitly or implicitly, several connected measures with the customer. In the case of Aluwave, an explicit brand strategy may not have been present but the customers have a reason for choosing Aluwave and, therefore, having an implicit perception of the brand that could be valuable to understand.

Evaluation is an essential part of understanding a brand and to determine if actions and initiatives have created the desired result. It can also be a useful tool in identifying what needs to be done differently and further implications. Therefore, the research questions are as formulated below:

- Is there a gap between how Aluwave and Aluwave's customers perceive the brand 'Aluwave'?
 - What is the value of the brand 'Aluwave'?
- What implications can the findings give for Aluwave's future strategy?

The first question is of explanatory and comparative nature, where the identification of potential gaps serves as a cornerstone for further analysis. The second question aims at evaluating the results and finding useful insights. Together, they will help answer the aim of the study.

1.5 Delimitations

The study is to focus on how the brand “Aluwave” is perceived by their customers and if the perception correlates with how Aluwave believes they are perceived. The thesis will not cover the general perception of Aluwave and will only investigate how their current customers are perceiving their brand. Further, the research will only investigate customer-based brand equity and will not look into the financial aspects.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework the thesis is based on will be presented in this chapter. The fundamental concepts of brand elements, brand equity and brand strategy are what constitutes the frame of reference. Further, the theoretical framework will to some extent emphasize the branding theory based on a B2B setting.

2.1 Brand Elements

Looking from the perspective of intellectual property, a brand can be seen as solely a name or a logo (Kapferer, 2012). However, the name and logo are only part of a whole system of other valuable aspects. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) defines a brand as a feeling and identity that captures the emotion of its customers and De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) defines a brand as a collection of promised benefits, unique for the particular brand. Therefore, a brand can be described in both concrete and abstract terms and in order to fully understand the concept, a combination of both is necessary.

A brand is an intangible asset that has the opportunity to create tangible value for the company (Kapferer, 2012). A brand is one of the few assets a company can provide a long-term competitive advantage (Kapferer, 2012). Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) even takes it as far as calling it the most significant and sustainable asset a company can have. It can therefore be strategically advantageous to use the brand as a guiding principle when making decisions.

The elements that are used to identify and differentiate a brand and the appurtenant products and/or services are called brand elements (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) has identified four important elements: *Name*, *Logo*, *Tagline*, and *Brand Story*. The elements should mediate the essence, personality, and culture of the brand and business. It is therefore important to design and coordinate the elements in order to create brand equity. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) suggests seven criteria for a strong brand:

- *Available*. The elements need to not be used by others that operate in the same market and that important internet domain is not already taken. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)
- *Meaningful*. The essence of the brand and the business should be communicated through the brand elements. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)

- *Memorable*. It is important that the elements are easy to remember. This also implies that the name should be easy to read and spell. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)
- *Protectable*. It is important to be able to protect some of the brand elements in order to prevent others from using them. For example, it can be important to legally protect a brand name in all the countries the company operates in. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)
- *Future-Oriented*. It is advantageous if the brand elements are able to provide change and adjust to the future. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)
- *Positive*. A positive brand element is when positive associations are created in the minds of the customer. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)
- *Transferable*. A brand element is transferable if it can be used when presenting new products. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)

2.1.1 Brand Name

The foundation of a brand image is the brand name (Kohli & LaBahn, 1997). Choosing a good brand name can be difficult (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). It should be chosen with care since the name itself conveys a message and creates direct associations and perceptions of the brand. An effective brand name makes it easier to position the brand and company. An effective brand name is a name that explains what the brand does but at the same time is not stereotypical and too common as it can make it difficult to differentiate. A common objective within branding is to choose a brand name with meaning, where the name itself can communicate appropriate product details (Kohli & LaBahn, 1997). There are several ways of making a brand name meaningful, such as enhancing a product category or a specific attribute or advantage that can constitute as the key selling argument. An example of such a brand name is Nordic Wellness, a Nordic fitness gym that focuses on health and wellness (Nordic Wellness, 2021).

2.1.2 Logotype

In general, people are more susceptible to visual objects such as images and symbols than they are to written words (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Therefore, the logo can be important in order to strengthen the brand identity and it can be an effective way to communicate an attribute or value. When a company creates a logo that is a powerful visual image it can create a long-lived image in customers' minds that connects them to the brand.

2.1.3 Tagline

Creating a tagline, also known as a slogan, is the first step and an essential part of building a brand (Freeman, 2005). The tagline complements and supports the brand name and logo in creating the

brand image (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). A common misconception is that the slogan has to capture the entire brand identity, while in fact the brand is too complex to be entirely captured. However, it should convey both functional and emotional attributes (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). A tagline does not only tell what the business is doing, but also expresses the style and personality of the company. The value of the taglines builds over the years and therefore could a tagline be a company's best and cheapest kind of advertising. The most successful tagline distinguishes the company from its competitors and should clarify and emphasize the brand's uniqueness (Freeman, 2005). Apple's tagline is as follows: "Think different" (Siltanen, 2011). This slogan indicates that the products of Apple are innovative and ground-breaking which is their core expertise and distinguishes them from their competitors.

2.1.4 Brand Story

It is common for companies to have brand stories based on how the company was created. A well formulated brand story can make a brand be perceived as special. Further, a brand story can be an effective tool for strengthening the believability of the vision and mission of the company. It is therefore important that the brand story conveys a true, relevant and correct image of what the company is about. (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)

2.2 Brand Equity

There are many definitions of brand equity and one of the most widely accepted definitions states the following: "added value endowed by the brand to the product" (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015). Brand equity is an intangible asset that builds a relationship between the brand and its customer (Tanveer & Lodhi, 2016). The concept of brand equity can also be viewed in different ways. In a customer perspective, the value added to a physical product or service by connecting it with the brand name is considered to be brand equity. From a company's standpoint, brand equity can be perceived as the extra revenues a company receives from being able to charge a price premium because of the brand itself or increased loyalty created by the brand name. Viewing it from a managerial viewpoint, brand equity is considered to be a combination of assets that are connected to a brand name or logo (Aaker & Biel, 2013). The concept of brand equity can however also be deconstructed into different dimensions consisting of: *brand awareness*, *brand associations*, *perceived quality* and *brand loyalty* (Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005). Additionally, there are implications that *brand image* is an important aspect that has a significant impact on brand equity (Ansary & Hashim, 2018).

2.2.1 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness describes the degree customers can recognize and identify a brand, a product or how much they associate a brand with a specific product under different conditions (Keller, 2012). Creating brand awareness means raising awareness of the brand by frequent exposure. Exposure to the brand can be through seeing it, hearing it, or thinking about it, anything which makes the customers experience the elements of the brand. Further, brand awareness is divided into brand recognition and brand recall. The former concerns customers' ability to recognize a brand they have been exposed to before. Whilst the latter concerns customers' ability to retrieve the brand from their memory when they think of a certain product category or situation. (Keller, 2012)

2.2.2 Brand Associations

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) defines brand associations as everything that connects the customer to the brand. Thus, it can for instance be images, product attributes, brand personality and symbols. The base of a purchasing decision often lies in the associations with the brand (Aaker, 2009). Associations can create a comprehensive picture of information that otherwise would be hard for the customer to absorb and that also would be very expensive for the company to convey. The associations can create value both for the company and the customers. For example, brand associations can help differentiate the brand, ease retrieval and processing of information, provide a basis for extension, and even be the reason for buying.

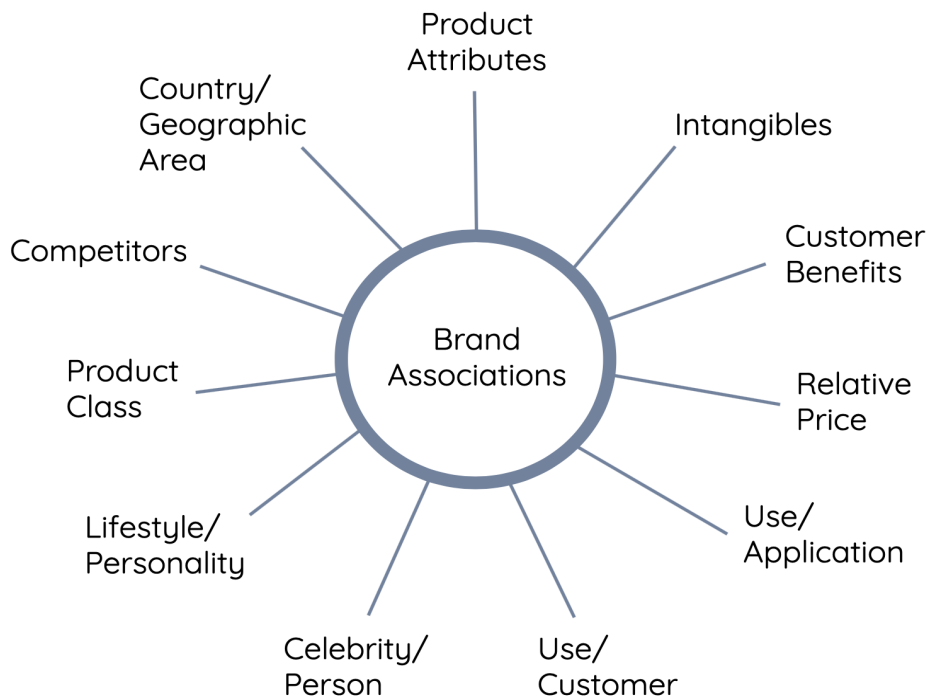


Figure 1. Brand Associations.

When assessing brand associations, the associations that are of importance are the ones that affect the buying behaviour of the customers (Aaker 1991). Further, it is important to understand if the associations are strong and shared by most customers or if they are weak and differ among people. Aaker (1991) has defined eleven different kinds of brand associations, see Figure 1. The eleven types of associations are not necessarily interesting and present for every company. An association is only relevant for brand equity if it has an effect on the buying behaviour. In general, product attributes and consumer benefits are the most important ones.

2.2.3 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is described as being the measure of the commitment that customers have with a brand (Aaker, 2009). If customers base their buying decision solely on price and performance, there is most probably little equity. On the other hand, if customers repeatedly continue to buy the brand even when competitors have a superior offer in terms of price and features, the brand contains value. High brand loyalty decreases the risk of being affected by competitors' moves. According to Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006), brand loyalty occurs when the brand frequently manages to live up to and deliver on the brand promise.

Aaker (2009) presents the Loyalty Pyramid, which describes five levels of loyalty, see Figure 2, where each level has its own challenge. The lowest level is a buyer that is neutral to the brand and competitors' brand, and the buying decision is based on aspects such as price and convenience and are likely to switch brands. The second level consists of buyers who find the product to be good enough, they are satisfied with the product, but they find no particular benefit with it. These customers are often habitual buyers which can be difficult to reach because there is no reason for them to switch to a different brand. However, they tend to be easily affected by competitors if they can be convinced of a clear benefit of switching. The third level consists of customers who are satisfied with the product and have switching costs. In order to attract the buyers, competitors have to offer incentives or benefits that are large enough to compensate for the switching costs. The fourth level are the customers that appreciate the brand to a high degree. The reason for them appreciating the brand can be hard to define and can be based on their associations with the brand, user experience, and perception of quality. The fifth level consists of customers where the brand is very important to them. It can be important in that sense that it provides a specific functionality and/or that it can serve as an expression of who they are.



