Independent but dependent

An empirical study of the car modification market

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Abstract

A brand can be a valuable asset for a company in two ways: On the one hand the brand can have an influence on the perceptions and preferences of the consumer and thereby positively influence the performance and success of a product, which can lead to a competitive advantage. On the other hand, a brand can even be an asset of significant financial value. For the actual building of a strong brand, several theoretical models exist.

Car modification companies offer modifications for and modified versions of cars of other brands. The thereof resulting connection between the two brands and its consequences for the brand of the modification company cannot be depicted with the existing theoretical brand and brand building models. In addition to that, car modification companies touch upon the field of luxury cars. This factor has to be taken into consideration when dealing with the brand building of car modification companies.

In addition to the lack of applicability of existing brand building models for the car modification industry, this special industry has not been covered by research yet in general.

In this thesis, a theoretical framework for brand building, the model of customer based brand equity as well as the characteristics of luxury branding will be lined out. In order to examine how the special factors of the car modification industry, namely the connection between the modification company and the base brand and luxury branding can be integrated into this model, six representatives from the car modification industry have been interviewed.

The results and analysis of these interviews show that through the assessment of the customer based brand equity of the base brand, the modification company can identify strong and favorable aspects of the base brand that it can build upon, emphasize and/or expand with the modification as well as weaknesses and flaws of the base brand that it can make up for with the modification. Furthermore, the examination shows that by assessing the model of customer based brand equity of the modification brand and a relevant special brand factor, in the case of this thesis luxury branding, for common features and similarities, this special factor can also be integrated into the theoretical model.

Through these findings, the thesis is able to present a revised model of customer based brand equity that incorporates both the connection between the modification brand and the base brand as well as the special factor luxury branding.

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1   Introduction

1.1   The relevance of brands in the car market

Within the highly competitive global marketplace a brand is one of the most important intangible assets a company can have. At its most basic level, a brand fulfills the simple function of marking the offering that a company makes. This marking provides several benefits for the customer: it simplifies the choice, gives a promise of quality and increases the trust while at the same time reducing the risk. A company benefits from this, as a brand can influence the consumers' perceptions and preferences. Having a strong brand can therefore depict a competitive advantage. It leads to higher profits and superior performance, can generate a base of loyal customers and can pose an entry barrier to potential competition. In addition to that, having a brand enables the company to measure the effectiveness of marketing activities by assessing the brand awareness. A strong brand can also depict a valuable financial asset, as it will have an impact on the financial value of the company (de Chernatony & McDonald, 2003, p. 17; Jobber, 2010, p. 305; Aaker, 2010, p. 163).

In order to demonstrate what difference regarding the performance and success of a product a brand can make, one example from the car industry is specifically suitable: General Motors (GM) and Toyota produced a car in a joint venture. Both companies marketed the car with identical specifications and equipment. GM branded the car as a Geo, priced at 10.700 US-$, while Toyota sold it under the Toyota brand for the price of 11.000 US-$. Despite the identical functionality and the lower price, from 1990 until 1994 GM was only able to sell around 80.000 of these cars while Toyota sold around 200.000 (Almquist, Turvill & Roberts, 1998).

This example does not only illustrate the impact a brand can have on the sales of a product, it also indicates that within the car market, the brand is an important factor and can have a major impact on the success of a car. Indeed does the brand of a car play a major role when it comes to a car purchase. At first sight, this might not be obvious, as for example according to a 2014 study of the independent nonprofit organization Consumer Reports the main factors when purchasing a car are quality, safety, performance, value, fuel economy, design/style and technology/innovation (Consumer Reports, 2014). Apparently, brand is not among these factors. However, according to a study by the Automotive Institute for Management the image of the brand plays a more and more important role when it comes to the purchase of a car. Due to the high complexity of the automobile market and the thereof resulting confusion, costumers tend to switch their basis for decision making from rational to emotional aspects. As the brand of a car basically reflects and bundles the performance promised by the manufacturer, consumers tend to make their purchase decision based on the brand image (automotiveIT, 2011). Another study by Capgemini Consulting (2013) lists reliability of the brand as the most important factor among respondents asked about how they decide on the car that they would like to purchase. In addition to that, it has been found that the popularity of a car brand is the biggest factor that influences the market share within the car market and even has a long-term impact (Kim & Chung, 1997).

Therefore it can be assumed that when it comes to marketing a car, having a strong brand with a positive image among potential customers is a desirable goal for

companies in order to influence the customer, differentiate from the competition and gain sustainable market share.

1.2   Car modification companies

As it might be unclear for some readers what exactly is meant when referring to car modification companies, a short explanation will be given. Car modification companies are companies which take vehicles of established car brands straight from the factory, modify them and sell them at a higher price. The modifications include performance improvement and/or modifications of the interior and exterior as well as adding/changing equipment. Often these companies also offer modifications and modification parts to customers who already own the base car (see for example Grünweg, 2008; Haupt, 2012).

To illustrate this with an example: GEMBALLA, a German car modification company will take a Porsche 970 Panamera as base car and increase the engine performance from 300 horsepower to up to more than 750 horsepower. All body parts of the car will be replaced with carbon parts in order to lower the weight, and a differently designed front spoiler with bigger air intakes and a different rear apron installed. The stock exhaust pipes will be replaced with a sport exhaust system. The standard chassis will be replaced with coilovers in order to be able to lower the car up to 40 mm. The stock wheels will be replaced with wheels designed by GEMBALLA and a high performance brake system installed. The interior of the car will be decorated depending on the wishes of the individual customer with materials like for example leather or alcantara. All Original logos and labels will be removed and replaced with GEMBALLA logos and labels and the car be sold under the name GEMBALLA Mistrale (Hänsch-Petersen, 2009).

1.3   The car modification market

According to the association of German car modification companies, Verband der Automobil Tuner e.V. – VDAT, there are no reliable numbers of for example the volume of sales for the international market of modified cars and modification parts and services. However, in 2011 German car modification companies, which the VDAT claims are leading in this industry, generated an international volume of sales of 4.6 billion Euros, with Europe being the biggest market. The majority of German car modification companies is globally active, with only 5% solely focusing on the German market (VDAT, 2011). To give an example, the German car modification company Brabus, which considers itself the world's biggest independent car modification company is active within 106 countries and generates 85% of its sales abroad, with the Emirates, Russia and China being the biggest markets (Pfeil, 2013). And there are indications that the worldwide demand for modified premium cars will grow in the future. Especially in the emerging markets, the luxury market is rapidly growing, with for example India's luxury market growing by 86% until 2018, followed by China growing with a growth of 72% and all of Asia Pacific with a combined growth of 170% (Wang, 2013). According to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2012 p. 10) luxury customers in emerging markets are purchasing luxury goods as status symbols and to achieve social acknowledgement. In addition to that luxury goods are often purchased with the intention to express uniqueness and individuality (Bian & Forsythe 2012). As a luxury car is seen as a symbol of status and wealth (Searle, 2010, p. 70), it can be argued that a luxury car that has been modified or even customized to the wishes of the

buyer combines all those three factors and therefore a growing demand especially within the emerging markets can be expected. Especially China, which is estimated to become the world's largest market for premium cars (Gabardi et. al., 2013) proves to be a promising market for car modification companies. According to Yankelovich, chief executive office of the Latvian car modification company Dartz (cited in Preiss, 2013), for wealthy Chinese people the standard version of a luxury car is not enough in order to meet their need for individuality. In addition to that, in 2012 the Chinese Zhongsheng Group Holdings Ltd. purchased 70% of the German car modification company Carlsson Autotechnik GmbH in order to be able to meet the growing demand for car modifications from wealthy car owners in China (Driskill, 2012).

Looking closely at the distribution of car brands for which modifications are offered among the different modification companies it comes to mind that the majority of the brands that get modified can be classified as premium or luxury cars. Marketing for luxury products however differs from the marketing of other products and requires different management, rules and values (Wiedmann & Hennigs, 2013, p. 14). Bastien and Kapferer (2013, p. 26) for example have identified what they refer to as anti-laws of marketing valid for luxury marketing. These imply for example that positioning is not relevant as luxury is not comparative or that it should be made difficult for the client to buy the product.

What is also apparent when taking a closer look at the distribution of car brands for which modifications are offered among the different modification companies is the fact that often for one brand several different companies offer modifications. This implies a competitive market.

1.4 Identified problems

After assessing the preceding descriptions of the special characteristics of car modification companies, the car modification market and the importance of branding within the car market, the following problems can be identified:

1. The car modification market is competitive, therefore in order to differentiate from the competition and to influence the customers purchase decision, developing a strong brand is advantageous. Building a strong brand is however not an easy task, as there are internal and external pressures and barriers and it requires an effective strategy (Aaker, 1995).
2. There is a connection to the brand of the cars that are the base for the modifications.
3. The majority of car modification companies modifies premium or luxury cars, therefore the modification brands will most likely benefit from establishing their brand as a luxury brand. This can however be a very challenging process (Roll, 2011).

1.5 Preconceptions

In order to uphold the rules of scientific practice, it is necessary to line out the author's background and possible preconceptions that might influence the thesis in order to

avoid impacting the result of the study. The author is currently in the final semester of a two year masters program in marketing at the Umeå School of Business and Economics. Prior to this he has studied a part time bachelors program in international business management at the Fachhochschule für Oekonomie und Management in Duisburg, Germany. On the career level he has worked as a credit specialist for a bank, as an account manager for a distributor of office supplies and as an account manager for a computer company. On a professional or academic level there has never been any contact with the car modification industry. On a private level the author has however had an interest in car modification. In addition to that, the author's aim after graduation is to work for a car modification company. As he however has no practical experience with the car modification market, with this thesis he tries to acquire theoretical knowledge in order to gain additional qualification for an occupation within this industry. Therefore, the factor that there might be a bigger personal interest in certain companies or that certain companies might be more attractive as a potential employer might lead to the danger of not approaching this thesis and especially the data collection with the required unbiasedness. However the author is aware of and acknowledges this possible conflict of interest, and therefore will critically reflect upon his approach and steps taken for the data collection in order to uphold the rules of scientific practice. In addition to that, the personal interest in the car modification market might also be beneficial for this thesis as there is basic knowledge that can be build upon.

1.6 Research problem and knowledge gap

The general topic of branding, brand management and brand strategy is a frequently researched area. Textbooks that get used at universities around the world within the field of marketing have chapters dedicated to it (see for example Kotler & Armstrong, 2010 p. 259; Baines, Fill & Page, 2011p. 312), and even peer reviewed journals like the journal of brand management exist. In addition to that, even subtopics like for example destination branding (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011), e-branding (Lee & Miller, 2006) and corporate branding (Fetscherin & Usunier, 2012) have evolved and been researched.

For Luxury branding there exist also a variety of books (see for example Kapferer, 2012; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012p.) and peer reviewed articles (see for example Song, Hur & Kim; Ko & Megehee, 2012, p. 1395-1398) that discuss and research this topic and related subtopics.

What the previously stated examples of literature about branding, brand management and brand strategy and luxury branding as well as other examples from these areas have in common is the fact that they focus on one single brand and/or one single company. To take an example from the automobile industry, Urde (2003, p. 1024) uses the case of Volvo to describe the building of a corporate brand based on its core values, safety and concern for the environment. In addition to that, Urde points out that despite the fact that there might be different benefits whether a brand is a corporate brand or a product brand, both architectures can be based on the underlying company's core values. This approach might at first sight be seen as a straightforward and applicable method for the brand building of car modification companies. At second glance however it becomes clear that using this approach would neglect important factors of the car modification business. Building the car modification brand solely based on the core values of the modification company for example will not take the base brand into account, or might even be in contrast to the base brand. As the base brand's product, however, makes up an essential or even a major part of the modification brand's product, it seems advisable

to take into account that the two brands are intertwined. Therefore, due to the nature of such empirical context, it should be examined if and how both brands can/should be connected in order to build the modification brand by using existing brand building theories. One possible theoretical approach which deals with two brands that are connected would be co-branding, which is a cooperation between different brands in order to create synergies and create value that is expected to be higher than the value that each brand would create on its own (Blackett & Russel, 1999, p.6). Some examples are an electric shaver by Philips that dispenses shaving cream and is co-branded with Nivea (Besharat, 2010, p. 1240) or to give an example from the premium car market, a limited-edition Mercedes CLK convertible co-branded with Armani (Lienert, 2003). However, co-branding involves cooperation between the involved brands and refers to combining at least two branded products in order to form a product that is separate and unique (Washburn et. al., 2000). Therefore for this thesis the concept is not applicable, as the car modification companies are in no official co-operation with the brand of the base car and the resulting product is not a separate, but a modification of an existing product.

The prior explanations show that within research brand building and related subtopics (such as for example in the case of car modification companies, luxury branding) are common and well researched. However, the existing theoretical models do not take into account the special case of two brands being connected in one product being a modification of the one brand's product by another brand, while no cooperation between the two exists and are therefore not applicable. Furthermore does the case of car modification brands contain the additional factor of luxury branding, which also only gets treated as a separate topic but would have to be included into a brand building model to be applicable in this empirical context.

In addition to this theoretical knowledge gap, during the research for this thesis the author found that the area of car modification receives no attention within research. Furthermore, it was even found that when research touches upon the area it might not even get identified and treated as such. Allsopp (2005, p. 188) examines premium pricing and gives examples for luxury brands are stretching their pricing range, meaning that they offer more expensive and luxurious products but at the same time also more affordable lower-end products. He states: "While Mercedes continue to develop at the very top end of the market (a new Mercedes Brabus costs from around £140,000 upwards), the Mercedes A-Class retails from around £14,000." Thereby he implies that the Brabus model is a model of the Mercedes brand. Brabus however is an independent car modification company (Automobilwirtschaft, 2012). The empirical context of car modification is however an illustration of the wider contemporary movement of a growing market for modifications, customizations and individualization within different industries (see for example Brun & Zorzini, 2009; Luximon et. al., 2003; Takagoshi & Matsubayashi, 2013; Liao et. al., 2013).

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1.7 Thesis purpose and research questions

As outlined in the previous chapter, existing theoretical brand building models are not directly applicable to the special constellation of car modification brands or any similar brand constellation. Therefore the purpose of this thesis will be to extend an existing brand building model in order to make it applicable to modification brand - base brand

constellations. In addition to that, the model also needs to be adjusted in order to integrate a special branding factor, which in the empirical context of car modification companies is luxury branding.

RQ1: How can an existing brand building model be modified to make it applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation?

RQ2: How can a special factor of brand building theory be integrated into this adjusted model?

1.8   Intended contribution

1.8.1   Theoretical

Existing brand building models treat brand building as being related to one single brand and/or company (see for example Rahman & Areni, 2014; Zachary et. al., 2011) or in the case of a product being associated with two or more brands assume that there is a cooperation between the brands and that the product is new and unique (Washbum et.al, 2000). For these reasons, existing brand building models are not applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation. Therefore, the intended theoretical contribution of this thesis is to adjust and extend an existing brand building model in order to make it utilizable to an unexplored context and to thereby enhance its applicability.

1.8.2   Practical

As stated earlier, the market for modified cars is expected to grow especially within the emerging markets. Since a growing market also points towards growing competition, it will be advantageous for car modification companies to have a strongly positioned brand within the market. Therefore the adjusted framework that will be developed within this thesis will provide them with a tool in order to develop and manage their brand and achieve sufficient brand equity. As this framework however will theoretical, it will be transferable and can therefore also be applied by modification brands outside of the car modification industry.

2 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a theoretical model for the brand building of car modification companies. This development however has to be done with regard to the standards of scientific practice and therefore be based on and derived from a reliable theoretical foundation and empirical data. In order to do build the theoretical foundation for the model it is therefore necessary to familiarize deeply with the field of brand building, related topics and theories and the special factor of luxury branding. In order to do so, in this chapter, the author will introduce and line out the main theories that were chosen to be applied within this thesis. The applied theories and definitions will also be subject to critical comparison with other existing research, theories and definitions. In order to do so, the author will investigate if other researchers have applied the same theories and definitions, if definitions are applied in the same way or if differences exist. Concluding, the author will critically review the applied theoretical framework and make clarifications and adjustments where it seems necessary or beneficial.

2.1 The brand concept

The usage of the term brand for marketing and business purposes originates from the brand marks that cattle would get in order to be able to identify the owner. And even with the commercial use of the term today, it still fulfills the basic function of marking ownership, as the brand can give information about who is the tenderer of the branded offering and clearly states that the brand is the brand-owners property (Egan, 2007 p. 82).

According to Kapferer (2004 p. 9) there is disagreement within scientific literature about the definition of the term brand, its measurement and its perspective. Several different definitions exist, there is dispute on how to measure the strength of a brand and which indicators to use in order to measure it. Regarding the perspective, there is on the hand the customer-based definition which orientates on the relationship between customers and the brand. On the other hand, there are asset-based definitions, which measure and define a brand as a separable asset and in terms of its monetary value. The author however argues that the asset-based view and the monetary value of a brand is simply a logical consequence of successfully building and managing a brand according to the implications of the customer-based definition and will therefore focus on the latter.

Kotler and Armstrong (2010, p. 260) name the concept brand equity as an opportunity to describe the strength of a brand, meaning that brand equity describes the impact a brand has on a customer regarding the response the branded product and it's marketing. Positive brand equity therefore means that consumers will prefer product of the respective brand over the products of other brands or unbranded products. Negative brand equity means that customers prefer the one of the latter two. Regarding the precise meaning of brand equity, Feldwick (1996) however summarizes three different approaches:

1. Brand equity as the value a brand has as an asset, either when being sold or when being listed in a balance sheet.
2. Brand equity as a measurement and indicator of the attachment that consumers have with the brand.
3. Brand equity as the depiction of associations has with a brand and the connected beliefs.

This again highlights the difference between the consumer oriented definition and the company/financially oriented definition of both brand and brand equity. As this thesis however deals with the brand as a factor that influences the sales performance of a product and the author argues that a brand as a financial asset is mostly a result of approaches 2 and 3, the financial perspective will be neglected.

Keller (1993) however separated the strategic aspects of brand equity from the financial aspects and conceptualized it from an individual consumer perspective. From this viewpoint, he developed customer based brand equity, a model which describes building a strong brand as a sequence which has four so-called stages of brand development. Each step has its own objectives, and being able to start with a step depends on the achievement of the objectives of the previous step. Due to this step by step structure, this model can be used as an easy to apply guideline for brand building and brand management. In addition to this fundamental benefit, using customer based brand equity as a structure for building up and managing a brand provides another advantage: Sirianni et. al. (2013) point out, that due to its structure and different components, each component of customer based brand equity can be assessed individually and its evaluation among customers be measured. This makes customer based brand equity also applicable as a direct measure for customer's responsiveness to the brand.

Customer based brand equity and theoretical constructs that have been built upon or derived from it have been applied and tested successfully within research. Buil et. al. (2013) for example point out that there is indeed a causal order in the creation of brand equity, as represented in the stages of brand development in Keller's (1993) model and that the different stages/components of customer based brand equity positively influence each other. In addition to that, Buil et. Al. (2013) point out that brand equity has a positive influence on the price premium customers are willing to pay, that it is a significant predictor of consumer's positive response and that strengthening brand equity is a vital strategy in order to improve a company's market position.

Within literature, several studies that use the model of customer based brand equity in order to develop a branding model for a special type of branding exist. Hsu et. al. (2012) for example used the customer-based brand equity model and related theories and models in order to create a valid and reliable branding model for upscale hotels. Konecnik & Gartner (2007) used customer based brand equity in order to develop a empirically verified branding model for destinations. In addition to that, they also imply that the different dimensions/stages of customer based brand equity are strongly interrelated and that they all are of importance for building up customer based brand equity. These studies are on the hand not transferrable to the branding of car modification companies, due to the earlier mentioned special brand constellation. On the other hand however these studies show that the concept of customer based brand equity is flexible and can be adjusted to the needs of specialized branding without compromising its validity and reliability.

Washburn et. al. (2004) examined the effects which brand alliances have on the customer based brand equity. Brand alliance in this case is a collective term referring to joint promotions/complimenting brands, dual branding, meaning two separately branded products are offered in conjunction and co-branding, meaning different brands work together to create a new product. Their study revealed, that regardless of whether two brands with high equity, one brand with high and one brand with low equity or two brands with low equity were paired, the brand equity was higher than when the brands were evaluated separately. Despite the fact that due to the earlier explained differing brand constellation and missing cooperation this finding is not directly transferable to modification brands, it can give implications about how for example the modification brand could benefit from the brand equity of the base brand.

As the above explanations show, Keller's model of customer based brand equity provides a structured step-by-step guideline for building up a strong brand which at the same time makes the strength of the brand, meaning the brand equity measurable. Also, its applicability, measurability and also flexibility have been verified in several studies. Therefore the author has decided to uses this model as a base framework in order to adjust it and make it applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation. However, in order to be able to do so, first the concept and its structure and components should be described.

2.2   Brand knowledge

According to Keller , customer-based brand equity is described as the effect that brand-knowledge has on the marketing of the brand while "brand knowledge is the key to creating brand equity, because it creates the differential effect that drives brand equity" (2008, p.51). In order to describe it, he uses the associative network memory model, viewing memory as a network of nodes, which represent stored information or concepts that are connected by links which represent the strength that the association between the information or concept has. Brand knowledge is thereby defined as all the evaluative and descriptive brand-related information that is stored within the memory network of the consumer. This stored information can be of any type, such as abstract, contextual, visual or verbal (Keller, 2003, p. 596 & 2008, p. 51). Brand knowledge is divided into two components, brand awareness and brand image.

2.2.1   Brand image

The term brand image was first introduced by Gardner and Levy (1955) in the article "The product and the brand" in 1955. Their deliberations were based on that "Basic to many of the problems of advertising and selling is the question of the consumers' attitude toward the product and particularly their conception of the brand" (1955, p. 33). They pointed out that the image that a consumer associates with the brand of a product can vary regarding its clarity, complexity and intensity and that the notions the consumer has about the brand do not necessarily reflect the real nature of the product. But according to them, these factors still influence the decision whether the consumer purchases a certain brand or not. By noting that existing quantitative and qualitative research would only cover superficial reasons for consumers' decisions for a certain brand, they encouraged to take social and psychological factors into account, thereby

placing the subject within the field of consumer behavior. This approach has been applied by for example Chernev, Hamilton & Gal (2011, p. 67) and Lam et. al.(2010).

