

Implication of Brand Identity Facets on Marketing Communication of Lifestyle Magazine: Case Study of A Swedish Brand

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Abstract

Brand management has become an emerging issue today for any organization where branding starts with the concept of building brand identity in the target market. For the success of consumer goods or service brand, it is obvious to track brand through research. Brands of lifestyle products operate within extremely narrow target audience with highly specialized interest. The nature of this niche market demands strong brand identity and brand planning to secure sustainable relationship with customers. Lifestyle magazines are not exempt from this condition though this type of product is not explored in-depth within the brand management context. Consistent and congruent brand identity of a lifestyle magazine works as the mantra to design effective marketing communications which in turn strengthens the relationship between the reader and the branded magazine. The aim of this paper is to review basic concept of brand identity, to explore the implication of brand identity facets on marketing communication of a brand and to synthesize that understanding with a case study on a Swedish brand of lifestyle magazine – ‘Sköna hem’ through explorative research; thus this small-scale study endeavors to high-light the potential of this research arena for further development in future.

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1. Introduction

In a busy day from dawn to dusk, while people from different socio-economic and cultural background are struggling to identify themselves with branded consumer goods, accessories and services; consciously or unconsciously brands of lifestyle products have turned into an inevitable part of their target audience. After ensuring all basic needs in a branded way, a group of consumers have moved to fourth and fifth stage of needs – ‘Esteem needs’ and ‘Self-actualization needs’ respectively in Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (Stoner, Freeman, & Gilbert Jr., 1995) where lifestyle products deal with consumers’ desires for certain level of status and prestige; and self-fulfillment and creativity.

In print media, niche or lifestyle magazines are lifestyle products which serve extremely narrow audience with highly specialized interest (Silverstein, 2009). Lifestyle magazines are niche publications designed for a specific group of audience who has certain special interest such as beauty, fashion, sports, cuisine etc. to express distinctive living style and these magazines work as specialist in their specific field of interest (Kin, 2011; McMIndes, 2010). While worldwide recession and booming digital media put print media at immense crisis, niche publications are

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found on rise with a base of narrow but loyal audience (Philby, 2009; Kin, 2011). Matsa, Rosenstiel, and Moore (2011) have analyzed American Magazine Industry based on data obtained from the Audit Bureau of Circulations and observed that niche magazines have enjoyed circulation gains or at least stability for last several years especially during the recession years of 2008 and 2009; while other magazines have faced crisis situation. Media experts mostly have identified a common reason behind it - the small but qualitative and loyal audience who are passionate about certain products or special ways of living and niche magazine gives them a sense of ownership of the brand (Philby, 2009; Kin, 2011; Farber, & Daniel, 2012). Urs Honegger, CEO of Panorama Publications, South Africa whose publication includes lifestyle magazines such as ‘Animaltalk’, ‘PC Format’, ‘TeenZone’ and ‘Mom & Me’ has explained that truly loyal, interactive, passionate and enthusiastic readers always motivate them to purposefully pursue this niche magazine market (Farber, & Daniel, 2012).

Once a lifestyle magazine builds up its desired subscriber base, the target audience becomes valuable asset for marketers of other lifestyle and consumer goods brands to promote their products (Silverstein, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007). Thus lifestyle magazine turns into a brand machine (Silverstein, 2009). Since lifestyle magazine brands reach extremely narrow audiences through specialized content and brand promise, they could create exclusive tight bonding with limited segments of people more than any generalized magazine brand. Proper brand identification talks for lifestyle magazine brand (Silverstein, 2009).

While generalized magazines are fighting to grab attention of a reader, a lifestyle magazine brand gets competitive advantage within a crowded rack through consistent and congruent branding. In alignment to its premium value, glossy and eye-catching cover works as the primary hook to catch readers’ eyes; but later on informative, enthusiastic and customized content aligned with specific brand identity finally persuade that magazine to be in a reader’s hand or on a coffee table in a big house. A reader buys a lifestyle magazine not only to read it or get information; he or she aspires to distinguish his (or, her) personality, culture and image through that (Okonkwo, 2007). For example – ‘Elle’, ‘Vogue’, ‘Cosmopolitan’ in the first shot; all are fashion magazines but every one of them tells us a story of a different personality and culture around the globe.

Consistent and congruent brand identity of a lifestyle magazine works as the mantra to narrow down the gap between the reader and that branded magazine where the ‘brand’ turns into a trusty guide and friend to inspire reader to talk about her/him in public forum, blogs or websites; and also influences reader’s purchase decision. In such context, the aim of this study is to explore the implication of brand identity facets on marketing communication of lifestyle magazine through some basic literature reviews with major emphasis on Kapferer’s brand identity prism (2004) and to synthesize that understanding with a case study on a Swedish brand of lifestyle magazine – ‘Sköna hem’.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand and Brand Identity: review of basic concept

Brands work as a tool or a device to express consumer’s self-image (Keller, 1998a) through which consumers not only express themselves but also validate their identity (Jennifer Aaker, 1997; Escalas, & Bettman, 2005). Brands focus on a certain type of reference group who presents meaning of the brand (Escalas, & Bettman, 2005) and also expresses the nature of consumer-brand relationship or emotional attachment (Fournier, 1998) which is viewed as type of ‘bond’ or ‘pact’

(Keller, 1998a). From recent consumer research based on this basic idea on the role of brand, it is revealed that brands display consumers' conspicuous consumption nature and also express their social status along with their knowledge of culture or style (Amaldoss, & Jain 2005).