Figure 2. Brand Loyalty pyramid.

2.2.4 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is how the customers perceive the brand in terms of quality or if it's superior to competitor's products. Perceived quality is always in relation to the purpose and other alternatives. It is an intangible concept that covers customers' feelings about a brand. However, it is often based on characteristics of the brand and product, such as reliability and performance. Perceived quality creates brand equity since customers often lack the motivation or ability to collect all the useful information necessary for determining which brand/product has the best quality. When the perceived quality is high, the marketing initiatives are effective, resulting in the opposite effect when the perceived quality is low. (Aaker, 2009)

2.2.5 Brand Image

There are many definitions of what a brand image is, but according to Keller (2012), most agree on defining it as the customer's view of the brand. Kotler and Anderson (1987) emphasize that the brand image is the current view of the customer, indicating that it can change over time. Keller (2012) further elaborates and claims that the customer's view of the brand is mostly based on stored associations in their memory and together they form the customers' perception and meaning of the brand. Kotler and Gertner (2002) claims that a strong brand image is necessary in order to create a strong brand and that the image itself must be clear and communicate an advantage. When a customer has developed a favourite brand image, the brand message of the company will have a stronger impact on the customer compared to the brand message of their competitors (Lee, Lee &

Wuu, 2011). The brand image will therefore have a large effect on the customers' behaviour. In a B2B setting, brand image has an important role to play. Especially as it is difficult to differentiate products and services based only on the tangible properties. Having a favourable brand image will positively affect the customer behaviour regarding increased loyalty, require price premium and create positive word of mouth. With a positive brand image, it is more likely that the consumer is more willing to pay and therefore the brand equity increases.

2.3 Brand Strategy

In this section, relevant theories regarding brand strategy will be presented. Concept of *brand identity*, *brand personality*, *brand archetype*, *brand positioning* and *brand promise* will be explained.

2.3.1 Brand Identity

Brand identity is a concept that concerns how the brand defines itself, the values it has, its knowledge and its personality, etc. (Kapferer, 2012). This provides a direction and a purpose (Aaker, 1996), but it also covers everything that takes part in creating a meaningful and unique brand (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė, 2007). This can in turn help companies to distinguish themselves from its competitors and if correctly applied, even accentuate the product quality (Krake, 2005). Brand identity contributes to establishing a relation between the brand and the customer by creating a value proposition that includes functional and emotional advantages (Aaker, 1996). With the correct identity and meaning, a brand can convince the customer to believe that the product is appropriate and relevant for them (Keller, 2012). Consequently, customers will feel attached and passionate about the brands with the strongest identity. These customers will in turn act as evangelists and strive to share their beliefs and spread a good reputation about the brand itself.

2.3.2 Brand Personality

Aaker (1996) describes brand personality as “*the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand*” (Aaker 1996, p. 327). The words used to describe a human can also be used to describe a brand personality. Hence, brand personality characteristics include gender, age, socioeconomic aspects, but also human personality features such as warmth, insecurity and emotionality (Aaker, 1996). Unlike a product related attribute that focuses on emphasizing practical functions, brand personality, on the contrary, highlights figurative or self-expressive functions instead (Aaker, 1997). Similar to the human personality, the brand personality is also enduring and distinctive. Besides, a person's personality is influenced by almost everything the person is associated with, such as surrounding, people, activity, interactions and clothes, this can

be said to be just as applicable for a brand’s personality. Additionally, brand personalities are easily recognized by a wide range of customers, where there also is a consistency in how the different customers are describing and perceiving the brand's personality (Aaker, 1996). It also contributes to deepening the knowledge of customers' perception and attitude toward the brand and will help differentiate the brand identity, whilst enhancing communication and creating equity of the brand.

Brand Personality Scale (BPS) is a tool developed to measure and structure a brand personality. It is based on five different personality factors known as the “Big Five”, and are the following: *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication* and *ruggedness*. These five dimensions help to describe the differences between brand personalities. Just like a human, a brand personality is complex and can have traits from two or more of the traits of the “Big Five” personality factors. Each one of the Big Five features can be split into fifteen different facets to give a more descriptive understanding of Big Five’s character and structure, see Figure 3. The BPS will also give an indication of the attitude towards the brand is positive or negative and compare it to other similar brands. The different facets can generate either a positive or negative association. For example, Aaker (1996) describes the sincerity factor as most connected to a positive attitude and could be the reason why many companies use this as their identity. (Aaker, 1996)

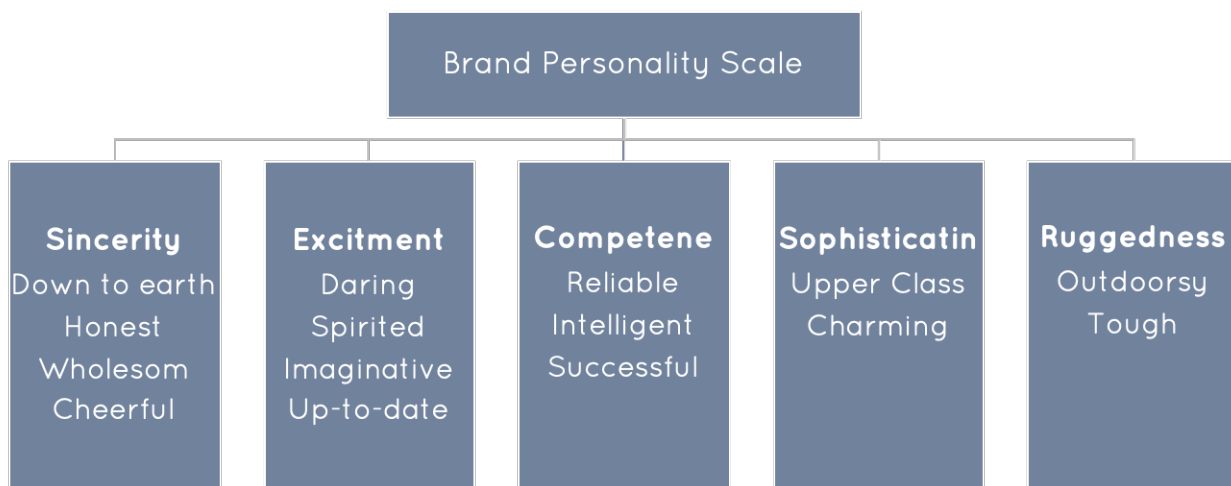


Figure 3. Brand Personality Scale.

2.3.3 Brand Archetype

The theory of archetypes, developed by Carl Jung, have been used in branding theory (Tsai, 2006). Archetypes imply giving behaviours a personality, where characters express behaviour patterns (Faber & Mayer, 2009). Archetypes can be described as preconscious psychological capabilities

that humans have, which enables them to act in a human way. Patterns of archetypes can be identified in every type of culture and be traced back in history. This indicates that the unconscious minds of the humans are not separate and individual (Tsai, 2006). Jung instead had the perception that characters' archetypes are stored within the collective unconscious part of humans around the world. (Golden, 2011).

The main reason to incorporate archetypes in branding is because association of archetypes and products creates a symbolic meaning which enables customers themselves to establish identities they can relate to, even across cultural boundaries (Tsai, 2006). Another strong justification to include archetypes in brand marketing is based on the assumptions that product brands, similar to archetypes, describe how people construe their relationships with their way of life and therefore give a symbolic meaning as any customer all over the world can use to create an identity. It is therefore important to find and identify the “soul” of the brand and convey it in a manner that touches upon archetypes which connects it with the essential psychological tendency of the customer to develop a universal icon. By incorporating the symbolic meaning of archetypes with the portrayal of a brand, it is possible to convert products that initially are perceived as lifeless into icons that are thrilling, inspiring and purposeful. A brand that is iconic is attractive to the customer as the archetype the brand reflects can be used by the customer in their process of creating an identity (Tsai, 2006).

There are twelve defined archetypes that represent the motivation of the human. Each and every one of the archetypes has its own meanings, values and characteristics. The most common construct of a personality consists of several archetypes, although one archetype is generally dominant, there is a supportive secondary archetype (Papagni, 2016). The archetypes can, in turn, be connected to the personality traits of Aaker's BPS (Bechter et al., 2016). The connection of each archetype is presented in Appendix 1.

- *The innocent*: the motto of the innocent archetype is “*Free to be you and me*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 53) and values a healthy and happy life. This archetype is seeking experiences that contribute to peace and kindness. They are characterised as faithful and optimistic. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The explorer*: “*Don't fence me in*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 71) is the motto of the explorer. This archetype is characterised as independent and curious, who drive by not having the sense of belonging and are constantly searching for self-discovery and something better as they are most often restless and dissatisfied. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)

- *The sage*: this archetype believes that happiness comes from education and seeks learning and wisdom. Its desire centres around discovering the truth and therefore the motto of the sage archetype is “*the truth will set you free*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 88).
- *The hero*: “*where there’s a will, there’s a way*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 105). This archetype stands for winning at all costs, regardless if the goal is noble or fair. The hero is most often regarded as a warrior who takes risks in order to conquer the evil and defend their values and the society. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The outlaw*: “*rules are meant to be broken*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 123), by acting as a strong force, the outlaw is able to create disruption by violating norms and regulation for the sake of others, for excitement and personal return or for alienation. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The magician*: acts as the initiator and pushes for social and institutional changes or healing. Its motto goes: “*It can happen*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 140), this archetype has the gift of discovering a win-win outcome in many situations. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The regular guy/gal*: has a motto that goes “*all men and women are created equal*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 165), and the core desire is to connect with others. This helps to set off behaviour and prospects that allows the individual to become a part of the group and values all people, not only the ones that shine and stand out. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The lover*: helps to make the individual attractive in the eyes of others and supports in developing emotional skills and sexual intimacy. The motto of the lover is “*I only have eyes for you*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 178) and have a strong desire to get intimacy and have physical pleasure. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The jester*: “*if I can’t dance, I don’t want to be part of your revolution*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 196). The jester reminds its surroundings to relax, enjoy the moment, and appreciate connection with others without caring about other opinions. Its wish to live in the present and enjoy it to the fullest. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)
- *The caregiver*: a characteristic of the caregiver is the enhanced awareness of people’s vulnerability, and the lack of concern for himself/herself as they have their hands full with solving others’ problems. This explains the caregiver’s motto: “*Love your neighbour as yourself*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 209).
- *The creator*: “*If it can be imagined, it can be created*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 227). Being creative and artistic by creating poems, musicals, painting etc., is when the creator is exercising his/her control. By structuring experiences in an artistic set-up gives a feeling of control and makes the world more beautiful. (Mark & Pearson, 2001)

- *The ruler*: when a situation is escalating and getting out of hand, the creator is the one to take control. It is the responsibility of the ruler to make life predictable and stable. Thereof is the motto of the ruler the following: “*Power isn’t everything. It’s the only thing*” (Mark & Pearson 2001, p. 244).