Bird et. al. (1970) later examined the relationship between the brand image and the usage of the brand and used the simple definition "attitude about a particular brand". This definition has subsequently been applied within the research of for example Stern et. al. (2001, p. 209) and Jacoby (1976, p. 335).

Gensch (1978, p. 384) described the brand image as an abstract concept that incorporates the impact of promotion, reputation and peer evaluation, defining it as the expectations the customer has. He examined the empirical measurability of the image and pointed out the influence that the image can have on perceptions and preferences. Furthermore, he portended the fact that the image can lead to a gap between the customers' expectations and perceptions. This research has been acknowledged by for example Hsieh et. al. (2004, p. 252).

Dobni & Zinkhan (1990) however analyzed 28 different studies that dealt with the topic and noted that the definition of brand image had been unstable over time and that there was disagreement about its operationalization. They identified the essential elements of brand image in order to give a theoretically founded definition. According to them, the term brand image describes what concept the consumer holds of a brand. It is formed through reasoned or emotional interpretation by the customer. The brand image doesn't evolve from the physical, technical or functional attributes of the product. It is based on and influenced by marketing activities, context variables, the characteristics of the perceiving consumer and his or her perception of reality. However, this definition can be seen as a more initial attempt to delineate the term, and different definitions with a different focus have evolved since then (Teichert & Schöntag, 2010, p. 371).

Wilson and Blumenthal (2008, p. 58) give a less theoretically grounded and more practical definition by defining brand image as the total picture of how consumers think of a brand and it being the result of what a brand promises to deliver and what it actually delivers. In addition to that they underline that a brand image is subject to constant change, as the comparison of what the brand promises and delivers is an ongoing process. Their book however can is not scientific but mainstream literature.

Franzen & Moriarty (2009, p. 19) point out that the term brand image is getting criticized as shallow and superficial due to alleged interchangeability with the concept of brand identity and accusations of image building being an attempt to manipulate the consumers mind. They however define brand image as "the generalized perception of a brand in people's minds" (2009, p.19).

Keller (2008, p. 51) defines brand image in consistence with the associative network memory model as "consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory.

Although different definitions of brand image exist, and inconsistency and disagreement regarding these definitions has been acknowledged, the consumers perception is a recurring factor when assessing different definitions. Therefore, the previously stated definition by Keller will be used, as it is also a component of the model of customer based brand equity that will be applied within this thesis.

2.2.2 Brand awareness

In his educational textbook "Advertising Promotion and Other Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications", Shimp (2010, p. 38) describes brand awareness as the likelihood and easiness of a brand name coming to mind when a consumer thinks about a certain product category. According to him, brand awareness builds the foundation of customer based brand equity, as equity can only evolve if the consumer is aware of the brand. Therefore for a new brand the initial challenge is to achieve brand awareness, while for an established the goal should be to maintain high brand awareness.

Percy and Rossiter (1992, p. 264)on the other hand divide brand awareness into brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall, happening prior to the purchase means that a consumer experiences the need of a certain category and the consumer recalls different brands from memory that could fulfill this need. Brand recognition on the other hand means that the consumer recognizes a brand at the point of purchase which then can stimulate the category need. It also means that the brand name does not necessarily have to be recalled, but that already the visual image of the packaging can stimulate a response to the brand. This definition has been used by for example Jansen et. al. (2012, p. 434).

Huang and Sarigöllu (2012) note that there is a scarcity of research on brand awareness. They however apply the definition of Keller (2008) in their research and find that there is a positive impact of brand awareness on brand equity and brand market performance.

Keller (2008, p. 54) also divides brand awareness into brand recognition and brand recall. He defines brand recognition as the consumers' ability to confirm that there has been a prior exposure to the brand when being confronted with it. Brand recall means that the consumer remembers the brand when having a need that has to be satisfied by a product category to which the brand belongs to. Keller also lists up concrete advantages that brand awareness has. As in order to create a brand image a brand node has to be established within the consumers memory, brand awareness has a learning advantage. This is due to the fact that the nature of this node influences how easily additional brand associations are learned and stored by the consumer. A consideration advantage arises from the fact that brand awareness increases the possibility to be considered by the customer in order to fulfill a need. Brand awareness also has a choice advantage, as a high level of brand awareness can affect the choice among all brands that are considered in order to fulfill a need. This means that a consumer, possibly even despite the lack of any other associations with a certain brand chooses this brand simply due to brand awareness. As this definition is in line with and also more detailed than the other existing definitions, Keller's definition will be applied within this thesis.

2.3 Building a brand based on customer based brand equity

The customer based brand equity model of building a strong brand consists of four stages that build on another (Keller, 2008, p. 59):

1. Brand identity: Ensuring that customers are able to identify the brand and associate it with a certain product category or need. The goal of this stage should therefore be to create deep and broad brand awareness.

2. Brand meaning: Establishing the brand meaning within the customers minds by linking brand associations with certain properties. This stage has the objective to create points of parity and points of difference for the brand. Points of parity are certain requirements that every brand has to fulfill in order to be considered by consumers in order to satisfy a certain need. Points of difference on the other hand are benefits or attributes that consumers associate with a certain brand and which they believe are a unique characteristic that no other brand possesses.

3. Brand responses: Evoke the appropriate response from customers towards brand identity and brand meaning. Therefore the objective of this branding stage is to achieve positive and accessible reactions from consumers.

4. Brand relationships: This stage has the objective to convert brand response into a strong and active loyalty relationship between the customer and the brand.

In order to structure the model and graphically depict it, Keller (2008, p. 60) divides it into six brand building blocks with rational stages of brand development on the left side and emotional branding objectives on the right side. As this depiction is helpful to visualize the theoretical model of customer based brand equity and therefore can also help to visualize how the factors brand connection and luxury branding can be integrated into the theoretical model, it will be shown in the figure below.
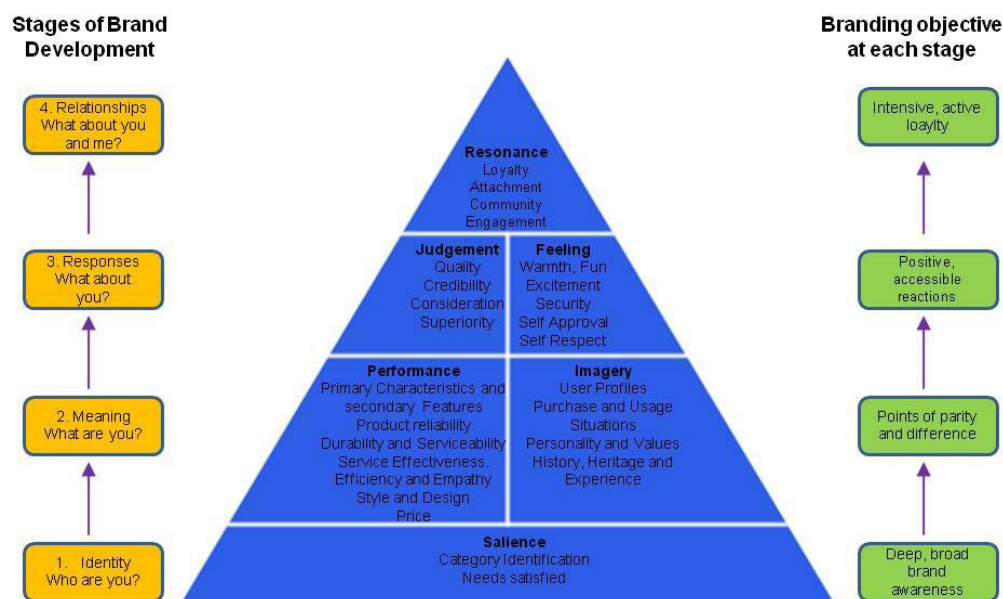
Figure 1: Customer based brand equity Source: Keller (2008, p.60)

2.3.1 Brand salience

According to Ehrenberg et. al. (1997, p. 9), "Salience is broader than any single measure of brand performance. It depends on virtually all the different possible measures of performance correlating." Putting this into an example in which Brand A possesses more brand salience than brand B, this would mean that for Brand A more consumers:

- Are familiar with or aware of Brand A by any means of measurable awareness

- Have Brand A among the Brands they frequently buy and/or might buy
- Would buy brand A if the brand they usually buy was unavailable
- Intend to buy and/or use brand A in the future
- Would choose brand A out of a variety of brands in a test
- Think that brand A has brand assurance (e.g. after-sales service, availability)
- Hold positive attribute beliefs about brand A
- See it as value for money
- Talk more often and more intensive about brand A in discussions
- Are by any measurable means more loyal to brand A
- Are aware of brand A's advertisements and able to recall them

This description however is criticized by Miller & Berry (1998) who describe the use of the term brand salience by Ehrenberg et. al. as differing from the use of most advertising and research professionals. They define brand salience as referring to the order in which brands come to mind when thinking about a certain category. Therefore their definition differs from the one of Ehrenberg et. al. as it deals more with attention and awareness than with attitudes. In addition to that they conclude that advertising has a limited impact on the brand image while it has an impact on the market share through increased brand salience.

Romaniuk & Sharp (2004) further distinguish brand salience from awareness and attitude and define it as "the propensity of the brand to be thought of in buying situations". This propensity derives from the quantity and the quality of the network of information on the brand within the min of the consumer, referred to as the "brand's share of mind".

Keller (2008, p. 60) however equates and incorporates brand salience with brand awareness. According to him, brand salience measures the brand awareness meaning how often and how easy and in which situations the brand comes to a customer's mind and how this recall is triggered. In addition to that, brand salience deals with to which extent the customer will see the brand as being able to satisfy certain needs and the likelihood of the brand coming to mind when having the need for a certain product category.

In order to complete the stage of brand identity, the objective of achieving deep and broad brand awareness must be fulfilled by creating brand salience. When referring to the depth of the brand awareness Keller means how likely and how easy a brand comes to the mind of a customer. The breadth of brand awareness means the variety of scenarios in which the consumer is confronted with a need that make the brand come to the consumers mind.

In order to actively create brand salience, a company needs to use promotional activities such as advertising, as this will create and increase brand awareness among potential customers (see for example Miller & Berry, 1998).

2.3.2 Brand performance

O'Cass and Ngo (2007, p. 871) define brand performance as the relative measurement of the success of the brand within the marketplace. This definition has been acknowledged and applied by for example Tuan (2014, p. 47) and Huang & Tsai (2013, p. 2028). Other authors, when using the term refer to the overall performance of the brand. This means its sales and profitability as the basic level of brand performance

as well as other internal and external factors such as the understanding and support of the key values of the brand by the management and whether the brands positioning enables it to differentiate itself from competitive brands (Chernatony, 2010).

According to the customer based brand equity model of brand building however brands performance refers to how the product or service that is offered under the brand in question meets the customers functional needs. Therefore the products or services primary ingredients and supplementary features are assessed regarding different factors. For products these factors are reliability, durability, serviceability, quality of product delivery and installation and other product related services like customer training as well as aesthetic factors like the product design. For services these factors are the actual satisfaction of the customers' needs by the branded service, its speed and responsiveness and the so called service empathy, meaning whether the service provider is seen as trustworthy, caring and acting on behalf of the customers' interest. In addition to that, for both products and services the price is a relevant performance factor, as customers may memorize brands in regard to their price (Keller, 2008, p. 64).

2.3.3 Brand imagery

According to Yuille and Catchpole (1977) imagery describes sensory or perceptual representations of memories, ideas and feelings and can even involve a recovery of past experiences. This definition has been acknowledged by for example Teichert & Schöntag (2010, p. 373) and MacInnis & Price (1987, p. 474).

Keller, when lining out the concept of brand imagery (2008, p. 65) is in line with that definition. He describes brand imagery as referring to more intangible aspects of the brand, meaning what potential customers abstractly think about a brand. Brand imagery also means that consumers deduce imagery associations with the brand deriving from direct experience or indirectly through external sources of information like word of mouth or advertising. He points that there is a variety of intangible brand imagery associations that can be linked to the brand, but highlights four main ones:

User profiles: Describes the mental image of actual or idealized users (users referring to either persons or organizations). This association might be based on demographic factors such as gender, age, race and income or more abstract psychographic factors such as attitude, possessions, social issues or political views.

Purchase und usage situations: Relating to the associations that consumers have about the situations in and conditions under which they can or should purchase and/or use the brand. This can be related to the channel (possible point of purchase, category or specific), time (e.g. time of day, day of the week, season), location (e.g. at home, outdoors) and the type of activity with which the brand is associated to be used at (formal or informal).

Personality and values: This refers to the brand itself rather than the personality and values of the consumer. Brand personality as such is a topic for itself, with a number of different definitions and interpretations (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 235). Therefore rather than lining out the different definitions and interpretations which would go beyond the constraints of this thesis, a basic and principal definition by Franzen & Moriarty will be compared to the use of the term within the brand building model of customer based brand equity. Franzen & Moriarty give a basic definition of brand personality as "a projection of human traits onto a brand, through which people can

determine their relationship toward that brand and can maintain a relationship with it". Keller's application (2008, p. 66) of the term is in line with that definition. He points out that influenced by experience or marketing actitivities, the consumer might have a mental image of the personality of the brand being for example modern or old-fashioned. What is of special relevance for this thesis is the fact that when purchasing cars brand imagery and personality are important to the decision and   consumers often choose a brand that has a brand personality that is consistent with their self-concept (Keller, 2008, p. 67).

History, heritage and experiences: This refers to associations that the consumer might have by recalling past experiences with the brand. These experiences can be individual and personal, or shared with others and for example be related to marketing aspects of the brand, such as the product or package design or the country of origin.

2.3.4 Brand judgments

With brand judgments, Keller (2008, p. 67 f.) refers to the opinions and evaluations of the brands by customers. These evaluations and believes derive from the associations that customers have with brand performance and imagery. Any type of judgment of the brand by the customer is possible, but there are four main ones:

- Brand Quality: The attitude of the consumer towards the perceived quality of the brand and its delivered customer value and satisfaction.

- Brand Credibility: The extent to which the customers see the company or organization behind the brand as credible. This credibility is divided into three dimensions: Perceived expertise (Brand seen as competent, innovative or even market leader), trustworthiness (Brand seen as dependable and considering the customers interest) and likability (Brand seen as fun, interesting and worth spending time with)

- Brand Consideration: Describes to which extent the customers actually consider buying the brand. This is based on how personally relevant customers find the brand and depends largely on the creation of strong and favorable brand associations.

- Brand Superiority: The extent to which customers see the brand as unique and better than other brands.

2.3.5 Brand feelings

With brand feelings, Keller (2008, p. 68 f.) refers to the emotional reactions and responses to the brand by customers. This includes what feelings related to the brand are evoked within customers, how the brand affects the feelings of the customers about themselves and the relationships with others, the intensity of these feelings and whether they are positive or negative. The six most relevant brand-building feelings are:

- Warmth: Feelings of calm- or peacefulness, sentimentality, warm-heartedness or affection are evoked by the brand.

- Fun: Feelings of amusement, joy, playfulness etc. are evoked by the brand.

- Excitement: Consumers feel energized through the brand and perceive the experience related to the brand as something special.

- Feelings of safety, comfort and self assurance are evoked by the brand, in certain cases even ruling out feelings of worry or concerns.

- Social approval: The use of the brand by consumers gives them the feeling that they are looked upon favorably by others

- Self-respect: By consuming the brand, consumers get a better feeling about themselves and feelings of pride, accomplishment or fulfillment are evoked.

2.3.6 Brand resonance

With the brand building block brand resonance, Keller (2008, p. 72) describes the relationship and the level of identification of the customer with the brand. Brand resonance can be characterized by two dimensions: The intensity or depth of the psychological bond that the customer has with the brand and the level of activity to which this bond leads the customer. These two dimensions can be divided into four categories which will be lined out below.

Behavioral loyalty:

Keller (2008, p. 72) assesses behavioral loyalty according to two factors: Repeat purchases and share of category requirements. This is in line with an approach to behavioral brand loyalty by Ehrenberg (2000) which is applied for example by Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel (2013, p. 68). Repeat purchases are defined as how often in which amount a customer buys a certain brand within a specific timeframe. Share of category requirements describes which share of purchases within a certain product category is accounted for by the brand. According to Keller (2008, p. 72) behavioral loyalty is required but not enough in order to produce brand resonance, as it might derive from factors like the product being the only one available, accessible or affordable.

Attitudinal attachment:

In order to create resonance, a strong personal attachment is required. This means that the customer should not only have a positive attitude towards the product, but see the brand as something special and hold it in the highest regards. This attitudinal attachment is created through marketing programs and products or services that is more than satisfying for the customer (Keller, 2008, p. 72).

Sense of community:

According to Bagozzi & Dholakia (2006, p. 45) a brand community describes a "…group of consumers with a shared enthusiasm for the brand and a well-developed social identity, whose members engage jointly in group actions to accomplish collective goals and/or to express mutual sentiments and commitments." This definition has been acknowledged and applied by for example Stokburger-Sauer (2010, p. 347) who also points out that the brand community is beneficial for both the customer and the brand, as the customer is able to satisfy social needs while the brand enjoys the benefits of having a loyal customer who also advocates for the brand. Keller's illustration (2008, p. 72) illustration is similar to that, but he also expands it in the way that he doesn't limit it to the impact that customers as members of the brand community have on each other, but also includes employees or representatives of the brand. Furthermore he points out the positive impact of the sense of community on brand attitude and intentions.

Active engagement:

According to Keller (2008, p. 74) the most powerful manifestation of brand loyalty is the active engagement of customers with the brand, meaning that they are willing to spend time, money, energy or other types of resources on the brand in addition to the resources they spend on the actual purchase or consumption of the brand. This means for example joining a brand club, corresponding with other brand customers or representatives, visit brand websites etc. This leads to customers themselves advertising the brand and influencing the relationship to the brand within others.

2.3.7   Concluding remarks

The model of customer based brand equity provides a structured overview on how a strong brand can be build. The division into six brand building blocks allows a stepwise approach with clearly defined objectives. Therefore the author sees this model as suitable in order to integrate the special branding factors of car modification companies, as the division into the six brand building blocks makes it possible to assess on which single parts of customer based brand equity these special factors might have an impact. This detailed assessment will then allow examining how the special branding factors can be integrated into the model.

2.4   Luxury branding

2.4.1   Luxury and luxury cars

In order to approach the field of luxury branding, it seems appropriate to first elaborate how luxury is defined. The word itself derives from the Latin word luxus which in the Oxford Latin Dictionary (Glare, 1968, p. 1054) is translated as soft or extravagant living, overindulgence, sumptuousness, opulence. The concept of luxury itself stands according to Dwyer (1998, p. 531) for a lifestyle characterized by material abundance and excess, bound to a sense of pleasure, which is therefore contrary to the life concept of necessity, bound to a sense of pain or lack of pleasure. The definition of luxury however is disputed among researchers and has also evolved according to time and context (Berry, 1994).

In addition to that, when it comes to luxury products, within research there is also no consent on how to define a luxury product and that it has to be put into socio-economic context, meaning that what is a luxury product for one isn't necessarily seen as luxury by someone else in another please. That means for example that in a location with low economic standards simply owning a car would be seen as luxury, while in other places a car would only be seen as luxury when it is of a certain brand such as BMW or Mercedes (Vickers & Renand, 2003, p. 461). This example does not only show the problematic definition of a luxury product, it also subliminally underlines the impact of the brand when it comes to cars. In addition to that, the definition of what a luxury car is might also be subject to discussion. Berry (1994, p. 16) for example states that a car is basically an instrumental good. However he adds that when a cars features aim at substantially improving the pleasure of travelling it can be categorized as a luxury car. At the same time he rules out high performance sports cars, as according to him a focus on speed and performance would leave no room for luxury fittings. The author does not agree with that exclusion, as on the one hand there are examples that demonstrate that both luxury and performance do not have to exclude each other. In order to give an example from the car modification industry: The German car modification company GEMBALLA modifies the Porsche model Cayenne Turbo and sells it as the GEMBALLA Tornado. The final car has an engine performance of up to 721 hp and can reach a top speed of 310 km/h. At the same time the interior is equipped with entertainment systems and depending on the preferences of the customer for example upholstered with premium leather and even diamonds can be integrated into the panels (Rogotzki, 2009; GEMBALLA, 2013). Furthermore the author argues, that paying a premium price in order to drive a car that is significantly more powerful and faster than average cars signifies sumptuousness and opulence and can therefore be seen as luxury, irrespective of the fact whether driving this car provides more comfort than the average car or not.

Bastien & Kapferer (2012, p. 49) not only state that the car "[…] is considered the very symbol of luxury among men", they also directly connect the development of luxury brands in a historical context to luxury cars (2012, p. 139). According to their explanation, luxury throughout history was not branded and simply expressed through the good itself. In the early years of car production, only significantly wealthy people could afford a car, and therefore simply owning a car was a sign of luxury. As however the middle-class was rising and simultaneously cars became more affordable and therefore more common, the branding of cars got into focus in order to make it possible for other people to recognize that someone owned a luxury car. They furthermore point out that a luxury product in order to be considered such it needs intrinsic luxury, which consists of two elements: Firs, the product must deliver high quality and pleasure. This factor however is imitable. Second, there has to be a symbolic power attached to the brand. This factor is unique and can't be copied.

Vickers & Renand (2003, p. 462) also point out that "To date the most widely accepted typologies have in common the idea that luxury goods products are modifications of a base product that involves satisfying consumer needs". For the purpose of this thesis, this statement has an important implication: It might be challenging to define which car brands or even which car models of a certain car brand can be defined as luxury cars. As car modification however solely sell products that are modifications of a base product (the base car) that satisfies consumers' needs (regardless of whether the base car can already be defined as a luxury car or not it fulfills the basic need of transportation),

according to this definition they definitely sell luxury products, no matter which brand the base car is.

2.4.2 Relevant factors of luxury branding

As well as the definition of luxury itself, no universal concept of what requirements a brand must fulfill in order to be considered a luxury brand exist (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). However, building luxury brands has been subject of a small number of publications. As these publications point out the special aspects of luxury marketing and branding, but do not claim that for luxury brand building a completely different and unique approach is necessary, the author will subsequently line out certain special aspects of luxury branding in order to incorporate them into the applied model of customer based brand equity.