As Olins (2004) states in his study:

Branding these days is largely about involvement and association; the outward and visible demonstration of private and personal affiliation. Branding enables us to define ourselves in terms of a short-hand that is immediately comprehensible to the world around us. Diesel, Adidas and W hotels is one lifestyle; Hermès, Ralph Lauren and the Ritz is another. You can mix 'n' match to customize, enhance and underline your own particular self-perception. (p. 14)

Brand differentiates a product or service from other products or services satisfying the same customer need, through some differentiating dimensions which may be functional, rational or tangible aspect related to product performance of a brand and also may be symbolic, emotional or intangible facet of the brand (Kotler, & Keller, 2008). Since product features are easily copied, brands differentiate products and evoke emotion through a promise of value to customers (Kotler, & Gertner, 2002). Brand signals the quality of the products (Wernerfelt, 1988), higher perceived value beyond the intrinsic product features (Fournier, 1998; Gerdner, & Levy, 1955) and also conveys a message of trust on product's unique benefits to influence buyers' purchase decision; which in turn works as time and risk reducer for buyers (Kapferer, 2004; Keller, & Lehmann, 2006).

In early days, brands or a brand was simply being used to mark ownership of cattle or other forms of livestock (David Aaker, 1991) and later on, during medieval times brands served as distinguishing symbols on goods created by craftsmen (de Chernatony, & McDonald, 1992). In modern times, brands first work as symbols for consumers to identify and separate one manufacturer from the other and then work as tracker to reach the manufacturer who is responsible for the quality of the goods (Koehn, 2001). But today brands are endorsed with different great characteristics serving as a strategic business asset which is very essential for firms to grow and compete successfully in the market (David Aaker, 1991; Kapferer, 2004). Immense focus of the marketing discourse on the importance of brands seems to be spread over every day discourse of contemporary consumer society, where consumers nowadays are encouraged to regard themselves as personal brands in themselves, worthy of development and nurturing in the same manner as commercial brand objects (Montoya, 2002; Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005). In several research works of David Aaker, (1991, 1996, 1997, 2012), Kapferer (1995) and Keller (1993, 1998b), the discussion on brands has come to include the management of psychological associations developed under a brand name from the manufacturers and consumers' point of view. The concept of branding has become top management priority in last few decades since brands are recognized as one of the most valuable intangible assets of the firm (Keller, & Lehmann, 2009; Keller, & Lehmann, 2006). Considering different marketing scholarly works done in the last decade, it is understood that few theoretical terms such as brand identity, brand image, brand personality, brand equity and brand loyalty with their correlated functions have been analyzed repeatedly in different perspectives to chock-out a competing guideline for brand management followed by brand managers. In this part of literature review, the author's attempt is to review the concept of brand identity from different marketing scholars' perspectives and also to have a thorough understanding of Kapferer's brand identity prism (2004) which will be reflected in the case study later on.

According to Kapferer's (2004) study, identity derives from the brand's core values, benefits and legacy; and describes brand's tangible and intangible facets – everything that makes the brand different and unique to the customers. While defining brand identity, David Aaker (1996) has highlighted on a unique set of brand associations which are created and nurtured by the brand managers of the organization to establish a brand in the market as well as to convey brand promise to customers to build a trustworthy relationship with them. According to de Chernatony (1999), identity “is about ethos, aims and values that present a sense of individuality differentiating the brand”. In a sense, the identity of a brand works as vision of how the brand wants to be viewed by its target audience. Since brand identity is the base for all communication activities, a brand should have a strong and clear brand identity (Mårtensson, 2009). Now brand identity is considered as the core concept of brand management due to its contribution to brand constancy and continuity; and thus brand management team should focus on brand identity to make brand durable and realistic, and to convey coherent signs (Kapferer, 2004). Besides, investment in brand identity is crucial since it makes ease for customers to buy a brand, for sales force to sell a brand and for brand management team to build brand equity (Wheeler, 2010). In a nut-shell, considering the views of David Aaker (1996), de Chernatony (1999) and Kapferer (2004), brand identity encompasses differentiating characteristics, values and promise of a brand which works as a base in developing marketing communication to convey the core message of a brand toward target audience.

In the field of brand management, researchers have immensely emphasized few terms such as brand personality, brand image, brand equity and brand identity as an integral part of brand building process; where strong brand personality and identity are invaluable to build brand equity and again, brand personality is considered as important component to define brand identity and brand image (Geuens, Weijters, & Wulf, 2009). Several researchers such as David Aaker, and Joachimsthaler (2000), de Chernatony (2001) and Kapferer (2004) have proposed certain models to define brand identity; where three facets such as brand personality, brand culture and relationship are commonly shared by Kapferer (2004), David Aaker, and Joachimsthaler (2000) and by de Chernatony (2001) and user image is also part of models shared by Kapferer (2004) and de Chernatony (2001). Besides all these models, according de Chernatony (1999, 2001), Kapferer's hexagonal brand identity prism (2004) is powerful tool to present insightful brand based view of identity which explains essential difference between a brand and its competitors. Though there are several brand identity frameworks, most researchers have mentioned that brand identity is best understood from the picture of sender and brand image from the picture of recipient (Konecnik, & Go, 2008); where the dimensions of values and relationship connect sender and receiver to let the brand flow as a message from sender to receiver (Kapferer, 2008). This total conception of brand identity framework was first introduced in Europe by Kapferer in 1986 which was accepted worldwide with great importance (Krishnamurthi, 2007). From this theoretical point of view, Kapferer's brand identity prism model (2004) has been chosen as a framework to analyze brand identity of the lifestyle magazine - ‘Sköna hem’.