2.3.4 Brand Positioning

Brand position is described as the part of brand identity and value proposition that is continuously transferred to the target group through active communication which will show a competitive advantage over their competitors (Aaker, 1996). A product or an organization have numerous different attributes that together create the total impression of the brand. When positioning the brand, a selection of the different attributes is necessary. The attributes that are chosen are built upon and highlighted, while the non-chosen attributes are treated the opposite way, minimized or completely eliminated (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). Proper brand positioning can act as a guide for marketing strategy, as it determines what the brand stands for, its uniqueness, how it differentiates from competitors and clarifies why customers should purchase the product (Keller, 2012). Brand positioning is important in the sense that it determines what direction in the market the product of the brand will pursue in order to expand their market share at the expense of their rivals (Kapferer, 2008). The position of the brand is crucial as this is a central aspect that affects the customers’ perception and decision process (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). It implies discovering the correct “location” in the mind of the customer that will make the customer think of the product or service in the “correct” and sought-after way in order to increase the potential advantages of the company (Keller, 2012).

Upon establishing a brand position, it is necessary to recognize the target market and the characteristics of the competition that the brand is attacking. It is therefore essential to identify the target customer and the main competitors, but also have knowledge of how similar and/or different the brand is compared to competitors (Keller, 2012). By implementing a positioning strategy, a focus will be created which will ensure that the positioning is aligned with the overall marketing program. There are six different approaches to positioning strategies: *positioning by attribute*, *positioning by price/quality*, *positioning by use or application*, *positioning by product user*, *positioning by product-class* and *positioning by competitor* (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

According to Aaker & Shansby (1982), the most commonly adopted strategy is *positioning by attribute*, where a product is associated with either an attribute, feature or a customer benefit. With this strategy, a brand can position its product with an attribute that competitors have neglected and

therefore distinguish themselves from their competitors and create a competitive advantage. It is also possible for a brand to position the product along several attributes. This is however difficult to implement and can create an unclear and indistinct image which causes confusion (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

The positioning strategy *by price/quality* is described by Aaker & Shansby (1982) as the most usable and penetrating strategy and can therefore be considered to be separate from the other positioning strategies. Positioning by price/quality implies that products offer more features, attributes, services and/or performance, and in return charge a premium price. As a result, the customer will get the impression that the brand/product withholds higher quality (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

The third strategy is *position by application* which relates the product with its usage or an application. This strategy is most frequently used as a second or third position. By adding attributes, it will enable the brand to expand in the market. Another strategy is the position by product user, where the product is associated with a defined user or user group. It is common that companies use models or other known personalities to relate to their customer segment. This positioning strategy is attracting their target customers by relating the product to them and indicating that the product is fitted for them. (Aaker & Shansby, 1982)

Connecting a product to a user or a type of user is related to the strategy *positioning by product-user*. This positioning strategy aims to target a specific type of consumer that is believed to be suitable for the product. (Aaker & Shansby, 1982)

Positioning by product class is when a product such as freeze-dried coffee is to be positioned in the same category as instant and fresh coffee. This strategy therefore determines what playing field the product is competing in and there off partly also the competitors the product is up against.

The last strategy is *positioning by competition*. This implies that an established competitor's image is utilized and used as a reference point in order to communicate another image. Another feature of this strategy is that it puts little emphasis on how good the customer believes the product is, but rather if the customer thinks that the product is better or as good as competition. (Aaker & Shansby, 1982)

2.3.5 Brand Promise

A brand conveys a promise with their brand. The brand comes with a promise regarding what the customers can expect when interacting with the brand. A strong brand promise can be used for differentiation, which can be important if the organization cannot differentiate the brand or product based on functional attributes. However, if the brand promises more than it can deliver, it may result in negative effects, and the customers lose faith in the brand. In order for a brand promise to be effective, it has to be clearly defined, relevant to the organization and product and meaningful for the customer. An example of how a brand promise can be formulated is FedEx's promise of providing their customers with "peace of mind". (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006)

2.4 Branding in B2B

Branding in a B2C context has largely been dominating the branding literature whilst B2B branding has been perceived as irrelevant. It has however been identified that B2B branding brings several benefits to companies (Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). Although the concept of branding might be general, it is important to identify how it can be adapted to a B2B context. However, there is no general widespread agreement on how branding differs in B2B compared to B2C but a few scholars have identified aspects within B2B branding that are worth mentioning.

Kuhn, Alpert and Pope (2008) addressed that initial awareness in a B2B context often rises from direct contact with salespeople from the company and that distribution networks are interrelated and dependent on each other. Therefore, is it possible that the aspects of recall and recognition in brand awareness are not as important in an industrial setting as in the consumer market (Kuhn et al., 2008). Kuhn et al. (2008) questions the focus on emotions since industrial branding tends to be at the corporate level where the focus is on reducing risk rather than on expressive benefits. However, representatives from the company constitute a large part of industrial brand equity and indicate that human elements do in fact play a role in industrial brand equity. The authors underline the importance of feelings but suggest that it can be important to look at other types of feelings that are less common in the B2C context. Leek and Christodoulides (2011) identified feelings to be less relevant in a B2B setting as well as personality traits, but instead emphasized that relationships with company representatives are of high importance rather than focusing on a relation with different product types. These will therefore be aspects that will be taken into consideration throughout the study and affect the mindset of the analysis.

2.5 Process Model

Based on the theories and concepts derived from the theoretical framework, a process model will be formed which the research will guide/follow/be based on, see *Figure 4*. Three central aspects will act as the base of the model, which consist of *brand equity*, *brand elements* and *brand strategy*. Following the process model, these three aspects will give insight to the value of the brand and identify potential gaps between the perception of the brand and how the company wants to be perceived. Lastly, this will give implications for the future of Aluwave's brand strategy.

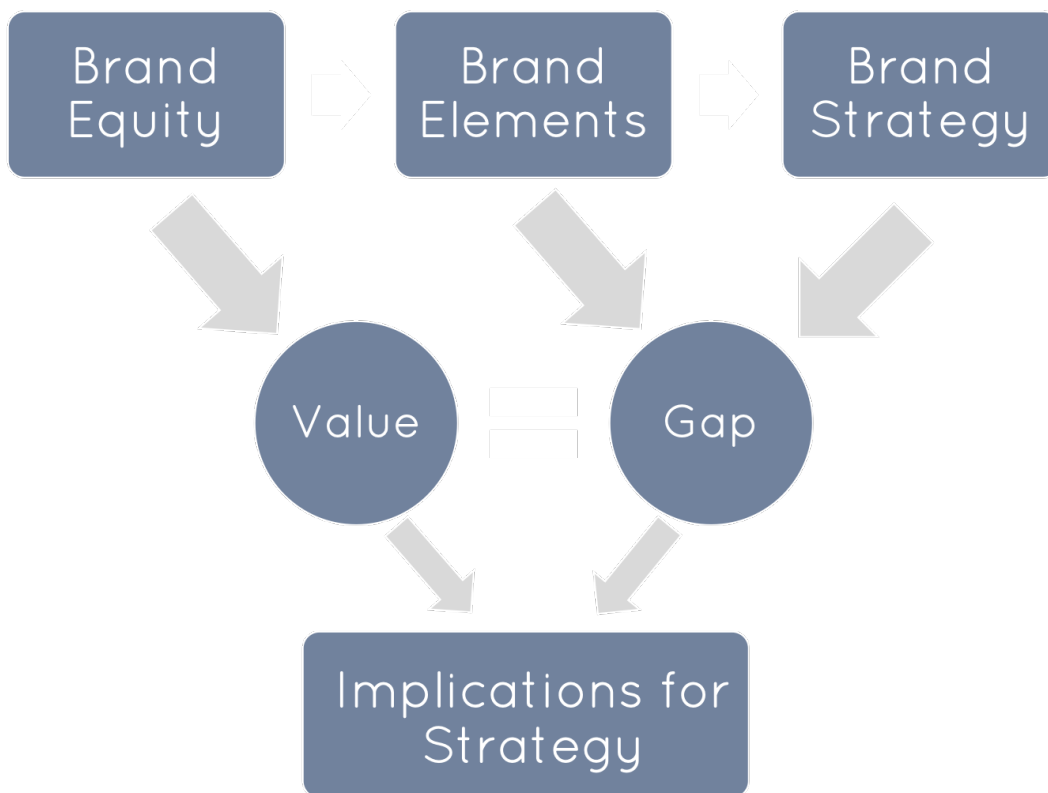


Figure 4. Process Model

3. Research Method

This chapter presents and motivates the chosen methods for conducting the study in order to reach the aim of the study. It will also explain the method of how data was collected.

3.1 Research Strategy and Design

By using qualitative research methods, the key principles of the study, which is to obtain an in-depth analysis of the case company's brand, can be achieved. A qualitative research method will enable the researchers to explore social relationships and will provide the research with a description of the reality that the respondents have experienced (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2013). Thus, the method will mostly be of qualitative nature since this provides a deeper understanding and knowledge of the specific topic. This will form an understanding of the brand, as the qualitative methods will allow uncovering a profound explanation of the brand and discover different aspects of how the brand is perceived.

With a quantitative study, a result of statistical, quantifiable and generalizability are sought, whilst a qualitative research method is used when processing textual material or other non-numerical data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). As this thesis will investigate the different perceptions of the brand, a quantitative method would not be able to describe the underlying reasons behind customers' response.

A case study, which is the most frequently used research design for qualitative studies, is chosen as the research design since it allows a close examination of a specific case within its true context (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The disadvantage with a qualitative approach is that the scope of the result is most often limited. However, for this particular research, depth of the particular case is preferable over scope. The research will not compare or examine multiple cases; therefore, it will be a single-case study. Further, the research will not look into different subunits of the studied case company and will therefore be a holistic case study. The study will not be approached in a linear fashion, where literature and empirical data will be collected simultaneously, and iterations will be used when necessary.

3.2 Research Approach

To provide an accurate picture of reality, it is important to relate theory with the gathered data, such as respondent information from the interviews, in a correct manner. As a basis for theory, information and data have been studied and gathered in the form of literature and scientific articles.

The starting point of the research was to create a theoretical framework which the research will be based on. The theoretical framework was created through an extensive literature analysis based on existing academic articles and books related to branding in general and branding in a B2B context. Thereafter, in-depth interviews were held based on the general principles from the theoretical framework. The result from the interviews in combination with the theories from the framework is therefore used to create a novel understanding of the individual case and question the existing theory.

