An Analysis of Brand Perception of a Selected Company

Alžběta Theuerová

Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2022/2023

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE
(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: **Alžběta Theuerová**
Osobní číslo: **H20795**
Studijní program: **B0231P090005 Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **Prezenční**
Téma práce: **Analýza vnímání značky vybrané společnosti**

Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění a studium odborné literatury
Formulace cílů a specifikace metod práce
Charakteristika vybrané společnosti
Analýza vnímání značky vybrané společnosti
Výsledky analýzy a tvorba doporučení pro zlepšení

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Gabay, Jonathan. 2015. *Brand Psychology: Consumer Perceptions, Corporate Reputations*. London: KoganPage.
Heyward, Emily. 2020. *Obsessed: Building a Brand People Love from Day One*. New York: Penguin.
Kuchař, Vladimíř. 2012. *Medonosný marketing*. Prague: BizBooks.
Steenkamp, Jan-Benedict. 2017. *Global Brand Strategy: World-wise Marketing in the Age of Branding*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Van den Bergh, Joeri, and Mattias Behrer. 2016. *How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generations Y & Z*. 3rd ed. London: KoganPage.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Ing. Zuzana Vaculčíková, Ph.D.**
Ústav podnikové ekonomiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **7. listopadu 2022**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **9. května 2023**

L.S.

_____   _____
Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.   **doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.**
děkan   ředitel ústavu

Ve Zlíně dne 2. března 2023

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. o vysokých školách a o změně a doplnění dalších zákonů (zákon o vysokých školách), ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby [1];
- beru na vědomí, že bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3 [2];
- podle § 60 [3] odst. 1 autorského zákona má UTB ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 [3] odst. 2 a 3 mohu užít své dílo – bakalářskou práci - nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům.

Prohlašuji, že
- elektronická a tištěná verze bakalářské práce jsou totožné;
- na bakalářské práci jsem pracoval samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem citoval. V případě publikace výsledků budu uveden jako spoluautor.

Ve Zlíně ....

(2) Disertační, diplomové, bakalářské a rigorózní práce odevzdané uchazečem k obhajobě musí být též nejméně pět pracovních dnů před konáním obhajoby zveřejněny k nahlížení veřejnosti v místě určeném vnitřním předpisem vysoké školy nebo není-li tak určeno, v místě pracoviště vysoké školy, kde se má konat obhajoba práce. Každý si může ze zveřejněné práce pořizovat na své náklady výpisy, opisy nebo rozmnoženiny.

(3) Platí, že odevzdáním práce autor souhlasí se zveřejněním své práce podle tohoto zákona, bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby.

2) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 35 odst. 3:

(3) Do práva autorského také nezasahuje škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení, užije-li nikoli za účelem přímého nebo nepřímého hospodářského nebo obchodního prospěchu k výuce nebo k vlastní potřebě dílo vytvořené žákem nebo studentem ke splnění školních nebo studijních povinností vyplývajících z jeho právního vztahu ke škole nebo školskému či vzdělávacího zařízení (školní dílo).

3) zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, § 60 Školní dílo:

(1) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení mají za obvyklých podmínek právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla (§ 35 odst. 3). Odpírá-li autor takového díla udělit svolení bez vážného důvodu, mohou se tyto osoby domáhat nahrazení chybějícího projevu jeho vůle u soudu. Ustanovení § 35 odst. 3 zůstává nedotčeno.

(2) Není-li sjednáno jinak, může autor školního díla své dílo užít či poskytnout jinému licenci, není-li to v rozporu s oprávněnými zájmy školy nebo školského či vzdělávacího zařízení.

(3) Škola nebo školské či vzdělávací zařízení jsou oprávněny požadovat, aby jim autor školního díla z výdělku jím dosaženého v souvislosti s užitím díla či poskytnutím licence podle odstavce 2 přiměřeně přispěl na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložily, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše; přitom se přihlédne k výši výdělku dosaženého školou nebo školským či vzdělávacím zařízením z užití školního díla podle odstavce 1.

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na vnímání značky z pozice zákazníka, protože je klíčovou součástí úspěchu značky. Teoretická část této práce se zaměřuje na vymezení pojmů jako je značka, hodnota značky, vnímání značky, marketingová komunikace a další. Praktická část se skládá z představení vybrané společnosti a analýzy anonymního dotazníku zaměřeného na cílovou skupinu vybrané společnosti. V závěru práce jsou na základě analýzy výzkumu předloženy doporučení na zlepšení vnímání značky vybrané společnosti.

Klíčová slova: značka, vnímání zákazníkem, positioning, marketingová komunikace, povědomí

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with brand perception from the customer's point of view as it is a crucial part of the brand's success. The theoretical part focuses on defining the terms like brand, brand equity, brand perception, marketing communication and more. The practical part consists of an introduction to the selected company and an analysis of an anonymous questionnaire aimed at the target audience of the selected company. Finally, the thesis presents recommendations for improving the selected company's brand perception based on the research analysis.

Keywords: brand, customer perception, positioning, marketing communication, awareness

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Brands are everywhere. They are a part of everyone's everyday lives and many times people do not even realize some of them. Especially in the last 20 years, the number of brands has risen a lot and it is becoming harder and harder for a brand to become successful by every day. The only way to become a successful and growing brand is through satisfied and happy customers who share their experience further.

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to evaluate the brand perception of a selected company by its customers and propose potential improvements in their marketing communication. The selected brand's perception will be analysed through anonymous research conveyed through a questionnaire.

The company selected for this thesis is a Czech subsidiary of a German holding company in the baby food industry. It has been agreed with the brand's management that it will stay anonymous throughout this thesis because it contains sensitive matters for them. It will be referred to as 'the selected company'.

The theoretical part of the thesis is divided into three chapters – Brand, Marketing and Research Methodology. The chapters focus on defining basic terms connected to brand perception such as brand, brand equity, brand awareness, positioning, target audience, marketing communication and more.

The analytical part also consists of three chapters – Company Description, Research Analysis and Recommendations. The first chapter introduces the brand of the selected company. The second chapter is an analysis of survey results, while the survey was created by the author. And in the final chapter recommendations for the improvement of the brand perception are given.

I. THEORY

1 BRAND

The world without brands is unimaginable. Brands have been around for centuries and their origin is unclear because one could perceive the start of "brands" at the time, as Steenkamp says, of barter and when people were known for their best skill and were called after that, e.g. the butcher. Everyone knew each other and whenever someone made a mistake or their products were not good enough, it spread quickly (Steenkamp 2017, 1). The principle then, was the same as today. Only nowadays everything happens worldwide which, as Steenkamp emphasizes, is thanks to the mass media breakout in the 1960s. During this time the number of brands drastically increased and he took over the name for this phenomenon which is the "Cambrian explosion of brands" (Steenkamp 2017, 2).

The word *brand*, according to Keller and Swaminathan, is acquired from the Old Norse word *brandr*. The exact meaning of this word is "to burn" and it is connected to a technique which is still widely used by farmers to mark their animals to confirm their ownership (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 32).

But the word *brand* has a different definition at this moment. As Keller and Swaminathan quote the American Marketing Association, a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition." However, they also point out that many professionals in the marketing field see a brand as something bigger, something that "has created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence" and that this difference between the two definitions of the word *brand* creates confusion when speaking about related topics (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 32). Furthermore, even Heyward adds on to this and highlights that a brand should not be seen only as what people usually imagine under branding, "a name, a logo, fonts, colors, a tagline." While these elements are crucial they are not the only part of what a brand is about. They represent the visible outer part which is relevant but the fundamental part is the one that customers can experience (Heyward 2020, Introduction).

By this time more and more companies have come to a key realization that Keller and Swaminathan comment on, which is the fact that the associations that customers develop with their brand names connected to their goods and services are their most priced assets (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 32). To support the statement, Steenkamp also comments that consumers perceive "brand name as an indicator of quality" (Steenkamp 2017, 7).

Even though, as Steenkamp commented, we live in a "branded world" where an average male says about 7000 words per day compared to the fact that we see more than 5000 brands in the same time frame, some people are still unsure about the importance of brands. According to Steenkamp, a brand should not only make customers' lives easier by simplifying the product choice-making procedure thanks to the knowledge and possibly familiarity with the brand which produces it, but it also minimizes the risk of the purchase. If the consumer discovers something less than satisfactory for him, he can choose a different brand. The last main point why brands are important is that they convey emotions. The same brand of detergent still smells like home, the national vehicle brand brings a sense of belonging and more (Steenkamp 2017, 6-8). Keller and Swaminathan confirm the statements regarding the overwhelming and fast world we live in, as well as that powerful brands should be able to help people make their life easier by reducing risk and simplifying choices. However, it is in the hands of marketing whether building, nourishing and growing those powerful brands to deliver value to their customers will be successful or not (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 32).

1.1 Brand Equity

There are two aspects to a brand equity concept. It is derived from cognitive psychology and information economics (Rahman et al. 2018, as cited in Schmitz and Villaseñor-Román 2018, Introduction). However, the research has been mainly focused on the cognitive psychology of the consumer (Christodoulides and De Chernatony 2010, as cited in Schmitz and Villaseñor-Román 2018, Introduction).

Kotler and Keller explain that brand equity is created by consumer perception which adds value to products and services. Therefore, brand equity is reflected by customers' experience not only in the way that they perceive the brand but also in the pricing, position in the market and the revenue that the products and services generate (Kotler and Keller 2016, 325). This corresponds with the statement of Heyward that for a company to derive success, especially in this time of overstimulation, a brand must be more than just the top layer (Heyward 2020, Introduction).

Customer-based brand equity (CBBE) is the concept introduced by Keller and Swaminathan. Compared to other points of view on brand equity, the CBBE concept is supposed to take the understanding of brand equity and the way it should be worked with to another level. It is supposed to help answer two questions which are commonly discussed in brand marketing:

1. "What makes a brand strong?"
2. "How do you build a strong brand?"

Since the CBBE concept depends on customers' views and assumes that the strength of a brand relies on the knowledge and experience that the customer has, it is crucial to adopt the right marketing strategy which has the objective to satisfy customers' wants and needs (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 68). According to the study of Peco-Torres, Polo-Peña and Frías Jamilena, customer relationship management is a process that strongly and beneficially impacts the CBBE (Peco-Torres, Polo-Peña and Frías Jamilena, 2023, chap. 5.1).

As the formal definition of CBBE, Keller and Swaminathan state that it is the contrasting approach and reaction of customers to the marketing of the brand based on their knowledge concerning the brand. In addition, it is recognized if the brand has positive or negative CBBE. Positive CBBE is indicated when a customer responds positively to a product and its marketing when already having an experience and knowledge about the brand which produces it, as opposed to an unknown brand. This customer is then less sensitive to changes in pricing, and marketing strategy, and is more likely to accept new products, etc. On the other hand, negative CBBE is when a customer responds negatively to a product and its marketing because he is familiar with the brand producing it, compared to an unknown brand. Furthermore, there are three key parts which belong to the definition:

1. "differential effect"
2. "brand knowledge"
3. "customer response to marketing"

The first part refers to the fact that brand equity comes from different customers' reactions. If the reactions are the same, then there is no difference between the branded product and some generic product, therefore it is assumed pricing would be the main battle. Second, the differences come from the knowledge of customers about the brand. What they have experienced, seen, read, and heard about the brand. Even though the brand marketing is trying to affect them, it still depends on the customer what he will remember. And lastly, the different customer reactions to brand marketing are mirrored in their "perceptions, preferences and behaviour" which are all related to brand marketing (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 69).