Similar to the approach of Keller on how to build a brand in general (2008, p. 59) Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p. 121) define brand identity as the base for a luxury brand in order to achieve brand equity. They further define building a brand as building a strong and unique perception. By examining different luxury brand strategies, they have derived two different modes of luxury brand building: The first mode (referred to as history and European approach) is based on value creation, in this case a product with the highest quality and empathizes the history and heritage of the brand as well as the founder of the brand and his or her "spiritual legacy" (2009, p. 127). The second one (referred to as storytelling and American approach) evolved due to the fact that American luxury brands have no long history they can build on. A history and heritage is invented and subliminally communicated through the brand name and experiences with the brand such as for example making the values of the brand perceptible through a special store experience.

In their approach on how to build a luxury brand, the first step of Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p. 127) is similar to Keller's (2008, p. 61) first brand building block of salience, which aims at achieving deep and broad brand awareness. However, they introduce what they refer to as the brand dream in addition to brand awareness. Brand dream consists of the difference between the amount of people who are aware of the brad and the amount of people who can actually purchase the brand. In order to be considered a luxury brand this difference therefore has to be kept high by for example raising the price or lowering distribution. An increase in perceived diffusion on the other hand has a negative impact on the brand dream and will have a negative effect on the brand. At the same time they point out (2009, p. 132) that a luxury brand also needs to have what they call access products. Making all products only accessible to customers who are loyal to the brand could have a negative impact on the brand. Therefore in order for the brand to become a positive social marker, there have to be some products which aim at on the one hand gaining new clients for the brand who will buy more expensive and sophisticated products later and become loyal to the brand. On the other hand these products should aim at consumers who occasionally buy luxury products and don't seek a certain brand. They furthermore point out that a luxury brand, in order to create brand equity benefits from an icon which symbolizes and prefigures the values of the brand. This icon can for example be the founder of the brand or a special and symbolic product. In addition to that, Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p. 75) underline the importance of the country of origin for the luxury brand: "When someone buys a luxury item, they are buying a product steeped in a culture or in a country. Having local roots increases the perceived value of the luxury item. BMW, which is successfully pursuing a luxury

strategy, builds all its automobiles in Germany – apart from the entry line: the 3 Series – and is keeping production of the Mini in the United Kingdom. Keeping production of its models and engines in Germany is at the heart of its brand identity: every BMW is an authentic product of German culture – apart from which, producing them in Germany is perfectly viable, there being no difficulty in passing any such additional costs on to the client." This example is of value for the purpose of this thesis for several different reasons. First, it categorizes BMW, the brand that is the third most modified brand within the car modification market as a luxury brand. Second, a connection to Keller's brand building block of imagery can be drawn and thereby a leverage point to incorporate luxury branding into the model of customer based brand equity be found. Third, it points towards a positive image of automotive products from a certain country, in this case Germany. Kim & Chung (1997) have already pointed out that unique country images and country-specific intangible assets can have a positive impact on the market performance of a product, as they in turn enhance the effectiveness that different marketing variables have on the market share. Therefore this factor will be of interest when examining how the modification company can build up customer based brand equity, in detail the brand building block of imagery. Another relevant factor that Chevalier & Mazzalovo (2012, p. 104) point out as relevant for luxury branding is the logo, again by using examples from the car industry in form of the logos of Jaguar, Rolls Royce and Ferrari, thereby again pointing towards a relevance of brands and logos within the luxury car industry. On the basic level, a logo fulfills the function to mark the product and to inform the consumer before the purchase. However, on a social level the logo fulfills the function of association. This means that a customer who consumes a branded product with a clearly visible logo can evoke certain associations among peers, willingly or not. This is especially relevant, as consuming luxury goods might be a way of reflecting and/or gaining a certain social status. Nelissen and Meijers (2011) even point out that conspicuous consumption of luxury products can be a beneficial social strategy, as it may lead to favorable treatment in social interactions. In addition to that, Park et. al. (2013) have shown that a visual brand logo has a strong positive impact on the customer relationship and loyalty by providing self identity and expressiveness benefits for the customer. This is of relevance for the brand building block of brand imagery, as according to Keller (2008) brand imagery includes the way in which the brand tries to meet the psychological and/or social needs of the customer.

3   Critical remarks

In order to uphold the rules and practices of scientific practice, it is necessary to not only review and summarize existing literature and show an understanding of the underlying topic, but also to critically review it. Critically reviewing in this sense means that the literature has to be read with skepticism and that the author must be willing to question it. Furthermore, it means relating the literature to previous and subsequent research, assessing its strengths and weaknesses, being objective and even including references that might oppose the literature or even the author's opinion (Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 64).

In order to do so, the author has as already stated in the beginning of the chapter not only reviewed and summarized the applied theories and definitions, but also investigated if previous and subsequent research has come to the same conclusions and whether definitions and theories constructed in the reviewed literature have been applied by it. Subsequently, the two main theoretical frameworks, customer based brand equity and luxury branding will be subject to individual concluding remarks.

3.1   Critical remarks regarding information on the car modification market

As stated earlier, the authors search for scientific literature regarding the car modification market did not turn up any valuable results. Moreover it was discovered that when encountering the car modification market, one researcher did not even identify it as such (see the chapter 1.6). Therefore the author had to make use of available sources in the form of popular literature and the information that the companies themselves provided. However, the information that the author took from these sources were in most cases descriptive facts, such as what base brands a certain modification brand offers modifications for. The possibility that these facts provided by the companies were not truthful is seen as very low, as for example providing false information about what brands of cars the company modifies would be harmful to its business. In addition to that, when information about a certain car modification company was found in a source that was not issued by the company itself it was always checked if a source provided by the company itself or at least other sources who had not simply adapted the information in question confirmed it.

3.2   Critical remarks regarding customer based brand equity

The model of customer based brand equity by Keller (1993) has been applied for the purpose of this thesis by the author in order to have a framework that provides an overview about how a strong brand can actually be build. For this purpose the model is seen as applicable by the author, as it derives the strength of the brand from the customer based brand equity. This customer based brand equity is according to the model built through six different brand building blocks in four different stages. This makes the model very clear and allows a stepwise approach.

Despite its practicability however, within the available literature the author could not find any empirical findings that the concept of customer based brand equity is applicable and leads to positive results in theory and practice. Despite the lack of empirical findings however, the model has been applied within research by for example Washburn et. al. (2004) who have used it in order to examine the effects of brand

alliances, meaning two brands creating a joint brand. (This research might even seem applicable for this thesis, however it has very different premises and was therefore not seen as feasible for this thesis.) Lassar et. al. (1995) underline the importance of brand equity in general both from a theoretical and practical point of view through the possibility of a competitive advantage. In addition to that, they identify customer based brand equity as an important driver for incremental financial gains for the company and refer to Keller's (1993) definition. However at the same time they criticize the lack of measurability of customer based brand equity and therefore provide a scale that they developed. This scale consists of five perceptual dimensions, namely performance, social image, value, trustworthiness and attachment. Although this scale, mainly because it focuses more on perception differs from Keller's (1993) model, there are similarities, the most obvious one the dimension performance being similar to the brand building block of brand performance. In addition to that, this research even refers to other scientific work (Park & Srinivasan, 1994) which itself in large parts refers to Keller's (1993) work.

These examples show, that Keller's (1993) model of customer based brand equity, although not empirically tested and proven has been accepted and applied. In the available database, the article in which the model was first introduced (Keller 1993) has been cited within 140 other articles. The author is aware of the fact that not all of the 140 citations might actually agree to the model, within the available timeframe however no major points of critique towards this model as a whole could be discovered. This lack of direct criticism to the model itself might also derive from the fact that it is not a new creation in itself, but a new way of combining existing concepts. Brand knowledge for example which Keller (2003; 2008) refers to as the key to create brand equity consists according to him of brand image and brand awareness. The literature review has shown that these two concepts have been acknowledged widely within research and been applied and developed further. Some inconsistency and disagreement regarding the exact definitions of these terms exist, however this is part of scientific discourse and no research opposes the two concepts or disproves them. The same goes for Keller's (1993) brand building blocks which make up customer based brand equity. Most of the different blocks taken individually consist of existing, acknowledged and applied concepts, Keller has only composed them into a construct in order to depict customer based brand equity. And although also regarding the different brand building blocks there is scientific dispute and sometimes even disagreement, the concepts that have been incorporated into the brand building blocks are acknowledged by research and no disprove or research that opposes any of them exists.

The brand building block brand performance could be criticized as not defining what other researchers define as brand performance, (see 3.5) but this is merely a question of labeling and not definition. In addition to that, other research has adapted the description that Keller uses for brand performance and further applied it (Lassar et. al., 1995).

The brand building blocks brand feelings and brand judgments could be criticized for not being related to existing concepts and theories, however the feelings and judgments towards brands that get incorporated into this model are no theories but feelings and judgments on a basic level. In addition to that, the relevance of feelings and judgments towards the brand as part of brand equity has been acknowledged and applied by for example Aziz & Yasin (2010).

Another point that could be criticized is the graphical depiction that Keller (2008) chooses. The depiction as a pyramid can lead to the impression that the brand building blocks/ stages of brand development are decreasing in importance the further the process goes. This author however feels that this could be a dangerous fallacy. A strong salience for example will not be able to make up for flaws regarding the judgments and feelings that the brand evokes, meaning that it is of no use for the brand if it is well known but potential customers see it as inferior to other brands or even associate negative feelings with it. As this thesis has the purpose to incorporate the special factors regarding car modification companies into the existing model, the author will attempt to also revise the optical depiction of the model in order to underline the equal importance of all six brand building blocks.

3.3 Critical remarks regarding luxury branding

As stated in chapter 2.4, there is no generally valid definition for what luxury and therefore luxury products and brands are. This could basically be a significant problem, however the purpose of this thesis is not to examine luxury as a theoretical concept but to incorporate relevant factors of luxury branding into a brand building model for car modification companies. Therefore it was seen as feasible to identify whether luxury branding would even be applicable for car modification companies and then identify relevant aspects that should be incorporated into the model. The outlined theoretical definitions for this chapter have been taken from either scientific articles or books that were authored by researchers. Therefore those sources can be seen as appropriate sources for this thesis. Of course these sources were still read critically. However, although there is some discussion regarding the definition of luxury and associated terms, no sources that would directly contradict or criticize certain definitions or approaches could be found within the available databases. In addition to that, the author has not simply taken one source that would underline the assumption that modified cars are luxury products. The discussion about in what context a car can be considered a luxury car was taken into account, and only after comparing different sources the author came to the conclusion that modified cars can be categorized as luxury cars. When lining out the special factors about luxury marketing that would apply to modified cars and therefore have to be incorporated into the model, the author did not simply adopt statements from one source, but seek other sources that confirm the statement or even underline it.

4 Methodologies

As Weathington et. al. (2012, p. 4) point out, to be able to successfully conduct and interpret high quality business research it is of utmost importance to have an understanding of the theoretical constructs and practical tools of research. Therefore within this chapter, the methods and approaches used to access, collect and analyze the empirical data for this thesis will be lined out. First of all, the theoretical methodology, meaning the philosophical standpoints taken within this thesis and its approach will be explained. Second, the practical methodology, consisting of research design, research strategy and the applied methods of data collection and analysis will be elaborated and be subject to a discussion of quality criteria and possible ethical issues.

4.1 Research philosophy and approach

As the overall goal of this thesis is knowledge development, it is necessary to elaborate and reflect upon the philosophical standpoints that will be taken. This is due to the fact that through the chosen method of research not only the research itself gets influenced, but also the content of research and the understanding of this content. The first philosophical question that has to be answered prior to conducting the research is the question of how the author sees the nature of reality, referred to as ontology. Here there are two possible standpoints: On the one hand, objectivism, meaning that reality is seen as a concrete structure and therefore social entities exist external to social actors. On the other hand subjectivism, which describes reality being a social construction and imaginary projection, therefore also referred to as social constructivism. (Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 108).

The next philosophical issue that has to be considered when conducting scientific research is epistemology. As scientific research in general and therefore also this thesis aims at creating new knowledge, epistemology deals with what can be regarded as acceptable knowledge and justified belief in a field of study. One central question that therefore evolves within epistemology is whether the social world and social phenomena are possible to and should be studied following the same rules, principles, procedures and ethical guidelines as natural sciences. Three main epistemological positions exist (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15; Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 112).

Positivism means that the researcher takes the philosophical standpoint of natural science. The exact conception of positivism is difficult to describe and outline, however taking a positivistic standpoint means that certain principles are being followed. These principles are that only knowledge that is confirmed by the senses can be seen as genuine knowledge, that knowledge is generated through the collection of facts which provide the ground for laws and that science has to be conducted objectively and therefore free from any value. Furthermore according to the positivistic principles theory's purpose is to generate hypotheses that are subject to testing and lead to explanations of laws. In addition to that in positivism there is a clear distinction between normative and scientific statements, the latter one being the scope of science as normative statements can't be confirmed by the senses (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15).

Interpretivism stands in contrast to positivism. It is based on the view that that social actors and phenomena can't be examined and research with the same scientific methods and principals as natural sciences. It takes the fact that humans are social actors into account and requires the researcher to apply empathy in order to understand causal

relations by seeing the researched field from the point of view of the involved social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 16; Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 116).

Realism is overlapping with positivism in two aspects. First, like the positivistic standpoint, realism assumes that reality exists independent of it being perceived. Second, realism implies that in order to understand this reality, both natural and social sciences should use the same approach. However, there are two significantly different major types of realism. Direct or empirical realism assumes that how reality is perceived through the senses is accurate and depicts reality as it is. Critical realism on the other hand takes into account that the perception of reality through the senses is merely a reflection or image of reality which might be distorted through for example the mental processing of the sensations. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 17; Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 114).

In order to elaborate the philosophical standpoints for the underlying thesis, the author will take the aid of a comprehensive chart provided by Morgan and Smircich (1980, p. 492). This chart enables to locate the approach as more towards subjectivism or objectivism according to different assumptions. The goal of this thesis is to incorporate the special factors of branding within the context of car modification companies into an existing model. This will be done by interviewing relevant actors from this area orally and in writing and extracting and evaluating information from these interviews. Taking this into a more theoretical and philosophical context and using the language of Morgan and Smircich (1980), the author sees reality as a social construction with man as its creator and tries to understand how this reality is created by analyzing the language game, accomplishments and texts of different social constructors through hermeneutic research. Therefore the author takes an approach that is not completely but very much towards subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology.

Regarding the relationship of the undertaken scientific research to theory, there are two different approaches. Deduction refers to developing a theory and a connected hypothesis and then testing it, and is therefore the most widely used approached within natural science. Induction on the other hand describes an approach that first collects empirical data, analyzes it and subsequently develops a theory, meaning that a conclusion is drawn from observations and data and the specific implications then generalized. These two approaches however are not rigidly separated and can even be combined (Ormerod, 2010, p. 1209; Saunders et. al., 2009, p. 124). And indeed, as this thesis takes existing theories about brand building and applies them to the area of car modification but at the same time attempts to modify and extend theory through empirical research, it can be seen as an interplay between induction and deduction. This interplay will be explained and outlined more in detail in the following practical methodology.

4.2 Practical methodology

In general, within business research there are two main research strategies: Qualitative and quantitative. Regarding these two "the differences are deeper than the superficial issue of the presence or absence of quantification" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 26). Quantitative research, as the name suggests relies on quantification when it comes to collecting and analyzing data and has a deductive orientation, meaning it mostly focuses on the testing of theory. In addition to that, it follows a positivistic epistemological orientation, meaning it applies the methods and rules of the natural sciences on the research. Its ontological orientation is towards objectivism, it therefore sees social reality as an external, concrete structure. Qualitative research on the other hand focuses more on words, texts, images, processes, situations etc. that are analyzed and interpreted. It has a more inductive orientation, aiming at generating theory. It follows a more interpretivist orientation, as it rejects the practices and norms of natural science in order to focus on how social actors interpret reality. It has a more constructionist ontological orientation, as it sees reality as a constantly changing creation of individual social actors. However it should be noted that the outlined differences have to be seen as tendencies and orientations, and are not at all definite distinctions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

As the field of car modification companies has only been researched marginally, the underlying thesis does not aim at providing a definitive solution for or complete understanding of the brand building process within this industry. It can merely be seen as setting an agenda for future research within the subject of brand building process within the area. For this type of research, referred to as exploratory research, different methods are recommended (Brown & Suter, 2012):

Literature research: Although literature research can be a very time efficient and easy research method, it is unfeasible for this thesis. As mentioned earlier, within research the topic of this thesis has not been dealt with, therefore almost only popular literature is available. This is insufficient for researching a topic with regard to proper scientific practice.

Focus group: In short, conducting research with a focus group would mean that a small number of people would come together and discuss the topic under the direction of a moderator. The discussion is afterward analyzed regarding relevant information on the subject. Theoretically, this method would have been a promising approach to gain insight into the topic and acquire relevant information regarding the branding of car modification companies. Practically speaking, this approach seemed unfeasible, as it for example was seen as unlikely to convince different companies of the car modification companies to send representatives to discuss branding.

Depth interviews: Conducting depth interviews would mean to interview relevant persons who possess relevant information in the form of knowledge or experience within the field. The interview, often conducted by a trained interviewer would consist of main questions, follow up questions and probing questions and require a significant amount of time concerning the interview itself as well as the analysis and might even require several interviews with one interview partner. Therefore due to possible time constraints on both sides, this method was seen as unfeasible.

Case analyses: Conducting the research with the aid of case analyses would mean examining the brand building of car modification companies by analyzing examples.

Within case analysis, different methods exist. Benchmarking describes identifying organizations or companies who are the leader regarding a certain aspect of the business and use for example their practices or products as a source of information. Regarding the business practices of the companies within the field of car modification however no scientific literature exists and the companies themselves are within popular literature described as very secretive (Lorentz, 2001; Grünweg, 2008), therefore it was seen us impractical to try to gather this kind of information. Ethnography would mean an observation of consumers over an extended period of time. Due to time constraints and the possible difficulties to access the customers this method was also seen as unfeasible. Interviews however, are also a way of conducting exploratory research through case analyses. Unlike depth interviews, interviews as part of a case analysis would be less elaborate and time consuming, as they for example don't necessarily have to be coded, require a trained interviewer or have follow up and probing questions. Therefore the author decided to conduct interviews. A structured interview would according to Saunders et. al (2009, p. 320) require the interviewer to minimize social interaction during the interview and read the questions exactly from the interview sheet without any intonation in order to avoid indicating bias. As this would mean that during the interview the questions could not be adjusted to the situation or person getting interviewed, no follow up questions could be asked and no clarifications could be made, this method was seen as impractical for the purpose of the interview. Semi structured interviews on the other hand are also based on predefined questions, but also allow to expand on certain questions or ask follow up questions. Although semi-structured interviews have the disadvantage that the researcher might influence the participants through for example follow-up questions and that due to differences in the questions the data might be harder to interpret, they are recommended for explorative research as an unexplored field makes it harder to compile a structured set of precisely targeted questions (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010, p. 277). In addition to that was it unclear how used the participants were to answering questions for the purpose of scientific marketing research. As therefore explanations and follow-up questions might have been necessary, the author decided to use semi-structured interviews.

4.3   Data collection

As the area of car modification companies is a fairly uninvestigated topic, it seems feasible to first get an overview about the car modification market and the existing brands on an international level. In order to do so, a list was compiled. This list first of all contained the different existing car modification brands. Some of the brands could be recalled from the author's memory. Others were found by using online search engines and on a website that focuses on sport cars and car modification (GTSpirit, 2014). In one case, a French car modification brand, Jeremie Paret was found listed on this website. However, no information on this brand or company could be found. In order to investigate further, a French fellow student was contacted and asked for assistance to find information. He found out that Jeremie Paret was the CEO of a company called International Automotive Business, but that the company had been liquidated in 2011. As during the conversation it was mentioned by the author that German companies were in the majority within this field and that a French company would have been a useful addition to the list, the contact person researched and found a French car modification company, De la Villa. Furthermore, car journals, the car sections of journals and news websites were frequently scanned for articles about car modification companies in order

to find companies that were not yet included in the list. At this point, the list contains 81 different brands from 78 different companies. During the compilation of this list, the author realised that it could serve more purposes than just list up the active companies within the car modification market, but also to give an overview about the geographical distribution and the distribution of the base brands. Therefore a column with the country of origin and columns for the different base brands were added. The author makes no claim that these lists covers all existing car modification brands and companies but has compiled the list to the best of knowledge and believe.

In order to be able to gather the empirical data from the companies, the author started to contact the first companies that he had recalled from memory by phone and asked them about their willingness to participate in an interview. Therefore first of all, five German Car modification companies were contacted. Two of those companies expressed that they would see no benefit from doing so and were not interested. One of these two companies even stated that the company would not conduct any marketing. Three companies asked the author to send an email which would further explain the request for the interview. As the method of contacting the companies through phone had proven to be quite time-consuming and that even when an initial interest to participate existed an email with further explanations had to be sent, the author decided to send out a personalized letter to every company in the list with the aid of a mail merge function. The mail which can be found in the appendix was in German for German companies and English for companies from other countries mentioned the company name through an automated system in order to not seem too standardized. Where a contact person for marketing inquiries could be found on the company's website, this person would be addressed directly in the mail.

From 67 companies the author received no reply at all. Eight companies rejected the proposal for an interview due to lack of interest, two companies gave time constraints as a reason to decline. One company rejected the proposal due to the duty to maintain secrecy for all employees. The author later replied to this by sending the questions that would be asked during the interview, pointing out that they would not touch upon any sensitive information, informing that the interviewed person could deny answering any question he or she would see as touching upon sensitive information and that the interview could be dealt with anonymously within the thesis. The company then again replied that they could not answer the questions due to time constraints and also due to the fact that they would not have any information to answer the questions as they for example had not conducted any surveys. This fact, the through email responses actively and by not responding passively expressed lack of interest by several companies and the earlier mentioned statement by one company's representative that the company would not conduct any marketing can not lead to any qualified statements about the awareness of the relevance of marketing within the industry. However, there might be implications about why this industry has barely been researched yet.

4.3.1   Interview design

The interview questions were designed with regard to the relevant factors that will have to be incorporated into the brand building model, namely the connection between the two brands and luxury branding. In addition to that, all six brand building blocks should be covered by the interview, in order to identify where the special factors of car modification can be applied and incorporated. In order to stay in line with the earlier set

philosophical standpoints and to increase the transparency of this thesis, each question and its purpose will be explained.