3.3 Data Collection and Theoretical Framework

A research study can be based on either primary or secondary sources, or even a combination of the two (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Primary data is specifically collected for the purpose of the study and aimed to answer the research questions, using methods that are most suitable for the study. The methods to collect primary data are observations, experiments, surveys and interviews to mention a few. In this research, primary data was collected through personal interviews. Secondary data on the other hand is more convenient to collect and has a tendency to be more reliable, extensive and valid than primary data. Secondary data however does not always answer the particular research question that the study is investigating. The way to collect secondary data can be done through literature review of academic articles and books (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). In this research, secondary data was collected through the company's website and annual report.

The primary data will be collected from different sources. Firstly, information about Aluwave as a company will be collected internally from the company's marketing department through informal interviews and sharing of documentation. Thereafter, in-depth interviews with two representatives from Aluwave will be conducted to gather more detailed information regarding the individual's perception of the company and the brand itself. Prior to conducting the in-depth interviews, an interview guide will be constructed with a number of predetermined interview questions (see Appendix 2 and 3). The interviews will be of a semi-structured character, and based on the interviewee, where the structure and order of the interview will vary depending on the individual situation, as well as allowing follow-up questions. Further, interviews with Aluwave's current customers will be conducted to gather information on their external view of the company and its brand. By conducting interviews, a closeness to the respondents can be created which will contribute to a better understanding of the respondents' perception (Patel & Carlsson, 2011). In this way, an understanding can be created that helps to explain the perception of the brand. The interviews will be semi-structured since it allows follow-up questions to be asked and gives the

interviewer the opportunity to immerse oneself in different topics. This allows deeper knowledge, but at the same time the ability to compare answers still remains to some degree. Although the study will mostly be based on primary data, the secondary data will be collected through external communication, such as the company's website and annual report. Simultaneously, the literature review will be conducted in order to support the creation of interview questions and form the basis of the analysis.

3.3.1 Interviewees

Prior to conducting the interviews, two separate interview guides were developed for interviewing both the case company and the customers, see Appendix 2 and 3. The interview guides were based on the theories and general principles derived from the theoretical framework. The interviews will be conducted by following the interview guides to generate the empirical findings, which in turn can affect what content that should be included in the theoretical framework.

Two in-depth interviews will be conducted with the case company. First, an interview with the Head of Sales and Marketing (HoSM) at Aluwave. The insight from the marketing department is highly relevant for the subject of the study. The HoSM is responsible for all branding initiatives and has great insights and understanding of the thought behind the initiatives, what the brand aims for and what the future of the brand should be. This will provide the research with a solid foundation and give an understanding of the values and mission of the company. In order to get a different perspective of the brand from Aluwave's point of view, an interview with the Head of Product and Development (HoPD) will be conducted. The aim is to understand if the perspective can differ within Aluwave and it is therefore important to interview someone from a different department. Additionally, HoPD has been in the company from the start and can therefore provide an insight regarding Aluwave prior to their branding journey being initiated, and also give valuable insights after it.

The customer interviewees have been selected, after discussion with the HoSM, where a wide range of different companies were prioritized over a high number of interviewees, but also customers that have been collaborating with Aluwave for various time periods. In Table 1, the different interviewees are presented with alias names to keep anonymity. The type of company that the interviewees are representing will also be briefly described and the position in the company will be present to set the interviewees' responses in context.

Alias	Age	Title	Company Alias	Company Description	Date of Interview
Adam	40s	Product Designer	Alfa	Provides lighting solutions with a focus on long service life and low energy consumption. Product range includes light sources, luminaires and sensors for automatic light control.	2021-04-01
Bertil	60s	Product Manager	Beta	Lighting company that offers lighting for all types of buildings, from small to large, from residential to industrial.	2021-04-01
Bengt	50s	Regional Sales	Beta	Lighting company that offers lighting for all types of buildings, from small to large, from residential to industrial.	2021-04-06
Carl	50s	Sales/Product Development Manager	Charlie	Design-oriented lighting company with focus on quality, environmental care and innovation.	2021-04-12

Table 1. Description of Interviewees

3.3.2 Ethical Considerations

One of the most common ethical issues of a qualitative study is lack of consent (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Therefore, all the necessary information will be provided for the interviewees to understand how and why certain information is gathered. This intends to make the interviewee feel safe and comfortable during the interview. Further, the interviewee will be given the choice of anonymity and the company they are representing will be kept anonymous to further ensure safety and agreement during the interview.

The considerably larger part of the data will be collected through interviews. Iphofen and Tolich (2018) emphasizes the importance of interviewees participating voluntarily. In this research, the participants will be provided through the case company, thus it will be difficult to fully ensure that they are participating voluntarily. In order to mitigate the risk, the interviewee will be asked for consent in order to ensure voluntary participation. Additionally, all interviewees will be asked for permission to record the interview. Further, the interview will be informed with the option of editing and withdrawing the recording, during and after the interview. The recording of the interviews will be deleted after being transcribed, which the participants will be informed of before the recording starts. Lastly, the case company, Aluwave, will be given the option of removing or rephrasing sensitive information during the entire process of the thesis.

3.3.3 Quality and Generalisability

When conducting qualitative research, it is more difficult to ensure the quality of the study compared to quantitative research (Tracy, 2010). In this qualitative study, information is mainly gathered by conducting interviews, where personal interaction is key, and the subjective interpretation has a large effect on the data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Information is also collected from secondary sources such as the company's website and annual report.

In order to ensure the quality of the study, Hair, Black, Babin, Andersson and Tatham (2006) describe two valuable aspects to take into consideration: *reliability* and *validity*. Reliability refers to the ability to repeat the study and achieve the same result (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To ensure reliability in the study, established and recognized theories will be used. However, the reliability of the study will be affected, since a large part of the study will be based on qualitative interviews with different individuals, which will hamper the replicability and to some degree how the researcher interprets the qualitative data. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for future use in order to strengthen the reliability further. In terms of validity, there's a risk of the data collected through interviews to be exposed to some bias (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviewees are provided by the case company and can therefore be chosen with a motive. However, discussions regarding why the specific interviewees are chosen will be conducted with the contact person of Aluwave. Further, due to the scope of the thesis, the research will only investigate the case company's current customers perception, which could transform into a more positive result compared to if we also had the opportunity to interview and investigate a general opinion of the brand.

The research is exposed to generalisability in the way that it aims at theoretical development. The theoretical development will be done by linking the particular case of Aluwave to relevant theory of branding.

3.4 Limitations

The research is to a large extent based on the data gathered from the personal interviews. A limitation related to this is that relatively few interviews were held, which could have an effect on the quality of the research. To address the issue, the company's public external communication such as the website and annual report were used as an information source to support and add to the amount of information and increase the variation of sources. Additionally, the customer interviewees are solely OEM customers and the research will therefore not be able to identify

potential patterns between different types of customers. Lastly, the research on branding in a B2B setting is not as widespread as in the B2C market. Part of the literature is therefore solely based on B2C and the relevance for B2B is not always confirmed.

4. Result

Below, the result from the conducted interviews is presented. First, the insights from the interviews, presented in Table 1 with the case company are presented followed by the customers. The interviews were held in Swedish and the quotes in this chapter have therefore been translated. Lastly, the findings that were discovered on the website will be introduced.

4.1 Aluwave Interviews

This section will present the interesting aspects gathered from the company interviews with the perspective of the representatives from Aluwave. Their different viewpoints and opinions will form the base of the result where the findings are grouped and presented based on area of topic.

4.1.1 Aluwave's Core Strength

Aluwave's ability to offer both LED modules and luminaires was described by the Head of Sales and Marketing (HoSM) to put the company in a unique position compared to competitors. The product mix was described as allowing them to understand the single components and have a holistic view of the armatures and can therefore offer their customers a complete solution. This was described as being a good sales argument and something that makes them unique. Head of Product and Development (HoPD) considers Aluwave to be unique and having no similar competitors within their local region and for that reason having no clear position in relation to competitors. However, he describes their "*existensberättigande*" (raison d'etre) (HoPD, personal communication, 25 March, 2021) to be to deliver the best possible quality there is to offer to the high end segment, and that they are not competing with price.

The production sites in Sweden and China are highlighted by the interviewees as one of Aluwave's core strengths. Their production in Sweden, is described to allow Aluwave to be fast-acting and offer fast deliveries, whilst their production in China lowers cost through scalability. The ability to deliver with a short delivery time is perceived by the HoSM and HoPD to be a strong attribute which also is well recognized and appreciated by their customers. HoSM claims that the

combination of their competencies of production sites in Sweden and China is inexpugnable and together with their strong technical competencies they believe they are able to provide the best performance/price ratio for the customers.

According to both HoSM and HoPD, Aluwave is a strong product development partner. They are involved in the early stages of the customer's product development phase where they provide advice, expertise and customized solutions. This was explained by HoSM to enable customers to have customized products to their specific requests and not needing to compromise on their designs. It was further elaborated by HoSM that Aluwave are able to use their competence and innovation to create solutions that are adapted to customer requirements. Multiple times during the interviews, it was emphasized that Aluwave is and wants to be a strong development partner. However, the importance of this aspect is described as varying depending on which type of customer you ask, OEM or wholesaler. Explaining that OEMs' value more complex customized products than the wholesalers. Further, both interviewees explained that their geographical closeness to the customers is a vital part in order to create a strong product development partnership and communicate that they are not only a distant supplier.

4.1.2 Values

Regarding Aluwave's fundamental values, HoSM described their strong focus on sustainability and the environment as being one of Aluwave's cornerstones. HoSM claimed that Aluwave was one of the first players in the lighting industry to deliver luminaires where the entire product was made out of biomaterials. Moreover, HoSM explains that the company's owned production sites in Sweden and China gives them the ability to fully control areas such as human rights, working conditions and child labour. These aspects are important and prioritized by Aluwave and according to HoSM it is about creating a prosperous organization. Further, it is stressed that these aspects are not only of importance to Aluwave, but also to the customers of Aluwave. HoSM also highlights that it is about building a company where the employees are treated in a correct way, with the right conditions and where people thrive. Furthermore, HoPD expressed that Aluwave is a cleantech company who operates in the environmental sector. It is also explained by HoPD that the company is innovative and knowledge based.

4.1.3 Human Characteristics

As regards to describing the company and the brand "Aluwave", it was mentioned that Aluwave can be compared to the automotive industry's "Audi". It is claimed by HoSM that Aluwave

consistently delivers quality, stability and security, but also have a strong confidence in what they do as they withhold a solid competence, “... *if you look at other brands and the car industry, we want to be Audi, which is like good consistent quality, there is some kind of stability and security, with good self-confidence basically. But with a fair amount of cockiness.*” (HoSM, personal communication, 8 March, 2021). HoPD explained the company as being opportunistic as they historically have been saying yes to most businesses. He also describes the company to have a risk-taking behaviour and that they historically have been perceived as somewhat “*rock n roll*” (HoPD, personal communication, 25 March, 2021), not the typically strict corporation.