To be more specific and show exactly what is meant by CBBE, Keller and Swaminathan use an example of blind product taste testing. Two groups of consumers get the same product, however, only one group knows what brand it belongs to. The group's opinions differ at all times even though they tasted the same thing. Thus, it was deduced that

knowledge about a brand affects consumers' perception of the product (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 69).

Based on the brand equity concept definition it is clear that brand equity is hard to quantify therefore it is not mentioned in the financial reports of companies. However, companies have many ways of how to attempt to evaluate it for their marketing purposes. Kotler and Keller describe two different approaches how to assess sources of CBBE which are complementary and should be combined to get a full and objective result. The indirect approach attempts to measure potential CBBE sources by evaluating consumers' brand awareness and brand associations. The direct approach measures how consumers' reaction to different marketing strategies changes based on their brand knowledge (Kotler and Keller 2016, 338).

1.2 Brand Perception

Brand perception is understood as the way that consumers create opinions, understand and interpret a brand, based on the sum of their experiences, associations and beliefs with the brand. This consumer perception can be influenced by many factors, not only by their own product or service experience and marketing communication but also by other consumers' experiences and beliefs known as word-of-mouth. According to Wheeler, the success of a brand revolves around the customer's perception of the brand (Wheeler 2017, 2).

Products and services are the main aspects that create customers' brand perception as they are the key output that they meet with. Keller and Swaminathan report that perceived quality and perceived value are what significantly influence consumer decisions about products and services, hence making them the most valuable brand associations. Perceived quality is about the belief of the customer regarding the product or service's uniqueness and quality in comparison with the competitors. Some of the specific features of the product or service that customers take into account throughout categories are ingredients, reliability, style and design. However, especially in recent years of growing supply and product improvements, which has led to customers being more demanding in the case of product quality, it has been hard to reach a desired level of perceived quality. The customer also has a vision of what the cost of the product should be which is captured by the term perceived value. Hence marketers have to apply certain strategies to "sell the right product at the right price" (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 186-191).

Brand associations are created through the knowledge of the consumer. Keller and Swaminathan state, that in order to understand how consumers' knowledge works an

"associative network memory model" was developed. It shows memory as a structured model of "nodes and links". Nodes are supposed to represent remembered information and links show the strength of connections between nodes. Based on this concept, knowledge about a certain brand is a node and the associations that were created based on the knowledge are the links connected to the node. With regard to this, brand knowledge can be divided into two parts – brand awareness and brand image (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 71).

1.2.1 Brand Awareness

According to the associative network memory model, brand awareness should picture how strong the node about brand knowledge is and it measures the ability of the consumer to recognize the brand under different circumstances (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 71).

Keller and Swaminathan state a division of brand awareness into two parts – brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition shows the ability of a consumer to recognize the brand to which he was already exposed when facing it again. Brand recall is slightly more challenging as it shows a consumer's ability to recall the brand when given some sort of cue e.g. the product category (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 72).

Steenkamp also divides brand awareness into brand recognition and brand recall. However, he adds a simple explanation of these two terms. He calls brand recognition "aided awareness" and brand recall "unaided awareness". Moreover, he provides a figure which shows a clear distinction between the two phrases and what else can be distinguished within brand recall ability:
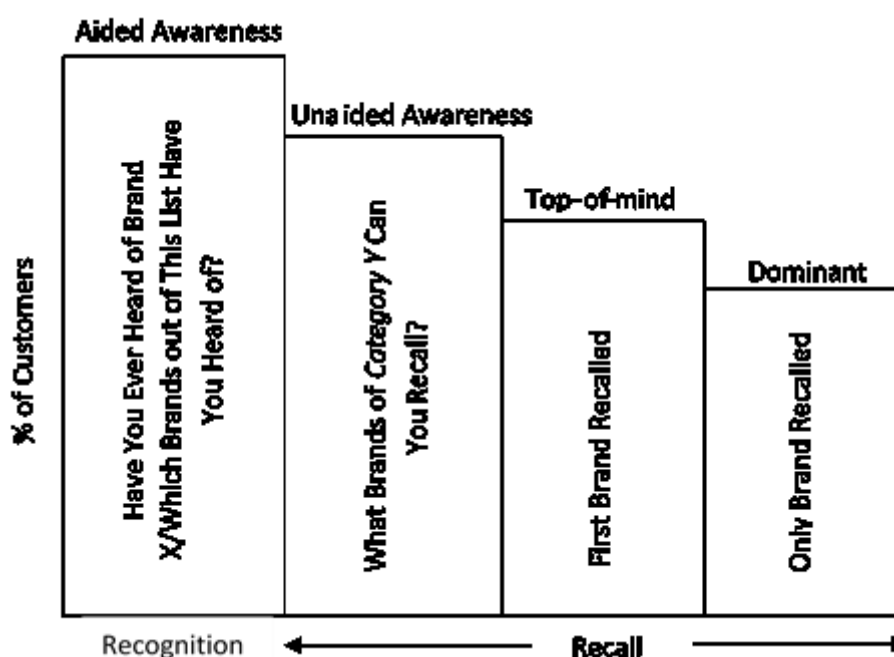

Figure 1 – "Brand Awareness Waterfall" (adapted from Steenkamp 2017, 247)

Steenkamp calls it the "brand awareness waterfall" and explains that there is a significant decline in the percentage of people who recognize the brand when asked about it and people who recall only one brand when given a certain criterion it must fit into; therefore, the shape reminds of a waterfall. In addition, there are two more segments which have not been mentioned and that is top-of-mind and dominant awareness. Top-of-mind awareness means that a consumer recalls the brand as first among others in the same category. In addition, if it was the only brand he could recall, brand awareness is dominant (Steenkamp 2017, 246-247).

1.2.2 Brand Image

Kotler and Keller emphasize that every brand's goal is to generate as many positive, powerful, original and satisfactory brand associations as possible to shape a brand image (Kotler and Keller 2016, 32).

When speaking about brand image, Keller and Swaminathan begin with the fact that building brand image comes secondary after being successful in building a certain level of brand awareness. Provided that, they continue with what also Kotler and Keller emphasized, which is that to create a positive brand image, customers must associate as many positive, powerful and original memories with the brand as they can. Those associations are created by each customer differently, in many different ways, such as by word-of-mouth, own product experience, commercials and others. In addition, brand associations are either brand attributes which are "descriptive features that characterize product or service", or brand benefits which are connected by customers to brand attributes and are "the personal value and meaning" (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 76).

1.2.3 Brand Loyalty

The significance of customer experience and satisfaction is brought up by Keller and Swaminathan in a statement which indicates that without the satisfaction of customers' wants and needs and delivering even more than expected, there would be no brand loyalty (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 186).

Kotler and Keller imply that customer loyalty may sometimes be overlooked even though the benefits are significant. Whether it gives the brand a certain freedom in implementing changes, or secured demand for their products, or the fact that loyal customers do not mind buying products that are 20 – 25 percent more expensive than the competitors. Likewise, it creates a barrier for new brands in the same market because loyalty is not solely about purchasing the product or service but also about the emotional connection with the

brand (Kotler and Keller 2016, 323). Bergh and Behrer state that nostalgia has a similar impact on customers as loyalty in the way that they are willing to pay more money for the products of the brand they feel nostalgic for (Bergh and Behrer 2016, 102).

By analysing brand loyalty status, which is described by Kotler and Keller, the company can learn about its strengths and weaknesses. There are usually envisioned four loyalty group types of consumers:

1. "Hard-core loyals"
2. "Split loyals"
3. "Shifting loyals"
4. "Switchers"

The first group is loyal to one brand at all times and may help to find the brand's strengths. The second group are loyal to a couple of brands at once which can help to find the biggest competitors. The third group are consumers who switch their loyalty from one brand to another and the company may find its weakness thanks to why did the customer leave. And the last group are consumers who are not loyal to any brand (Kotler and Keller 2016, 282).

1.3 Brand Management

Brand management, according to Wheeler, has a structure, is planned, and is a process of shaping and managing the various elements of a brand's identity, perception, and positioning. All in order to create a positive brand image. The goal of brand management is to build and maintain strong brand equity, success and drive customer loyalty (Wheeler 2017, 8).

Strategic brand management by Keller and Swaminathan is defined as a process of proposing and performing "marketing strategies and activities to build, measure and manage brand equity". The process of strategic brand management has four parts:

1. "Identifying and developing brand plans;"
2. "Designing and implementing brand marketing programs;"
3. "Measuring and interpreting brand performance;"
4. "Growing and sustaining brand equity." (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 59)

1.3.1 Brand Building

According to Keller and Swaminathan, brand building has four steps. Each step must be accomplished before moving on to the next one and every one of them is represented with a question. The questions are:

1. "Who are you? – brand identity"

2. "What are you? – brand meaning"

3. "What about you? What do I think or feel about you? – brand responses"

4. "What about you and me? What kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you? – brand relationship"

These questions represent the stages of brand development, and it creates a "branding ladder" on which the customers' brand awareness and emotional connection to the brand climb (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 107-108).

Steenkamp expresses that the peak and connection of all the hard work to build a brand is the customers' knowledge (Stennkamp 2017, 251). A big part of nowadays brand building strategies is social media.

1.3.2 Positioning

Geyrhalter presents three main questions that place a brand into its market position. The questions are concerning the brand's difference from others in the field, for what reason the products should be attractive to consumers and how the brand is viewed by them. Finding the right answers to position the brand is key as it is a starting point for "developing a business direction, marketing message, and overall identity". In addition, what may help with choosing a positioning for a brand is thinking of what it helps your customers to solve in their everyday life. There are three categories and every positioning belongs in at least one of them:

1. "Functional"

2. "Symbolic"

3. "Experiential"

Functional positioning suggests the brand helps to address a trouble or delivers something materialistic; symbolic positioning indicates the brand either offers a sense of community or enhances one's self-perception and experiential positioning proposes the brand contributes to physiological or psychological invigoration (Geyrhalter 2016, chap. 1).

Another point of view on positioning is brought by Wheeler who states that brands' positioning is constantly evolving whether it is thanks to social media, business changes, trends or each confrontation with customers, stakeholders, and many more. The crucial part is to recognize what are competitors' intentions, where the brand has the power against them, what customers want, and follow the evolution of the world (Wheeler 2017, 140). On the other hand, Becker and Gijsenberg highlight the known marketing theory which suggests

that brands' positioning should be "consistent and unique" (Aaker 2012, Keller 2088, as cited in Becker and Gijsenberg 2023, 128).

Likewise, Kotler and Keller approach brands' positioning similarly and define it as "the act of designing a company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market". They also target the issue of either evolving or staying consistent with positioning by recommending that it should balance between the current state and future aspirations (Kotler and Keller 2016, 297-298).

1.3.3 Target Audience

Target audience consists of the consumers that will probably want to buy the products or services that a brand is offering. Keller and Swaminathan imply that the importance is not only in finding the consumers who want the type of products or services the brand is offering but also in being able to divide them and detect who has the same values as the brand and then target them (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 78).

Kuchař makes a point by saying that brands want to make money. However, they should not focus on their wants but on the wants of their customers because the more the brand focuses on itself, the less it gets. Instead, the more they focus on the customers' wants the more they get from them (author's translation, Kuchař 2012, 39).