The interview was constructed as follows:

Question 1: Please introduce yourself and your role and experience within the field of car modification companies.

This question is on the one hand to get started and letting the interview partner open up. On the one hand it also provides information about the interview partner and his or her knowledge on the subject that has not been apparent before.

Question 2: Please describe the brand you are working for.

This question specifically asks for the brand as asking for what company the person works could lead to answers that do not contribute to the purpose of the interview. It also makes it possible to see how the brand is described, meaning for example what adjectives the interviewed person uses. This enables the author to get an overview of how members of the different companies perceive their brands and how much thought the company has out into the asset brand.

Question 3: How many brands does [Brand name] offer modifications for?

With this question on the one hand the author tries to find out if the company has a certain base brand focus with the modification brand and therefore a strong connection to the base brand(s) is implied. It also enables the author to assess whether the brand offers modification for base brands that he has not yet included in the previously mentioned list.

Question 4: Do you aim at different customers than the base brand?

In order to assess the connection between the modification brand and the base brand(s), it seems feasible to find out if the modification companies targets the same customers.

Question 5: Do you think for marketing modifications of different brands of base cars different approaches should be used/ are the customers different?

This question will help the author to understand if the connection with the base brands is so strong that for vehicles based on different base brands different marketing approaches have to be taken.

Question 6: Do you see your brand as independent from the brand of the base cars? How strong is the connection with the base car brand? (Independent not in a legal or economic sense, but in the sense of how the brand is perceived)

With this question the author tries to establish whether the car modification brand sees its brand as independent from the brand of the base car and if the connection of the brand the base brand(s) is seen as strong.

Question 7: Do your customers see the cars as your brand or as the brand of the base car?

While question 6 asks about the perceived/desired independence of the brand from the base brand from the point of view of the company, this question tries to establish whether this is coherent with the customers perception.

Question 8: Does your brand benefit from the brand of the base car / do negative aspects of the base brand (e.g. image problems) impact your brand?

Apart from the perception of the company itself and the customers, by investigating the impact that positive and negative aspects of the base brands have on the modification brand the connection between the two brands can be further assessed.

Question 9: If you think about the base brand(s) and your brand, are there any differences and which are these?

This question attempts to investigate whether regarding the modification brand and the base brand there has to be a high level of coherence or if the modification brand can be significantly different.

Question 10: Do you put your own logo on the car / beside the original logo or even replace it? Do you give the car a new name?

These questions cover different aspects: First, as stated in the theory part, the logo is an important aspect when it comes to (luxury) branding and it is therefore relevant to establish to what extent the modification companies use the logo. Second, it can also indicate the connection with the base brand. Completely replacing the original logo would indicate a less strong connection than placing the modification brand logo beside the original logo. Third, the own logo on the car is relevant in order to achieve brand awareness as only a car that has been branded with the logo of the modification company can be properly identified.

Question 11: Do your modifications enhance the luxury image of the base car?

As the majority of the cars that get modified by modification companies can be categorized as luxury/premium cars, the author tries to investigate whether the modification has an enhancing impact on the luxury image of the base brand car.

Question 12: Is the fact that you are a brand from [Country of origin] incorporated into your brand identity? Does it have a positive impact on the luxury image?

As already stated, the country of origin can depending on the image and perception of the country have a positive impact. In addition to that, the country of origin plays a significant role when it comes to marketing and branding luxury products. Therefore the author tries to establish whether this can also be said for car modification companies.

Question 13: Do customers expect and perceive the same or better performance quality/ do they expect you to make certain things better than the base brand?

This question relates to what is referred to as brand performance in the customer based brand equity model. Car modification companies clearly have an impact on the performance, as they modify the product, but with this question the author tries to establish what impact this can have on the brand building.

Question 14: Do you want your customers to have a different opinion about your brand in comparison to the base brand?

With this question, the author investigates how the modification companies can make use of the brand building block judgments by either trying to achieve the same opinion from customers as the base brand or a different opinion.

Question 15: Do you want your customers to feel differently about your brand in comparison to the base brand?

This question is related to the brand building block feelings and tries to investigate how the modification brand can either use the existing feelings towards the base brand or establish different feelings on the side of the customers.

Question 16: Do your customers have a deeper connection with your brand than with the base brand / is that even a goal you have? Does the smaller group of customers benefit from that?

With this question, the author tries to investigate the brand building block resonance. As the brand should aim to establish an intense, active and loyal relationship with the customer, it is important to know whether the customers perceive themselves as having a relationship with the base brand or the modification brand.

Question 17: How do you achieve brand awareness? With similar methods than the base brand?

This question tries to investigate if the modification brand can use the same methods as the base brand in order to achieve brand awareness/salience or if different methods are necessary/useful.

Question 18: How do you see the market for car modifications in general, with regard to the emerging markets and regarding competition?

With this question the interview will be concluded. It aims at investigating the future of the car modification market and thereby the practical relevance of this thesis and the need for further research.

4.3.2 Interview conduction and participants

Due to geographical distances and organizational and time constraints on the side of some of the participants, the interviews were conducted with different methods. In the following, the different participants will be introduced and the course of the interview will be explained.

Mathias R. Albert is the owner and founder of Mediatel, a marketing agency that is specialized in the car modification industry. Besides that, he is a CEO of Carlsson Automobiltechnik, a car modification company that specializes in modifying cars of Mercedes-Benz and is a partner in several other car modification companies. He is also a member of the board of the association of German car modification companies. In addition to that, he is the publisher of two magazines that cover car modification. The interview was conducted in German via phone and took 20 minutes. As due to his different positions and 25 years of experience within the market Mr. Albert has different perspectives on the topic of car modification brands, the questions for his interview were slightly modified. The German interview questions for this interview can be found in the appendix.

Olga Sergacheva is the representative and brand manager of Larte Design, a Russian car modification company focusing mostly on cars of the infinity brand. She originally has a background in the marketing of fast moving consumer goods and has been in the car modification industry for one year. The interview was conducted via Skype in English and took 21 minutes.

Rainer Schlumberger is the Operations Manager of GEMBALLA, a German car modification company that specializes in cars of the Porsche brand. Before joining GEMBALLA four years ago, Mr. Schlumberger worked for different companies in the luxury market, for example a company that produces bespoke high quality safes that also serve as decoration objects. For the interview the author was invited to the premises of GEMBALLA in Leonberg and also was given a tour of the workshop. The interview was conducted in German and took 50 minutes.

Jochen Eckelt is the CEO, owner and founder of JE Design, a car modification company that he founded in 1992. JE Design focuses on the optical modification of cars from the Volkswagen group, mainly Seat and VW. The interview was conducted in German via phone and took 15 minutes.

Ansgar vom Orde is the marketing manager of Manhart Performance since 2012. Manhart Performance is a German car modification company that is specialized in the modification of BMW cars. Prior to his position within Manhart Performance, he worked within marketing at Carlsson Automobiltechnik for one and a half years. The interview was conducted in German via phone and took 17 minutes.

Arden Automobilbau GmbH was founded in 1972 and offers modifications for british cars since the mid 1980s. The question where responded to via email by the company.

The number of respondents as well as the length of the interviews might not seem very high, however it has to be kept in mind that this is an explorative study and that it was not possible to conduct extensive research and lengthy interviews within this very small and secretive industry.

4.4 Qualitative data and content analysis

In general for qualitative research there are two different main methods with their own advantages and disadvantages: Manual analysis and analysis with the aid of special qualitative data analysis software. The author has decided to analyze the data collected for this thesis manually.

For the analysis of qualitative data, it can be of great value to make use of qualitative data analysis software. In short, using such analysis software has several advantages: It enables the researcher to perform a structured analysis of large amounts of data while reducing the time needed for the analysis, increases the flexibility and thoroughness of the data handling and provides and supports the rigor and validity of the research. On the other hand, the use of qualitative data analysis software might lead the researcher to focus more on the quantity of the data than its quality and chose an inappropriate approach to the research in order to be able to apply the software. In addition to that, the use of qualitative data analysis software might create a distance between the researcher and the data and lead to standardized and dehumanized data. Furthermore, the fact that

the researcher has to deal with the technical side of the software and the computer it is run on might create a major distraction (John & Johnson, 2000). Therefore, despite the benefits that using such software might have, there is always the danger that instead of saving time the opposite might happen and by the use of it time be wasted. In order to avoid negatively influencing the research through the use of qualitative data analysis software, it is necessary to compare possible benefits and disadvantages it might have for the specific research (Beck, 2003).

As the transcription of the interviews might seem as a large amount of text, the author does not classify it as an amount of data large enough to make the use of qualitative data analysis advisable or even necessary. In addition to that, the author has no previous experience with such software, and the process of deciding for the right software and learning to use it might create the earlier mentioned distraction and loss of time which is seen as outweighing the advantages. Therefore the author decided for the manual analysis of the data.

For the manual analysis of qualitative data, a common method and starting point for the analysis of qualitative data within research is thematic analysis, meaning that the researcher systematically searches for reoccurring themes within the data which he then uses to analyze the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 571). Bryman & Bell however also claim that thematic analysis has no identifiable heritage or distinctive technical outline. This would make it a very vague and unsystematic approach and therefore would make it unfeasible for this thesis as applying a random, unsystematic technique of analysis would stand in flagrant contradiction to scientific practice. Braun & Clarke however have already in 2006 (p. 77) lined out that "Thematic analysis is a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method […]" and provided a step by step guide.

This guide consists of 6 steps (2006, p. 87):

1. Familiarization with the data: Transcription of data if necessary, reading and re-reading, noting of initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Going through the entire data set and coding of interesting features, sorting data according to codes.
3. Searching for themes: Sorting of codes into potential themes, gathering of data relevant to each theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Level 1: Checking if themes work in relation to the coded extracts. Level 2: Generation of a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis with refinement of themes and the overall story, generation of clear definitions and names for the themes.
6. Producing the report: Final opportunity for analysis. Selecting relevant extract examples, finally analyzing these extracts, relating analysis to research question and literature, production of a scholarly report of the analysis.

For the purpose of this thesis, this means that first the recorded interviews will be translated and transcribed. This will not be done word by word, but the author will extract the essence of each respondents answer to the question. The interviews will then be listened to again and the essences will be read and re-read and first ideas regarding the analysis and resulting conclusions will be noted. Afterwards, the interviews and their essences will be searched for relevant, reoccurring and interesting facts which will then be coded. The third step for this thesis will then however differ from Braun & Clarkes guide (2006, p. 87). As with the theoretical framework of this thesis already

relevant themes (Connection with the brand, the brand building blocks and luxury branding) exist, the codes will be searched and sorted according to these themes. The gathering of additional data that is relevant to each theme is therefore also partly redundant as the data has been gathered according to the themes and partly not possible due to the fact that it would require conducting follow up interviews. As the data has been gathered according to the themes, the themes also do not have to be checked regarding their compatibility with the extracted codes. A type of thematic map of the analysis will be done when sorting analyzing the codes regarding each single theme. Step 5, the definition and naming of themes also is redundant for the analysis of the data that has been gathered for this thesis, as the themes have been named and defined in the theoretical framework. Step 6 will then be undertaken as lined out, by analyzing the data, selecting and showing up relevant examples from the interviews. As the standards of scientific practice require the analysis will be deeply linked to the research question and the literature that has been used for the theoretical framework. .

4.5 Quality criteria for qualitative research

It is one thing to attempt to uphold the standards of scientific practice within this thesis, however it does not make a qualified statement about the actual quality of the work. Therefore it is necessary to establish and assess the quality of this thesis based upon suitable criteria. Especially as within this thesis an exploratory approach is undertaken, it is of utmost importance ensure its quality. As exploratory research lays the foundation for further research, a study of low scientific value might for example lead further research to take up conclusions that do not reflect reality. Tracy (2010, p. 840) therefore provides a clear and consolidated framework of eight different criteria that can be used in order to verify the quality of qualitative research. This framework and its 8 criteria will be applied on this research in the following table:

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve	Achievement in this thesis
Worthy topic	The topic of the research is • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting	The number of companies dealing with car modifications in connection with the outlined relevance of brands within the car market underlines the relevance and significance of the topic. The rising demand for cars in general and luxury/premium cars makes the topic, and as it examines an unresearched and unique industry it is interesting.

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve	Achievement in this thesis
Rich rigor	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes	The author has lined out the theoretical constructs of the brand and brand building as well as luxury and its branding. The applied theories were critically reflected and sufficient empirical data collected. These data was collected and analyzed in accordance with the standards of scientific practice.
Sincerity	The study is characterized by • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges	The author has critically reflected upon possible subjective influences and avoided them. All methods are clearly lined out and the challenges which the author faced were explained.
Credibility	The research is marked by • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling •Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections	All theoretical and practical aspects of the thesis have been explained in detail and knowledge of the essential factors, theories and practices has been demonstrated.
Resonance	The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalizations • Transferable findings	The style of the thesis makes it easily readable and the collected data is presented in an agreeable way. The thesis is attractive for audiences from different background and gives managerial implications.
Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically	The thesis explores an under researched topic, provides a theoretical model for a specialized concept and gives managerial implications for managers.
Ethical	The research considers • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)	The data was collected with strict adherence to ethical principles. The respondents were treated with respect and asked for permission to publish the data. The completed study is shared with all respondents without limitations and will be made publically available.

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve	Achievement in this thesis
Meaningful coherence	The study • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other	The research purpose and questions were kept in mind during the creation of this thesis in order to ensure that the content is linked to them and that there is a logical thread throughout the whole thesis. Different chapters of the thesis are interconnected and build up on each other in order to achieve the purpose of the thesis.

Table 1: 8 Quality criteria for qualitative research and their achievement in this thesis (Tracy, 2010, p. 840)

To conclude, the author claims that the quality criteria of this thesis have been regarded and assessed sufficiently. No major factors that would compromise them like for example interviews that can in no way be repeated or conclusions that would be drawn without referring to theory and/or empirical data could be identified and it can be said that this thesis has the necessary quality to be qualified as a duly scientific work.

4.6 Ethical considerations

When conducting research, it is not only important to hold up the standards of scientific practice, but also to take ethical aspects into consideration. Per definition ethics are "the systematic study of or formalization of rules concerning the separation of good conduct from bad" (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 30). Curtis & Curtis (2011, p. 15) identify four main factors that have to be taken into account when assessing the ethical conduct of research.

4.6.1 Voluntary informed consent

This is according to Curtis & Curtis (2011) the most important aspect and an essential requirement of ethical research, not only to minimize the risk of harm but also to avoid legal consequences. Voluntary refers to the fact that the participants in the study are taking part by free will and that declining participation does not require more effort than accepting. Informed refers to that potential participants are provided with enough information regarding the study so that an informed decision about the participation can be made. Consent refers to that the participants have formally affirmed their voluntary participation based on an informed decision. Regarding the voluntary informed consent within the framework of this thesis, it can be said that it has been properly taken into account. All participants were approached and asked for their willingness to participate. Regarding the approach via email, it was even easier to decline than accept participation, as not responding at all is an unambiguous signal of refusal. In addition to that, the approach either by email or in the cases of approach by phone provided the potential participants with enough information about the purpose of the study. Furthermore, all participants were sent the exact questions they would be asked in the interview in advance. Before the actual interview, meaning before the author would ask the interview question and before any spoken words were recorded, the participants were informed that they would not have to answer any questions they would not want to

answer and that they could abort the interview at any time. Before starting the recording, the author clearly signaled that the conversation would be recorded from this point on. The participants also gave formal consent by agreeing to the interview in written form by responding to the first approach email or in case of the companies that had been approached via phone by answering to the follow up email.

4.6.2   Risk of harm

In social science, risk of harm refers to emotional discomfort or stress that the participant might experience during the study (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Although the possibility of harm to the actual participant due to an interviewing on brand building was seen as significantly low, it was still considered. In addition to that, the author also had to consider the potential harm that the company of the participant might suffer from harm due to statements made in the interview. However, as stated above the participants were informed about the questions in the interview, were informed that they would not have to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with and were given the possibility to abort the interview at any point. Regarding possible harm to the company due to the interview, the companies were informed that the interview could also be conducted anonymously, meaning that the companies name would not appear in the public accessible version of the thesis and that any information that would make it retraceable would be obliterated. The disclosure of the questions prior to the interview also gave the participants and the company the possibility to assess the questions and to prepare answers. In addition to that, the participants were sent all text passages that would quote or refer to them or their company in any way before submitting the thesis in order to give them the possibility to assess the given information and if seen as necessary ask for changes or even withdrawals. This is seen as lowering the possibility of inconsiderate answers and accidental reveal of company secrets and consequential harm to the company as to a very low and therefore acceptable level.

4.6.3   Deception

Deception refers to pretending that the research has another purpose than it actually has in order to avoid influencing the participants through the knowledge of this purpose. For this thesis this is however not applicable, as no deception was used and transparent communication with the participants used at all times.

4.6.4   Debriefing

This ethical issue is mainly related to the previous issue of deception. Conducting a study with participants that are unaware that they are participants in a study, or deceiving participants that have given their consent to take part about the real nature of the study and after the study has been finished not informing them about the fact that they were part of a study or revealing the true nature of the study can be seen as highly unethical. In another sense, debriefing can be an issue when a participant has been suffering from stress during the study or afterwards and the researchers make no effort to lowering the stress level again by for example offering a person whose traumatizing experiences have been recalled during an interview about it psychological consultation. The first case can be ruled out for this study as all participants have given their consent and will not be deceived. The second case is seen as highly unlikely, as the author assumes that none of the participants will suffer from high stress due to an interview about brand building. However, the author argues that for this thesis a debriefing in

another sense is necessary. As the author has obtained data and recorded spoken words of the participants, it is seen as necessary both from a professional and ethical perspective to keep the participants that provided the data informed about anything that happens with this data. As this thesis will be publicly available, it would be unethical to include any information about a person or company or quote any of the participants without having their consent that this can be published as it might, as mentioned earlier harm the participant as well as the company. Therefore the author will send all participants the passages that are related to them or their company and give them the opportunity to ask for changes.

4.6.5   Ethical issues regarding luxury

Another ethical aspect regarding this thesis apart from considerations regarding the methods could be criticism towards the factor of luxury cars and luxury in general. It could be argued that it is unethical to deal with making high priced cars even more expensive while a huge number of people in the world suffer from poverty. The author acknowledges that there is a huge income gap in many countries and that major problems due to poverty exist, but argues that luxury cars are not a cause for this gap but rather a visible manifestation of the differences in incomes.

5 Empirical results

In this chapter the results of the empirical data collection will be provided. In order to gain an overview of the car modification market, the constructed table of the different car modification brands, their country of origin and for which brands they offer modifications will be shown in table 2. For the conducted interviews, a detailed transcription would be too large to be reproduced within this thesis, it would however still be beneficial to depict the different answers in order to be able to show up similarities and differences. Therefore first a table of the coded answers will be provided. Subsequently, the extracted core statements and essences of the different respondent answers will be provided. A summary of all essences will be given and first implication lined out. A thorough examination of the responses will be done in the following chapter.

5.1 Overview of the car modification market

Company	Hamann	G-Power	Graf Weckerle	German Special Customs	Gemballa	Geiger	FAB Design	edo competition	Duke Dynamics	DMC	DeLaVila	Dartz Motorz	CDC	Carlsson	Cargraphic	Caractère Exclusive	Caractère	Brabus	Callaway	B&B Automobiltechnik	ASMA Design	ASI	Arden	Anderson Germany	Alpina	AC Schnitzer	Abt Sportsline	A.R.T. Tuning	9ff
Country	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Switzerland	Germany	Canada	Germany	France	Latvia	Germany	Germany	Germany	Belgium	Belgium	Germany	USA	Germany	Germany	Japan	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany
Porsche	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			✓				✓	✓
Mercedes-Benz	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓							✓	
BMW	✓	✓						✓	✓				✓							✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	
Audi			✓					✓	✓				✓		✓		✓			✓				✓			✓		
Bentley	✓		✓					✓					✓							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Lamborghini	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓			✓							✓				✓					
Range Rover	✓							✓					✓							✓			✓	✓				✓	
Ferrari	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓			✓											✓					
Maserati	✓		✓					✓		✓			✓											✓					
Aston Martin	✓		✓					✓		✓			✓										✓	✓					
McLaren	✓				✓		✓																						
Volkswagen								✓									✓			✓							✓		
Ford						✓	✓																						
Nissan													✓																
Jaguar																							✓						
Rolls-Royce	✓		✓																										
Seat																				✓							✓		
Toyota																						✓							
Chevrolet						✓							✓						✓										
Dodge													✓																
Mini																						✓				✓			
Škoda																				✓							✓		
Bugatti																													
Lexus																						✓							
Cadillac						✓																							
Chrysler																													
Honda																													
Infinity																													
Jeep																													
Lotus																													
Mitsubishi																													
Smart																													
Tesla																													
Alfa Romeo																													
Daihatsu																													
GMC																													
Lincoln																													
Mazda																													
Spyker																													
Subaru																													
Suzuki																													
Total	11	1	9	1	3	3	4	11	5	5	1	1	13	1	2	1	2	1	1	10	4	4	4	8	1	2	4	4	1

Company	Reiter Engineering	Prior Design	Prindiville	Premier 4509 Limited [1]	PPI	Overfinch	Onyx	Oakley Design	Novitec	MTM	Merdad	MEC Design	Mansory	Manhart	Lumma	Loriuser	Loewenstein	Liberty Walk	Larte Design	Klemann	Kicherer	Kahn Design	JE Design	INDEN-Design	IMSA	Imperium	Idrimpower	Hofele-Design	Hennessey	Heffner Performance	Hartge
Country	Germany	Germany	England	Japan	Germany	England	Ireland	England	Germany	Germany	England	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Japan	Russia	Denmark	Germany	England	Germany	Germany	Germany	Germany	Scotland	Germany	USA	USA	Germany
Porsche		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓							✓						✓	✓		
Mercedes-Benz		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		
BMW		✓	✓										✓	✓	✓			✓				✓					✓		✓		✓
Audi		✓	✓		✓					✓			✓									✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
Bentley		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓			✓									✓						✓	✓		
Lamborghini	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓					✓												✓	
Range Rover			✓			✓	✓				✓		✓		✓				✓			✓									✓
Ferrari			✓	✓				✓	✓				✓					✓				✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		
Maserati		✓	✓						✓				✓									✓									
Aston Martin		✓	✓										✓									✓									
McLaren			✓							✓	✓		✓																✓		
Volkswagen		✓								✓												✓	✓								
Ford																						✓							✓	✓	
Nissan																		✓											✓	✓	
Jaguar		✓																											✓		
Rolls-Royce													✓															✓			
Seat										✓													✓					✓			
Toyota																		✓				✓							✓		
Chevrolet																													✓	✓	
Dodge																													✓	✓	
Mini		✓																				✓									✓
Škoda										✓													✓								
Bugatti			✓										✓																		
Lexus																													✓		
Cadillac																													✓		
Chrysler																		✓													
Honda																															
Infinity																			✓												
Jeep																						✓							✓		
Lotus													✓																✓		
Mitsubishi																															
Smart																												✓			
Tesla																															
Alfa Romeo																															
Daihatsu																															
GMC																													✓		
Lincoln																													✓		
Mazda																															
Spyker										✓																					
Subaru																															
Suzuki																															
Total	1	11	12	5	1	1	3	3	3	9	3	1	14	1	4	1	1	6	2	1	1	14	4	2	1	1	2	7	19	6	3

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Table 2 (car modification industry). Companies are column headers (with their country); car brands are rows. ✔ marks indicate a company modifies that brand. "Total" column = overall brand count; bottom "Total" row = per-company count.