Both HoSM and HoPD identified Aluwave as being “the creator” when asked about the 12 archetypes. It is expressed by HoSM that Aluwave thinks outside the box regarding sustainability and was one of the first players in the industry that utilized biomaterials and developed smart solutions such as integrated electrical ballast. Furthermore, HoPD identified Aluwave to be *the creator* because they see opportunities in everything they do, but historically he believes they have been perceived as “the hero” as they have been known for being adaptable. However, HoPD thinks that Aluwave wants to be “the explorer” but is not there yet.

4.1.4 Elements of the Brand

Both HoSM and HoPD explained that the name Aluwave was developed from their old business concerning alunat, heat transfer and with a focus on material. Both found the name not representative of their current business and the lighting industry that they are active in. HoPD expressed concerns if they were to change the name, whether they want to be associated as a technology company or a lighting company. Their strategy is to utilize the tagline instead of the brand name, as a way to communicate that they are in the lighting industry.

“Solving complex lighting demands for leading luminaries players”¹

One of Aluwave's larger branding initiatives is their change of logotype, see Appendix 4. The reason for the change of logotype was described by HoSM to be a need for a refreshment. The old orange logotype was described to not represent their technical height and innovation capabilities. HoSM expressed having personal associations with the color orange. He further explained that he found it to represent the “typical Swedish company” (HoSM, personal communication, 8 March, 2021) that does not have the “wow factor” (HoSM, personal communication, 8 March, 2021) or

¹ www.aluwave.com

being exciting, which is not what they want to convey with their logotype. HoSM described that the dark blue colour and the font of the new logotype was chosen because it rhymed more with the company they wanted to develop into. Similarly, HoPD described the aim of the new logotype to represent the new Aluwave' and align more with the logotypes of the lighting industry. HoPD described some doubtfulness regarding the result. He described it as being too American and not representing the type of company that Aluwave is.

4.1.5 Website

Parallel with the change of the logotype, Aluwave also updated their website. It is explained by HoSM that the previous website did not reflect the company as interesting or as an attractive employer. The website was rather dull and conveyed a technology company that had no interest in appearing as interesting. HoSM further explained that the renewal of the website was a way to convey the company's technical competence, an exciting company and a product development partner, but at the same time being corporate enough and Swedish. With the updated website, HoSM believes that the new website has managed to capture them as an interesting development partner. This was explained by HoSM to create an interest amongst the customers to contact them further. This fulfils the purpose of the website, which is to act as a landing page. HoPD, however, expresses that *"..it is very American. ..it was a bit more "fabulous" all over, which is not really us."* (HoPD, personal communication, 25 March, 2021). HoPD further elaborates that Aluwave is not great and global, but instead close and intimate to the customer, and is not convinced that the way the company is presented is accurate as it does not convey a Swedish and an engineering company. He has experienced that the customers have struggled to identify the key values of the company on the website and do not recognize Aluwave on the website.

4.2 Customer Interviews

In this section, the findings from the customer interviews will be presented. The result will be grouped into different areas of topics that were identified after the interviews.

4.2.1 Description of Aluwave

Aluwave is described by Adam as a young company, who has transitioned from their technical direction of materials that divert heat to a company that delivers complete solutions to the lighting industry. Additionally, Bertil emphasized Aluwave as being professional and fast when developing customized solutions. Flexibility and speed are also described by Adam to be some strong characteristics of Aluwave. Further, Bengt described Aluwave as innovative and professional, but also that the company is at the forefront in the lighting industry when it comes to luminaries due

to their high level of competence. It is further described by Carl that Aluwave is competent in the way that they are able to present solutions in accordance with the customers' specific requests. The solutions might not always be how the customers initially imagined it. Although, in the end the result is always satisfactory. In addition, Adam described the company as being young and expanding too quickly which has had negative consequences on delivery time. Besides, Bertil found Aluwave to be small where they have not established their roles yet, making the organization unclear to the customer.

When asked to describe Aluwave with human characteristics Adam expressed that he perceived Aluwave to be a kind company, as they have not encountered any conflicts and are solution oriented. Furthermore, Bengt thought of Aluwave as candid. Carl described Aluwave as being honest, with no excuses. They always explain the reason for something and are very simple.

Bengt described Aluwave's as being the archetype "the explorer" or "the creator" but leans more towards "the creator". The explanation for them being the creator is mostly based on Aluwave's research and development in environmental material of the luminaires. The ability to create a sustainable material that can be recycled and scaled makes Aluwave unique. Adam thinks of Aluwave as being *the creator* and experienced that Aluwave came up with ideas and solutions they would not have thought of themselves. If collaborating with another supplier, Adam believed that they would not have been able to reach the same level of innovation. Carl identified Aluwave as being *the creator* because they develop the solutions they as customers want.

4.2.2 Values

Both Adam, Bertil and Bengt expressed that they do not find Aluwave to be an environmental-oriented company in their communication but find it to be a common interest when developing products together. It is stressed by Adam that sustainability is an important aspect and something they especially prioritize when developing products. This is to assure that the products are long lasting by being able to change parts in order to extend the life cycle. Carl expressed that the environmental and ethics related questions are something that they expect their supplier to live up to, but they do not take any action to assure that it is being followed. However, none of the interviewees were able to identify that sustainability was one of Aluwave's core values, other than solely developing environmental products together.

4.2.3 Expectations and Uniqueness

When interacting with Aluwave, Adam expects the products to be world-leading regarding performance and efficiency. Moreover, the ability to offer fast delivery of customized products and smaller volumes are other influencing factors to collaborate with Aluwave. Adam even brought Aluwave into his current workplace from his previous one, as he had such a good experience with Aluwave before. Furthermore, Bengt expects fast delivery, high quality and good support when collaborating with Aluwave, otherwise he finds few apparent benefits. Aluwave is a Swedish company which can be seen as a benefit, however many other suppliers are Swedish as well. Carl expects to receive high quality products and for Aluwave to work with sustainability.

What makes Aluwave stand out from their competitors is according to Adam that they are a Swedish-owned company. He stressed that closeness in combination with their knowledge makes them competitive against Chinese players, whilst also being able to compete with price. Adam further stresses that “*closeness is incredibly important*” (Adam, personal communication, 1 April, 2021). Bengt however, stressed that Aluwave’s environmental focus by providing products and components in recyclable and degradable materials makes the company unique. This is according to Bengt, not something he believes that any other competitor is offering. The reason for collaborating with Aluwave was described by Bertil to be because they could speed up the process of customized solutions due to the geographical closeness and scope of their production sites. Explaining that Aluwave can react and deliver quickly as they are responsible for all steps of the production of the LED module, whilst other suppliers tend to spread out their production on different sites, decreasing delivery time. Carl adds that closeness in combination with their ability to scale up are factors that make Aluwave stand out from other competitors. He further explains that there are similar companies such as Aluwave, but their small size resulted in them being unable to deliver according to their requests.

4.2.4 Elements of the Brand

The meaning behind the name Aluwave is unknown to Bengt, but believes the name is a combination of aluminium and lighting waves. Adam believed the name is associated with Aluwave’s previous business where they focused on alunat and material that dissipated heat. Adam believed that for an individual who is unaware of the story behind the company, which is related to their previous business, would have assumed the name was related to aluminium. This was not described as a necessarily bad association, however it is not accurate to the business. Carl was not aware of the meaning behind the name and believed it must be related to the wavelength of the

LED light. In addition, all interviewees expressed that they found the slogan to reflect Aluwave as a company, the industry they are active in and what they do.

All interviewees thought of Aluwave's new logotype to be cleaner and more modern. Adam questioned the old logo being in the colour orange and thought that it did not reflect a technology company, but instead associated it more towards metals. The old logotype did not evoke any feelings at all for Carl. Bengt did not find the old logotype to be suitable for the lighting industry. He thought the new logotype was considerably better-looking but at the same time quite similar to the old one. Adam found the new logotype to be modern but still not entirely reflecting Aluwave and their business. Carl described the new logotype as being a more common industrial logotype and did not find it to reflect the lighting industry.

4.2.5 Website

At the top of Aluwave's website, the visitor is exposed to their tagline being displayed in the centre of the screen (Aluwave 2021). The design of the website is minimalistic and clean. The same blue nuance as in the logotype is consistently being used throughout the website. Further down, they present a short description of what the company does, which is as follow:

*“Aluwave designs and produces customized lighting solutions.
Development partner for the lighting industry.”²*

The websites also highlighted three fundamental aspects of the company. The first one is that they have “Fully owned production in Sweden and China” which explains that it allows them to have full control of the production and supply chain. The second one is “Extensive technical competence”, saying that they can handle any type of lighting project, no matter how complex it is. The last aspect is “Product development partner”, explaining that they collaborate with OEMs and wholesalers in order to develop their business, and that they are ready to take on the role as a product development partner. Even further down the website displays the product categories, LED modules and luminaires. In the bottom of the website, the customer is encouraged to contact the relevant department of Aluwave for the particular inquiry. (Aluwave 2021)

During the interviews, the customers were shown and asked about Aluwave's updated website. Few of the interviews were not aware that Aluwave has updated their website. Although the new

² www.aluwave.com

website is known to Bertil, it is not a tool that is being used on a daily basis. Bertil further explained that the website does reflect Aluwave as a company and portrays them as professional. The website conveys that Aluwave can act as a product development partner and that they are innovative and are in the forefront of new technology. It is explained by Carl that he seldom uses the website, he was not even aware that the website had been updated. When the website was shown to Carl, the first reactions were that the website looked modern. Bengt too found the website to be modern, neat and appealing, if you work within the lighting industry. He also does not use the website regularly, instead Bengt has more regular contact with their assigned contact persons at Aluwave. Adam never visits Aluwave's website and was not aware that the website had been updated. However, when the new website was shown to Adam, the response was that the website was contemporary. Further, he thought the website did not clearly indicate which industry the company is present in. The website also encouraged customers to seek further contact as the website is not clickable and only displays images and texts.

5. Analysis

The sections present the analysis of the results, which will be based on the first part of the process model: brand elements, brand equity and brand strategy.

5.1 Brand Elements

The base of a brand image is the brand name (Kohli & LaBahn, 1997). Based on the customer interviews, it was clear that the name Aluwave does not entirely create the correct associations for their current business. Many of the customers associate the name with aluminium, which is incorrect in relation to their current business. However, at the same time they identified the name with lighting waves which is relevant to Aluwave's business and the lighting industry. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) claims that a brand name is effective if it explains what the brand does but at the same time is not stereotypical. Hence, the name Aluwave can be considered effective since it is not similar to any other company name in the industry. It describes what the company does to some degree but there is a risk of faulty associating the name to aluminium. In the case of Aluwave, the misleading association with aluminium can create confusion amongst the customers and communicate an incorrect message of the company and their product offering. This contradicts the criteria Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) brings forward about a brand element to be meaningful and communicate the essence of the business. The aluminium association can, however, insinuate that the company has a strong technical background and competence which, despite all, reflects the company. Conveying technical competence could make the brand name live up to Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2006) criteria of a brand element being future-oriented, as it would not limit Aluwave to the lighting industry.