2   MARKETING

Marketing is focused on satisfying the consumers' wants and needs and as Godin says, you can find it anywhere. People got so used to it that they do not even notice it. However, marketing still wants to get the most out of everything (Godin 2018, XI-XII).

Marketers' have a lot of goals. And one of them, as Keller and Swaminathan emphasize, is the importance to show the customers that brands that make the same products are not necessarily the same as well (Keller and Swaminathan 2020, 72).

2.1 Marketing Communication

A brand does not just exist on its own. It needs marketing communication to support it. However, not only to support it but more like Percy explains, marketing communication shapes and gives the brand its significance. He goes as far as to say that establishing a brand might be unattainable without marketing communication (Percy 2018, 24). Kotler and Keller call marketing communications "the voice" of the brand (Kotler and Keller 2016, 580).

Although a lot of people see marketing communication solely as advertisements on the TV, on the Internet, billboards, etc. it is much broader. Percy states that is it "everything: packaging, the outside of the truck that transports the company's products, sales kits for the trade, 2 Brands and IMC business cards, sponsorships, store signs, collateral, retail store layout (if the brand is sold at retail, or is in fact a retail store), newsletters". Therefore, it is clear that marketing communications have a lot of space to promote brands, yet it is not easy because all of the channels have to be synchronized and send the same message to consumers (Percy 2018, 24-25).

There has been an enormous development and change in technology in the last twenty years. Marketing communication means have at least doubled thanks to social media. Wheeler states that social media is now a regular and pricy expense on a company's Profit and Loss Statement. While companies are not able to evaluate the return on this social media expense yet, it is obvious how much it helps to engage the customers in spreading the knowledge of a brand and the creation of a brand. Retweets and shares help to spread information much faster than any worldwide advertisement (Wheeler 2017, 76).

Nevertheless, advertisements still remain to be one of the channels through which the customer discovers new goods and concepts. It is about finding a creative way to build a strong and positive association between the product or service and the customer (Wheeler 2017, 182).

As a result of the social media growth, some companies have tried to engage with consumers on every platform. But sometimes it is better to remember that less is more, and as Wheeler advises, companies should find platforms where most of their potential customers and current customers are and focus on those. They should also consider the size of the social media team and how many platforms they can operate. Another recommendation was to stick to the 80/20 rule. Eighty percent devote to creating a community and content and use only twenty percent for marketing the brand, products and services (Wheeler 2017, 77). On the other hand, brands should not forget what building a community means. Heyward points out the brands that think a community is built by a full comment section are aiming at the wrong target. A community is formed by "shared values" (Heyward 2020, 64).

2.1.1 Customer Overstimulation

Kuchař is one of many who talk about the overstimulation of people. There are thousands of advertisements that every consumer encounters on a daily basis and they might not remember a single one of them. That is because they have built an advertisement blindness. Although in the past advertisements were a fun distraction, their number rapidly grew over the years and people started to ignore them (author's translation, Kuchař 2012, 66-70). Gabay states that in the first ten seconds of an advertisement video, up to twenty percent of people stop watching, and in the next five seconds the number of people losing interest almost doubles (Gabay 2015, chap. 20).

The problem then continues, as Kuchař explains, because every brand is trying to be the one which catches the attention of the consumer and it becomes a vicious circle. The way out is by getting permission for communication from the consumer personally. It lowers the expenses and the brand knows it communicates directly to the potential customer (author's translation, Kuchař 2012, 71-72).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Marketing research can be sometimes viewed as the same concept as market research, states Bradley, however, there is a distinction between the two. Market research falls under the general term of marketing research and focuses on a particular market category and examines its consumers and their usage of products or services. On the other hand, marketing research is broader and analyses the various factors that are taken into account while meeting the wants and needs of customers. It assists with optimizing the marketing mix and takes into account every step that results in satisfying the customer (Bradley 2013, 4). Bradley also mentions that marketing research is a crucial instrument in growing brand equity (Bradley 2013, 272).

Two types of data can be used in research. Primary data, as Solomon explains, is gathered by the researchers themselves and secondary data is information obtained by someone else (Solomon 2020, 591). Bradley calls them "second-hand" and "old" because they once were primary data (Bradley 2013, 70).

3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research, as Hague et al. point out, implies its meaning by the expression 'quantitative'. This research works with lots of data which allows it to make a statistical inquiry. The distinction between the number of respondents for qualitative or quantitative research is not unified, but according to statistics supposing that 30 people answer an open-ended question all imaginable options should be mentioned (Hague et al. 2016, 105).

3.1.1 Survey

A survey is one of the tools used for quantitative research. Especially online surveys, as Hague et al. comment, became very popular and are the most common source of data for quantitative research. Their popularity is hidden in the convenience of easy access through a phone, tablet, computer, or laptop. Due to this modern progress, the price of the survey is minimal, the spreading pace is fast and the completion too (Hague et al. 2016, 107).

The survey, as described by Solomon, is created by a series of open-ended or close-ended questions. The question types can be combined or only one of the types can be used. Open-ended questions provide the respondent with the freedom to answer in his own words. Close-ended questions require the respondent to choose from a set of provided answers or to answer using a Likert scale (Solomon 2020, 592).

3.1.2   Interview

An interview is another tool of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. However, there are two types of interviews. One type is a structured interview with prepared questions and the other type is an unstructured interview with no questions prepared ahead. As Bradley states, the unstructured interview belongs more to the qualitative method because its purpose is to get as much quality information as possible on some kind of predetermined topic (Bradley 2013, 15, 212).

II. ANALYSIS

4 COMPANY DESCRIPTION

For the purpose of this bachelor's thesis brand perception analysis, a selected company has been chosen. The company operates in the Czech market, however, it is a subsidiary of a German holding company. The holding company is a family business with lots of history currently led by the fourth generation of the founder family. According to the NACE code the selected company is classified in the category G – Wholesale and Retail Trade, and under the number 46.19 – sale of a variety of goods and 47.1 – retail sale in non-specialized stores.

The selected company specializes in products for babies like formula milk, baby food and baby care, but it also offers cosmetic products for moms. In Germany, the holding company is very successful with over 50 percent of the market share and has subsidiaries in more than 50 countries all over the world. Nevertheless, the selected company is far from this achievement in the Czech Republic with only around 10 percent of the market share.

The philosophy of the company is clear and simple. It offers quality, sustainable and mostly organic products. Some of their products are also climate positive which means that they give nature more than they take. As a result, that ranks them among the first companies producing baby food that achieved this. Provided that, if the selected company was to be classified according to the pricing of their products, they would be among the priciest in the Czech Republic.

It was decided to leave the selected company anonymous throughout this thesis after consultation with the company's management. Internal information about the selected company comes from the consultations which were done throughout the process of writing the analytical part of the thesis.

4.1 Market Position of the Selected Company

The reason why the popularity of the holding company in Germany is greater than that of the selected company in the Czech market, even though they offer the same products, is unclear and there is probably more than one influencing factor. However, a few reasons might be that not only the holding company in Germany represents a home product which brings a sense of nationality to some people, but it also has a longer history on the market, since 1956, which is a time when there might not have been as many brands to choose from. So that could have caused many generations of mothers to have used their products and have developed a positive brand image and passed their positive experience on to other generations of new mothers. As a result, a little barrier for new brands in the market was possibly created thanks to the emotional connection the customers have with the holding

company. Contrariwise, the selected company appeared on the Czech market in 1999 which is more than 40 years later.

The target audience of the selected company is mainly mothers with children up to three years old. The marketers' goal, as explained in the interview, is to "find" pregnant women and introduce them to the brand so that when their baby arrives they already have the knowledge and possibly some positive brand associations to know what their options are. The company's main focus is to sell formula milk, baby food and baby cosmetics. However, to help them target pregnant women they also offer cosmetics for mothers to care for their skin while pregnant. Moreover, they also offer baby wipes to have a broader product range which is convenient for mothers who do not have much time and have to be quick when shopping. Therefore, it is easier to buy more sorts of products from one brand and save decision-making time.

The market position of the selected company is constant in the way that even from the beginning of the holding company, it has promoted itself as organic and family-based which are attributes that are important to mothers who want the best for their children and put family above all. Contrariwise, its marketing position is also evolving and going with the flow of new trends by expanding its organic attribute to sustainability and climate positivity. Those are two important concepts that became widely known in the past few years and refer to being kind and considerate of our planet.

The positioning of the selected company can be sorted into two categories based on what it helps to solve for their customers in their everyday life. The first category would be functional because it offers mothers a solution to the question 'what should they feed their children with' by offering children food. The second category would be symbolic because the brand is trying to promote itself as natural, the closest formula milk to breastmilk, etc. Therefore, by choosing this brand mothers should perceive it as they give their children the best they can and that should also make them better mothers in their own eyes.

The competition of the selected company are not only companies in the same industry that offer the same or similar products and could serve as substitutes, but it is much broader looking at it from the market point of view, where basically everything that satisfies the same need is a competition. In that case, also normal food (as adults consume) and also breastmilk are competitors of the selected company.

4.2 Marketing Communication of the Selected Company

Companies that want to succeed need to follow the recent marketing trends, like using social media, influencers and so on. However, to get the most out of marketing communication, it is still good to combine it with the 'old-fashioned' advertisements on TV or similar.

4.2.1 Offline Marketing

Offline marketing's downside is that it cannot be specifically targeted at a consumer. It is assumed that the consumer of the target audience will appear at the place of the advertisement, e.g. the pharmacy, however, there will be other consumers too who are not a part of the target audience of the brand.

The selected company is aware that marketing communication is not only about advertisements. What they especially use to communicate is their baby cosmetics packaging. They use it to communicate not only with their baby customers but also the adult ones at the same time. It is commonly known that the packaging of baby cosmetics can be very colourful and crazy which is not a cup of style of every mother. The selected company produces their packaging in calm and pleasant colours, such as white and light green to satisfy the want of mothers of aesthetic products. Meanwhile, the packaging is entertaining and interesting for children because most of them are made in the shape of animals, like a turtle or a hippo.

Furthermore, they use paid advertisements on different e-shops where their products are offered, online and paper magazines which are targeted at mothers, and their advertisement videos are featured on TV. Advertisement videos are a popular way to advertise, although it is tricky because they have to be catchy and not too long to attract consumers' attention. The selected company has several advertisement videos. Their newest ones have two different lengths. The advertised product and the message are the same, however, one video is longer and the message more explained and the other is shorter and briefer. According to the theory that after 15 seconds of a video, almost 40 percent of viewers are not paying attention anymore, their longer advertisement is too long because it lasts 25 seconds. Contrariwise, the shorter video is almost perfect because it has enough time to convey the message and does not bore the viewers because it has only 13 seconds.

The brand is among the recommended to mothers in a lot of maternity hospitals, specifically 9 out of 10 maternity hospitals in Czech use their baby cosmetics, as well as by paediatricians, they also have posters in pharmacies where their products are provided. However, they do not employ in-store marketing. They explain that the concentration of mothers and their children in stores is too low for the selected company to be worth the

money needed to be spent on e.g. tastings, games for children, etc. They are the main sponsors of an annual competition of mom blogs where the target audience is 100 percent present. As the competition is small, no money from them as the sponsor is needed, they only gift the winners full baskets of their products of all sorts.