2.2 Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism

Kapferer's brand identity prism model (2004) works as a potential mechanism for brand managers to gauge the identity of any brand. As the name implies, this model consists of six facets: Physique, Personality, Relationship, Culture, Reflection and Self-image. A brand is a speech flowing from a sender to a receiver where the brand identity facets of Physique (i.e. physical attributes) and Personality (i.e., human characteristics) portrait the sender; and the identity facets of Reflection (i.e., image of target audience) and Self-image (i.e., how the brand is perceived by the consumers)

depict the receiver. Finally, Culture (i.e., values) and Relationship (i.e., the way of conduct) form a connection between the sender and the receiver (Kapferer, 2008).

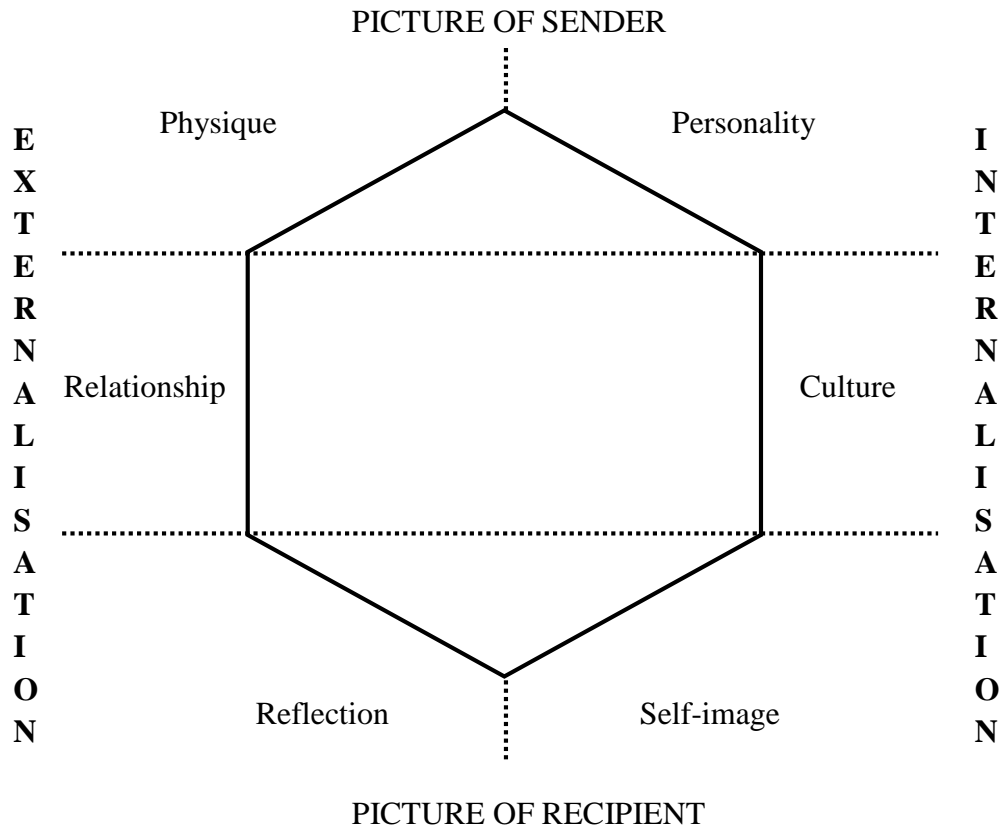


Figure 1: Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2004)

These six facets are divided into two dimensions: (1) Picture of Sender vs. Picture of Recipient –where a well-presented brand should be able to be seen as a person (Physique and Personality) and also as the stereotypical user (Reflection and Self-image); and (2) *Externalisation* vs. *Internalisation* – where social aspects of a brand defining its external expression (Physique, Relationship and Reflection) and the aspects incorporated into the brand itself (Personality, Culture and Self-image) are presented. (EURIB, 2009)

According to EURIB (2009), “Kapferer states that these aspects can only come to life when the brand communicates with the consumer. Strong brands are, according to Kapferer, capable of weaving all aspects into an effective whole, as a way of coming to a concise, clear and appealing brand identity”. Six facets of brand identity prism will be discussed here in detail to understand its link with marketing communication.

a. **Physique:** Physique, an exterior tangible facet communicating physical features, color and qualities, forms the brand’s backbone (Haafte, 2009). Physical aspect of a brand is the first step in building up a brand which differentiates the brand in the market through tangible added value of unique appearance, as for example, the unique shape of Coca-cola bottle (Krishnamurthi, 2007). Thus, while a brand name strikes in consumer’s mind, she/he first tries to visualize its physical attributes to recall it.