It was highlighted by all customer interviewees that the current logotype, see Appendix 4, did not evoke any specific emotions and it did not have any connection to the lighting industry. According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006), an image or a visual object is more susceptible to people than just the written word. Aluwave's logotype, which is a written word, could therefore benefit from adding a symbol. Moreover, the slight ambiguity of the brand name could perhaps be compensated with a logotype that included a symbol or a visual image. This could enhance customers' ability to recognize the brand, strengthen their brand identity and convey to existing and new customers what the brand represents and does. Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) explains that a symbol could be an effective way to communicate the brand's attributes and strengthen the brand identity. By incorporating a symbol or similar, it could make it easier for the customer to remember the brand,

which corresponds with Kotler and Pfoertsch's (2006) criteria of a strong brand element being memorable.

It is known to all the customer interviewees that Aluwave has updated their logotype. Based on the customer interviewees, it is evident that the customers believe that the old logotype reflected and was more suitable for a manufacturing industry. The need for a refreshment and a new start, resulted in Aluwave creating a new logotype with the aim to convey a modern and innovative company which, based on the customer interviews, seems to have been conveyed. However, modern and innovative seem to be the only attributes that are communicated through the logotype. It can be discussed whether or not Aluwave should be portrayed as more than that, in regard to what the Head of Product and Development (HoPD) said about the logotype being too American and Adam saying that the logo still doesn't convey the right associations for Aluwave. For instance, closeness is not conveyed in the logo which, according to all interviewees, is one of the most important aspects of Aluwave and distinguishes themselves from competitors.

HoPD described that to overcome the ambiguity of the name, the strategy is to have a tagline that conveys which industry they are active in. This is in accordance with what Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) explains regarding the tagline acting as a complement and supporting the brand name. It was expressed by the customer interviewees that the brand name could have a connection to the lighting industry by the association they made with "wave" in the brand name. This was then further strengthened when the tagline expressed the lighting industry explicitly. The use of the tagline can therefore be proven to be successful in the case of Aluwave, as all customer interviewees found the tagline "*Solving complex lighting demands for leading luminaire players*" (Aluwave 2021) to represent and explain Aluwave's business. The role of the tagline in this case is to eliminate some uncertainty regarding what the company does and what industry they are active in, but still the company has not limited themselves to a specific industry or business as the brand name is still somewhat neutral. By keeping the brand name neutral, this will give the company bigger room to expand and grow into other industries, as the brand name is not connected to any specific industry and will not create associations that are difficult for them to distance themselves from. Additionally, the tagline could be considerably easier to change compared to a brand name. However, changing a brand element too often could weaken brand recall since it would make it more difficult for customers to remember the slogan and connect it to the brand.

As Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) emphasize, the tagline should not only describe what the business is doing, but also explain the style and personality of the company. This can be said regarding

Aluwave's tagline. The tagline presents a clear sense of professionalism and innovation, which according to the customer and company interviews are some of Aluwave's main characteristics. Even if the customers thought the tagline represented Aluwave as a company, it could be questioned if it is missing one of the most vital parts of Aluwave, *videlicet*, the closeness to the customers. Aluwave's closeness to their customers was emphasized multiple times and was in some cases described by customers as the main reason for collaborating with Aluwave as well as it being a large part of what Aluwave themselves describe as one of their core strengths.

5.2 Brand Equity

This section will present the analysis of the five different aspects of brand equity: brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand image. The brand equity will be evaluated on a three levelled scale: *low*, *medium* and *high*. The levels are based on the perceptions of the researchers in combination with the theoretical framework and will function as a summary of the company's state of brand equity.

5.2.1 Brand Awareness

Keller (2012) describes brand awareness as raising awareness of the brand by constantly exposing the brand elements to customers by seeing, hearing and thinking about the brand to a point where they will remember you and be able to recall and recognize the brand at a later stage. Aluwave has recently started their transformation from an anonymous sub-supplier to a visible product development partner with their own private label and therefore, their brand awareness is naturally weak. However, Kuhn et al. (2008) suggests that brand awareness in a B2B setting is less about brand recognition and brand recall and more about personal contact with sales representatives. Continuing on Kuhn et al. (2008) perspective on brand awareness, Aluwave might have stronger brand awareness than first thought since both Aluwave and the customers expressed that they have a continuous dialogue and a close relationship. This could be seen as a way to strengthen their brand awareness to their current customer base. Assuring that Aluwave is always on top of their customers' minds and exposing them to hearing Aluwave.

5.2.2 Brand Associations

According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) brand associations are everything the customer relates to the brand. It can be identified that three associations are present amongst all or the majority of interviewees, which are environmentally friendly, technical competence and closeness. The associations from Aluwave and customers are summarized in Table 2. This could indicate that these associations are what makes Aluwave unique. Examining Aluwave's website, closeness and

environmental friendliness are associations that are not prominent. The associations that the website is portraying are foremost technical competence and innovation. The customers did not find the brand elements to communicate these aspects as well. This implies that the environmental aspect and closeness is solely communicated through personal communication. It was emphasized by the customers that the environmental aspect and the closeness were determining factors for some of the customers to actually collaborate with Aluwave. It could therefore be beneficial if these associations were more prominent in Aluwave's marketing strategy but also in the way they profile the brand as a whole. However, the associations exist among all customers and are aligned with Aluwave's view. It is evident that the brand association category Lifestyle/Personality is not as consistent as the other categories. However, the customers did not use Lifestyle/Personality words to describe the reason for collaborating with Aluwave. Therefore, it could be seen as if the Lifestyle/Personality category is not a category that affects the buying decision indicating that it is not relevant for Aluwave. This could be strengthened by Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) who acknowledge that B2B products in most cases are industrial products and where the determining factors to purchase the product highly depends on price, product features and performance. Therefore, the brand associations could still be considered to be strong, even if they are inconsistent in the Lifestyle/Personality category and are not utilized in Aluwave's external communication.

	HoSM	HoPD	Adam	Bertil	Bengt	Carl
Product attribute	Environmental friendly, Product mix	Environmental friendly,	Environmental friendly, World leading technology	Environmental friendly	Environmental friendly	Environmental friendly
Intangibles	Technical competence, Innovation	Innovation Knowledge-company		High competence	High competence Innovative	Technical competence
Customer benefits	Closeness Customized solutions	Closeness Optimization of products	Closeness Flexible Customer friendly Fast Lower volumes Customization	Fast	Closeness	Closeness Swedish Customization Price Quality
Lifestyle/Personality	Stable Safe Audi	Opportunistic Cleantech Rock 'n' roll	Young Kind Professional	Professional Unclear roles	Professional Candid	Honest

Table 2. Summary of Brand Associations.

5.2.3 Brand Loyalty

According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006), brand loyalty is created when a company manages to deliver on their brand promise. According to the customers' opinion, Aluwave delivers on their brand promise, by being able to deliver customized and high technology products, which indicates a strong brand loyalty. However, two of the interviewees found no particular benefits of collaborating with Aluwave, indicating that they could easily switch if another supplier could provide similar products and services. This places Aluwave on the second level of Aaker's (2009) loyalty pyramid. On the other hand, one of the customer interviewees described Aluwave to deliver world leading, outstanding service and support and even brought Aluwave into his current workplace from a previous one. This could thereby be compared to the fourth level of the loyalty pyramid towards Aluwave that could be compared to the fourth level of the loyalty pyramid. Additionally, closeness is described as a reason for the customers to collaborate with Aluwave. This is also something that most of Aluwave's competitors are lacking and therefore strengthening the customers' loyalty to Aluwave. Aluwave's brand loyalty appears to differ to some extent between the customer interviewees and are positioned on different levels on Aaker's (2009) loyalty pyramid. Overall, Aluwave's brand loyalty can be considered to be medium.

5.2.4 Perceived Quality

Common for all customer interviewees is that they find Aluwave's products to be of very high quality. Aaker (2009) defines perceived quality to be in relation to other alternatives and the purpose. Aluwave's products are described as having a long lifespan and live up to the expectations regarding quality. It is mentioned that in fact other suppliers can deliver the same products with the same level of quality. What distinguishes Aluwave from their competitors is that they are close and situated in Sweden. This is according to most customer interviewees a huge advantage as the customers perceive that they obtain better service and support. In addition, it is expressed that Aluwave is always able to deliver high quality products regardless of how complex the request is. This is what the customers consider as high quality, as not all competitors are not able to deliver on to the same extent. Hence, Aluwave's level of perceived quality can be considered to be high.

5.2.5 Brand Image

Brand image is the customer's current view of the brand (Keller, 2012), it can therefore change over time (Kotler & Anderson, 1987). The customers expressed that they found Aluwave to be very professional, technically competent, innovative and a great product development partner. However, there seem to be areas that are affecting the brand image negatively. It was expressed by the customers that Aluwave is a young company and that the company is expanding too quickly.

The rapid expansion of the company may have an effect on the brand image as there have been many changes within the company, such as organizational changes. The “current” image of the brand will therefore change/shift along the changes that Aluwave implements. It has even been expressed by the customer that the company has unclear roles within the company which creates confusion amongst the customers and affects communication and even delivery of the products. This may affect the brand image negatively since the company might not appear to be reliable which is a very important aspect if they want to be taken seriously as a product development partner.

Figure 5 shows a summary of how Aluwave is graded in the different aspects within customer-based brand equity.

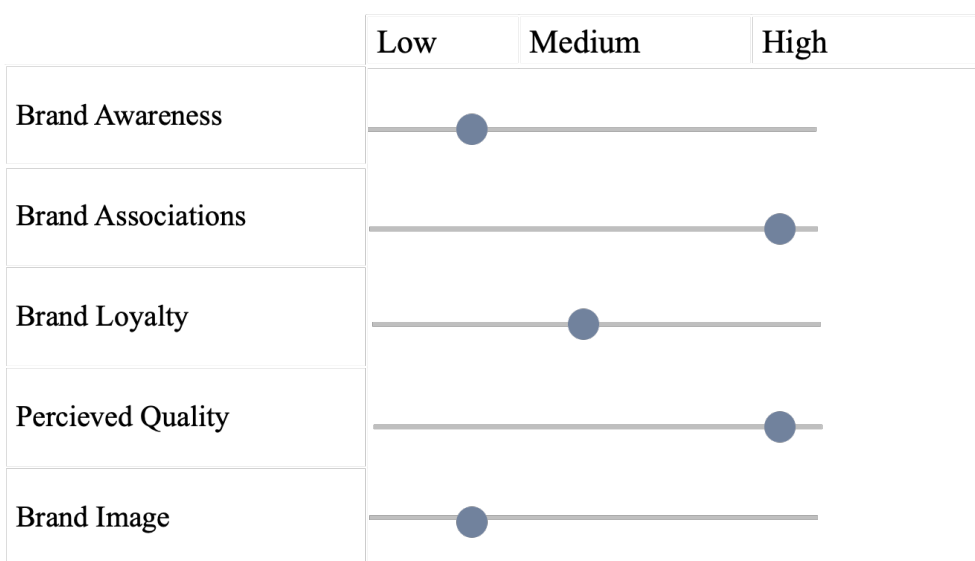


Figure 5. Summary of Brand Equity

5.3 Brand Strategy

This section will present the analysis of the five different aspects of brand strategy.