To increase the perception of brand professionalism, the selected company collaborates with a paediatrician to give advice on their website. There are many articles on breastfeeding, starting formula milk, how to start with baby food, how to care for the baby's skin and more. They not only have articles on the website but also an e-book, with a precise description of how to start feeding baby food, and on breastfeeding and using formula milk.

4.2.2 Online Marketing

The selected company appears on social media too. It engages with consumers mainly on Instagram and most of the posts upload on Facebook as well. It is good that they do not operate on more social media platforms as that might be too overwhelming. Facebook is a kind of long-term security where some mothers are a part of discussion groups and a lot of people browse it from time to time.

Followers	23 thousand
Engagement rate (average 2022)	0,07%
Views per post (average 2022)	22 330
Posts in January 2023	5
Posts in February 2023	6
Posts in March 2023	5

Table 1 – Facebook (Source: Internal Company Statistics 2023)

Table 1 gives numbers of followers on the selected company's Facebook page as of March 2023, and internal statistics on an average engagement rate and views per post. Even though the average views per post almost reach the number of followers, the engagement rate is very low. There are not as many posts, as on their Instagram, it seems as if their Facebook page is used only for some reposts of the original content created on Instagram. In January and March 2023, there were 5 posts in each month, and in February 2023 there were 6. Determining the right amount of posts per month is not easy because it requires trying out what works best for the target audience. However, 5 or 6 posts per month is approximately one or two in a week, which is not overwhelming, the posts do not overshadow each other and if they encourage followers to do some kind of activity, a week is enough time for them

to try it out. However, the low engagement might be caused by the fact that all the posts there are the same as on Instagram only not all of them are there.

On the other hand, as opposed to Facebook, Instagram is the kind of social media that has been trendy for quite some time now and still remains the mainly used platform by both consumers and brands. Provided that Instagram is the dominant social media, most mothers should be there too. It is hard to analyse if they stick to the 80/20 rule with the proportion of the marketing posts to content posts. However, it is clear that they are trying to engage the consumers by arranging giveaways and competitions, and coming up with many creative ideas with recipes containing their baby food products, how to recycle and reuse the packages of their products, while entertaining the kids and at the same time train their motor skills from a young age. They also share tips and tricks on how to save nature, compost, or grow your own vegetables, herbs and fruit. While promoting their products they do it in an educating way, like choosing one ingredient and explaining its benefits, how it is grown and which of their products contain it, e.g. a carrot which is a usual type of vegetable, however, farmers of the selected company have grown their own variety which is more suitable for baby food with no added sugar because it is sweeter. Moreover, they also cooperate with Czech and Slovak celebrities of all kinds – sportswomen, models, actresses, etc. so that every customer can find their favourite and relate to them. The selected company's budget for 2023 for influencers is 4 million CZK.

Followers	27 thousand
Following	345
Posts in total	649
Engagement rate (average 2022)	0,54%
Views per post (average 2022)	318 429
Posts in January 2023	11
Posts in February 2023	12
Posts in March 2023	11

Table 2 – Instagram (Source: Internal Company Statistics 2023)

Table 2 shows data on various variables on Instagram. The followers that the selected company has on their Instagram page as of March 2023 is only 4 thousand more than on Facebook, however, the views per post are much bigger, which only proves the popularity of Instagram. Nevertheless, the engagement rate is still quite low at 0,54% while their goal is to get to 1%. There might be more troubles why their Instagram page is not more

prospering. First, the number of posts per month plus also stories that last 24 hours on the page might be too much content for their audience. Some posts overlap each other and might overshadow the other one when there are approximately 2 or 3 posts each week. The second reason might be the fact that no one usually replies to comments, when there are some, even if it is a question. Surprisingly, no negative comments have been left under their posts in the last 6 months. Third and maybe the last problem is that they are not promoting their socials on their website. There are icons with links to their socials in the footer of the website, but that can blend in very easily and may not be enough to catch everyone's attention.

Their account features both pictures and reels, and it seems that they also try to keep that in balance between months. The reels to photo ratio were in January 8:3, February 9:3 and in March 9:2. It follows the trend of short videos across all platforms, which has almost banished the long-used photo posts, and that is a good step forward in following their goal of more engagement rate.

The selected company's social media platforms are handled by one person and an agency. The agency helps with content creation, however, the person is all in one. The person is an administrator of social media, a photographer and a creator of many posts, and also writes the texts. The monthly budget for this is on average 50 thousand CZK.

A very important part is that they are using descriptive titles on their website with keywords that mothers are likely to search for. This is to boost their search engine optimization to increase the organic traffic on their website, such as including an article with the title 'How do I know that I am pregnant' which might be the first thing a woman tries to search for when she gets suspicious she might be expecting.

To have easier communication with their customers and potential customers too, they offer a loyalty programme. By signing up customers get free access to more articles, test products, attend a photo contest, personalized emails, and then also each month 10 newly signed-ups can win a package of products. This way the company gets access to the consumers' email addresses and can communicate directly with them which is much cheaper than doing a national campaign.

5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS

The selected company carries out their own brand perception and customer brand equity research each year. However, not this year yet which was the reason to carry out the survey focused on brand perception and brand awareness.

The questionnaire consisted of five parts. The first part was only general and focused on getting information about the respondent. Each of the other four parts was aimed at a different segment which contributes to the overall brand perception. The second part was directed at brand awareness. The third section contained questions to observe the brand perception itself. The fourth part was designed to discover customer loyalty levels and the last, the fifth part, was supposed to reveal advertisement awareness.

The questionnaire was featured in several Facebook groups – different mother groups as well as a group of a city which was not maternity related; and then on two mother websites. The survey was targeted at mothers with children of three years old and younger because that also corresponds with the main focus of the company.

5.1 Structure of Respondents

The questionnaire was answered by 325 people. The first question asked about sex, and only 3 answers were of the male sex. They were asked if they know the brand of formula milk, baby food or baby cosmetics which they use for their child. But since the number of male respondents does not correspond with a representative sample, it will not be included in the analysis.

Women were then asked how many children they have. If their answer was 'none', there was a follow-up question about whether or not they are pregnant. In case their answer was 'no', the questionnaire ended. If their answer was 'yes' then there were more follow-up questions, asking if they are familiar with the brand of the selected company and if they were, then they were asked to rate the brand on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being the worst and 4 being the best. The last two questions concerned if they know they offer cosmetics for mothers and if they would consider using them. The number of responses from women who do not have any children was only 7, out of which 5 women were pregnant. That number does not coincide with the proper representative sample size, and for that reason again will not be included further in the analysis. The rest of the women who answered, which is precisely 315, have at least one or three or more children.
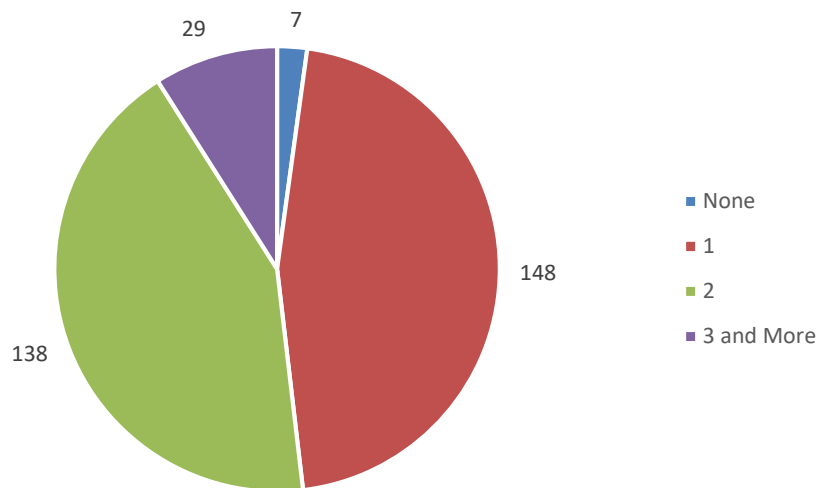
Figure 2 - Number of Children of Respondents (Source: Own Research 2023)

The most common answer, almost half of the responses, was that they have one child, but only ten fewer respondents answered that they have two children. Figure 2 shows the exact structure of the answers:

The next question was one of the most important segmentations in the questionnaire and that was 'How old is your youngest child?'. There were only two possible answers, either 3 years old or younger, or older than 3 years old. Since the company's focus is aimed at children of 3 years old or younger, the questionnaire was also targeted at this group of consumers and ended for women with children older than 3 years old. As a result, out of 315 women respondents, only 37 of them have children older than 3 years old and the rest which is 278 women have children of three years old and younger, who continue with the questionnaire.

The women that were able to carry on with the questionnaire were given a multiple choice question concerning the food they give to their youngest child. The exact question was 'Which all forms of food do you feed your child/children under 3 years old at this time?'. The choices were 'breastmilk', 'formula milk', 'baby food' and 'normal food' (fresh ingredients, food cooked at home, etc.).
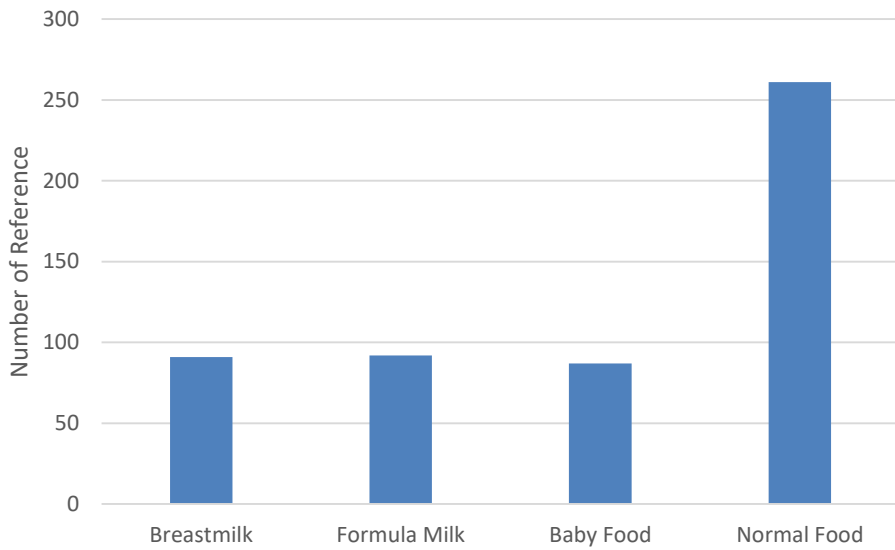
Figure 3 – Type of Food Given to Children of 3 Years Old or Younger (Source: Own Research 2023)

The layout of responses is pictured in Figure 3. It was a multiple-choice question and the most repeated answer was normal food, which was chosen by 261 respondents, which is almost everyone. The other categories were nearly equal with every choice being chosen almost 90 times.