Total	Zele International	Wheelsandmore	Wald International	Vorsteiner	Veilside	Väth	TopCar	Unplugged Performance	T Sportline	Techart	Switzer Performance	Startech²	Sportec	Speedart	Strosec Design	Sharkwerks	Saleen	RUF	Roush Performance	RENNtech	Roock Auto Sport	Company
Total	Japan	Germany	Japan	USA	Japan	Germany	Russia	USA	USA	Germany	USA	Germany	Switzerland	Germany	Germany	USA	USA	Germany	USA	USA	USA	Country
41			✔	✔			✔			✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔	Porsche
35		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔								✔					✔		Mercedes-Benz
25			✔	✔			✔															BMW
24		✔	✔	✔									✔							✔		Audi
23		✔	✔										✔							✔		Bentley
21		✔	✔										✔									Lamborghini
20		✔	✔	✔			✔					✔										Range Rover
20		✔																				Ferrari
13		✔	✔																			Maserati
12		✔	✔																			Aston Martin
10		✔																				McLaren
10													✔							✔		Volkswagen
7																	✔		✔			Ford
8	✔		✔		✔						✔											Nissan
5			✔									✔										Jaguar
6			✔																			Rolls-Royce
5													✔									Seat
5			✔		✔																	Toyota
5											✔						✔					Chevrolet
4											✔						✔					Dodge
4																						Mini
4													✔									Škoda
3																						Bugatti
3			✔																			Lexus
2																						Cadillac
2																						Chrysler
2			✔		✔																	Honda
2	✔																					Infinity
2																						Jeep
2																						Lotus
2			✔		✔																	Mitsubishi
2																				✔		Smart
3								✔	✔								✔					Tesla
1		✔																				Alfa Romeo
1			✔																			Daihatsu
1																						GMC
1																						Lincoln
1					✔																	Mazda
1																						Spyker
1					✔																	Subaru
1			✔																			Suzuki
Total	2	10	18	5	6	1	4	1	1	1	4	2	7	1	2	1	4	1	1	6	1	**Total**

Table 2 Overview of the car modification industry

5.2 Coded answers of the respondents

For the purpose of readability the questions will be repeated again below.

2. Please describe the brand you are working for.
3. How many brands do you offer modifications for?
4. Do you aim at different customers than the base brand?
5. Do you think for marketing modifications of different brands of base cars different approaches should be used/ are the customers different?
6. Do you see your brand as independent from the brand of the base cars? How strong is the connection with the base car brand? (Independent not in a legal or economic sense, but in the sense of how the brand is perceived)
7. Do your customers see the cars as your brand or as the brand of the base car?
8. Does your brand benefit from the brand of the base car / do negative aspects of the base brand (e.g. image problems) impact your brand?
9. If you think about the base brand(s) and your brand, are there any differences and which are these?
10. Do you put your own logo on the car / beside the original logo or even replace it? Do you give the car a new name?
11. Do your modifications enhance the luxury image of the base car?
12. Is the fact that you are a German brand incorporated into your identity? Does it have a positive impact on the luxury image?
13. Do customers expect and perceive the same or better performance quality/ do they expect you to make certain things better than the base brand?
14. Do you want your customers to have a different opinion about your brand in comparison to the base brand?
15. Do you want your customers to feel differently about your brand in comparison to the base brand?
16. Do your customers have a deeper connection with your brand than with the base brand / is that even a goal you have? Does the smaller group of customers benefit from that?
17. How do you achieve brand awareness? With similar methods than the base brand?
18. How do you see the market for car modifications in general, with regard to the emerging markets and regarding competition?

Question	Respondent	Coded for
2	Olga Sergacheva	High quality, beauty, individuality
	Rainer Schlumberger	Globality, tradition, uniqueness, refinement and ennoblement, intensity, individuality
	Jochen Eckelt	Optical modifications
	Ansgar vom Orde	refinement and ennoblemen, extreme, emotions
	Arden	Elegant design, luxury cars
3	Mathias Albert	2 Different philosophies (1 brand or several), low customer loyalty, dependance on base brand, 1 base brand better for brand shaping, several base brands means fewer risks
	Olga Sergacheva	One main base brand but successful exceptions
	Rainer Schlumberger	One main base brand, but lately expanded, uniqueness
	Jochen Eckelt	Several base brands
	Ansgar vom Orde	One officially modified brand, unofficial modifications possible, trust in the modification brand
	Arden	Several brands
4	Mathias Albert	Same core target group, special needs, competition through base brand, niches
	Olga Sergacheva	Independent brand
	Rainer Schlumberger	Different customers, passion, individuality
	Jochen Eckelt	Segment of base brands core target group
	Ansgar vom Orde	Segment of base brands core target group, individuality, performance, loyalty, dependence on base brand
	Arden	Segment of core target group, individuality
5	Mathias Albert	Own Customer segment, internationality
	Olga Sergacheva	No difference among customers, customers eager to experiment
	Rainer Schlumberger	Own Customer segment, brand awareness of base brand relevant, affinity for the modification brand, unofficial modifications possible, different customers among base brands
	Jochen Eckelt	Regional differences, different customers among base brands
	Ansgar vom Orde	Different customers among modification brands
	Arden	Different customers among base brands
6	Mathias Albert	Building up on image of the base brand, dependence on the image of the base brand
	Olga Sergacheva	No strong connection, modification brand independent

Question	Respondent	Coded for
	Rainer Schlumberger	Modification brand independent, Building up on image of the base brand
	Jochen Eckelt	Strong connection
	Ansgar vom Orde	Strong connection
	Arden	Strong connection, dependence on base brand, modification brand independent
7	Olga Sergacheva	Modification brand independent
	Rainer Schlumberger	Modification brand independent, keen customer Community and engagement
	Jochen Eckelt	Modified cars are perceived as cars of the base brand, independence as brand not goal
	Ansgar vom Orde	Own logo, uniqueness, modification brand independent
	Arden	Modification brand independent
8	Mathias Albert	Dependence on the base brand, building up on image of the base brand
	Olga Sergacheva	Building up on image of the base brand, luxury cars
	Rainer Schlumberger	Building up on image of the base brand, dependence on base brand
	Jochen Eckelt	Building up on image of the base brand, dependence on base brand
	Ansgar vom Orde	Building up on image of the base brand, dependence
	Arden	Dependence on base brand
9	Mathias Albert	Exclusivity, cooperation with modification brand positive for base brand
	Olga Sergacheva	More emotional, unsatisfied base customer
	Rainer Schlumberger	Building up on image of the base brand, difference in focus between base and modification brand
	Jochen Eckelt	Individuality
	Ansgar vom Orde	Emotions, individuality
10	Mathias Albert	Legal requirement for logo replacement, only makes sense if modifications are extensive, customers want logo for identification
	Olga Sergacheva	All logos are exchanged, only slight modification of model name
	Rainer Schlumberger	Legal requirement for logo replacement, Customers want modification brand logo, modification brand logo is promotion
	Jochen Eckelt	Logo is not replaced, but added, new model name only

Question	Respondent	Coded for
		when modifications are extensive
	Ansgar vom Orde	Legal requirement for logo replacement, new model names due to image and recognition reasons
	Arden	New logo on all cars and new model names
11	Mathias Albert	More individual, more extravagant, fancier, showier, perceived as more valuable
	Olga Sergacheva	more luxurious, more aggressive, more expressive
	Rainer Schlumberger	Performance is important, individual luxury modifications possible, expand the frame of the base car in luxury terms, very individual, anything that is technically possible can be realized, increased luxury comes with the modification brand, modification brand amazes more in direct comparison to the base brand
	Jochen Eckelt	To a certain extent more luxurious, target group should be asked
	Ansgar vom Orde	More expensive could be defined as more luxurious, modifications a kind of luxury
	Arden	Luxury made more sporty and elegant, Interior modifications on Mini cars perceived as more luxurious
12	Mathias Albert	Germany as country of origin a crucial advantage
	Olga Sergacheva	Russia as country of origin no advantage
	Rainer Schlumberger	Germany as country of origin a crucial advantage
	Jochen Eckelt	Perceived as German modification brand
	Ansgar vom Orde	Germany as country of origin an advantage that is emphasized
	Arden	Germany as country of origin integrating in marketing and an advantage
13	Mathias Albert	Quality mustn't be lower
	Olga Sergacheva	Same quality expected
	Rainer Schlumberger	Certain features get improved, same quality expected, more variety, quality mustn't be lower
	Jochen Eckelt	More special, more individual, more sporty, more comfortable ,more luxurious
	Ansgar vom Orde	Better performance expected by customers
	Arden	More individual, products that the base brand doesn't offer
14	Mathias Albert	Modification brand can be perceived as better
	Olga Sergacheva	Modification brand should be perceived independently

Question	Respondent	Coded for
	Rainer Schlumberger	Better opinion desired, more pride, more excitement, more satisfaction
	Jochen Eckelt	Can be perceived as more sporty or more individual
	Ansgar vom Orde	Perception has to be different, niche is served
	Arden	Good opinion is important
15	Mathias Albert	More emotional, more individual, more extravagant, targeting of customers who seek individuality and extravagance
	Olga Sergacheva	Modification brand should be perceived as better, customer gets more, difference between modification brand and base brand
	Rainer Schlumberger	Customers should have different feelings towards modification brand, selling with feelings, car built individually for the customer, customers see it different, more emotions involved
	Jochen Eckelt	Customers are approached more emotional
	Ansgar vom Orde	Customers are approached more emotional
	Arden	Individuality and exclusivity important factors, different emotions important
16	Mathias Albert	Deeper connection to the base brand, Low loyalty towards modification brand
	Olga Sergacheva	Customers see themselves different than base brand drivers, but still associate with them
	Rainer Schlumberger	Deeper connection to the modification brand, modification brand builds limited edition "legends" that are stable in value
	Jochen Eckelt	Not the intention to create a deeper connection, only the customer can answer that
	Ansgar vom Orde	Modified car stays a base brand car, no intention to interfere with the base brand connection of the customer, dependence on base brand
	Arden	Long time loyal customers exist, interest in the base brand has to pre-exist
17	Mathias Albert	Same methods can be used, amaze and evoke emotions, smaller target group, special methods in addition
	Olga Sergacheva	Same methods can be used
	Rainer Schlumberger	Smaller budget, special methods, smaller target group
	Jochen Eckelt	Same methods can be used, smaller budget, special methods in addition, base brands are increasing competition
	Ansgar vom Orde	Same methods can be used, smaller budget, closer connection to customers
	Arden	Smaller budget, same methods can be used, sales structure is important

Question	Respondent	Coded for
18	Mathias Albert	Market is allocated, eliminatory market, base brands are an increasing competition, more demand for individuality, cars as status symbols, growth in emerging markets
	Olga Sergacheva	Market not very strong, strong brands have a better position, Asia interesting, but specific interest in USA, Europe and middle east, growing competition, reorganization of the market
	Rainer Schlumberger	Market will decline in the traditional markets, growing competition through base brands, emerging markets important and growing
	Jochen Eckelt	Steady competition, growing competition through base brands, identify special needs and niches, cars as status symbols, car needs to be more noticeable, more powerful, mightier, more special, emerging markets important
	Ansgar vom Orde	Positive development, need for differentiation, need for individuality, international markets are growing, growing competition from other modification companies, Germany as country of origin advantageous
	Arden	Growing competition through base brands, growing competition from other modification companies

Table 3: Coded answers of the respondents

5.3 Responses of the interview participants:

Question 2: Please describe the brand you are working for.

Olga Sergacheva: Larte Design works mainly with Infinity and produces Bodykits of high quality. We guarantee the best quality on the market and we guarantee the clients satisfaction. We produce beautiful cars, not of high speed, but beautiful to help our customers to express their individuality.

Rainer Schlumberger: GEMBALLA has the advantage that it is a global brand within the industry and has more than 30 years tradition. The founder Uwe GEMBALLA was one of the first to make such refinements and ennoblements[1]. This is important as it is a unique characteristic of GEMBALLA. Despite from that we see ourselves not as a tuning company but as a refinement/ennobling company and we don't use the word tuning in our communication. We refine/ennoble cars, we define them more intensive than the original manufacturer and try to realize the individual mark of the customer when modifying a car.

Jochen Eckelt: JE Design stands for mainly optical modifications of cars from the Volkswagen Group.

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[1] The German participants of the interviews often tried to avoid the word tuning and used the word "veredelung" which is hard to translate with one word and will therefore be translated with refinement and ennoblement.

Ansgar vom Orde: Manhart is a refiner and ennobeler who became known for engine modifications and making fast BMWs even faster. Manhart always stood for the extreme, however we now also offer modifications for smaller BMWs and Diesel engines. Therefore in short you could describe Manhart as an extreme modifier who makes BMWs faster and more emotional.

Arden: Arden stands for elegant design and modern technology within the field of English luxury cars.

The responses to this question show that the different companies which the respondents represent have different perceptions regarding their brands and also that there are differences regarding the connection to the base brand or brands.

Question 3: How many brands do you offer modifications for? (Modified question for Mr. Albert: Is it advantageous if a modification brand focuses on one base brand?)

Mathias Albert: There are two different philosophies in the industry: Concentrating on one brand or one corporation, or concentrating one segment, mostly premium or luxury. Both are promising approaches, both with their own risks. Focusing on one brand means dependence on this brand, focusing on a whole segment and thereby on several brands has fewer risks but also gives fewer possibilities to shape the brand. Focusing on one brand also makes achieving customer loyalty much harder, and the brand loyalty towards the modification brand in general is much lower than to the base brand.

Olga Sergacheva: Mainly Infinity, but a modification of the Range Rover Evoque was also a great success and currently a modification of the Mercedes GL is in Progress.

Rainer Schlumberger: Porsche, since one and a half year also McLaren in addition to that there is a uniquely modified Ferrari "Enzo Ferrari" called MIG U-1.

Jochen Eckelt: VW, Seat, Audi, Porsche, 4 Brands.

Ansgar vom Orde: Officially only for one, BMW. However we have customers who have cars from different brands. As they trust us they often ask us to modify these cars. But officially we only modify BMW.

Arden: Four brands: Jaguar, Range Rover, Bentley, Mini.

The difference regarding the previously mentioned connection to the base brand or brands gets even more apparent within the answers to this question, as one company focuses on one brand, . However they also reveal relevant aspects like for example the fact that a company that officially modifies only one base brand will perform modifications on cars from different base brands when the customer asks for it.

Question 4: Do you aim at different customers than the base brand?

Mathias Albert: The core target group is the same and a huge amount of sales is generated through dealers of the base brand because the customer seeks modification and modification supplies there. Modification companies have to identify the special needs of dealers and the customer and adjust their offerings to that. It is no longer

possible to sell any kind of sporty supplies for any kind of base brand. However today there is a lot of competition from the base brand itself, this competition has to be faced and niches and needs that are not properly served by the base brand identified in order to supply that demand.

Olga Sergacheva: Larte Design is supposed to be its own brand, making the base brand irrelevant.

Rainer Schlumberger: I think so, as we go much further. For the customer it is much easier to simply order the car from the manufacturer with the features he wants. Getting a car from us requires much more effort due to all the configurations and also more passion for the car from the customer. I don't want to say that our customers are higher positioned, because it is not about money as the customers of the base brand already have a certain wealth. It is more about if the customer has a passion for cars and is willing to pay a premium for this passion and the individuality and the individual customer advice. And we consistently hear that this is what makes the difference.

Jochen Eckelt: Of course there is a common set, as only someone who drives the car from the base brand already can be our target group. Also our target group is a segment of the target group of the base brand. We are mostly selling modification parts, therefore we are more active in the after sales market.

Ansgar vom Orde: No. It always builds up on BMW and we are very loyal to BMW. So basically it is the same target group, but a small segment within this target group which wants more, something more individual and faster. BMW and its target group has to exist, and then Manhart can top that off with modifications.

Arden: Since we build upon the base car, out target group is a segment of the target group of the base brand which wishes for an individualization of the base car.

The majority of the answers show that the main target group of the modification brands is often a segment of the target group of the base brand. However they also show that for certain modification brands the target group differs from the target group of the base brand.

Question 5: Do you think for marketing modifications of different brands of base cars different approaches should be used/ are the customers different?

Mathias Albert: There is no real difference among the customers who buy completely modified cars and it is a very internationalized market that is served by specialized dealers, therefore modified cars have to be attractive for those dealers.

Olga Sergacheva: Basically not, but Infinity Customers are more receptive for experiments as infinity is a relatively new brand that is not very strong in Russia.

Rainer Schlumberger: We have to market our cars in general completely different than car manufacturers or other modification companies. If you look at our production cars, that are extensively modified, only the modification costs over 300.000€. Therefore you have to market it different. We can't go to the traditional or even specialized car shows anymore as the buyers are no longer there. The difference in marketing of different base

brands however becomes visible with the new McLaren we offer in a modified version. Although it is a car of high quality, it doesn't sell due to lack of brand awareness. Therefore it wouldn't be possible to sell a modified car based on a McLaren to a customer who is interested in Porsche as a base car. If however the customer has brand affinity for our brand, then the base brand doesn't matter. We even get requests from customers who bought a car from a brand we do not offer modifications for to modify these cars. We do that, as a friendly turn and not in our name. But there will be no other product combinations with GEMBALLA and any other car manufacturer.

Jochen Eckelt: Yes of course. There are different price segments and there are different target groups within the Volkswagen Corporation. There are also different target areas, meaning we market a modifications for a brand preferably in a location where the base brand is strong, Seat for example is strong in Western Europe, so we focus on our sales for this model on Western Europe. Then you have the VW Touareg which is a strong model in the markets with poor roads such as Eastern Europe, Russia, Asia, therefore you have to market modifications for this car there.

Ansgar vom Orde: Yes. A VW driver is something different than a BMW or Mercedes driver, but even as BMW and Mercedes are both premium I would differentiate between those two also. BMW is younger and more modern with younger and more dynamic drivers than Mercedes, which is a bit conservative, even if they are trying to renew that image currently. A Carlsson is something different as a Manhart, the customers might be a bit older and probably want something even more noble/luxurios than Manhart customers as the base car is a Mercedes.

Arden: Partially the customers differ among the base brands, this has to be taken into account when marketing.

The answers to this question show that for some modification brands, the customers differ among different base brands, but also that there are modification brands which are detached from the customers of the base brands.

Question 6: Do you see your brand as independent from the brand of the base cars? How strong is the connection with the base car brand? (Independent not in a legal or economic sense, but in the sense of how the brand is perceived)

Mathias Albert: Modification can basically just increase/improve the image of the base brand, which should also be the goal of car modification, meaning making a sporty car sportier and an exclusive car more exclusive. You can't detach from the image of the base brand.

Olga Sergacheva: There is no strong connection to the base brand, Larte Design is different than the base brand.

Rainer Schlumberger: If you take a Porsche to any other tuning company, when you get it out of the workshop you will have a Porsche with modifications from this company. If you come to us, you will leave the workshop with a "GEMBALLA". The base brand gets pushed into the background, and people even don't see it as the base brand anymore but as a GEMBALLA. Of course the customer wants the base brand because in his or her opinion it's a good car, but we top it off.

Jochen Eckelt: If you consider the perception of the brand JE Design, of course it is perceived in connection to the base brands.

Ansgar vom Orde: No it belongs together. There is a strong connection and one can't do without the other.

Arden: We have a strong connection with the base brand and rely upon it. However our brand is already strongly memorized so that we are to a great extent perceived as independent.

The answers to this question show, that for the majority of modification brands the connection to the base brand is perceived as strong.

Question 7: Do your customers see the cars as your brand or as the brand of the base car?

Olga Sergacheva: Larte Design customers choose Larte Design cars not because of the base brand but because it's a Larte Design car.

Rainer Schlumberger: They see it as a "GEMBALLA", no exception. Regarding our production cars, they will even have a new vehicle identification number, as we are an officially registered car manufacturer. To a large extent, the customers identify with the brand through products or social networks.

Jochen Eckelt: I assume our modified cars are perceived as cars of the base brand, and the connection to the base brand is stronger than the connection to the modification brand. But we also don't claim to be perceived as an independent car manufacturer, we claim to be perceived as a brand that deals with the refinement and ennoblement of the base car.

Ansgar vom Orde: That depends. If it's a rather complex modification, the car isn't even allowed anymore to have the BMW logo and the setup is quite unique, therefore it is complete Manhart. But if you for example just modify the engine power then it is still a BMW. Therefore I would differentiate between complete modifications where for example an engine is mounted into a chassis which in this combination is not produced by BMW, that is a Manhart, the others are refined and ennobled BMWs.

Arden: Our Customers see our cars as Arden cars. This is empathized when selling the cars, but unfortunately often leads to cars being offered as Arden cars although they are none or just have single Arden parts installed.

The answers to this question show, that despite the strong connection to the base brand, the modification brand can be perceived as independent, in extreme cases even leading to counterfeit modifications. However they also show that this perception as an independent brand depends on factors like for example the degree of modification.

Question 8: Does your brand benefit from the brand of the base car / do negative aspects of the base brand (e.g. image problems) impact your brand?