According to Kapferer, no brand will be able to succeed in getting consumer's attention without expressing its material benefits. Though Hugo Boss, Max Factor and D&G possess strong brand image, they have to express material benefits such as selling clothes and/or cosmetics in their advertisement (EURIB, 2009).

b. **Personality:** Personality is the internal intangible facet which forms relevant character for the brand to identify it (Haaften, 2009). The brand personality in the prism model is the way in which the brand represents its products or services as a human; more specifically through human personality traits (Kapferer, 2004). This can be done by communicating any specific pattern, design, color schemes (EURIB, 2009) or simply by giving brand a real or symbolic spokesperson to create instant personality (Kapferer, 2004). Spokesperson or famous character endorsement can give more realistic expression of the brand personality by adding flesh to a brand's character; where George Clooney for Nespresso and Jamie Oliver for Sainsbury's are well-known examples (EURIB, 2009).

c. **Culture:** The next dimension of this identity prism model is culture - an internal intangible facet which is the set of values embedded in the brand and originated from organization essentially to differentiate (Haaften, 2009). This facet describes the basic value and principles on the basis of which products and communication of a brand are designed. Culture could be seen as the direct connection between a brand and organization. In many cases, the country of origin of the brand works as source of cultural associations of the brand. For example, Coca-cola appeals to American values, Mercedes-Benz to German values and Citroën to French values (EURIB, 2009).

d. **Relationship:** An exterior facet with tangible and intangible areas (Haaften, 2009), which connotes a brand's symbolic relationship between actors. Compared to product brands, service brands have the most obvious use of relationship since by definition a service brand survives based on its relationship with customers. This facet in the prism deals with the mode of conduct i.e, the way in which the management behaves to deliver services and relate to its customers which identifies the brand (Kapferer, 2004).

e. **Reflection:** An external intangible facet addresses the outward reflection of the customer with which perception customer wishes to be visualized or identified (Haaften, 2009). This aspect makes reference and works as the source of identification to the stereotypical user of the brand. But it does not necessarily coincide with the characteristics of the target group. For example, while thinking in terms of reflection, one can describe consumer base for Coca-cola as 15-18 year old people (with values such as fun, sporty and friendship); but the actual target group of this brand is far broader. According to Kapferer, brand managers do not need to portray a realistic reflection of the actual target group in their marketing communication/campaigns; rather they should present a group/person that will appeal to the members of the target group (EURIB, 2009).

f. **Self-image:** The last facet of this model is self-image - an external intangible facet and it is defined as the target customer's own internal mirror while customer gets personal interaction with the brand during purchase or usage situation (Haaften, 2009).

Self-image is customer's image with his/her choice of brand, visible in the mirror while he/she looks at it. A customer of a brand might think that others perceive him/her in certain ways because of the use of that particular brand. For example, a Porsche driver thinks others perceive him as a rich person because of his flash car. While developing brand identity, brand managers should cautiously consider this dimension. The self-image insights are very important in creating a brand identity. Besides, the knowledge of the underlying core drivers of consumers can help boost-up the brand and leverage marketing campaign. Research has revealed that Lacoste brand users pretend themselves as members of a sporty club, though they do not actively play any sports.

But without valuing this insight, Lacoste brand would never have been able to create its current strong brand image based on its brand identity (EURIB, 2009).

Brands evolve with time in a certain direction. Brand managers and the organization in a whole need to understand the key brand drivers to manage and balance identity changes across the facets in a planned and preferred direction (Haaften, 2009). These six facets of the brand identity prism enable the brand managers to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the brands and thus also allow them to define boundaries for brands to extend. All these facets are interconnected to express a collaborative identity of the brand. This model allows analyzing the communication process through understanding the original plan behind the brand's objectives, products and symbols. But, the original plan is often implicit. If it is not written and well communicated internally, brand managers unconsciously make mistake by doing brand planning in an ad-hoc basis. (Kapferer, 2004)

Thus, brand identity prism model can be utilized as a powerful tool to assess the position of the brand in the market and in the consumer's mind to design an effective marketing communication plan. In this exploratory study, the author has tried to figure out six facets of a Swedish lifestyle magazine brand considering its positive features and also has analyzed their role behind the marketing communication more specifically, print media advertisement.

3. Case study on a Swedish lifestyle magazine

Glamorous and creative nature of lifestyle magazine along with eye-catching advertisements of luxury brands inside the magazine always influence the luxury fashion consumer market and hook consumer with an aspiration to define her/his personality and lifestyle in a distinctive way (Okonkwo, 2007). Historical and cultural background, art schools, artists, social context of a country and also homeowners' tastes are integral part of the history and theory of design (Creagh, Kåberg, & Lane, 2008), which all together gives ideas to interior designers and they in turn influence people to decorate their homes in stylish way as shown in glossy papers of an interior design magazine (Becker, 2009). Since the early twentieth century the movement in modern Swedish design has not only brought changes in domestic environment as a means to social reform, but also has influenced the international arena of modern architecture and interior furnishings (Creagh et al., 2008). The democratic design concept based on easily accessible and affordable products without eliminating beauty and the influence of late-19th century famous Swedish artist Carl Larsson's works have made Swedish design unique in the world; which is mostly revealed through creative functional designs of furniture and other home décor items (Eypórsdóttir, 2011). Shortly this historic movement in Swedish design and its unique position in the world have worked as motivation to conduct study on interior design magazine though there are several categories in lifestyle magazines based on different ideas and topics such as fashion and beauty, family life, interior design, gardening, technology and so on.