The following question concerned one of the most crucial pieces of information that brands need from their customers and that is what they request from a product. The question was 'What is important to you when choosing baby food?'. Figure 4 illustrates the answer structure:
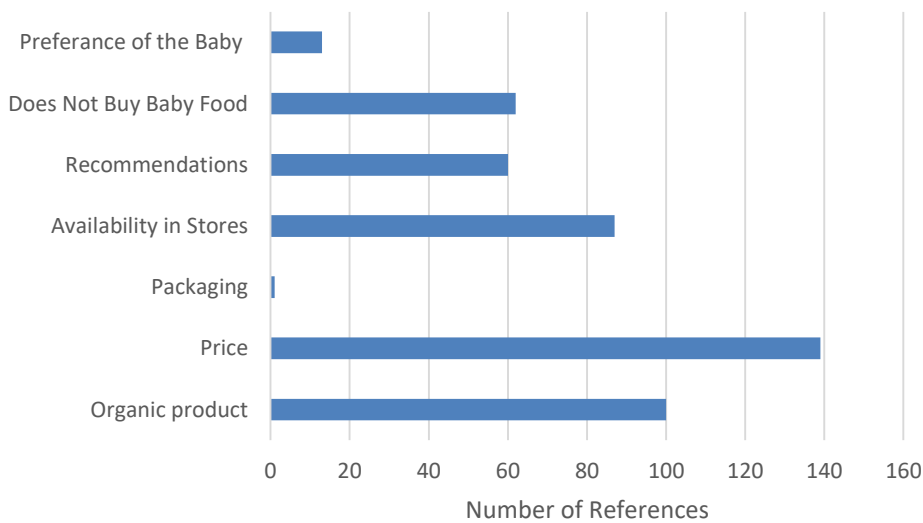
Figure 4 – Important Features of Baby Food (Source: Own Research 2023)

It was again a multiple-choice question and the outcome is that mothers do not care about the packaging of baby food because only one person selected that option. 'Preference of the baby' was not among the default options, however, 13 mothers added it. The most chosen answer was 'price', which was chosen by 139 respondents. Then the next two most chosen options were 'organic product' and 'availability in the stores'. Finally, the last two options were almost even with 60 votes for 'recommendations' and 62 votes saying that they do not buy baby food, but instead make it at home.

The last question focused on the fact if mothers even use cosmetic products for babies or if they choose to use some organic and natural option. The question was 'Do you use baby cosmetics for your child?'. The answers were in great favour of using baby cosmetics for their children. Out of 278 women, only 21 answered that they do not use any baby cosmetic products for their children.

5.2 Brand Awareness

To measure the brand awareness of the selected company's brand of the respondents two types of questions were implemented. The first type of question was used for three categories of products of the selected company. The reason for that was to see how consumers connect the brand's different categories of products since someone may be satisfied with their formula milk meanwhile buying a different brand of baby food and may not be as aware of the other categories of products the brand offers. Therefore, it will show which categories of products of the selected company have the most customer awareness. The second type of question needed to be used only once to observe if the respondents recognize the brand.

Initially, the respondents' brand awareness was tested through brand recall questions. For each category of products, there was a separate open-ended question. Each question started the same and even though the ending changed, the answer to all could be the selected company's brand. The questions were 'Name the first brands which come to your mind when buying formula milk/baby food/baby cosmetics.' Their answers not only provide an insight into their brand recall abilities, awareness and knowledge, but also show, which brand is a top-of-mind and which one is dominant. For the purpose of creating the following Figure 5, the answers are an average of all three categories but the exact numbers will be mentioned later on.

The second type is supposed to test the brand recognition ability. The respondents were provided with a picture of the logo of the selected company and with its name in the question. The question was a simple yes or no expressed like this 'Do you know *the selected*

company's brand?''. Consumers that have been previously exposed to this brand should be able to remember and recognize it. The answers unambiguously showed that everybody has encountered this brand at least once and is capable to recollect it when given a name and visual. However, among the 278 answers, there was one abnormal one where the respondent claimed that she does not know the brand. But a look into her previous answers, where the brand recall was tested, showed that she mentioned the same brand in two out of three categories. As this is a strange occurrence this respondent's answers are irrelevant.

The following Figure 5 proves the theory of Steenkamp 2017 about the decline in the number of people who can recognize the brand compared to the number of people who can recall it.
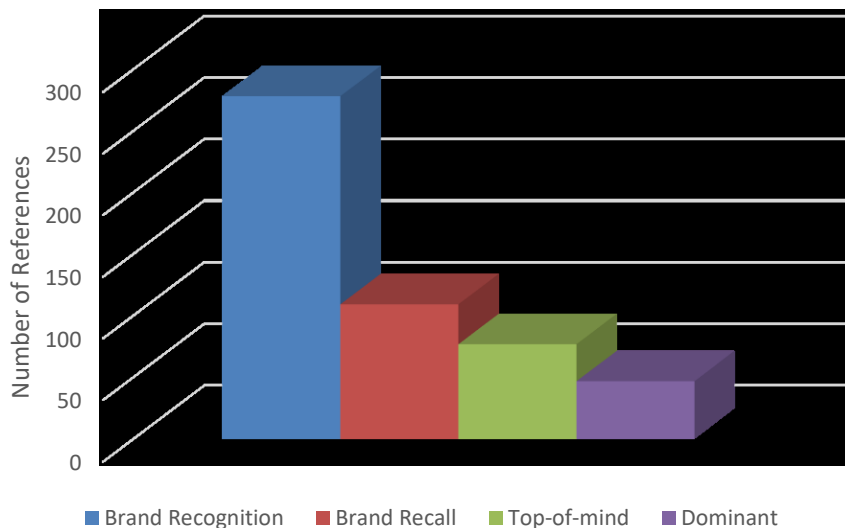

Figure 5 – Brand Recognition to Brand Recall (Source: Own Research 2023)

Now since the brand recall had three parts of three categories it is necessary to analyse them. Most people surprisingly recalled the selected company's brand in the category of baby cosmetics, however, it was only one answer more than the people who recalled it in the category of baby food.
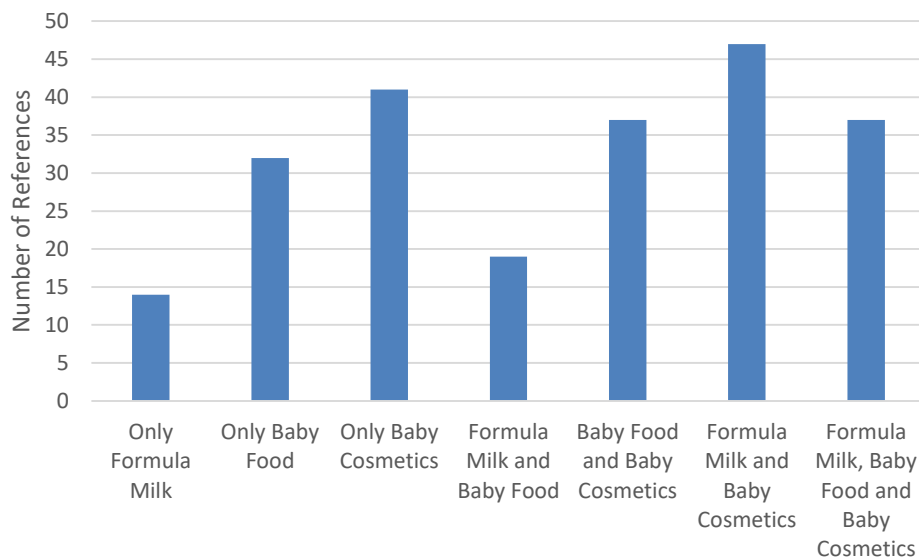
Figure 6 – Connections Between Product Categories (Source: Own Research 2023)

The numbers were 125 and 124, which is close to half of all respondents. Contrariwise, people recalled the selected company's brand in the category of formula milk only 78 times. Nevertheless, the interesting part of this segmentation is to see the connections between the answers. Figure 6 initially shows the number of respondents who were able to recall the selected company's brand only in one category and not in the other two. It can be retrieved from the figure that baby cosmetics was the one category where people most recalled the brand without recalling it in the previous two. On the other hand, the formula milk category shows that it was the one category where people least recalled it without recalling it in the following two. The strongest brand awareness in a combination of two categories was detected with formula milk and baby cosmetics, meaning that the respondents recalled the brand in both of these categories. The combination of formula milk and baby food was unexpectedly the weakest even though these categories are more similar in the sense of both being food. A good sign is the last bar which depicts the number of people who recalled the selected company's brand in all three categories. The number could have been higher, however, it is still a success that some people are enough aware of the brand that they were able to recall it in all three categories.

Brands target consumers through different channels to catch their attention and extent their knowledge about the existence of yet another brand so they would possibly want to become their customers. It is crucial for the brand to identify the right channels where most of their target audience is. Therefore, another important piece of information that the respondents bring is where they have encountered the brand for the first time. It is not easy to recall the exact place of the first confrontation if they have seen the brand on multiple

different occasions since then. For that reason, it was a multiple-choice question and the formulation was 'How did you learn about *the selected company's brand*?'.
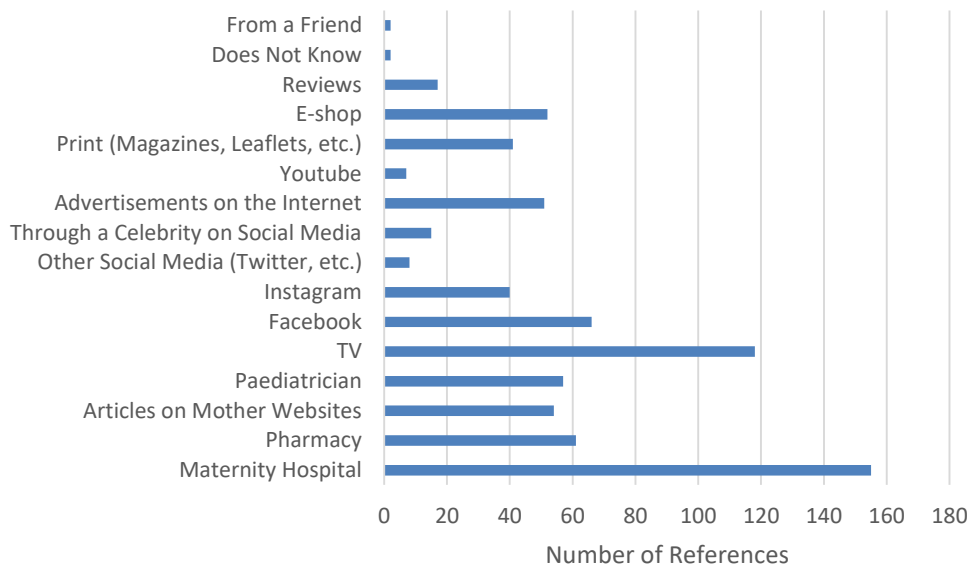

Figure 7 – First Encounter with the Brand (Source: Own Research 2023)

The most chosen answer was maternity hospital probably because in a lot of Czech hospitals, the brand is recommended to mothers. The second visibly more selected option was the TV which shows that their advertisement videos are placed well and are effective at conveying knowledge about the existence of the brand. Then a lot of the options like pharmacy, paediatrician, Facebook etc. were quite equal with the number of answers around 40 to 65. The least chosen answers were reviews on the Internet, YouTube, and other social media like Twitter, through celebrities, from a friend and people who did not know where they encountered the selected company's brand for the first time.