Mathias Albert: Low demand for a certain model makes it harder to sell modifications for it. Better performance of a brand internationally is beneficial for the modification company.

Olga Sergacheva: To a certain extent the image of infinity influences the image of Larte Design and helps Larte Design to be in the luxury market.

Rainer Schlumberger: Sure. Porsche claims to make the best cars in the world, and if you improve them that's a god basis. But negative aspects like for example suddenly occurring technical problems with certain models are also noticeable.

Jochen Eckelt: I can't really answer that question, as the base brands we use basically all have a positive image. But I would say that for a base brand with a negative image it would be much harder to market modifications for it. We clearly benefit from the good or very good image of the base brand.

Ansgar vom Orde: Yes both applies, because of the strong connection. Luckily BMW has had no image problems in the past and has always had a positive image and we can profit from that.

Arden: The influence of the base brand has an impact in form of the sales figures, meaning if the base brand sells more cars the number of customers who wish for a modification increases and vice-versa.

The answers to this question show that the connection to the base brand might be beneficial for the modification brand and that it can build up on it, but also that negative aspects of the base brand might impact the modification brand for example in terms of quality issues or decreasing sales.

Question 9: If you think about the base brand(s) and your brand, are there any differences and which are these?

Mathias Albert: The modification brand is much more exclusive and higher positioned than the base brand, this higher position is then a reason for the base brand to cooperate with the modification brand.

Olga Sergacheva: Larte Design cars have extra parts and extra emotions which set the car apart. The base car can not satisfy the customer.

Rainer Schlumberger: Porsche as a car brand is above everything and has a formidable global reputation, but they also offer for example accessories under the Porsche brand. GEMBALLA only offers modifications.

Jochen Eckelt: You can't compare JE Design to the base brands, because the base brands stand for complete cars and our brand stands for the individualization.

Ansgar vom Orde: Manhart cars have more emotions, are faster and more individual.

The answers to this question show, that the modification brand can be perceived different than the base brand, which can be beneficial in case that for example the modification brand is perceived as more individual or more exclusive.

Question 10: Do you put your own logo on the car / beside the original logo or even replace it? Do you give the car a new name?

Mathias Albert: Extensive modification leads to a legal requirement to replace the base brand and its logos. This replacement on the other hand only makes sense if the modifications are extensive. The customers also wish for the logo of the modification company as they want the identification with the modification brand.

Olga Sergacheva: Yes, all logos are exchanged. Special names are planned, for now only initials and numbers are added to the original model name.

Rainer Schlumberger: For one, the production cars need to have our logo, there mustn't be any Porsche logo in any way due to legal reasons. If a customer who already owns a Porsche come to us to get it modified, there would be no legal requirement. However these customers often want to have the GEMBALLA logo on their cars. We see this as important, as every car with our logo is promotion for us. Therefore we even give customers who only buy a set of wheels free logo stickers.

Jochen Eckelt: We don't replace the original logo, we just add our logos. The car only gets a new model name if the modifications are extensive.

Ansgar vom Orde: On the one hand we have to completely change all logos, for example with the extensively modified cars that get their own vehicle identification number and in the registration certificate it will even say Manhart and not BMW. However if there are just minor modifications the logos can stay. But we also give the cars new model names due to image and recognition reasons.

Arden: We put our brand and name logo on all cars and give them a new model name.

The answers to this question show first of all that there is a legal requirement to remove all base brand logos if the modifications are extensive, a fact of which the author was unaware before. In addition to that however they also show the relevance of the brand for creating brand awareness, and that customers might wish to associate with the modification brand through the logo.

Question 11: Do your modifications enhance the luxury image of the base car?

Mathias Albert: A modified car is in any case more individual, more extravagant and fancier. As it is showier, it will be perceived as more valuable.

Olga Sergacheva: Larte Design Cars are more luxurious, more aggressive, more expressive.

Rainer Schlumberger: Luxurious is a difficult term. We attach great importance to performance. However we even do modifications such as integrating a TV and a fridge into the car, which I would call luxurious. But yes, we expand the frame that the manufacturer has set. We make it very individual, we will realize anything that is technically possible. But if you directly compare it, it comes with the brand. If a Cayenne stands next to a GEMBALLA based on a Cayenne, everyone will be amazed by the GEMBALLA. That's how it is.

Jochen Eckelt: To a certain extent I assume yes. But you shouldn't ask me this question, you should ask the target group.

Ansgar vom Orde: That depends, as luxury is always a question of definition. If luxuy means more expensive, then you could for example take a BMW 3 series and put in a rollcage, sportseats and make it fit for the racetrack. It is more expensive and some kind of luxury. But if that makes the car more luxurious is a matter of opinion. I would call it more high-grade instead of more luxurious.

Arden: Jaguar, Range Rover and Bentley are already luxury brands, therefore we modify them in a sporty-elegant way. Regarding MINI, through our extensive interior modifications they surely are perceived as more luxurious.

The answers to this question show on the one hand that the problem of defining luxury is not only of theoretical but also of practical nature, as even practitioners mention that the question of whether or not something can be regarded as luxurious is always dependant on subjective perception. In addition to that however they also show that car modification at least touches upon aspects of luxury in the opinion of the respondents.

Question 12: Is the fact that you are a German (Russian in case of Larte Design) brand incorporated into your identity? Does it have a positive impact on the luxury image?

Mathias Albert: Germany as country of origin of a car modification company is definitively an advantageous and crucial factor for the brand.

Olga Sergacheva: To be a Russian car modification company is a shocking background in the market, but for Russian customers it doesn't matter. In the international market more questions will be asked and Larte Design has to be more offensive in proving the quality.

Rainer Schlumberger: Yes. Absolutely. With us everything is 100% Germany. And that is very important for us. There is only one exception, and that is that the brakes come from Brembo in Italy because no one else can produce the special brakes we need.

Jochen Eckelt: Of course JE Design is perceived as a brand from Germany within the market.

Ansgar vom Orde: Yes, definitely. We emphasize that the parts are produced in Germany and that the modifications are done in our workshop in Germany.

Arden: We integrate the origin of our brand in our advertising, like in the slogan "Made in Germany – designed for the world". This has a positive impact on our brand.

The answers to this question show that the country of origin, in this case Germany can have a positive impact on the modification brand in general, as well as on the modification brand being perceived as luxurious.

Question 13: Do customers expect and perceive the same or better performance quality/ do they expect you to make certain things better than the base brand?

Mathias Albert: The quality shouldn't at least be lower in any case.

Olga Sergacheva: The Customers expect the same quality.

Rainer Schlumberger: An example is the GEMBALLA Mirage. It is based on the Carrera GT, but this car was built for the racetrack. It has a racing transmission and clutch and it is hard to drive with this car under normal street conditions. Therefore we had a special clutch developed for this car as our customers mostly do not intend to use the car on the racetrack. Our customers want a daily driver with the standard reliability of Porsche, but when they step on the gas hell should break loose. And that is the case with our cars. You can drive them normally and won't even notice the huge engine power, but when you then step on the gas even with 4 people in the car you will have acceleration values like a Ferrari Enzo. So yes we do have a better performance and more comfort. So to conclude, better in the sense of more variety. Worse Quality would be a no go.

Jochen Eckelt: I would be careful using the word "better". However the customers expect the car to be more special and more individual than the car of the base brand. You can make a car more sporty, more comfortable, more luxurious. But the word better is delicate.

Ansgar vom Orde: Yes they expect that. If you hand out your car to us, you expect that it drives better afterwards, that it has a better handling and looks better. Otherwise you wouldn't invest that money.

Arden: Our customers expect a possibility to individualize the car from us and that we offer products which are not offered by the manufacturer. In addition to that our year long competence within engine manufacturing plays an important role.

The answers to this question show, that regarding the quality of the modification, the quality of the base brand is the minimum level that the modification brand has to achieve. Exceeding the quality of the base brand is a positive feature, but not expected by the customers.

Question 14: Do you want your customers to have a different opinion about your brand in comparison to the base brand?

Mathias Albert: If the modification brand does a good job, it can be perceived as better than the base brand.

Olga Sergacheva: Customers should think about Larte Design as independent from the base brand.

Rainer Schlumberger: Yes, a better one. It would be terrible and sad if a customer would not be more proud, more excited or more satisfied than with a standard Porsche.

Jochen Eckelt: I assume that we are perceived in the area of individualization, and it can be that the cars we have modified are perceived as more luxurious or more sporty or more individual.

Ansgar vom Orde: Yes. If you compare the sizes, BMW is a large corporation that serves the mass market and Manhart is a small Company that serves a niche. Therefore the perception has to be different.

Arden: It's important to us that our customers have a good opinion about us. Since we offer our customers products that are bespoke, we can even reach customers who can't get to grips with the basecar.

The answers to this question show, that the opinion of the customers on the modification brand can be different than the opinion on the base brand. They also show that a different or even better opinion should be a goal of the modification brand.

Question 15: Do you want your customers to feel differently about your brand in comparison to the base brand?

Mathias Albert: The modification brand has to be more emotional, more individual and more extravagant. Extrovert customers who seek individuality and extravagance have to be targeted.

Olga Sergacheva: It should be perceived as better than the base brand, the customer gets more. Larte Design is different from Infinity.

Rainer Schlumberger: Yes, absolutely. We are selling feelings and emotions. Many people don't understand that. But we have customers who see their cars for the first time and are absolutely amazed, these are grown men but they have tears in their eyes and they walk around the car for 3 hours and inspect every little detail. It's not about the money. They don't care about the money. They waited for this car, this car was built to their requirements and the feelings are extremely important. The customers see something different in the car.

Jochen Eckelt: We approach the car owners on a more emotional level than the base brand.

Ansgar vom Orde: Definitely. We want to arouse more emotions through for example better acceleration or different looks.

Arden: Since the area of refinement and ennoblement of cars is shaped by the individuality and exclusivity, those points play an important role with our brand.

The answers to this question show that regarding the emotions that the customer feels toward the brand, the modification brand evokes more emotions than the base brand and that this is a crucial factor within the branding.

Question 16: Do your customers have a deeper connection with your brand than with the base brand / is that even a goal you have? Does the smaller group of customers benefit from that?

Mathias Albert: First the customer sees him or herself as a driver of the base brand, then as a driver of the modification brand. There is very low loyalty towards the tuning brand among customers.

Olga Sergacheva: In social media, Larte Design drivers are active in groups of Infinity drivers. However they talk about driving a Larte Design car and consider their cars the best cars in these groups. They feel different and a little bit better.

Rainer Schlumberger: Yes, absolutely. Through our history and the earlier extraordinary models we even refer to us as builder of legends. Also our cars are extremely stable in value what no other modification company can claim. Therefore we also limit our cars, in order to keep the price stable.

Jochen Eckelt: It is not my intention and I can't really answer that question. Only the customer can answer you that question.

Ansgar vom Orde: No. As said earlier, it stays a BMW. The customer should still perceive his BMW as a BMW and value BMW. We don't want to interfere there and one can't do without the other.

Arden: We have long-standing and very loyal customers, which the base brand most likely also has, whereby partially the interest in the base brand has to preexist.

The answers to this question show, that the customer can be loyal to the base brand while still also feeling connected to the modification brand and vice versa.

Question 17: How do you achieve brand awareness? With similar methods than the base brand?

Mathias Albert: Basically modification brand can use the same methods, but you also have to amaze and evoke emotions, but the target group is much sharper (smaller) therefore you have to avoid spreading losses and conduct marketing activities much more precise and coordinated than the base brand. Also the modification brand can reach brand awareness through specialized trade shows besides big automobile shows.

Olga Sergacheva: Basically we use the same methods.

Rainer Schlumberger: Porsche does a lot of promotion. We can't do that. We are trying to get the contact to potential customers were they are and to avoid spread loss, for example by being present on polo events or Porsche events. 100.000 visitors at the Frankfurt motor show are useless, as 99% of those unfortunately can't afford our product. I need those two people who can afford it, and therefore it's better to go to a golf game or to invite them privately.

Jochen Eckelt: We use the same ways, channels and possibilities in general, like car shows, print, PR, Facebook but of course with a budget that is much different than that of the base brand. Partially we also visit special trade shows where the base brands are not present. But the presence of the manufacturers with their individual programs on the special shows is getting stronger, in order to offer an individualization to customers who have not bought it together with the car.

Ansgar vom Orde: Basically we use the same methods but of course BMW has a bigger budget. But we also can be more personal in social media, reveal more and include our followers more and thereby create closeness to the brand.

Arden: Since you can't compare our promotion budget with the manufacturers, we have limited resources. Of course we try to get media coverage, advertise and be present on trade/car shows. In addition to that the sales structure is important.

The answers to this question show, that in order to achieve brand awareness the modification brand can under certain circumstances use the same methods as the base brand, but also that sometimes different methods, like being present on special car shows or approaching the customer directly are advisable or necessary. This is for example the case if the modification brand wants to reach customers with a specific interest in car modification or if the modification makes the product affordable for only a limited group of customers.

Question 18: How do you see the market for car modifications in general, with regard to the emerging markets and regarding competition?

Mathias Albert: The market is clearly allocated among the established companies making it hard for new ones. There has also been a shift from a growth to eliminatory market. There is a growing competition of base brands through more diversified product lines, which however also means that at the same time there is more demand for individuality. Cars and mobility have always been a status symbol, this is today much more apparent in the emerging and frontier markets, meaning that those markets offer growth opportunities especially for car modifications made in Germany.

Olga Sergacheva: The market is not very strong, but a strong brand can persist in this market. The Chinese and Asian market is interesting for car modification companies but Larte Design is more interested in the US, European and middle eastern market. The competition will probably grow and the market will be reorganized.

Rainer Schlumberger: The future will be difficult. The number of companies will decrease in the next years. One of the main reason being the manufacturers covering more and more the market themselves. There are already some companies who disappeared and there are some who aren't doing very well at the moment. The emerging markets are very important, China is extremely important, Russia is gaining traction again. The future there looks good, but in the modification market in specific it will be difficult.

Jochen Eckelt: There has always been competition and there always will be. Fact is that the manufacturers have discovered the modification market for themselves and offer much more possibilities for individualization than a few years ago. That is one the one hand not beneficial for after sales modifications, but on the other hand it means you have to work more concentrated and faster and therefore can meet the special needs of the customer better than a large manufacturer. Regarding the emerging markets, where wealth has grown significantly in a short time the need to demonstrate success is much bigger than in for example Germany. Status symbols are very important, and that includes cars. Therefore the car has to be more noticeable, more powerful, mightier, more special than the average car. Therefore these countries especially in the luxury car sector are preferred by many modification companies, including us.

Ansgar vom Orde: I would see the future developments as positive. In Germany the car will always play a big role and there will always be people who want to differentiate their cars from others, therefore there will be an urge for individuality and therefore in

Germany there will always be a market. International the markets are growing, especially in China with the growing middle class people want more and more individuality. But there is also growing demand in Thailand and India. The competition is strong and for us there is growing competition coming from the USA, and these companies are good at what they do. But we have the advantage that we are from Germany, as people tend to put trust into a company that is geographically close to the base brand. But the competition isn't sleeping.

Arden: The manufacturers have recognized the potential within the car modification industry and therefore offer more accessories themselves. In addition to that there is a growing number of new companies who deal with that topic and existing companies who expand their brand portfolio.

The answers to this question show first of all that the car modification market is a very competitive, but in certain regions also growing market, which underlines that this thesis is relevant and timely. In addition to that, the answers show that modification companies not only face competition from other modification companies but also from the base brands.

6 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is, as the headline implies, the analysis of the collected empirical data. As outlined before, there are two sets of data. First, the quantitative data about the car modification industry and the brands which are present on it. This will be done in order to get an overview about the market and not be extensive and detailed. Second, the analysis of the gathered qualitative empirical data. This will be done in detail with the aid of the previously outlined thematic analysis.

6.1 Analysis and overview of the car modification market

In total, the author was able to identify 81 brands (including 3 sub brands) internationally that are active within the car modification market (again, the author does not claim that this list is exhaustive). These 81 brands officially offer modifications for 41base brands, with Porsche being the base brand the most modification companies offer modifications for. The exact distribution of the base brands among the modification brands can be seen in figure 2 on the following page.
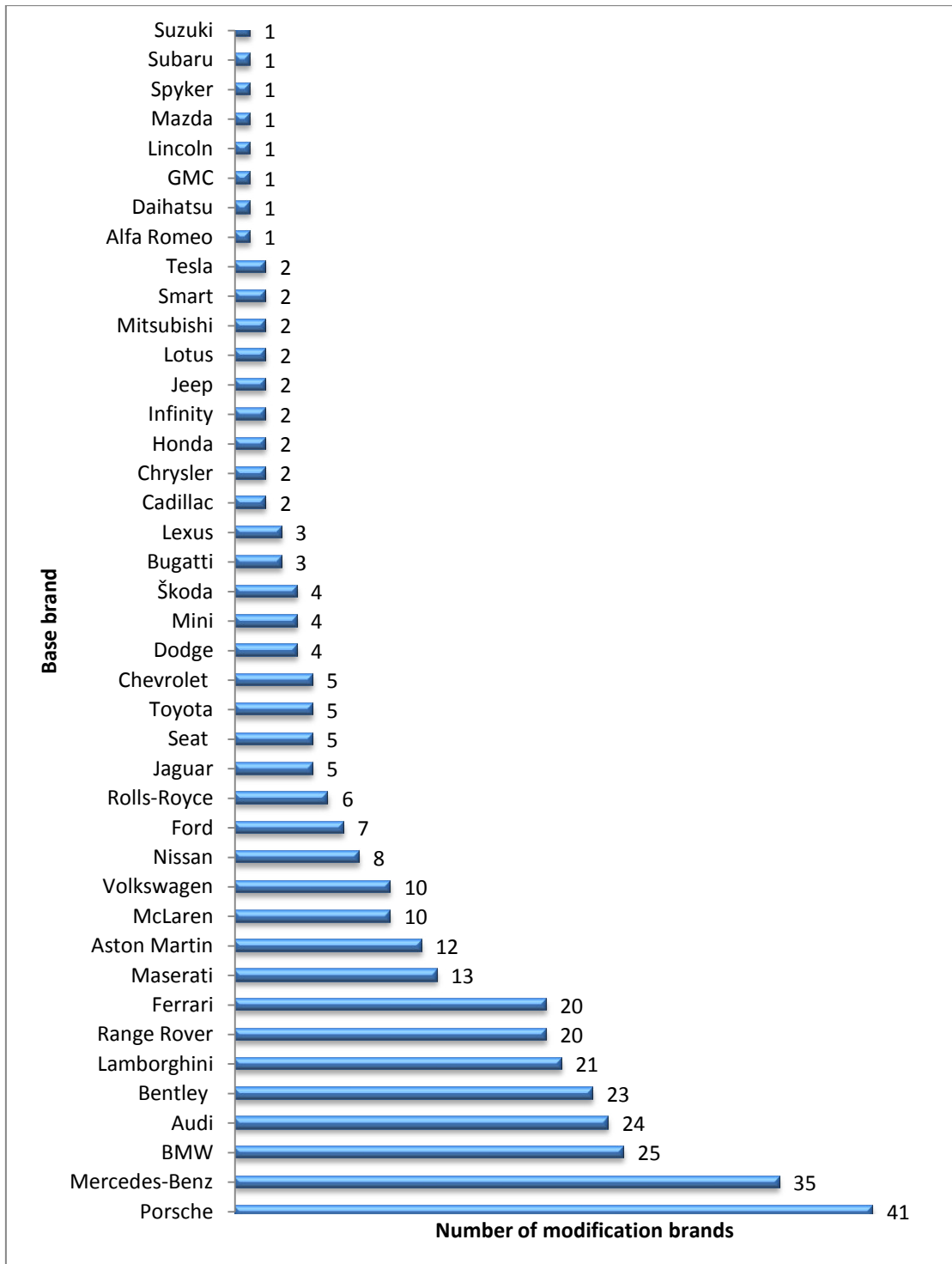
Figure 2: Number of modification brands in relation to the number base brands

The distribution of the base brands among the modification brands implies high competition, at least when a modification company offers modifications for certain brands. A modification company that for example offers modifications for Porsche, the most modified brand, faces 40 competitors. This even means that the modification company faces more competition than Porsche itself. This high competition again emphasizes the need for brand building in order to set the company apart from the competition. What is also apparent is the fact that at least the base brands for which the most companies offer modification can be subjectively categorized as premium/luxury

brands. For the purpose of this thesis this categorization is sufficient, however there are opportunities to extend it by for example assessing which different models of the single brands are offered modifications for and how these models could be categorized. What is also apparent is the fact that for Tesla Motors, a manufacturer that has specialized in the production of electric cars and only marketed its first car in 2008 (Tesla Motors, 2014), already three companies offer modifications. Two of these companies are also not established car modification companies which have expanded their portfolio, but were newly founded for the purpose of offering modifications for Tesla cars, both claiming to be the first modification brand to focus on Tesla cars (T Sportsline, 2013; Unplugged Performance, 2013). This underlines that car modification is a relevant topic and thereby that this thesis is timely and relevant.

The geographical distribution of the modification brands can be seen in the following table 4:

Country	Brands	Percentage
Germany	45	55,56%
USA	12	14,81%
Japan	7	8,64%
England	5	6,17%
Belgium	2	2,47%
Switzerland	2	2,47%
Russia	2	2,47%
Latvia	1	1,23%
France	1	1,23%
Canada	1	1,23%
Ireland	1	1,23%
Scotland	1	1,23%
Denmark	1	1,23%

Table 4: Geographical distribution of car modification brands

The geographical distribution depicted in table 4 shows that the majority of car modification companies originate from Germany, with 45 almost 4 times more than from the USA, where the 2nd most car modification companies originate from. Therefore, when simply assessing it through the number of companies, the earlier mentioned claim by the German association of automobile tuners that German companies are leading within the car modification market can be seen as true. However, when assessing market leadership on the basis of for example profit or quality, no objective statement that is based on empirical data can be made at this point. In addition to that, as mentioned earlier, the country of origin plays a role regarding brand imagery and luxury branding (Kapferer & Bastien 2009, p.75), therefore the role that the country of origin plays for car modification brands will be further analyzed in the next section.