Bonnier AB, backed with 200 years long historical background in both book and magazine publishing, is a family-owned Sweden based international media group operating in 17 countries. From this media group, Sweden's leading magazine publisher Bonnier Tidskrifter offers range of branded magazines under certain categories such as – Fashion & Beauty, Lifestyle, Family, Home & Interior Design, Special Interest and Business Magazines. Thus, interior design magazines from Bonnier AB have been screened initially to select potential magazine brand for brand identity analysis. Under the category – Home & Interior Design, there are ten brands of magazines named as – '101 idéer', 'Allt i Hemmet', 'Antikvärlden', 'Allt om Fritidshus', 'Family living', 'Gård & Torp', 'Hem & Antik', 'Sköna hem', 'Sköna hem Country life', 'Sköna hem', 'Skapa stilen' and

‘Trendenser’. Among all these magazines, ‘Sköna hem’ magazine has been chosen to carry out this study based on judgmental analysis mainly focusing on two criterions – age of the magazine and the number of readership. Within the category, ‘Allt i Hemmet’ magazine is the oldest magazine founded in the year 1956 and after that ‘Sköna hem’ founded in 1979, secures second position in term of age of the magazine. (www.bonniermagazines.se)

Though, ‘Allt i Hemmet’ is the oldest magazine, according to ORVESTO® Konsument 2011 full year report – a postal media and audience research in Sweden circulated by the research company TNS Sifo, the readership of this magazine is 330,000; whereas the readership of ‘Sköna hem’ magazine is 409,000 (TNS Sifo, 2012). Therefore, considering the number of readership, ‘Sköna hem’ magazine has been taken as a case to be studied where better consumer reach has worked as positive notion to get reliable and structured information about that magazine brand from the consumers and other peer-groups within the industry.

3.1 Sköna hem – at a glance

Sköna hem is one of Sweden's biggest and oldest magazines that focus on interior design. It started in 1979 and the brand name is part of Bonniers Tidskrifter AB. Sköna hem means ‘sweet home’ or ‘comfortable home’ in English and it focuses on interior design. Sköna hem magazine offers 14 issues per year and have 409,000 readers according to the ORVESTO® Konsument 2011 full year media consumption report (TNS Sifo, 2012). The target group is between the ages of 25 and 65. Sköna hem stands for trend, tradition and quality. The magazine contains articles on the latest trends in décor along with historic and classic interior designs that influence readers to think about design in diversified ways. Sköna hem gives interesting news on interior designs from both reputed Swedish designers and international designers around the globe. This is such an artistic platform where creative mind readers get a chance to have reliable tips and inspiration from professional designers as well as to peep into décor amused people’s home to see interesting ways of home decoration. Sköna hem provides different themes related to designing ideas in home furnishings, such as storage, textiles, bedroom, sitting area, kitchen and bathroom. (Blom, 2012, & www.skonahem.se)

Sköna hem is more than an interior design magazine. It promotes ideas, inspiration and reliable buying tips to consumers who want to create the most beautiful home and also to learn more about interior design. For both individuals and companies, Sköna hem is conducting course on interior design in big cities in Sweden. To an enthusiastic reader, Sköna hem is a lovely inspiration in creating a beautiful, personal and functional home environment.

Quick facts about the brand Sköna hem and the profile of its target readers are summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Quick facts about brand and consumer profile

Brand Quick Facts	Consumer Profile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique selling proposition (USP): Experienced designers' guideline & inspiration for most beautiful & exciting homes • Concept: Latest update in the field of decorating & design • Mission: Reliable & lovely inspiration in creating beautiful, personal & functional home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiastic in creating fantastic & interesting home environment • Passionate to spend more money on interior decorating • Distribution: 75% women, 25% men • Age Group: 25- 65 • Avg. Household Income: SEK 504,300 (Swedish Kroner)

Data Source: Bonnier Tidskrifter QRS, 2010; Adapted from: Blom, 2012.

3.2 Central features of the magazine's own brand identity

Due to the explorative nature of this research work, qualitative approach has been preferred as research frame work. Since the goal of an exploratory research is to gain insights as new information emerges (Churchill, & Iacobucci, 2005), a qualitative research approach is mainly adequate for explorative aims (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998). This research work has been carried out at small scale with an intension to verify its potential for further study and this is mainly based on secondary data analysis with partial verification by flexible and unstructured primary data. Initially data have been collected from – (a) different reports generated by Bonnier Tidskrifter (www.bonniermagazines.se; www.skonahem.se) and Swede's media research report- ORVESTO Konsument 2011:Helår, 2012 (TNS Sifo, 2012), (b) industry related expert opinions by the magazine's Editor-in-chief (Blom, 2012), top designers and interior design bloggers. Then the collected established data have been partially validated with (a) unstructured communication with consumers through different internet based consumer forum and groups such as group page on social media (e.g., Facebook), online discussions on both magazine issues (publications from the year 2010 to 2012) and renowned designers' review write-up on those magazine issues; and finally further analysis has been carried out based on the observation of those magazine issues. Informal consumer feedback and discussion have been found less biased to understand the brand identity of this lifestyle magazine on the basis of Kapferer's brand identity prism model (2004) and also to analyze the influence of central features of that magazine brand on marketing communication to strengthen its identity. Flexible nature of qualitative research approach provides information to understand consumer behavior and to define the problem accordingly (Malhotra, 2003); which has been found very useful to get information for this study within a fragmented research environment.

During this study, following fundamental questions have considered to get relevant information to analyze brand identity of Sköna hem within the context of Kapferer's brand identity prism model (2004).

- Comprehending the brand physique of Sköna hem: What physical symbols or features are associated with the brand to describe the magazine?