5.3.1 Brand Identity

Aluwave appears to be fragmented in terms of how they identify themselves within the organization. Head of Sales and Marketing (HoSM) described the company to be a somewhat more “corporate” Aluwave whilst HoPD identified Aluwave as being looser and rock’n’roll, and where the foundation of Aluwave is engineering and tech savvy. Aaker (1996) describes the identity as the soul of the brand, and it seems as if Aluwave have not formed cohesion in that particular area. Historically, Aluwave seem to have been identified as competent engineers, where the sole of the brand is that they are technically competent. The expansion puts the company in a challenging

situation, where they might have to become more corporate, making it even more important that they define what the soul of the company really is. If the soul and identity of the brand is not established, the uncertainty might reflect and spread throughout the organization and create insecurity of the brand. It might even reflect down to the customer's view of the brand. A somewhat fragmented identity within Aluwave could be connected to the brand image and why the customers perceive the organization to be unstructured with regards to the unclear roles. However, both interviewees at Aluwave agree that Aluwave is a product development partner and that they are very technically competent and characterized as innovative.

Aluwave defines themselves as an environmental oriented company, where even HoPD described them as a cleantech organization. The customers are not doubting their technical competence and creativity when it comes to developing environmental products. However, it seems as if they only connect Aluwave's ability to create environmental products with their high technical competence rather than with Aluwave as a brand and organization being environmentally friendly. When developing sustainable products, Aluwave are just delivering on their tagline of "Solving complex lighting demands for leading luminaire players". Once again, this could be related to Aluwave not having a strong brand identity, since being a cleantech company indicates that it is something that is imprinted throughout the organization and is more of a lifestyle rather than just the product.

5.3.2 Brand Personality

Stability and security are described by HoSM to be two personality characteristics that embody Aluwave as a brand. Relating this to the Brand Personality Scale (BPS), Aluwave can be classified into the "Competence" category since stability and security can be related to reliability. HoSM further described Aluwave to be similar to the car industry's Audi. Audi is active in the high-end segment and describes themselves as being progressive premium. Furthermore, they present themselves as having a high confidence but understated and delivering high-quality products. Based on the personality traits from Audi, "Sophistication" can be added to Aluwave because of the premium segment but some characteristics from the category "Excitement" can also be defined because of the progressive technology which can be compared to imaginative and up to date.

Moreover, it is expressed by HoPD that Aluwave can be described as opportunistic. It is further elaborated that Aluwave historically has been risk-taking, never said no to business and took every opportunity that came to them. Relating these specific personality traits to the BPS, it can be identified that Aluwave's personality mainly fits into the categories "Excitement". The mentality and the way Aluwave does business can be seen as daring as they are going outside the box and constantly taking risks. Additionally, Aluwave is considering themselves as environmentally

friendly as they are utilizing biodegradable material in their products. This can also be regarded as the excitement personality category. Comparing this to how HoSM described Aluwave, it is evident that there is a slightly differing view and perception of what kind of personality Aluwave has. Relating this to the brand identity where it could be identified that there is a split view of what the identity within Aluwave is, could be the reason why the personality is split as well.

It is expressed by customer interviewees that Aluwave's personality is perceived as kind, candid, honest and adaptable, which can position Aluwave in the "sincerity" category of the BPS. Even if the brand personality seems to be split within Aluwave, it has not resulted in a split customer perception of the personality. It is however clear that Aluwave's perception of their brand personality, categorized as "Sophisticated", "Excitement" and "Competence", differs from customers' perception of the identity "Sincerity". The differing view that Aluwave and the customers have of the brand's personality strongly indicates that Aluwave has not been successful in their way to present and communicate it.

5.3.3 Brand Archetype

It is identified by both HoSM and HoPD that Aluwave can be identified as the archetype "the creator" since they are in the forefront when it comes to innovation and environmental aspects. However, it was emphasized by both interviewees that the ambition is to become more like "the explorer". They therefore strive to become more curious and work on continuous improvement of both themselves as a company but also their products and technology and innovation. Likewise, the customers identified Aluwave to be "the Creator" due to for instance being able to create luminaires with environmental material and creating advanced and customized solutions.

The creator's motto is "*If it can be imagined, it can be created*" (Mark & Pearson, 2001, p. 227), which seems to align well with what the customers think of Aluwave as a company. However, when the customers were asked to describe Aluwave with human characteristics, in other words, Aluwave's personality, other traits were emphasized, such as kind, candid, honest and adaptable. Therefore, the archetype "The creator" might not be what represents Aluwave's personality. Comparing the personality traits with Bechter et al. (2016) archetype and personality scheme (Appendix 1) it appears as if the customers are describing Aluwave as "the Regular guy" or "the Caregiver".

Papagni (2016) suggests that if a brand has associations with more than one archetype, a primary and a secondary archetype can be used as a support. In the case of Aluwave, it can be identified

that “the Creator” is the brand’s primary archetype. This archetype is clearly communicated both within the company but also externally to the customers’ of Aluwave as well. The first associations Aluwave and the customers had about Aluwave was innovation and leading technology. In addition, it can be argued that Aluwave’s secondary archetype is “the Regular guy”. This archetype is complementing the primary archetype of Aluwave and gives the brand a human and close association to the customer. It can also be argued that the secondary archetype distinguishes the brand from its competitors that provide similar products. The secondary archetype could be what makes Aluwave unique in the lighting industry. A higher emphasis on “the Regular guy” could perhaps be a useful communication tool for conveying that Aluwave is a close and intimate company, which has been identified to be lacking.

5.3.4 Brand Positioning

Aluwave describes themselves as being in the high-end segment of the market, but still being able to deliver a good price-performance ratio. If customers are requesting a simpler product, they will deliver that and at the same time match the price point to the quality level. This is in accordance with what Aaker & Shansby (1982) describes as the positioning strategy by price/quality. The customer of Aluwave also identifies Aluwave to be positioned in the high-end segment but at the same time finding them unique in the industry and therefore not having any direct competitors and therefore not a clear position. This implies that Aluwave have been fairly successful in their brand positioning as they have been able to communicate that they are able to deliver high quality in relation to price.

Since Aluwave only has been fairly successful in their positioning of the brand, it could perhaps be beneficial to explore other areas and strategies. A large part of the Aluwave’s brand identity consists of being environmentally friendly. It appears that the company has not been able to effectively position themselves as an environmentally friendly brand as the customers are not identifying Aluwave’s positioning in the market with sustainability. This could indicate that there's a missed opportunity for Aluwave to use positioning as an attribute, even though the environmental aspect is an area that the customers expressed as highly valued. The environmental aspect should therefore be emphasized more and communicated in Aluwave’s brand positioning. By using the strategy positioning by attribute, Aluwave would be able to emphasize their strong focus on the environmental aspects. This positioning strategy aims at highlighting attributes that competitors have ignored and helps companies distinguish themselves from competitors (Aaker & Shansby, 1982). By emphasizing the environmental attribute, Aluwave could strengthen their position in the market and be even more unique, and thereby create a competitive advantage.

Another strong association that makes Aluwave unique was described by the customers to be that Aluwave is a local and close company. This is also a possibility for positioning by attribute that could be useful in strengthening their brand positioning and separating them from competitors and highlighting the aspects of the company that their current customers highly appreciate. It is evident today that those attributes are not communicated through for example their website, which is also confirmed by the customer interviewees that the closeness is not conveyed, but that it is a very important aspect of Aluwave.

5.3.5 Brand Promise

Based on the interviews with Aluwave representatives, it can be said that their brand promise is solving the impossible, meaning that they can provide solutions to the customers that no other competitor in the industry can. Further, it was explained that they promise to put the customer's products at a higher value. The customers described their expectations when interacting with Aluwave was to get world leading technology and customized solutions during the exchange. Further, it was described that Aluwave was solving problems that other suppliers were not able to solve, which indicates that the brand promise “solving the impossible” is communicated and achieved. A contributing factor to choose Aluwave as supplier is because they are always able to solve the customers’ specific requirements and will adapt to the customer instead of the customer adapting to the product.

5. Discussion

Based on the brand equity analysis, it is identified that Aluwave has a weak to medium brand value, due to having a low brand awareness and weak brand image. Even though the customers think highly of Aluwave in many areas it could be harmful if the perception of expanding too quickly and having unclear roles do not change soon. Expanding too quickly could indicate that they do not find Aluwave to be in control, which in the long term could affect the perception of professionalism and weaken their brand image further. Further, it could be perceived as if they focus more on attaining new customers rather than maintaining and developing their current relationships with their customers, which could potentially move them further down the brand loyalty pyramid. Besides, being a product developing partner could make it even more important that the relationship is close and loyalty from customers is high. The role as a product development partner implies that Aluwave works closely with the customer and is present in the customer's

development phase where information and details are shared. This requires trust between the parties and the customer wants to feel that they are being prioritized by Aluwave, which may be lost in Aluwave's focus on expansion.

It seems as if there are uncertainties within Aluwave related to the brand's identity that hinders them from formulating and pursuing a well-thought-out brand strategy. They have not reached conformity regarding which industry they are acting in, whether they are a technology company that serves the lighting industry or if they are a lighting company. Further, they are fragmented in their identity regarding how corporate they are and what the soul of the company is. This in determination could complicate how they think about their brand elements and make it difficult to establish a strong brand position. Because if they were determined in which type of company they are, they could adjust their elements according to their industry and identity and not end up with a sort of bland name and logo that says neither one nor the other about the company. Further, the indecisiveness makes it difficult for Aluwave to establish a position if it's first, not clear which industry they are in and secondly if they don't know who they are and what the soul of the company is. Furthermore, this complicates the company's brand positioning, the elements, attributes, personal characteristics, how should that be communicated if it is not fully determined within the organization.

Even though there is a split view within the company regarding their identity and personality, it has not been reflected down to the customers as they have a fairly unified view of the Aluwave brand. This could be related to the B2B branding literature that emphasizes the importance of relationships between the customer and company representatives (Leek & Christodoulides, 2011). It is through strong relations that the brand identity and personality is created. This contradicts the traditional B2C branding literature which often does not highlight the importance of personal relationships. This could further indicate that brand personality and brand identity have different meanings in B2B compared to B2C literature, and that once again, the personal contact should be highlighted and taken into consideration.