Of the 81 car modification brands, 30 (37%) officially offer modifications for only one base brand. This fact, taken individually can at this point not lead to any qualified statements about the impact on the connection to the base brand and the modification brand itself, but it points towards that whether a modification brand offers modifications for one or several brands might be a relevant factor. The fact that three sub brands, which offer modifications for other base brands than the main brand exist, underlines this possibility.
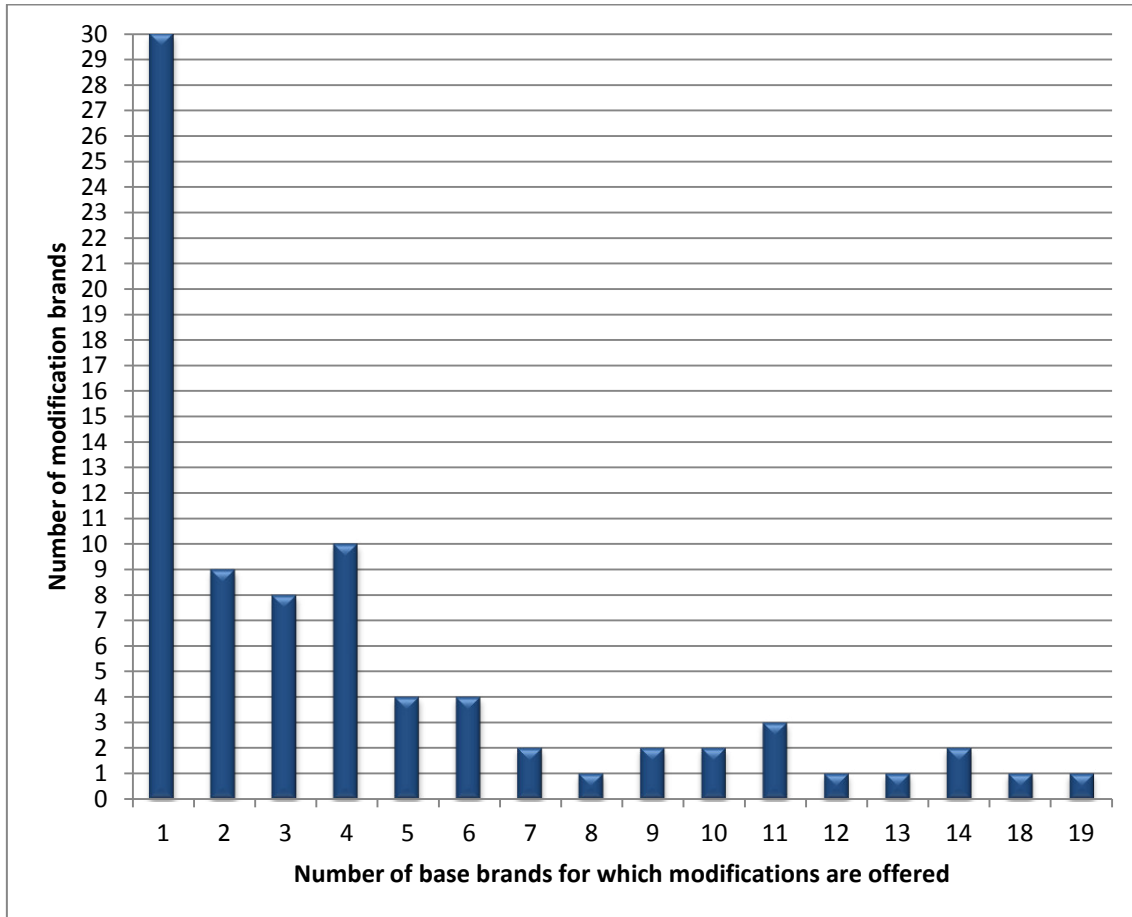
Figure 3: Distribution of the number of base brands among modification brands

6.2　Thematic analysis of the interview responses

Subsequently, the interview responses will be analyzed regarding the modification brand – base brand connection, the different brand building blocks of customer-based brand equity and luxury branding.

6.2.1　Connection between the two brands within the brand building for car modification companies

As the first research question of this thesis is "How can an existing brand building model be modified to make it applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation?", it seems advisable to first examine the connection between the two brands, in order to find out how deep the connection is, what factors have an influence on the connection and the actual underlying nature of the connection.

The following codes have therefore identified for the theme "Brand connection":

- 2 Different philosophies (1 brand or several), 1 base brand better for brand shaping, several base brands means fewer risks
- One main brand but successful exceptions
- One main brand, but lately expanded
- Several base brands
- One officially modified brand
- Unofficial modifications possible
- Independent brand
- Segment of base brands core target group
- Dependence on base brand
- Building up on image of the base brand
- Dependence on the image of the base brand
- No strong connection
- Modification brand independent
- Strong connection
- Modified cars are perceived as cars of the base brand
- Independence as brand not goal
- Own logo
- Cooperation with modification brand positive for base brand
- Difference in focus between base and modification brand
- Logo is not replaced, but added
- Modification brand should be perceived independently
- Deeper connection to the base brand
- Low loyalty towards modification brand
- Deeper connection to the modification brand
- Not the intention to create a deeper connection
- Modified car stays a base brand car,
- no intention to interfere with the base brand connection

As the interviews and the resulted codes show, regarding the connection between the base brand and the modification brand it is of relevance whether a modification brand

focuses on the modification of one base brand or offers modifications for several different base brands.

"There are two different philosophies, in fact there are two major movements within the industry: The concentration on one brand or one corporation, meaning the brands of the Volkswagen Corporation or the brands of the BMW AG and on the other hand tuning companies that have specialized on car segments, usually premium, meaning only car models of the premium and noble manufactures like Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentley and so on. Both in my opinion promising strategies, both associated with certain risks, if you are dependent on one brand you are to a certain extent dependent on the manufacturer and the model policy, you are dependent on to which extent you have access to and possibilities for cooperation with the corporation. Therefore the concentration on one segment and therefore the spread among several base brands is more risk-free on the one hand, but also offers less shape."

Mathias Albert

These two different philosophies are apparent when examining how many modification companies offer modifications for one and how many for several base brands and can be seen in figure 2. What is also apparent is the fact that all respondents, no matter what philosophy the brand they represent follows have mentioned a certain dependence on the base brand or at least mentioned that their brand builds up on the image of the base brand. In addition to that, the data has shown that the target group of the modification is often a segment of the base brands core target group or that at least the interest in the base brand has to exist. Two of the respondents even mentioned that their brands are approached by customers and asked to perform modifications on cars of base brands for which they officially don't offer modifications. These modifications will then be done, but unofficially, meaning that for example the modification company will not put its logos and labels on the car. Therefore it can be said that there is a relevant connection between the modification brand and the base brand or brands, and that therefore the base brand or brand should be taken into account when building the modification brand.

In order to construct a brand building model for the modification brand with the aid of the model of customer based brand equity while taking luxury branding into account, the connection between the modification brand and the base brand or brands therefore makes it advisable to not build the modification brand from scratch but to orient and build up on the base brand or brands. To do so, the different brand building blocks of the customer based brand equity model can be used.

6.2.2 Brand salience within the brand building model for car modification companies

As lined out in chapter 2.3.1, the brand building block brand salience deals with brand awareness and brand recall and has to the objective of creating deep and broad brand awareness. In addition to that, brand salience also touches upon whether the brand is perceived by the customer as being able to satisfy his needs and if the brand comes to mind when the customer thinks of a certain product category (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004; Miller & Berry, 1998; Keller, 2008).

The following codes were identified for this theme:

- Brand awareness of base brand relevant

- Own logo
- Modification brand logo is promotion
- New model names due to image and recognition reasons
- Logo is not replaced, but added
- New logo on all cars and new model names
- Unsatisfied base customer
- Products that the base brand doesn't offer
- Niche is served
- Same methods (to achieve brand awareness) can be used
- Special methods (to achieve brand awareness)
- Identify special needs and niches

On the hand, the interviews have showed that the brand awareness and salience of the base brand is an important factor for the modification brand, as the demand for cars of a certain brand is linked to the demand for modifications of cars of this brand. However, the modification brand still has to build up its own brand awareness and salience, as people have to be aware of and know about a brand before they can consider it. For the creation of the brand awareness it became clear throughout the analysis of the interviews that in order to create brand awareness and salience, the modification brand can basically use the same methods as the base brand, as the target group is often a segment of the core target group. However as several respondents mentioned, the budget is significantly smaller and therefore the modification brand has to be much for focused and can't afford massive spread losses. In addition to that, the modification brand can make use of special methods, like being present on special car shows or even personally approaching the customer. Furthermore, the modification brand can make use of the application of own logos and labels. Despite the fact that extensive modifications require the replacement of all base brand logos, the own logo on the car will create brand awareness. As said by certain participants in the interviews, the modified cars are flashier, and putting the own logo on a flashy car will let the modification brand benefit from the attention that the car might get.

Brand salience also deals with how the customer perceives the brand as being able to satisfy his or her needs (Keller, 2008, p. 60). Regarding that, the interviews have shown that modification brands can use the brand salience of the base brand to its advantage. If there are certain needs that the base brand does not satisfy and niches which the base brand does not serve, by examining the base brands salience the modification brand can identify these needs and niches and satisfy and serve them.

"We use the same possibilities and ways, of course logically with a much much different budget than the base brand, meaning trade shows, fairs, print, PR, Facebook etc. Basically we serve the same channels but only with a much different budget than the base brand. […] Partly also trade shows which focus on topics like after sales, accessories, individualization."

Jochen Eckelt

"The customers need some extras, extra parts, extra emotions. Something the other cars don't have. Something special. These customers are not absolutely satisfied by the base cars."

Olga Sergacheva

6.2.3 Brand performance within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified codes:

- High quality
- Beauty
- Individuality
- Elegant design
- Performance
- Exclusivity
- More luxurious
- More aggressive
- More expressive
- Performance is important
- More expensive could be defined as more luxurious
- Luxury made more sporty and elegant
- Quality mustn't be lower
- Same quality expected
- Certain features get improved
- More sporty
- More comfortable
- Better performance expected by customers
- Customer gets more

Brand performance within the framework of customer-based brand equity could at first glance be seen as problematic within a theoretical model for car modification bands. Keller (2008, p.60) describes brand performance as how the product that the brand offers can meet the customers' functional needs in terms of for example reliability, durability, serviceability, quality of product and price. The base car in its original form however already fulfills all functional needs that one would expect a customer to seek in a car. However when dealing with car modification and luxury branding, it can be argued that the functional need still exists, but is overshadowed by the needs for example individuality and/or improved performance. Therefore the need that has to be fulfilled by the modification company is not a functional one, but a special need that can differ from customer to customer. The need that was mentioned the most during the interviews was the need for individuality. In addition to that, the modification brand can fulfill needs like for example the customer wanting to have a faster car, a more comfortable car or a better overall handling of the car. Hereby again the modification brand can identify needs which the base brand does not fulfill in order to offer customers a solution for these needs. In addition to that, the modification brand can identify relevant features of the base brand and further expand and build up on them. The interviews have also shown that although the customers expect different features and sometimes even improved performance (in this case referring to for example the acceleration or handling of the car) from the modification brand, the expectations regarding the actual quality are the same. However, not having the same level of quality as the base brand is seen as harmful to the brand. The overall goal of the stage of the brand building block brand performance should be to create points of parity and difference (Keller 2008, p. 60). The major point of parity is therefore the quality standard set by the base brand. The modification brand however has to focus mainly on

points of difference, as these are ultimately the reason why the customer will buy a modified instead of a base car.

"They want a daily driver with the normal reliability that Porsche offers. But when they step on the gas for once, hell should break loose."

"Yes we have better performance, regarding the transmission and you have the seat comfort, but I don't think the customer comes to us to improve his or her Porsche, I think he comes to us to define it. He or she wants him a bit lower, he or she wants rims that are a bit different, or perhaps wants colored details in the interior. […] We have advantages here and there, better in the sense of more variety but for sure on the same level as Porsche. Worse absolutely can't do."

Rainer Schlumberger

6.2.4 Brand imagery within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified codes:

- Individuality
- High quality
- Uniqueness
- Refinement and ennoblement
- Extreme
- Elegant design
- Luxury cars
- Unofficial modifications possible
- Customers eager to experiment
- Different customers among base brands
- Building up on image of the base brand
- Dependance on the image of the base brand
- Exclusivity
- Customers want logo for identification
- New model names due to image and recognition reasons
- Fancier
- Showier
- Perceived as more valuable
- More aggressive
- More expressive
- Modification brand amazes more in direct comparison to the base brand
- Germany as country of origin a crucial advantage
- Russia as country of origin no advantage
- Perceived as German modification brand
- Germany as country of origin an advantage that is Emphasized
- Germany as country of origin integrating in marketing and an advantage
- Can be perceived as more sporty or more individual
- More emotional

The brand building block brand imagery within the model of customer based brand equity describes the abstract thoughts that potential customers have about the brand and

with what they associate the brand (Yuille & Catchpole, 1977). The four main brand imagery associations are user profiles, purchase and usage situations, personality and values, and history, heritage and experience.

Regarding the user profiles, and thereby the mental image of actual or idealized users (Keller 2008, p. 65), as mentioned earlier the modification brand often has a target group that is a segment of the core target group of the base brand. This means that the modification brand could roughly orient on the user profiles of the base brand. However within the core target group of the base brand the actual target group of the modification brand are customers whose needs the base brand does not fulfill, as they for example wish for more individuality, uniqueness and fancier and showier cars. Again these unsatisfied needs have to be identified by the modification company and met. In addition to that, the modification brand can work with the idealized user profile by for example emphasizing that the modified cars have a better performance, are more individual or even more luxurious. By doing so, the idealized user of the modification brand will be positioned above the user of the base brand, making being a user of the modification brand desirable for example to fulfill the need for social recognition. In addition to that, for some modification companies the potential target group is partly independent from the base brand or brands. This means that the modification brand has to put more effort into identifying these users, as they cannot be picked out of the target group of the base brands.

"I would say that it is basically the same target group, but within that target group there is a little niche in which there is a smaller target group that wants a little more, wants something more individual and something faster. But basically it is the same target group. The BMW has to exist, and with the Manhart modification you can top it of."

Ansgar vom Orde

"He or she wants something that you can't get at Porsche. […] So our target group is, I don't want to say higher, because it's not about money, if someone buys a 911 Turbo at Porsche or a Cayenne, really doesn't matter the he or she can still be a multi-millionaire. It's more about is he or she passionate for cars and willing to pay for this hobby and this passion a little bit more."

"If you look at our production cars, meaning the complete modifications, only the modifications cost 300.000 Euros. At another modification company I can get two cars for that. And therefore you are forced to market it differently. You don't have the class of customers when you go the Frankfurt Auto Show, we don't go there, there are no buyers for us. We don't go to a normal car show. We don't even go to Monaco anymore by the way."

Rainer Schlumberger

Regarding the usage situations, this research finds that they can apparently differ among the customers of different modification companies. GEMBALLA for example may take a high performance car that has been built for the racetrack and install a newly developed transmission that will enable the customer to use it as a daily driver outside of the racetrack. Manhart on the other hand may take a BMW limousine and enhance the engine performance as well as install a rollcage and other racing components to make the car able to be driven on a racetrack. This makes it necessary for the modification brand to identify the usage situations of potential customers and create the

right associations. Depending on the specifications of the modified car and its intended use, the modified car might then be able to target a segment of the target group of the base brand as well as customers outside the target group of the base brand, as they might consider the modified car because they perceive it as fulfilling the function they would need it for. Regarding the purchase situation it has to be said that has limited applicability for the purchase of modified cars. First of all, a car purchase, no matter if it is a modified car or not, is generally a high involvement purchase situation meaning that the customer will spend a significant amount of time and resources on the purchase decision (Lamb et. al., 2011). In addition to that, the modification of a car to the individual needs and wishes of the customer is also lengthy process which requires extensive consultation. Therefore it is unlikely that the consumer will find him or herself suddenly in a situation where a modified car is required or wanted. Therefore it is not possible to go into detail regarding the purchase situation within this thesis, as this would require a much more intensive examination of the decision making and purchase process. It should however also be mentioned that it has occurred for one modification company that modified cars were bought directly at a car show. This however seems to be an exception.

Regarding the personality and values, and thereby the human traits that potential customers project onto the brand in order to determine and maintain their relationship with it (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009, p. 235), the connection to the base brand comes more into play again, mainly when the modification company focuses on one brand. The interviews have shown that for the modification company it is not possible to create an image/ brand personality that is severely different from the one of the base brand. It is possible to make a luxury car sportier and vice versa, however modifying a car that has a conservative and/or luxurious image into a car that focuses solely on performance and speed without providing any driving comfort in order to attract customers that see themselves as modern drivers of sporty cars will apparently not be very beneficial. Therefore again the modification company can benefit from analyzing the brand building blocks of the base company and identify the factors that make up the personality and values of the brand building block imagery of the base brand and identify favorable factors that can be emphasized with the modifications in order to build up its own imagery on these factors.

"Basically you can always just enhance the image that the base brand has with the modification brand. That is eventually also the objective that the modification has to achieve, meaning if you have a sporty oriented car then you make it even sportier, if you have a very exclusive car you make it more exclusive, you can't completely detach from the image of the base brand."

Mathias Albert

Regarding history, heritage and experiences here again depending on the intensity of the connection to the base brand, the modification brand can benefit from associations that the customers have with the base brand and also build up on and expand these. This can for example the case with the associations regarding the country of origin of the base brand, the base brand itself and a modification company from the same country.

"We have the advantage that we are in Germany and that BMW comes from Germany and so to speak BMW is just outside our door, and that's how people in other countries always see it, that those who come from the country where the base car comes from know what they are doing and that therefore we have a trust bonus."

Ansgar vom Orde

6.2.5 Brand judgment within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified codes:

- High quality
- Trust
- perceived as more valuable
- Quality mustn't be lower
- Same quality expected
- Good opinion is important
- Modification brand should be perceived as better
- Modification brand builds limited edition "legends" that are stable in value
- Modification brand can be perceived as better
- Modification brand should be perceived independently
- Better opinion desired
- more pride
- more excitement
- more
- satisfaction
- Can be perceived as more sporty or more individua
- Perception has to be different

As lined out in chapter 2.3.4, the brand building block of brand judgments is made up of the opinions, beliefs and evaluations that the customers hold have about the brand and is closely connected to brand performance and imagery. The four main brand judgments that Keller determined for the model of customer-based brand equity are brand quality, brand credibility, brand consideration and brand superiority (2008, p. 67).

Regarding the brand quality, as described earlier the customers expect the same quality from the modification brand as they expect from the base brand. Therefore the quality of the base brand has to be seen as the minimum level of quality for the modification brand. Modifications that are of lower quality than the base car would most likely have a negative effect and might even lead to the customers perceiving the modification brand as worsening the quality of a good product.

Regarding the brand credibility, the modification company faces the same challenges as any other company in any other industry. Trustworthiness and likeability are characteristics that any company should aim at having, whereby when it comes to likeability the modification company might benefit from that when they modify cars of a popular brand, their brand might be seen as more interesting and worth spending time with by customers than the actual base brand.

When it comes to brand consideration, a modification brand that is deeply connected to the base brand relies on the brand consideration of the base brand, as first the customer has to consider buying a car of the base brand before considering a modified version. If this consideration exists, the modification brand relies on its own brand performance and imagery in order to be considered. If the modification company is however perceived as independent, it might be a bigger challenge to create brand consideration, as it cannot benefit from the brand consideration of the base brand and might even have to compete with the base brand which would make favorable characteristics of the other brand building blocks even more important.

Regarding superiority this research finds that the modification brands goal should be to expand the properties and the image of the base brand. This means for example that by modifying a car that is already sporty and has a high performance into an even sportier car with better performance, the modification brand could be perceived as superior to the base brand. The main focus regarding superiority should however be put on other modification brands, as these are the direct competitors. Hereby however the modification company has to rely on its unique capabilities and characteristics, as when competing brands offer modified versions of the same base car the foundation for building up on is the same.

"It would be terrible, what also sometimes happens in practice logically if a customer […] would not be a bit more proud, a bit more amazed and a bit more satisfied than with a Porsche. That would be sad."

Rainer Schlumberger

6.2.6 Brand feelings within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified codes:

- Individuality
- Uniqueness
- Intensity
- Extreme
- Emotions
- Trust in the modification brand
- Passion
- Customers eager to experiment
- Luxury cars
- Exclusivity
- More emotional
- Emotions
- More extravagant
- Fancier,
- Showier
- Perceived as more valuable
- More aggressive
- More expressive
- Modification brand amazes more in direct comparison to the base brand
- Selling with feelings
- Car built individually for the customer

- More emotions involved
- Customers are approached more emotional
- Individuality and exclusivity important factors
- Different emotions important

Brand feelings refer to the emotional reactions and responses of the customer to the brand. The six most relevant feelings for customer based brand equity are warmth, fun, excitement, feelings of safety, social approval and self-respect (Keller, 2008, p. 68).

Throughout the interviews it became clear, that when dealing with car modification companies, the emotions of the customer play an important role. All respondents at some point mentioned the involvement of emotions in car modification marketing. The three main feelings that could be identified as being involved were excitement, social approval and self-respect. Excitement, as some modification brand customers have a passion for cars and there is excitement involved in the purchase of the car, as well as that the modified car can create excitement through its features like for example significantly increased acceleration and that the modification brand amazes more in comparison to the base brand. Social approval, as the higher status of the modified car as well as its possible luxury attributes might give the customer the feeling of being looked upon favorable. Self-respect, as when the car is made according to the individual wishes and needs of the customer his or her individual mark is incorporated into the car, which might lead to extended feelings of pride, accomplishment and/or fulfillment.

As it was also lined out before, the functional need fulfillment is of secondary nature when buying a modified car. This means, as the interviews have also shown that emotions are an important factor to build upon when building the brand. The modification brand has to identify the emotions that the base brand evokes and can build upon them. This means for example that when certain features of the base car evoke emotions like excitement the modification brand can emphasize these features with the modification in order to evoke even stronger emotions. In addition to that, if the base car lacks certain emotions, the modification brand can use this to its advantage and create a modified car which evokes additional emotions that will then be associated with the brand. If for example the base car evokes emotions like the feeling of safety and social approval but lacks excitement, the modification company can perform modifications that will evoke this emotion and thereby benefit from all three emotions for its brand building. However the earlier mentioned dependence on the image of the base brand should be kept in mind, as for example trying to add excitement to a limousine that is perceived as luxurious but conservative by modifying it into a sporty car will probably miss its purpose.