Like other lifestyle magazines, Sköna hem is printed on glossy paper with beautiful, stylish photographs of home decor done by professional photographer and designer to attract the attention of the target audience, with the cover page containing relevant catchy headings. For more than 30 years, this magazine remains stick with three core features – 'trends, tradition and quality' where classical and traditional approaches are balanced with latest news of design world and quality

presentation of the core content (Blom, 2012; www.bonniermagazines.se). Sköna hem follows both Swedish and international designers and architects while talking about latest or classical pattern of designs done by either established famous designers or young designers such as Astrid Sampe, Anna Petrus, Josef Frank, Berndt Friberg, Axel Einar Hjort or young promising designer Jonas Kleerup (www.skonahem.com). Thus, presentation of designers' classic and quality works on textile, glass, furniture or other home décor item or simply famous architect's Scandinavian style of house, endorse the brand – Sköna hem with the terms – ‘trend, tradition & quality’.

- Comprehending the brand personality of Sköna hem: If this magazine is a person, what personality does it possess? Or what personal characteristics of the brand are portrayed by the community?

Claes Blom, Editor-in-chief (2012) has explained Sköna hem in the following way:

Sköna hem invites you to the most beautiful, most personal and exciting homes. The fantastic imagery in the articles offers pleasure and inspiration. Sköna hem provides clever interior design, tips and ideas. Sköna hem's experienced designers offer guidance and inspiration. And more, there are always reliable purchase guides.

While world's best interior blogs (Davies, 2012) such as Apartment Therapy, Décor8, Bodie and Fou, Emma's Designblogg, Pinterest get inspiration from the features covered in Sköna hem and start talk about latest Scandinavian trend in the field of decorating and design, that brand of magazine simply turns into a reliable guide for interior design. Besides articles on interior ideas and tip, in Sköna hem readers get information from advertisement on latest collection of renowned fashion house and furniture retail chains like H&M, IKEA; which has a great influence on readers' purchase decision (Bonnier Tidskrifter QRS 2010 as cited in Blom, 2012). When an American freelance writer and design lover, Laura Gaskill starts her blog with a dialogue - ‘Let's get inspired with a fresh batch of interiors from Swedish design magazine ‘Skona Hem’ – one of my favorite go-to sources for inspiring homes & styling’ (Gaskill, 2012); it simply strengthen the brand personality of Sköna hem as ‘Stylish, latest and reliable guide’.

- Comprehending the brand culture of Sköna hem: *What set of values and vision of the brand are communicated to the consumers to differentiate the brand?*

While talking about Swedish design, an American award winning and best-selling author, interior stylist and founder & editor of the renowned interior blog – ‘decor8’, Holly Becker (2009) says –

I seriously need to go back to Sweden again for vacation because I love to shop there and find so many things that appeal to me. I am inspired by Swedish magazines too because whenever I look at them I'm reminded of why I love certain elements of Scandinavian design so much. (para. 1)

Sköna hem's interior photographs and articles on Swedish traditional black-white based design, Gustavian styled vintage furniture, modern functional design, seasonal design collection or simply famous Danish photographer Birgitta Wolfgang Drejer's home décor hook international best interior blogs such as American blog – ‘decor8’, ‘apartment therapy’, Australia's best interior blog – ‘The Design Files’ and inspire them to talk about it (Becker, 2011; Werbler, 2010; Feagins, 2009). Again, inspirational seasonal features in the magazine make readers nostalgic with the childhood memories of the traditional celebration of Christmas in Sweden (Vitt, 2010). Though the language of this magazine is Swedish, this magazine brand has successfully communicated its core

value and vision to the interior world. Thus, brand culture of the magazine is succinctly summarized as inspired with ‘Swedish values and tradition’.

- Comprehending the brand relationship of Sköna hem: *What type of relationship does exist between the consumer and the magazine to strengthen its brand value?*

The mission of the brand Sköna hem is to be reliable source and lovely inspiration for those readers who have craving for beautiful and creative functional home environment (Blom, 2012). And the brand is quite successful to achieve this mission which is visible through the following statement of Annie Werbler (2010) –

Sköna Hem, which means "comfortable home" in Swedish, always puts together the best features on warm modern decor in real homes. Don't be put off by the language barrier, because we can still learn a lot from pictures. Design is the universal language! (para. 2)

Not only the language barrier, even though it is admitted by many general readers and top designers that interior photographs or ideas on Sköna hem are not the actual picture of average Swedish home; still it inspires them to be creative (Becker, 2009; Werbler, 2010). Besides, this magazine brand also offers design course training led by expert interior designers which gives participants an amazing feeling of becoming professional designer of their own homes (www.skonahem.com) and by turn strengthen their relationship with Sköna hem through ‘lovely inspiration for creation’.

- Comprehending the brand reflection of Sköna hem: *What is the desired image that consumers want to achieve while buying or reading this magazine brand?*

According to the Quality Readership Study – QRS by Bonnier Tidskrifter (2010 as cited in Blom, 2012), the magazine brand Sköna hem portrays its target audience in the following way –

She is an enthusiastic magazine consumer who reads two or more magazines per month. She reads the magazine carefully, spending an average of 41 minutes per issue. She reads for pleasure and information, and she saves each issue so she can read it several times..... Sköna hems advertisements influence her shopping choices....