If brand awareness in a B2B context is created through salespeople from the company rather than through brand recall and recognition, the relevance of the brand elements could be questioned to some degree. The high focus on making the brand memorable and stand out, which then might not be as important when personal communication is dominating. Therefore, their flaws within their brand elements may not be vital. Additionally, Kapferer (2012) explains that brand identity is based on how the brand defines itself. It is acknowledged that Aluwave internally has a conflicting

view of their brand identity. Since the sales representatives are responsible for communicating the brand and its identity to its customers, it could indicate that it is more vital in a B2B context that the brand identity is consistent internally, compared to a B2C context.

6.1 Suggestion for Future Research

It is acknowledged by Leek and Christodoulides (2011) that relationships in brand management are more important in a B2B setting. The relationship between sales representatives and the customer is therefore an area that can be further analysed. In hindsight, the research could have benefited from interviewing a combination of salespeople and managers from Aluwave rather than only managers. This would allow the research to identify whether the brand associations and personality that the customers have of a brand is related to the brand itself or if it is more connected to the relationship the customer has with the specific sales representative. Future study could for that reason benefit from having more interviews with the sales representative at Aluwave to identify how they build and maintain customer relationships in their work, which could give insight to how the customer perceives the brand.

6. Conclusions

In terms of brand elements, there is no particular gap between how customers perceive them compared to Aluwave. However, it is evident that there is a gap within Aluwave regarding how well the elements represent Aluwave as a company and if it communicates the correct associations.

The overall value of the brand according to the brand equity theory is identified to be medium. The perceived quality is considered very high and they have strong consistent brand associations among the customers that are as well shared with Aluwave. The weaker areas within brand equity are brand awareness and brand image. It is identified that Aluwave has unclear roles and were perceived by the customer to be expanding too fast, which have affected the brand image negatively. Additionally, Aluwave branding journey is only at its start and therefore have not been able to create a strong brand awareness yet.

In Aluwave's brand strategy, a gap can be identified in terms of the brand being an environmental oriented brand or not. Aluwave defines themselves as being a cleantech company whilst the customers first and foremost identify Aluwave as an innovative and technological company.

Further issues regarding Aluwave's brand identity are that they have not reached conformity within Aluwave regarding how they are and what the soul of the brand is. Further, a gap is identified in terms of how the customers perceive Aluwave's personality, where the customers find Aluwave to be sincere whilst Aluwave perceives themselves as being competent, sophisticated and exciting.

The main issues of the brand Aluwave can be directed to the brand identity. Because Aluwave has not decided on who they are, they can not communicate a clear picture to the customers. This in turn affects the brand image, making the customers perceive Aluwave as unclear. It is also difficult for Aluwave to communicate a brand personality and archetype if the identity is not set. Therefore, it could be beneficial for Aluwave to internally establish a unified identity within themselves. To determine e.g. whether they are a technological company in the lighting industry or a lighting company. This could help them to create a direction for their brand elements and brand strategy. Additionally, there is an opportunity to improve the Aluwave brand by establishing a secondary archetype, as mentioned by Papagni (2016), that can support the main archetype and provide depth to the personality. The possibility to explore and position themselves with another perspective such as environmental or closeness could be beneficial, as this is something that the brand is missing. Also, by communicating these aspects for the brand will also make the brand more unique in the industry.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Connection of Archetypes and Personality Traits

Archetype	Motto	Personality Trait
Innocent	<i>"Free to be you and me"</i>	Sincerity Excitement Competence
Explorer	<i>"Don't fence me in"</i>	Excitement Excitement Ruggedness
Sage	<i>"The truth will set you free"</i>	Excitement Competence Excitement
Hero	<i>"Where there's a will, there's a way"</i>	Excitement Sincerity Ruggedness
Outlaw	<i>"Rules are meant to be broken"</i>	Excitement Ruggedness Sophistication
Magician	<i>"It can happen"</i>	Sincerity Competence Excitement
Regular Guy/Gal	<i>"All men and women are created equal"</i>	Sincerity Competence Sincerity
Lover	<i>"I only have eyes for you"</i>	Sincerity Sophistication Sincerity
Jester	<i>"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution"</i>	Sincerity Sophistication Excitement
Caregiver	<i>"Love your neighbor as yourself"</i>	Sincerity Sincerity Sincerity
Creator	<i>"If it can be imagined, it can be created"</i>	Excitement Excitement Sophistication

Ruler	<i>“Power isn’t everything. It’s the only thing”</i>	Competence Ruggedness Sophistication
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Appendix 2. Template for interviews with Aluwave

Datum:

Namn:

Titel:

Öppningsfrågor

- Kan du börja med att introducera dig samt beskriva lite kort vad du gör och vad du har för ansvarsområden?
- Hur länge har du arbetat med marknadsföring/ bygga varumärke? Hur länge har du arbetat med marknadsföring på Aluwave?
- Kan du beskriva Aluwave som företag?
 - Vad har ni som företag för mål och visioner? Kortsiktigt? Långsiktigt?
 - Vad är er bild av Aluwave om 1/5/10 år?
 - Vad behöver göras för att uppnå visionen?
 - Vad anser du att Aluwave har för grundläggande värderingar? Är de tydligt genompräglade i organisationen?
- Vilken varumärkesbild tror du existerar hos era intressenter?
 - Skiljer sig denna mellan olika intressenter (Kunder, investerare, anställda, leverantörer o.s.v.)
- Identitet
 - Kan du beskriva Aluwaves identitet?
 - Hur vill ni att Aluwave ska uppfattas?
 - Vad står namnet Aluwave för?
- Position
 - Vilken roll/position på marknaden har ni?
 - Vad gör ni för att det ska uppfattas på det sättet?

Positionering

Utifrån en skala mellan 1-10, hur skulle ni säga att Aluwave placerar sig utifrån nedanstående parametrar.

Låg kvalitet

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Hög kvalitet

Lågt pris

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Högt pris

Personality

- Om ni var tvungna att beskriva Aluwave med mänskliga karaktärsdrag, hur hade ni beskrivit er då?
- Har ni en brand story som ni kommunicerar till kund?
- Vad är anledningen till att ni valde att byta logga?
 - Vad tycker ni att er logga sänder för signaler?
 - Vad skickade er gamla logga ut för signaler?
- Vad tror ni att kunderna upplever som er styrka?
- Vad tror ni att kunderna har för associationer till er?

Brand promise

- Vad lovar ni era kunder vid ett utbyte? Kvalite? Upplevelse? Teknisk specifikation?
- Hur arbetar ni med att leva upp till detta löfte?
 - Tycker nu att ni lever upp till er löfte?
 - Vad kan en kund förvänta sig när de köper av er?

Övrigt

- Det finns en teori om att alla företag kan identifiera sig utifrån en av 12 olika arketyper. Om ni var tvungna att välja en som Aluwave kan identifiera sig med, vilken hade ni då valt? [Visa bild på de 12]

Kunden

- Varför tror ni att kunderna väljer just Aluwave?
- Har alla kunder samma inköpsprocess?

Konkurrenser

- Vilka är era konkurrenter och vilka produkter/tjänster säljer dem?
- Vad särskiljer er från konkurrenterna? Hur differentierar ni er?

Initiativen

- Vad för initiativ har ni tagit? Översiktligt och sedan djupgående om de olika
- Vad var syftet med dem?
- Vad förväntade ni er för resultat?
- Vad upplever ni att resultatet blev?
- Vad har ni för framtida initiativ? Och hur tänker ni att de ska hjälpa er att nå målen med ert varumärkesmål?

Appendix 3. Template for interviews with Customers

Datum:

Namn:

Titel:

Öppningsfrågor

- Kan du börja med att introducera dig samt beskriva lite kort vad du gör och vad du har för ansvarsområden?
- Kan du beskriva Aluwave som företag?
- Vad är er bild av Aluwave i framtiden?
- Känner du till Aluwaves grundvärderingar inom företaget?
 - Vad anser du om dessa värderingar? Lever de upp till dem?
- När du tänker på Aluwave, vad är de första associationerna som du får upp då? (positiva/negativa)
- Om ni var tvungna att beskriva Aluwave med mänskliga karaktärsdrag, hur hade ni beskrivit er då?
- Vad anser du unikt med Aluwave?
- Det finns en teori om att alla företag kan identifiera sig utifrån en av 12 olika arketyper. Om ni var tvungna att välja en som ni identifierar Aluwave med, vilken hade ni då valt? [Visa bild på de 12]

Brand elements

- Vet du vad namnet Aluwave står för?
- Känner du till Aluwaves slogan?
- När du hör sloganen "*Solving complex lighting demands for leading luminaire players.*" vad tänker du på då?
- Vad tänker du på när du ser denna loggan "visar deras gamla logga"
- Vad tänker du på när du ser denna loggan "visar nya loggan"
- Känner ni till historien bakom Aluwave? Hur startades Aluwave?

- Hur skulle du beskriva din relation med Aluwave?
- Vad förväntar ni er när ni köper från Aluwave?
- Lever produkterna och tjänsterna ni köpt upp till era förväntningar?
- Vilka fördelar finns det med att köpa Aluwaves produkter och tjänster?
- Har ni varit inne på Aluwaves hemsida?
 - Har ni varit inne på den tidigare och har ni varit inne på den tidigare?
 - Vad får ni för associationer när ni besöker hemsidan?
 - Vad använder ni hemsidan till? huvudsakliga syftet med hemsidan?
 - Uppfattar ni att hemsidan speglar Aluwave som företag?

Köpmönster

- Hur kom ni i kontakt med Aluwave?
- Hur går ni tillväga när ni köper produkter eller tjänster från Aluwave?
- Hur går ni tillväga när ni köper produkter eller tjänster från andra aktörer?
- Hur länge har ni varit kund till Aluwave?
- Varför valde ni just Aluwave?
 - Kvalite? Pris? Teknisk specifikation?
- Vad upplever ni att Aluwave lovar er vid era utbyten? Upplevelse, kvalite osv.
 - Lever de upp till det?

Positionering

- Vilken positionering på marknaden upplever ni att Aluwave har?
- Hur upplever ni att Aluwaves kvalite är? Lever den upp till era förväntningar? Hur står den sig i jämförelse med konkurrenter?

- Utifrån en skala mellan 1-10, hur skulle ni säga att Aluwave placerar sig utifrån nedanstående parametrar.

Låg kvalite

Hög kvalite

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

-

-

Lågt pris

Högt pris

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- Vad anser ni vara Aluwaves styrka?
- Vad anser i vara Aluwaves största svaghet?
- Rangordna följande attribut utifrån hur mycket ni tycker att det stämmer överens med Aluwave
 - Hållbara
 - Hög teknisk kompetens
 - Flexibla
 - Snabba
 - Innovativa
 - Kundanpassade

Appendix 4 Aluwaves Logotypes

Old logotype



New Logotype

aluwave