The last question in the questionnaire which should give an overview of the consumers' brand awareness was 'Did you know that *the selected company's brand* offers cosmetics for mothers?'.
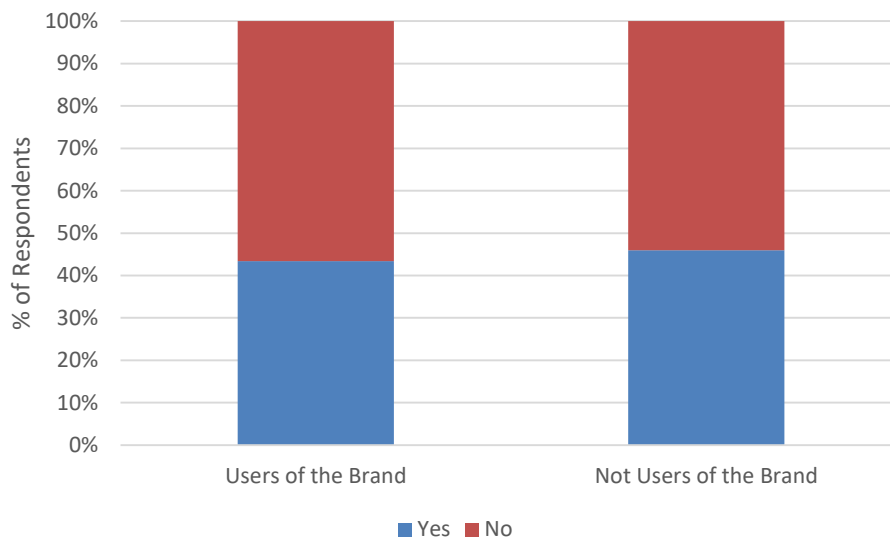
Figure 8 – Knowledge of Cosmetics for Mothers (Source: Own Research 2023)

Figure 8 shows percentages instead of whole numbers because it is not a simple result of yes or no, but it is also a comparison between people who use and who do not use the selected company's brand products. The question, of whether or not the respondents are users of the brand, is assessed in the brand perception chapter, however, the exact numbers are not necessary here. The point of Figure 8 is to show that the knowledge of the existence of cosmetics for mothers from the selected company's brand differs only by two percent. The result is that more than half of the people on both sides of the spectrum do not know that the brand offers cosmetics for mothers.

When asked a follow-up and final question, depending on their answer, whether or not they use or would consider using the selected company's brand cosmetics for mothers, in this way 'Do you use/Would you consider using the cosmetics for mothers from *the selected company's brand*?' it came out that only 10 respondents use or have used the products. Some, to be exact 35, of the respondents who use the brand's products for their children agreed they would consider using the cosmetics for mothers. However, 111 people said they do not use it and 61 respondents answered they would not even consider using it. Finally, 57 respondents are not sure if they would try cosmetics for mothers or not.

5.3 Brand Perception

To find out what the brand perception of the consumers of the selected company's brand is the main concept of this whole survey. To see, in what position the brand is among the respondents, it was important to learn who uses the brand's products. With the knowledge of whether or not they use the products, it can be easier to understand the person's

experience, way of creating opinions and the whole perception of the brand. The question for the respondents was 'Do you use products of *the selected company's brand*?'. Out of 277 respondents, 166 of them are mothers who use products of the brand X and the rest, 111 women, do not use them for their children.

The respondents who claimed not to be customers of the selected company were asked 'Why do you not use products of *the selected company's brand*?'.

Figure 9 – Factors for Not Using the Selected Company's Brand (Source: Own Research 2023)

It was a multiple-choice question. The most repeated answer was 'price', however, the other answers were not so far except for 'availability in stores' which no one picked and only one mother mentioned that the marketing communication of the selected company's brand is very intrusive and annoying. A lot of the mothers stated they do not like the composition of the products, specifically, the baby cosmetics and that water is enough to take for the children's sensitive skin. Another interesting choice added by a lot of the mothers was that they use a different brand. What might be indicated through that is they have never even tried the selected company's brand and will probably not try it.

Contrariwise, the respondents who are users of the products of the selected company's brand were asked, which products they use in this way 'Which products of *the selected company's brand* do you use for your child/children?'. It was again a multiple choice and the options were – 'formula milk', 'baby food' and 'baby cosmetics'.
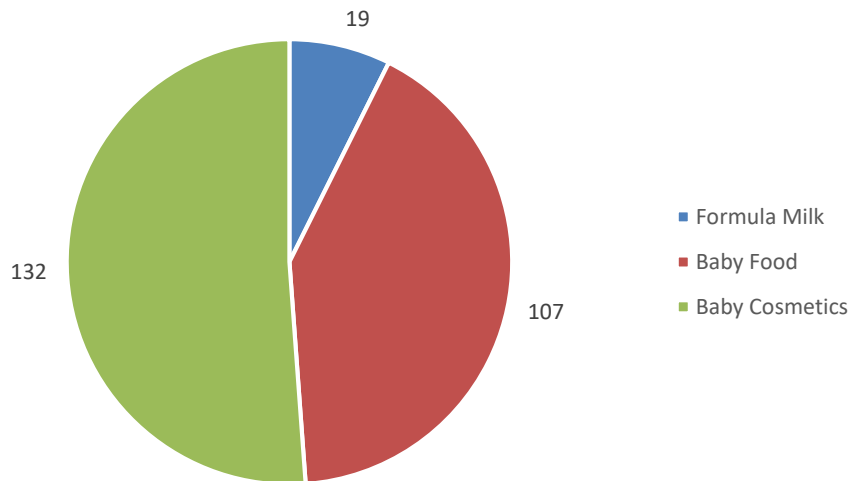
Figure 10 – Type of Product Used by Customers of the Selected Company's Brand (Source: Own Research 2023)

Most respondents answered that they use baby cosmetics, specifically 132 of them, and baby food, exactly 107. Meanwhile, only 19 mothers answered 'formula milk' but this variable might be skewed by the ages of children which are not known exactly. What is clear from the data is that baby cosmetics from the selected company's brand are very popular among their customers or at least among the respondents of this questionnaire.

These respondents were given a follow-up question if they are satisfied with the brand. The question was 'Are you satisfied with *the selected company's brand*?' and the results were 100 percent agreeing, which is probably usual because if customers are not satisfied with one brand, they go to another.

However, they were given one more follow-up question trying to find some more data on their brand perception. The question was 'Is there anything you are not satisfied with *the selected company's brand*?' and the results give a little more insight into their minds. Based on the results, it is clear that many respondents are satisfied with the brand, Figure 11 shows the exact layout of answers:
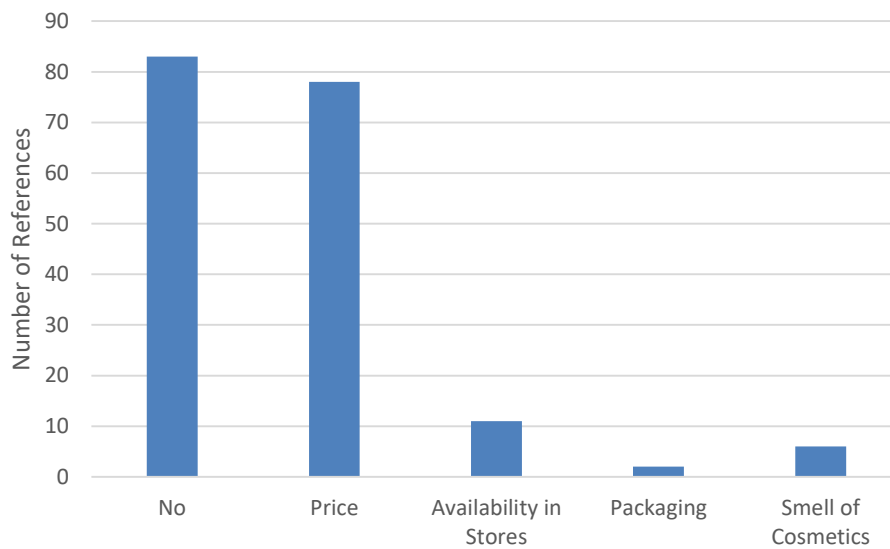
Figure 11 – Customer Reservations Towards the Products of the Selected Company's Brand (Source: Own Research 2023)

This was a multiple choice question and 83 people answered that they have no objections towards the selected company's brand. However, 78 people then mentioned 'price' to be a little issue, which correlates with the results of the respondents who are not users of the brand and also gave price as one of the determiners why they do not use it. 'Availability in stores' is also one of the things that bother some customers, as well as 'packaging' and 'smell of cosmetics', but the numbers are quite small and overall may be irrelevant to bigger companies even like the selected company.

To observe both sides of the spectrum the next question given to the respondents was 'What do you like about *the selected company's brand*?'. It was a multiple choice question and the answers give perspective on what the consumers see as attributes in the brand's products. Figure 12 illustrates the results.
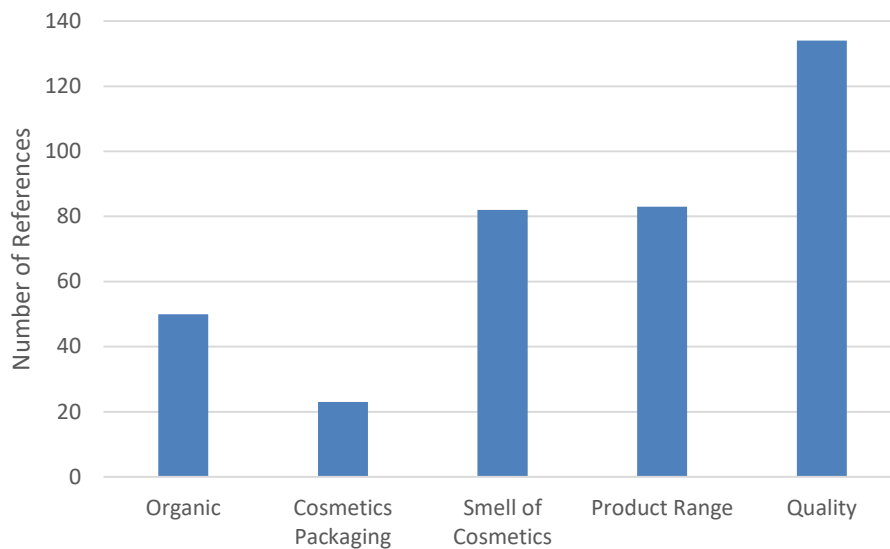
Figure 12 – Customer Favourite Features of the Products of the Selected Company's Brand (Source: Own Research 2023)

The most chosen answer was 'quality' which shows that respondents see quality as the strongest attribute of the selected company's brand. Then there are balanced results between 'product range' and 'smell of cosmetics' which is particularly interesting because these respondents claim to like the smell and the respondents who do not use the brand see the smell as a reason for not using the products. Not so many people are keen on the organic part of the brand's products and even fewer respondents chose the answer 'baby cosmetics packaging'.