Here, brand’s desired image of consumers is quite logical considering some statistical data about reader’s profile such as gender distribution – 75% women, residence – 46% from big cities of Sweden and average household income - SEK 504,300 (TNS Sifo, 2012); which gives an allusion that women from big cities in Sweden, exposed with modern lifestyle and capable to spend fair enough money on things of own interest are the target consumers for Sköna hem. Shortly, the brand reflection of Sköna hem is referred to as the ‘awareness of self interest, creativity and joy of interior’; though it may not always depict whole characteristic of the target group.

- Comprehending self image of Sköna hem: *How consumers are identified within the brand community while they are purchasing this brand?*

I am simply going to choose some of my favourite photos from the latest issues of Sköna hem, one of the coolest mags on the planet that I wish came translated in English and sold here in Canada. That would rock my world.

~ Kim Johnson, Web developer & Interior design blogger, Ottawa, Canada. (2009).

This is the voice of many passionate interior designers and lovers around the world who can't understand Swedish but know the language of design and get inspiration from the ideas and interior designs posted on Sköna hem through either the website of the magazine or social networks and blogs. This group of audience across the country border is not visualized by the brand reflection facet. Thus, all together a reader of Sköna hem opines herself as 'trendy and décor amused' persona.

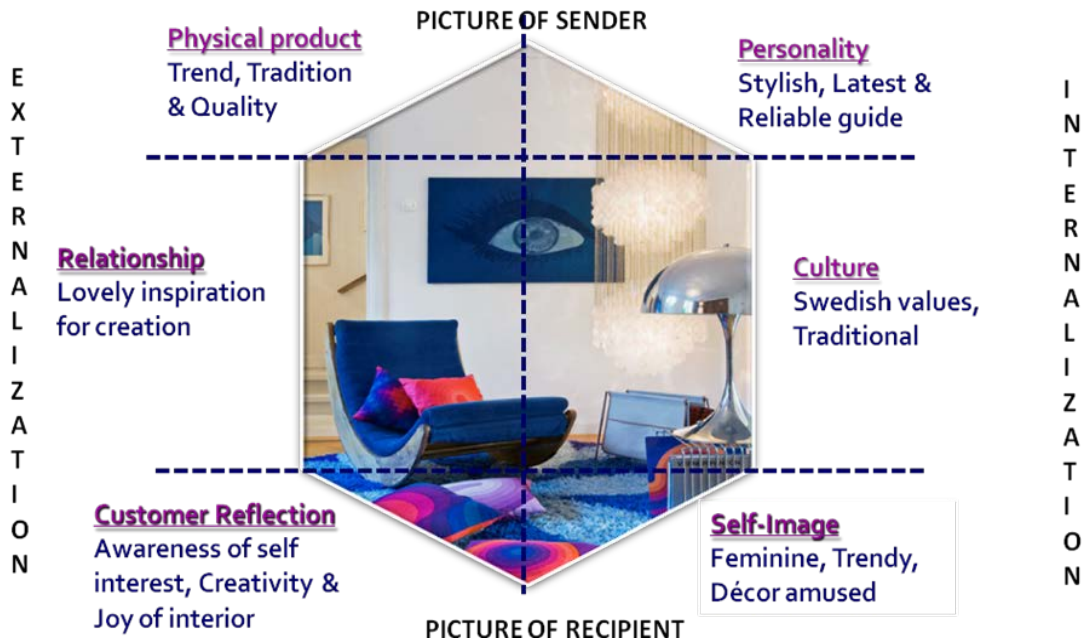


Figure 2: Brand Identity Prism for the magazine "Sköna hem"

3.3 Implication of magazine's identity on advertisements: interplay between marketing communication and the brand

Maintaining a strong brand connotes striking the right balance between continuity in marketing activities (i.e. not to confuse customers with conflicting brand image) and the relevant change (Keller, 2000). Brand equity of a strong brand is tied both to the actual quality of the product and to the intangible aspects of brand identity (Keller, 2000); which needs to be well integrated within marketing communication to strengthen brand equity (Keller, 1993). Thus, brand identity should influence marketing communication to convey right message about the brand to customers through right ways (de Chernatony, 1999; Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005).

The first thing anyone notices is the physical attribute of the magazine i.e. it is very glossy, attractive and covered with photographs of the latest trends; where consumers can follow people's homes and the journey of their interest in interior. Sköna hem, a design magazine worth SEK 74, is basically targeting to those readers who are educated and keen about latest trend in home décor; who have a high household income to spend a lot more money on interior decorating than the average person (Bonnier International Magazine website). Thus, all facets of this magazine's brand identity (as analyzed in figure 2) work together to present it as a good marketing channel for professional designers who want to promote their ideas and for firms who are selling designers' home decor products, high-tech lifestyle gadgets, antique items, kitchen and bathroom fitting etc. required in furnishing a home in a unique and stylish way.

The success factor of marketing relies in understanding consumer's need or buying process (Tyagi, & Kumar, 2004, p.66); and in case of a lifestyle magazine, articles or editorial content work as a frame of reference to influence consumer behaviour and attitudes (Tyagi & Kumar, 2004, p.176). Marketing strategy of a brand depends on consumers' knowledge, experience and beliefs about that brand (Keller, 2000). According to Claes Blom, Editor-in-chief (2012), 'Sköna hem's reader is inspired by advertisements. The advertisements are a portion of that inspiration, as well as the new ideas she gets from Sköna hem'. Designers like Svedberg, Josef Frank or Arne Jacobsen are doing advertisement in Sköna hem and reaching their specific target customers who are interested in design (www.skonahem.com). Again, advertisements of home décor items and electronic appliances with price information from renowned companies like Siemens, Svedbergs, Bang & Olufsen, IKEA, Montana, and Electrolux enrich the contents of the magazine with useful information. Thus, these combinations of advertisements present this magazine as a reliable source of tips, ideas and buying guide. In the report of *Bonnier Tidskrifter QRS* (2010 as cited in Blom, 2012), it is revealed that Sköna hem's readers spend an average of 41 minutes per issue to read it carefully, get influenced by the advertisement and after reading the magazine, either they visit a website to explore or purchase the product. Thus, these combinations of advertisements present this magazine as a reliable source of tips, ideas and buying guide; which express the clear influence of Sköna hem's brand identity on marketing communication.

Besides, the link created between the reader and the magazine benefits the advertisers. The magazine creates an environment that prepares the reader to receive the advertisement positively. Advertisement is an integral part of a magazine where relevant advertisement always adds value to the magazine and hooks readers. Reader's strong bondage with the magazine as a brand, strengthen the endorsement that the advertising firms receive from this magazine brand's personality. Reading the magazine is about relaxing, which increases readers' chance to give a look at the ads and this condition is same for Sköna hem like other magazines.

Targeting with precision is the key strength of life style magazines. On the other side the magazine itself needs advertisement in order to show which target group are being addressed to and felt comfort in their choice. The magazine and the industry advertised are closely connected, since they need to target the same audience. For the company, the advertisement in the magazine will be the chance to reach the customer. On the other hand, the advertisement of those particular companies will help the magazine to achieve its goals.

4. Discussion & Conclusion

For a lifestyle magazine, it is a great challenge to reach very specific group of audience with right content of their interest; especially while it is striving to create its desired brand identity like other niche products in different industry. Success of a strong brand largely depends upon frequent use of in-depth brand audits and ongoing brand tracking studies through external investigation, focus group and other consumer researches which reveal consumers' perception and beliefs about a brand to define its true brand identity (Keller, 2000). Though scholars like Kapferer, and Bastien (2009), Cailleux, Mignot, and Kapferer (2009), Keller (2009) and Chernev, Hamilton, and Gal (2011) have several research works on management of luxury brand, challenges and opportunity analysis of lifestyle branding within consumer goods and service industries, particular research arena focusing lifestyle magazine brand management and its influence on marketing communication has remained quite untapped. From such point of view, this qualitative research work at small scale has been carried with a notion to pay attention at this potential area to be explored further.

According to brand identity analysis (figure-2), it is understood that as a brand this magazine has established its desired position not only in Sweden, but also in the international arena of interior design. Readers' profile of the brand - Sköna hem and the brand's own personality, vision and image are found in the same thread to make it successful. Specially, the brand conveys right set of cultural values through its overall content and marketing communication which has positioned it as a brand of trendy 'Swedish' design magazine. Here, Swedish historic and cultural values work as competitive advantage for the brand to grab attention of international consumers, though many top international designers and consumers have screamed out saying 'can't understand a damn word! But love the design'. Simply, Sköna hem's relationship with its readers based on 'lovely inspiration for creation' has overcome this language barrier and has made this brand of magazine accepted internationally. Again, relevant advertisements in the magazine aligned with its brand identity facets, have made the magazine a complete purchase guide and strengthen the brand value.

While worldwide the lifestyle magazine industry is at the rising stage, emergence of digital media has become great challenge for print media. Sköna hem has already confronted this challenge through its availability at website and smart phone applications; but still it is not completely prepared for its international readers, especially for international top designers who can endorse the brand for its further growth. The language of this magazine may become an obstacle in near future for its effective marketing communication to convey its brand identity in the target market. International exposure of this brand can attract more advertising firms to promote their products and service which in turn will enrich the content of the magazine; and will reduce any gap between brand's 'customer reflection' and 'self-image' facets. Thus, marketing communication strategy and brand's identity facets are closely related.

From the brand identity analysis, another important point has been found out from general readers' discussion panel that in many cases the magazine does not show the actual picture of any Swedish home though creative mind readers are amused with lovely home décor photography. Being a lifestyle magazine, it is not a significant complain against Sköna hem. But it may create gap between consumers and the brand. More realistic content will definitely strengthen the brand's relationship with its consumers.

Brand identity plays a significant role to strike the right chord in consumer mind which can create a long lasting impression or a short-term quick noise. The success of effective marketing communication resides in understanding of consumer insight and brand identity and this is the main tricky task for brand management team. Very often, marketers forget that they are promoting brands of their target audience's choice not of their own taste; and also mix up the terms target and customer reflection. Kapferer's brand identity framework is partly rigid to preserve core values of the brand, but partly flexible to accommodate certain aspects in brand communication to catch-up with changing consumer's taste and behavior as well as to consider transition in product range and markets. It defines a boundary for each brand to visualize it's limitation of stretching point and works as speed breaker for brand managers to plan brand's visions. Analyzing any consumer goods brand or service brand employing brand identity model is a common practice for brand management to develop marketing strategy for the brand. But, for a lifestyle magazine brand this type of study is quite challenging due to its narrow base of consumer and fragmented nature of research environment. Therefore, this small scale study with a limitation of lack of market segmentation based large scale primary data, is a thought for further broad scale research work in this category of lifestyle brand. Besides, since consumers' perception about a brand together with marketing communication is motivated by their own culture (de Mooije, & Hofstede, 2010), inclusion of ethnographic qualitative research framework will strengthen any future research.

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