The last part of the brand perception analysis is represented by four statements that respondents were asked to evaluate based on how much they agree or disagree with the statement using a Likert scale. The scale started at 1 and ended at 4, while 1 represented a strong disagreement and 4 represented a strong agreement. The evaluation directly shows the perception of the selected company's brand by the respondents. The full statements were 'I see products of *the selected company's brand* as good quality.'; 'The price of the products of *the selected company's brand* corresponds with the quality.'; '*The selected company's brand* is the brand that I trust.' and the last one 'I appreciate the fact that the quality of *the selected company's brand* is guaranteed by the owner.'. The ratings were done by both, users and not users of the selected company's brand.
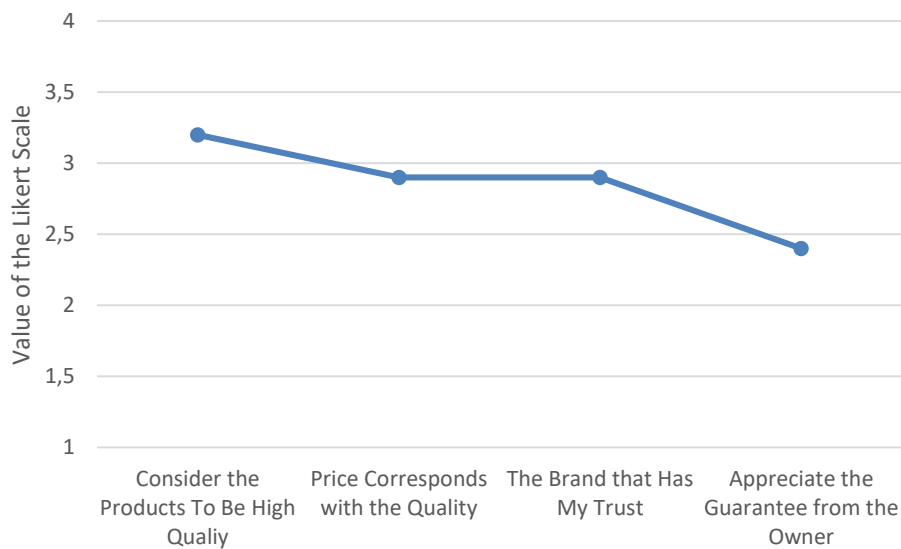
Figure 13 – Brand Perception Statements (Source: Own Research 2023)

The highest-rated statement is the one claiming that the consumers view the products to be high quality. On the contrary, the lowest rated statement was the one claiming that the quality of the products is guaranteed by the owner which shows that it is not the main aspect of the brand that people care about, however, its rating is not bad either and might be relevant to some consumers. In the middle, two equally evaluated statements reveal that people rather agree with the price-to-quality ratio and that the brand is a brand in which they have some positive level of trust.

5.4 Brand Loyalty

Loyal customers are very beneficial to a brand because they give it a certain freedom in its actions and there are still customers who stick with it. Brand loyalty is not only about purchasing products from one brand all the time but also the emotional connection is involved. However, in this survey, the only part measured was the buying habit.

Respondents were given three similar statements and selected an appropriate answer out of three columns. The statements were 'I exclusively buy *the selected company's brand's* formula milk/baby food/baby cosmetics.'. The three options available to each statement were 'Yes', 'I buy different brands too' and 'I do not buy this'.
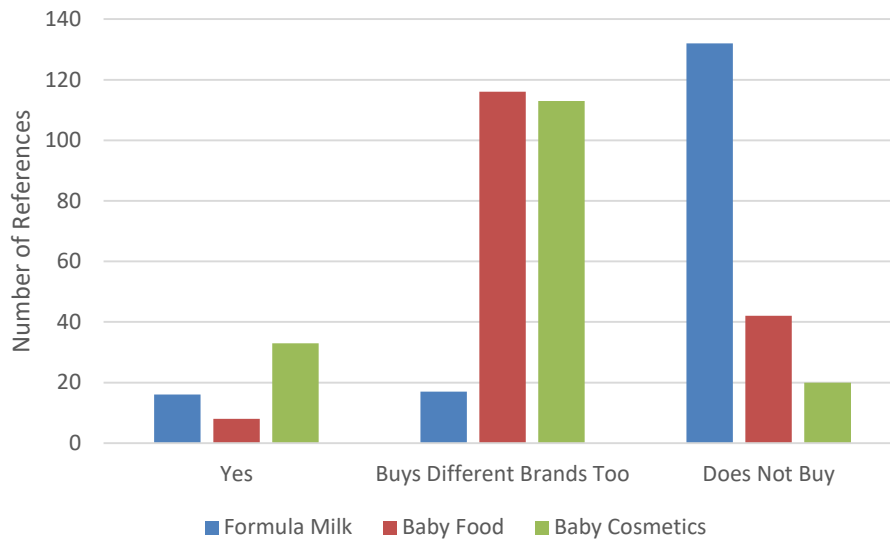
Figure 14 – Brand Loyalty (Source: Own Research 2023)

It is evident from Figure 14 that only a small number of respondents buy solely the products of the selected company's brand because most of them buy different brands of products too. The product category with the least loyalty to the selected company's brand is baby food, which might be caused by the fact that baby food, unlike e.g. formula milk, is widely available in almost every store even in the smallest villages. Therefore, if the mother needs it she can buy it anywhere and does not need to find a store which offers the selected company's brand's baby food.

5.5 Advertisement Awareness

The last part of the questionnaire on brand perception focuses on the awareness of the respondents of the advertisements of the selected company's brand. As there are countless advertisements every day it might be enriching to know if the respondents recognize the selected company's brand's advertisements among them. The question stated 'Where have you seen an advertisement on *the selected company's brand* in the past month?' and it was a multiple-choice answer.
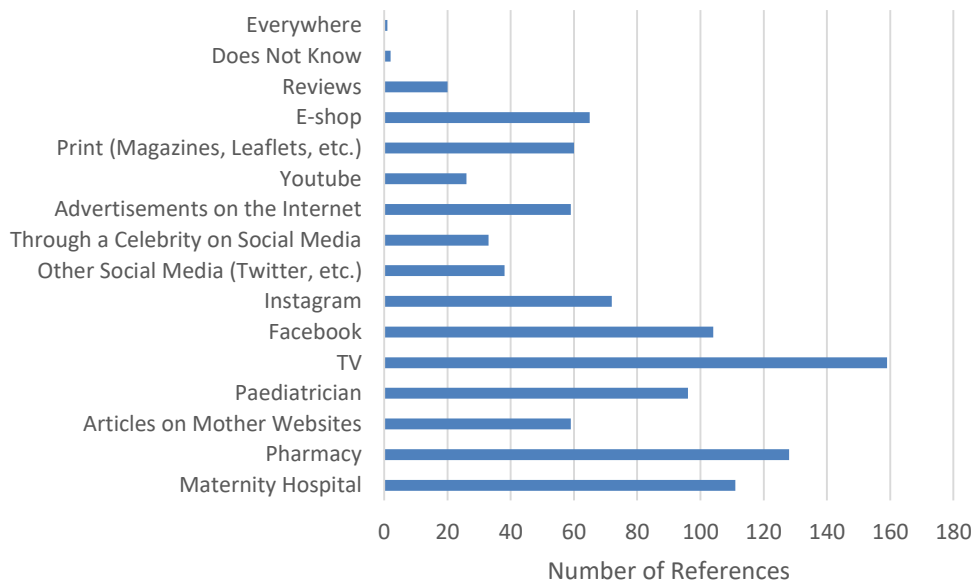
Figure 15 – Advertisement Awareness (Source: Own Research 2023)

The most common answer by far was the TV. The other frequently repeated answers were pharmacy, maternity hospital, Facebook and paediatrician. The most common places where the respondents have seen the advertisement in the past month are the same which were the most commonly mentioned when answering the first encounter with the brand. Then there are many answers in the middle range and then two options where someone answered 'everywhere', probably the same person who mentioned before that the brand's marketing communication is very intrusive, and then an option 'I do not know' which was chosen by 2 people. The overall advertisement awareness is surprisingly high and indicates well-placed advertisements of the selected company's brand.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the practical part of this thesis and the survey was to observe the brand perception of the selected company's brand. After the brand and the questionnaire analysis, there are a few points which deserve to be commented on and summarized.

The selected company's brand awareness according to this survey is amazing and every woman with a child of 3 years old or younger who participated in this questionnaire is familiar with the brand. However, assuming that it would be the case for almost every mother who has not participated in this survey, there still remains the question of why the holding company is more popular and probably perceived differently than the Czech subsidiary. Their products, message and marketing strategy are basically the same and it should not be a problem with brand awareness.

What seems to be a little troubling is brand loyalty which is closely connected to brand perception. As loyalty is not only about a buying habit but also linked to the emotional level, the low selected company's brand loyalty detected through the questionnaire might signal some problems. There might be a way of increasing brand loyalty and emotional connection through cosmetics for mothers. This research indicated that more than half of mothers, both who use and do not use the products of the selected company's brand, are not aware that they offer cosmetics for mothers. Even though it is not meant to be the main product focus of the brand, it might be useful to start promoting it more. If more pregnant women or mothers knew about it, more of them could start using it. Using the products throughout their pregnancy and possibly having a positive experience might create an emotional and sentimental connection with the special time and the brand. As a consequence of that, more mothers might consider using the selected company's brand products for their children and staying loyal to them.

The campaign for cosmetics for mothers could be targeted at pregnant women visiting gynaecology offices. The samples of three products which the selected company offers could be given to them by their gynaecologist if they would be interested. The calculation of the campaign costs is a rough evaluation based on the number of children born in the year 2022, an estimation of the number of pregnant women in one gynaecology office and the price of each cost. Here are the estimated calculations of the campaign costs:

	Total	Targeting
Children born in 2022	99 800	-
Number of pregnant women at any time	74 850	22 500
Gynaecology offices (2020)	1 295	500
Pregnant women per office (500)	57.8	45
	Price per unit (CZK)	Total price (CZK)
Sample 3x	60	1 350 000
Price for collaboration	2 000	1 000 000
Transport	10	225 000
Gift bag	15	337 500
Leaflet	5	112 500
Final Price		3 025 000

Table 3 – Campaign Price Estimation (Source: Own Estimation 2023, CZSO 2023, IHIS CR 2021)

There were 99 800 children born in 2022 according to the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO 2023), which is the newest statistic that can be used. If we assume that it also roughly represents the number of women that were pregnant, it can be counted how many women were pregnant at any given time in the year supposing that pregnancy lasts 9 months. The number would be 74 850. According to the Czech Institute of Health Information and Statistics, there were 1295 gynaecology offices in 2021 (IHIS CR 2021). Therefore, there should be 57.8 pregnant women in each gynaecology office by a simple division. However, the real number would be lower and different in each office, therefore, the estimated number of pregnant women in each gynaecology office is 45. If 500 gynaecology offices were asked to collaborate, 22 500 pregnant women would be the target audience, which is around 30% of all pregnant women at a time. Each pregnant woman who would be interested in trying the products would get a gift bag with 3 different product samples and a leaflet with instructions on how to use the products, what the ingredients are and what effect they should have. Each sample is worth 20 CZK, it is assumed that the doctor would take 2 thousand CZK for collaboration, each gift bag is worth 15 CZK and one leaflet is worth 5 CZK. The transportation of one bag is assumed to be around 10 CZK. The overall price for the whole campaign would be 3 025 000 CZK. As those are only rough estimations it is likely that the numbers may be lower or higher.

As the selected company's brand advertisement awareness question detected that the respondents are very conscious of the advertisements and it signals their good placement, there is no reason for expanding the portfolio. From the interview with the managers of the selected company, I know that the brand's marketing team considered starting a TikTok account. While that might be the recent social media trend, it is still a matter of younger generations and not the brand's target audience. Furthermore, their marketing team is quite small and it could be as overwhelming for them as for some consumers, e.g. the respondent who feels that the brand's marketing is irritating. They should focus on improving their current social media accounts on Instagram and Facebook. The suggestion is that they create more original content for Facebook, and lower the rate of posts on Instagram to one per week. The way to do it and not have any additional costs is to divide the posts, which they usually post all on Instagram and only some on Facebook, between the two social media accounts. Apart from that, the social media administrator should reply more to comments, as there are not as many and it gives the customer a sense of closeness to the brand.

A lot of respondents who use and even do not use the products of the selected company's brand indicated that the prices of the products are something that bothers them. For some, it might be the reason for not purchasing them. However, the evaluation of the brand perception statement of the price-to-quality ratio was 2.9 out of 4. That means the respondents rather agree that the price of the products corresponds with their quality. This might lead to the conclusion that people perceive the products as quality but still wish they would cost less. Nevertheless, the price is not a variable that can be easily changed by the selected company since it is dependent on the holding company's prices.

In connection with the previous paragraph, a lot of the people who do not use the brand's products also commented on the fact they do not like the composition of the products, especially the cosmetics. That is also not so visible in the evaluation of the statement that the products are perceived as quality which was rated at 3.2 out of 4. After all, the brand cannot please everybody and again it is not in their hands to change the composition of the products even if they wanted because the products are produced by the holding company.

To increase the professionalism of brand perception and give more reasons to mothers why use the selected company's products even if they are more expensive, the company should give more recommendations on child nutrition, and give reasons why it is beneficial to use organic baby food, without added sugar and artificial ingredients, and so on. They should highlight the importance of regular meals and how all of that prevents future health problems, obesity, psychological problems and more. The topic of healthy child nutrition

from the start is mentioned in numerous studies such as "Early Life Nutrition and Its Effect on the Development of Obesity and Type-2 Diabetes" (Vickers 2022) or "Establishing Healthy Eating Patterns in Infancy" (Berti, Agostoni 2022).

The overall perception of the selected company's brand analysed from the research is good. A lot of the respondents understand the brand as quality and that they can trust it. Even though some see it as quite expensive, they are willing to buy the products which is a good sign of some brand loyalty level. The respondents are aware of the brand advertisement appearances in their everyday lives and can recall the brand when given a hint.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the brand perception of the selected company's brand from the point of view of the consumer as it is an essential part of the brand's success thanks to the rise of brands. Satisfied customers are the best part of marketing communication and speak volumes about the brand to other consumers. The main component of this thesis was the selected company's brand which belongs to the baby food industry and wished to remain anonymous.

The theoretical part was divided into three chapters – Brand, Marketing and Research Methodology. Each chapter focused on defining important terms connected to brand perception such as brand, brand equity, brand awareness, positioning, target audience, marketing communication and many more.

The analytical part of the thesis was also composed of three chapters – Company Description, Research Analysis and Recommendations. The first chapter introduced the selected company and described its market position and marketing communication. The second chapter contained a survey analysis. The survey was created by the author and was used for collecting data on the selected company's brand perception by the consumers. The survey collected data from both users and not users of the selected company's brand products. The third chapter focused on recommendations for the selected company based on the survey results.

The survey was divided into five parts mainly based on the elements that create a brand perception. According to the survey results, the brand perception of the selected company's brand is on the positive side. The respondents were 100 percent aware of the existence of the brand and most of them were able to recall it when given a hint. More than half of the target audience of the respondents are users of the brand's products. For both groups, users and not users of the brand's products, the main problematic feature is the price. Overall, the brand is perceived as a quality brand, which people trust, with the price being suitable for the quality delivered.

Three recommendations based on the survey results were given to the brand concerning how to grow the selected company's brand loyalty and awareness, what to avoid and implement on their social media, and what to recommend to mothers whilst promoting their products. Three comments were also made concerning parts that cannot be easily influenced by the selected company since it is only a subsidiary company.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Becker, Maren, and Maarten J. Gijsenberg. 2023. "Consistency and Commonality in Advertising Content: Helping or Hurting?" *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 40, no. 1: 128–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2022.05.004.

Bergh, Joeri Van den, and Mattias Behrer. 2016. *How Cool Brands Stay Hot Branding to Generation Y and Z*. 3rd ed. London: Kogan Page.

Berti, Cristiana, and Carlo Agostoni. 2022. "Establishing Healthy Eating Patterns in Infancy." In *Early Nutrition and Long-Term Health: Mechanisms, Consequences, and Opportunities*, 493-535. 2nd ed. doi:10.1016/B978-0-12-824389-3.00001-5.

Bradley, Nigel. 2013. *Marketing Research: Tools and Techniques*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CZSO. 2023. "Ročník Narozených 2022 Je Nejslabší Za Posledních 18 Let." Accessed April 7 2023. https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/rocnik-narozenych-2022-je-nejslabsi-za-poslednich-18-let.

Gabay, Jonathan. 2015. *Brand Psychology: Consumer Perceptions, Corporate Reputations*. London: Kogan Page. https://www.koganpage.com/product/brand-psychology-9780749471736.

Geyrhalter, Fabian. 2016. *How to Launch a Brand*. 2nd ed. Long Beach, CA: Brandtro Publishing. https://www.amazon.com/How-Launch-Brand-Step-Step-ebook/dp/B01H81MN3U.

Godin, Seth. 2018. *This Is Marketing: You Can't Be Seen Until You Learn to See*. Londres: Portfolio.

Hague, Paul, Matthew Harrison, Julia Cupman, and Oliver Truman. 2016. *Market Research in Practice: An Introduction to Gaining Greater Market Insight.* 3rd ed. London: Kogan Page.

Heyward, Emily. 2020. *Obsessed: Building a Brand People Love from Day One.* New York: Portfolio.

IHIS CR. 2021. "Stručný Přehled Činnosti Oboru Gynekologie a Porodnictví Za Období 2007–2020." Accessed April 7, 2023. https://www.uzis.cz/index.php?pg=record&id=8387.

Keller, Kevin Lane, and Vanitha Swaminathan. 2020. *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 5th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Kuchař, Vladimír. 2012. *Medonosný Marketing*. Praha: BizBooks.

Kotler, Philip, and Kevin Lane Keller. 2016. *Marketing Management*. 15th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Peco-Torres, Francisco, Ana I. Polo-Peña, and Dolores M. Frías Jamilena. 2023. "Anteced-ents and Consequences of Strategic Online-Reputation Management: Moderating Effect of Online Tools." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology* 14, no. 3: 384–400. https://doi.org/10.1108/jhtt-05-2021-0144.

Percy, Larry. 2018. *Strategic Integrated Marketing Communications*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

Schmitz, Anne, and Nieves Villaseñor-Román. 2018. "Do Brands Matter in Unlisted Firms? An Empirical Study of the Association between Brand Equity and Financial Performance." *Administrative Sciences* 8, no. 4: 65. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci8040065.

Solomon, Michael R. 2020. *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*. 13th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Steenkamp, Jan-Benedict. 2017. *Global Brand Strategy: World-wise Marketing in the Age of Branding*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vickers, Mark H. 2022. "Early Life Nutrition and Its Effect on the Development of Obesity and Type-2 Diabetes." *Early Nutrition and Long-Term Health*, 281–307. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-824389-3.00011-8.

Wheeler, Alina. 2017. *Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Entire Branding Team*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBBE   Customer-based Brand Equity

CZSO   Czech Statistical Office

IHIS CR   Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: English Version of the Questionnaire – Brand perception

1. **Sex:**
   A) Male → **1.** Do you know which brand of formula milk/baby food/baby cosmetics you use for your child? If yes, which one?
   B) Female

2. **How many children do you have?**
   A) None → **1.** Are you pregnant? **2.** Do you know *the selected brand*? If yes, rate it from 1 (the worst) to 4 (the best). **3.** Do you know that *the selected brand* offers cosmetics for mothers? **4.** Would you consider using it?
   B) 1
   C) 2
   D) 3 or more

3. **How old is your youngest child/children?**
   A) 3 years or younger
   B) Older than 3 years old → End of the questionnaire

4. **Which all forms of food do you feed your child/children under 3 years old at this time?**
   A) Breastmilk
   B) Formula milk
   C) Baby food
   D) Normal food (fresh ingredients, food cooked at home etc.)

5. **What is important to you when choosing baby food?**
   A) Organic product
   B) Price
   C) Availability in stores
   D) Packaging
   E) Recommendations
   F) Other

6. **Do you use baby cosmetics for your child?**
   A) Yes
   B) No

7. **Name the first brands which come to your mind when buying formula milk.**

8. **Name the first brands which come to your mind when buying baby food.**

9. **Name the first brands which come to your mind when buying baby cosmetics.**

10. **Do you know *the selected company's brand*?** (+ picture of the logo)

   A) Yes

   B) No

11. **Do you use products of *the selected company's brand*?**

   A) Yes

   B) No

For people who answered 'No' in question 11:

12. **Why do you not use products of *the selected company's brand*?**

   A) Price

   B) Smell of cosmetics

   C) Availability in stores

   D) Not enough information

   E) Other

For people who answered 'Yes' in question 11:

13. **Which products of *the selected company's brand* do you use for your child/children?**

   A) Formula milk

   B) Baby food

   C) Baby cosmetics

14. **Are you satisfied with *the selected company's brand*?**

   A) Yes

   B) No

15. **Is there anything you are not satisfied with *the selected company's brand*?**

   A) No

   B) Price

   C) Availability in stores

   D) Packaging

   E) Smell of cosmetics

   F) Other

16. **What do you like about *the selected company's brand*?**

   A) Organic composition

   B) Quality

    C) Product range

    D) Cosmetics packaging

    E) Smell of cosmetics

    F) Other

17. I exclusively buy *the selected company's brand's* **formula milk.**

    A) Yes

    B) I buy different brands too

    C) I do not buy this

18. I exclusively buy *the selected company's brand's* **baby food.**

    A) Yes

    B) I buy different brands too

    C) I do not buy this

19. I exclusively buy *the selected company's brand's* **baby cosmetics.**

    A) Yes

    B) I buy different brands too

    C) I do not buy this

For everyone:

20. Did you know that *the selected company's brand* **offers cosmetics for mothers?**

    A) Yes

    B) No

21. Do you use/Would you consider using cosmetics for mothers from *the selected company's brand***?**

    A) Yes, I use/d it

    B) Yes, I would consider using it

    C) No

    D) I do not know

22. How did you learn about *the selected company's brand***?**

    A) TV

    B) Instagram

    C) Facebook

    D) Maternity Hospital

    E) Paediatrician

    F) Pharmacy

    G) YouTube

H) Print (magazines, leaflets, etc.)

I) Articles on mother websites

J) Other social media (Twitter, etc.)

K) Through a celebrity on social media

L) Advertisements on the Internet

M) E-shop

N) Reviews

O) Other

23. **Where have you seen advertisements on *the selected company's brand* in the past month?**

A) TV

B) Instagram

C) Facebook

D) Maternity Hospital

E) Paediatrician

F) Pharmacy

G) YouTube

H) Print (magazines, leaflets, etc.)

I) Articles on mother websites

J) Other social media (Twitter, etc.)

K) Through a celebrity on social media

L) Advertisements on the Internet

M) E-shop

N) Reviews

O) Other

24. **Rate the statements from 1 (the worst) to 4 (the best):**

A) I see products of *the selected company's brand* as good quality

B) The price of the products of *the selected company's brand* corresponds with the quality

C) *The selected company's brand* is the brand that I trust

D) I appreciate the fact that the quality of *the selected company's brand* is guaranteed by the owner.

Appendix 2: Unstructured Interview

Topics: Marketing strategy, Brand's position on the market, Budgets, Social media statistics and goals