"I would describe Manhart as an extreme modification company which makes BMWs even faster and gives them more emotions."

Ansgar vom Orde

6.2.7 Brand resonance within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified codes:

- low customer loyalty
- trust in the modification brand
- affinity for the modification brand
- keen customer
- Community and engagement
- customers want logo for identification
- Low loyalty towards modification brand
- Customers see themselves different than base brand drivers, but still associate with them
- no intention to interfere with the base brand connection of the customer
- Long time loyal customers exist

As described in chapter 2.3.6, the brand building block of brand resonance refers to the relationship and level of identification of the customer with the brand. It is divided into behavioral loyalty, attitudinal attachment, sense of community and active engagement. Although not all respondents agreed on it, it became clear with the interviews that under certain circumstances it is possible for the modification brand to create behavioral loyalty. This would mean that the customer will make a repeat purchase and buy a modified car or modification of the brand again (Ehrenberg, 2000). The possibility to create a share of category requirements shows strongly through the fact that customers even approach modification brands for the modification of a base brand for which the modification brand don't even officially offers modification. Here however also the dependence of the modification brand on the base brand comes into play, as when the customer has no behavioral loyalty towards the base brand, it is unlikely that he or she will purchase a modified car of this base brand. However if the modification brand offers modification for several base brands, this effect might be compensated by the behavioral loyalty towards the modification brand. The creation of this behavioral loyalty however will depend solely on the relationship between the customer and the modification brand and is influenced by for example how satisfied the customer is with the products and to which extent his or her needs are fulfilled.

Attitudinal attachment means that the customer should see the brand as something special and hold it in the highest regards and is created on the one hand through marketing programs and on the other hand through products and services that are more than satisfying for the customer (Keller, 2008, p. 72). Regarding this, it can be said that the modification brand is already seen as something special, as it develops the positive attributes of the base brand further. In addition to that, the modification brand can satisfy needs which are not satisfied by the base brand, and often even modifies the car to the exact wishes of the customer. This means that the modification brand has it easier to exceed the expectations of the customer as it can gain a better understanding of them.

Regarding the sense of community and active engagement, meaning that customers are enthusiastic towards the brand, see it as part of their social identity and engage with other customers (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006, p. 45) this research shows that although the customer might still show behavioral loyalty towards the modification brand, there is also a strong sense of belonging to the group of base car drivers. Some respondents

even mentioned that they do not wish to interfere with the belonging of the customer to the group of base brand drivers. This means on the one hand that the modification brand can benefit from the sense of community and active engagement that the base brand creates, as it might lead the customer to a repeat purchase of a modified car based on this brand. On the other hand, modification brand customers that are active within the base brand community, loyal to the modification brand and actively engage within the base brand community might be perceived as having a higher position within this community and make the possession of a product from the modification brand desirable for other base brand customers or even recommend the modification brand to others. Therefore the modification brand should try to create loyal customers, but still encourage a sense of community and active engagement with the base brand.

"In social media, in the groups of infinity customers you will also find the customers of Larte Design. They feel as Infinity drivers and as part of the group of Infinity drivers, but they never speak about driving Infinity, they speak about driving Larte Design and that they have the best cars in this group."

Olga Sergacheva

6.2.8 Luxury branding within the brand building model for car modification companies

Identified Codes:

- High quality
- Tradition
- Refining/ennobling
- Luxury Cars
- Building up on image of the base brand
- Exclusivity
- More extravagant
- Fancier
- Showier
- Perceived as more valuable
- More luxurious,
- Individual luxury modifications possible
- Expand the frame of the base car in luxury terms
- Increased luxury comes with the modification brand
- To a certain extent more luxurious
- More expensive could be defined as more luxurious
- Modifications a kind of luxury
- Luxury made more sporty and elegant
- Interior modifications on Mini cars perceived as more luxurious
- Germany as country of origin a crucial advantage
- More pride
- Individuality and exclusivity important factors
- Modification brand builds limited edition "legends" that are stable in value
- Cars as status symbols

As lined out in chapter 2.4, no concrete definition of luxury and luxury branding exists (Berry, 1994). In addition to that, it was also mentioned by some respondents that

luxury regarding car modification is open to interpretation. However it still became clear that car modification companies touch upon the topic of luxury. Therefore this aspect should be integrated into the brand building model. The relevant factors for luxury branding that have been identified within this thesis are (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012):

- Two different strategic approaches, history approach based on high quality products and the history and heritage of the brand, and the storytelling approach, inventing a history and heritage and subliminally telling it.
- Luxury brands should aim at creating a brand dream, meaning that there should be a difference between the people who are aware of the brand and those who can actually afford it.
- A luxury brand should have access products, meaning offering products that aim at creating new customers or attract people who only occasionally purchase luxury products.
- Creating icons, like the founder of the brand or iconic products
- Using the country of origin in order to increase the perceived value
- Using a brand logo for marking and creating associations

Regarding the different strategic approaches, the history approach is only applicable if the company has existed long enough to actually have a history to look upon, which can however be the case for a car modification company as the interviews have shown. For younger modification companies it however seems not advisable to take the storytelling approach, as due to the earlier described fact that the purchase of a modified car is a high involvement purchase the customer will most likely notice that the subliminally told story of the brand is not true. This would then eventually have a negative impact on the brand.

Therefore it can be said that a car modification company that has a history and heritage can include this into the brand imagery and benefit from it.

"Through our history and the earlier extraordinary cars, like the old avalanche and the old mirage, we call ourselves builder of legends."

Rainer Schlumberger

When it comes to creating a brand dream, this partly collides with the fact that the interviewed car modification companies mentioned limited budgets and therefore having to avoid spread losses. Therefore logic implies that only those who can afford the brand should be targeted. However, there are still possibilities to create a brand dream. Several respondents mentioned that the modification brand is active within social media, which provides an opportunity to reach people who could be interested in the brand but are not able to afford it. In addition to that, the visible application of logos and labels is also an opportunity to promote the brand that causes no additional costs, but still reaches people who can't afford the brand. Rainer Schlumberger for example mentioned that GEMBALLA label stickers are given to customers for free, so that when their car draws attention the brand is visible. In addition to that he mentioned car spotters, people who are interested in special cars and take pictures and videos of them and share them on the internet. If on these pictures and videos the modification brand is clearly visible, it helps to build the brand dream. This brand dream should be considered for the brand building block salience and be added to the branding objectives of the first stage.

Regarding access products, the modification company can offer single modification parts, like for example rims, modifications of single features like for example engine performance and modifications for cars of the base brand that can be considered base cars. This factor can be worked into the brand building block brand performance.

"We still do extreme things, but we also became a bit more grounded by offering modifications for smaller cars since 1-2 years. Therefore we work on that the average person who doesn't drive a M3 or M5 comes to us with for example a 116d."

Ansgar vom Orde

Regarding the creation of icons, the author sees possibilities for creating an icon out of the founder only given when there actually is a founder that could fulfill this function. This is linked to the history approach and should be evaluated in detail before being integrated into the imagery. Regarding iconic products however, it would be possible for a modification brand to build a modified car that has features that can make it an icon. Rainer Schlumberger for example mentioned the GEMBALLA MIG U-1, a unique modification of a Ferrari Enzo which is already seen as a legendary car in the basic version. The GEMBALLA MIG U-1 apparently regularly attracts a lot of attention when being seen on the street. An icon as luxury feature could therefore then be integrated into the brand building block brand imagery, as it can be used to symbolize the values of the brand.

When it comes to the usage of the country of origin as a factor of luxury branding, the interviews have shown that German companies emphasize their origin and see it as beneficial for the perception of the brand not only in terms of luxury but in general. Therefore it can be said that the country of origin is a factor that is not limited to the luxury branding aspects of the customer based brand equity model, but still can be used to emphasize the luxury aspects of the brand if necessary. Before integrating the country of origin into the brand building block brand imagery however, it should be assessed which image the country has within the targeted market.

Regarding the usage of a brand logo, it has been described before that marking its products with a brand logo has several benefits for the modification company. These benefits however are especially important when the modification brand wants to be perceived as a luxury brand, as for example the customers might have a desire to make it visible that their car has been modified by a certain brand. This factor has an impact on the brand salience due to the increasing awareness and brand dream.

6.3 Integrating the brand connection and luxury branding into a brand building model

As lined out in the previous chapters, existing brand building models and theories are not applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation, as they either focus on building a brand that stands alone and/or is connected to one single company (see for example Urde 2003, p. 1024), or, in case they deal with more than one brand being present in a product have differing prerequisites, such as for example the branded product being a new product (see for example Washburn et. al. 2004). In order to modify the existing model of customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993) and make it applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation and thereby fill the existing research gap, the interviews in this study gave valuable insight. Despite or maybe even due to the different branding strategies which the companies that the respondents represent pursue, the author was able to derive from the interviews how the model would need to be adjusted in order to make applicable to modification companies. Subsequently, the adjusted model of customer-based brand equity will be explained.

6.3.1 Assessing the base brand or brands

As lined out in the theoretical framework, Washburn et. al. (2004, p. 504) discovered that when dealing with brand alliances, regardless of the brand equity of the individual brands, pairing brands with each other will increase customer-based brand equity. This could imply that when it comes to modification brands, the modification brands brand equity will automatically benefit from the connection to the base brand, irrelevant whether its brand equity is high or low. The study however suggests otherwise. While high brand equity of the base brand will be beneficial for the modification brand, low or lowering brand equity of the base brand will negatively affect the modification brand.

In order to develop a strong modification brand, it is therefore recommendable that as a first step the base brand(s) for which the modification will be offered gets assessed. As Sirianni et. al. (2013) have pointed out, the different brand building blocks of the customer-based brand equity model can be used in order to assess a brand, therefore it it recommendable that they will be used as a guideline for an examination of the base brand. With this analysis of the individual brand building blocks of the base brand(s), the modification company will be enabled to:

1. Identify strong and favorable aspects of the base brand(s) that can be built upon
2. Identify strong and favorable aspects of the base brand that the modification brand can emphasize and/or expand
3. Identify weaknesses of the base brand that can be eliminated with the offering of the modification brand

The assessment of each brand building block can be done by identifying relevant aspects of the base brand. These aspects are as follows:

Brand salience: As brand salience within the model of customer-based brand equity is equated with brand awareness (Keller 2008, p. 60) it has to be identified whether the base brand has enough brand awareness so that the modification brand can benefit from it. In addition to that, it should be examined which methods the base brand uses in order to create brand awareness and if the modification brand can/should use the same methods or if other or additional methods would be advisable. As brand salience also

describes to which extent customers see the brand as able to satisfy their needs (ibidem) it should be tried to find out, whether there are certain relevant needs of customers which the base brand does not fulfill but that the modification brand could. By doing so, customers whose needs were not (fully) satisfied by the base brand can be attracted.

Brand performance: Within the customer-based brand equity model, brand performance describes how the branded product meets the functional needs of the customer (Keller 2008, p. 64). Therefore the product characteristics and the overall product quality of the base brand's product(s) have to be assessed. It should be examined which of the characteristics and features of the product(s) can be modified and in which way that should be done. It should especially be paid attention to if there are certain product characteristics which don not or do not fully satisfy customers, so that an offered modification can satisfy these needs. This satisfying of needs also relates back to brand salience and is an indicator for the interrelatedness of the brand building blocks as pointed out by Konecnik & Gartner (2007). As the interviews have also shown, the quality level of the base must be achieved by the modification brand in any case in order to satisfy customers, therefore this aspect should be examined thoroughly.

Brand imagery: Brand imagery refers to sensory or perceptual representations of memories, ideas and feelings which the brand awakens with customers (Yuille and Catchpole 1977). As according to Keller (2008, p. 65) within the model of customer-based brand equity there are four main intangible brand imagery associations, these four should be taken into consideration when assessing the base brand.

Regarding user profiles, it should be examined who the actual users of the base brand are and if the modification brand can target the same users. In addition to that, it should be examined if and how the modification brand can create an idealized user of the modification brand that is perceived as superior to the actual user of the base brand.

Regarding usage situations, it should be assessed in what the actual users of the base brand use it for. Subsequently, it can be examined whether there are usage situations for which the base brand product is not suitable, but for which it can be made suitable by the modification brand. These possible unsatisfied needs also refer back to the brand building blocks brand performance and brand salience, showing up the interrelatedness of the individual brand building blocks (Konecnik & Gartner 2007).

Regarding the personality and values, it should be clearly assessed what these are in relation to the base brand, so that on the one hand the modification company can try to adapt those and build upon them, but on the other hand also to avoid creating a brand that has personality and values which are in contrast to those of the base brand.

Regarding history, heritage and experiences, it should be examined which associations customers have with the base brand so that the modification brand can share, emphasize and built up on them.

Brand judgments: This brand building block refers to the customer's opinions and evaluations of the brand (Keller 2008, p. 67). Any type of judgment of the brand by the customer is possible, but the main ones are brand quality, brand credibility, brand consideration and brand superiority. The customer's judgments of the base brand should be taken into account, as the modification brand needs to build up on them, can use them to identify if there are certain factors which it can expand or improve. Also, the perceived quality of the base brand defines the minimum quality which the

modification brand has to achieve. Regarding brand superiority, on the one hand it should be assessed if the base brand possesses brand superiority and how it achieves it in order to be able to build up on it. In addition to that, it is important to see how the modification brand can achieve brand superiority over the base brand or at least be perceived as equal. If customers perceive the modification brand as inferior to the base brand, they will most likely not consider it.

Brand feelings: These describe the customer's emotional reactions and responses to the brand (Keller 2008, p. 68). It should be assessed what emotions the base brand evokes with customers in order to see which of these emotions the modification company can and should emphasize with its own brand. In addition to that, unsatisfied needs come into play again, as the modification brand can attempt to evoke emotions which the base brand can't. As for example mentioned in the interviews, if the base brand is seen as exciting, the modification brand can try to add excitement.

Brand resonance: Describes the relationship and the level of identification of the customer with the brand (Keller 2008, p.72). Regarding this brand building block, it should be assessed if customers are loyal and attached to the base brand. This would mean that they make repeat purchases of the base brands product(s) (see for example Ehrenberg, 2000) and actively engage within a brand community. Based on this, it can be tried to determine how the modification brand can create favorable brand resonance without competing with the brand resonance of the base brand. In addition to that it can be examined how the modification brand could benefit from customers that are active within the base brand community. As it became clear in the interviews, some modification brand customers see themselves as consumers of the base brand, but still emphasize that they have a modified version of the base brands product when communicating with base brand users.

The previously outlined process is summarized as a catalogue of questions in the following table.

Brand building block	Aspects of the base brand that have to be identified	Questions that should be answered
Salience	Brand awareness Methods of brand awareness creation Unsatisfied needs Modification brand logos	Does the base brand have enough brand awareness so that the modification brand can benefit from it? Which methods does the base brand use in order to create brand awareness, can the modification brand use the same methods, are other or additional methods necessary/advisable? Are there needs which the base brand doesn't fulfill that the modification brand can fulfill?
Performance	Product characteristics and features Overall product quality	Which characteristics and features of the base brands products can be modified and in which way should they be modified? Are there characteristics and features which don't fully satisfy the customer? Are there characteristics and features that are seen favorable that can be built upon and/or expanded? What level of quality does the base brand have that the modification brand must achieve in any case?
Imagery	Actual and idealized users Usage situations Personality and values History, heritage and experiences	Who are the actual users of the base brand and what do they use the base brand for? Can the same users be targeted with the modification brand? Are there usage situations for which the base brand is not usable that it can be made usable for by the modification brand? How can an idealized user of the modification brand can be created that is perceived as superior to the actual user of the base brand? What history, heritage and experiences exist? Does or can the modification brand share these and / or emphasize and build upon them?

Brand building block	Aspects of the base brand that have to be identified	Questions that should be answered
Judgments	Quality	What is the level of quality that the base brand has set as a minimum? Does the base brand have enough brand consideration? Is the base brand perceived as equal to the modification brand and can that lead to a lack of consideration for the modification brand? How can the modification brand achieve to be perceives as superior to the base brand? Are there competing modification brands with the same base brand over which superiority needs to be achieved?
Feelings	Feelings towards the base brand	What emotions does the base brand evoke? Are there emotions that the base brand evokes which have a limiting influence on the brand feelings of the modification brand? Which of these emotions can and should be emphasized by the modification brand? Which emotions does the base brand not evoke that the modification brand can evoke? Should the modification brand be more emotional than the base brand or less?
Resonance	Loyalty towards the base brand Attitudinal attachment towards the base brand Sense of community and active engagement with the base brand	Are the customers loyal and attached to the base brand, and actively engage within its community? How can the modification brand create favorable brand resonance without competing with the brand resonance of the base brand? How can the modification brand benefit from modification brand customers that are active within the base brand community?

Table 5: Questions for assessing the base brand

6.3.2 Building the customer based brand equity model of the modification brand

Once the base brand has been assessed according to its individual brand building blocks, the modification company can start building up its own brand according to the customer-based brand equity model. This will be done according to the different stages of brand development as lined out by Keller (2008, p. 60). However, for every brand building block of course the previous assessment of the individual brand building blocks of the base brand have to be taken into consideration. For the empirical context of car modification companies, the special factor of luxury branding also has to be taken into account and incorporated when building up the brand. Within this study, the author identified that aspects of luxury branding touch upon three brand building blocks, namely brand salience, brand performance and brand imagery.

Brand salience: The brand building block brand salience itself and the associated stage of brand development has the objective of creating brand awareness (Keller 2008, p. 60), which is usually done in a way so that it will most likely reach potential customers and reduce spreading losses (see for example Miller & Berry, 1998). However when integrating luxury branding into it, there is a requirement for the creation a brand dream. This means that brand awareness also has to be created among those who can not afford it and are therefore no potential customers (Kapferer & Bastien 2009, p. 127). In addition to that, the modification brands own logo has to be considered. This is due to the fact that in general a brand logo is essential in order to create brand awareness and equity (Grinsven & Das, 2014). At the same time the brand logo fulfills important functions within luxury branding, by for example enabling the customer to reflect or gain a certain social status (see for example Chevalier & Mazzalovo 2012, p. 104 and Nelissen and Meijers 2011). Therefore it should be assessed whether the modification brand has its own logo that can replace the base brand logo or be added to it. Furthermore it should be assessed whether the modification brand logo is able to fulfill the functions of a logo of a luxury brand. However, as the interviews have shown, there might even be a legal requirement to replace the base brand logo with the modification brand logo.

Brand performance: Besides describing how the branded product meets the customer's functional needs, the price is also a relevant factor regarding brand performance (Keller 2008, p. 64). While luxury branding is commonly associated with a raised price level, Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p.132) have pointed out that luxury brands also should offer access products, meaning products that are lower priced than the products the brand regularly offers. These products fulfill the main function of attracting new customers who will try out the brand by purchasing access products and at a later stage purchase the more expensive regular products and become a loyal customer. Therefore it needs to be assessed, which products/modifications can be offered under the modification brand that can fulfill the function of an access product.

Brand imagery: As brand imagery refers to sensory or perceptual representations of memories, ideas and feelings and what potential customers abstractly think about the brand (Yuille & Catchpole 1977; Keller 2008, p.65), it should be assessed how imagery associations that support a luxury brand image can be created among (potential) customers. Regarding this in relation to luxury branding, Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p.127) line out 2 possible approaches:

The history and European approach, which refers to offering a product with the highest quality while empathizes the history and heritage of the brand as well as of the founder

of the brand and his or her "spiritual legacy". This means that it needs to be assessed whether the modification brand has a history and heritage that can be beneficial for the luxury branding when being incorporated into the brand imagery and if there is a person in the modification company's history that could fulfill the function of an icon.

The storytelling and American approach describes inventing a history and heritage which get subliminally communicated through the brand name and experiences with the brand such as for a special store experience. If the modification brand should therefore lack history and heritage, it can be compensated by creating an invented history and heritage as long as these are communicated subliminally and in line with the other brand building blocks.

For both approaches, it should also be assessed whether the modification company has or can create a specially modified product which can be used as an icon that symbolizes the values of the modification brand (see Kapferer & Bastien 2009, p. 132).

As history, heritage and experiences within the brand building block of brand imagery can also relate to the brands country of origin (Keller 2008, p.65) and Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p.75) point out that the country of origin can be beneficial for luxury branding, it should be assessed which image the country of origin of the modification brand has and if this should be incorporated into the branding. As the interviews have for example shown, German car modification brands see their country of origin as beneficial for their brand.

The previously outlined assessment/brand building process is summarized as a catalogue of questions in the following table.

Brand building block	Aspects of luxury branding that have to be identified	Questions that should be answered
Salience	Brand dream Modification brand logos and labels	How can the modification brand create brand awareness among those who can't afford it with minimal effort? Does the modification brand have own logos and labels that can be applied to the modifications in order to create brand awareness? Do these logos and labels fulfill the functions that luxury brand logos or labels should fulfill? What has to be done in order to make the modification brand customers want to have the modification brands logos and labels on the modification?

Brand building block	Aspects of luxury branding that have to be identified	Questions that should be answered
Performance	Access products	Which modifications and modification parts can the modification brand offer that can act as access products?
Imagery	History and heritage Icons Country of origin	Does the modification brand have a history and heritage that can be beneficial when incorporated into the brand imagery? Is there a person in the modification company's history that can fulfill the function of an icon? Can the modification brand create a modification that can act as an iconic product? Can the modification brands country of origin have a positive impact on the perception as a luxury brand?

Table 6: Questions for assessing luxury branding

6.4 Revision of the customer based brand equity model

As the previous analysis has shown, the model of customer-based brand equity can be adjusted to the special brand constellation modification brand – base brand. In order to build up customer-based brand equity for the modification brand, in a first step the individual brand building blocks of the base brand should be analyzed regarding four main criteria:

- Aspects that can be built upon, emphasized and expanded
- Aspects that can be added
- Weaknesses that can be eliminated

In addition to this adjustability to an uncommon brand constellation, the analysis has also shown that special branding factors, like in the empirical context of this thesis luxury branding can be integrated into the adjusted model. This can be done by identifying relevant aspects of this special branding factor and integrating them into the brand building blocks of customer-based brand equity on which they have an impact. In order to present the adjusted model graphically and to adjust the graphic model according to the critical remarks lined out in chapter 3.2, the author will present a revised graphical model which can be seen in figure 4.
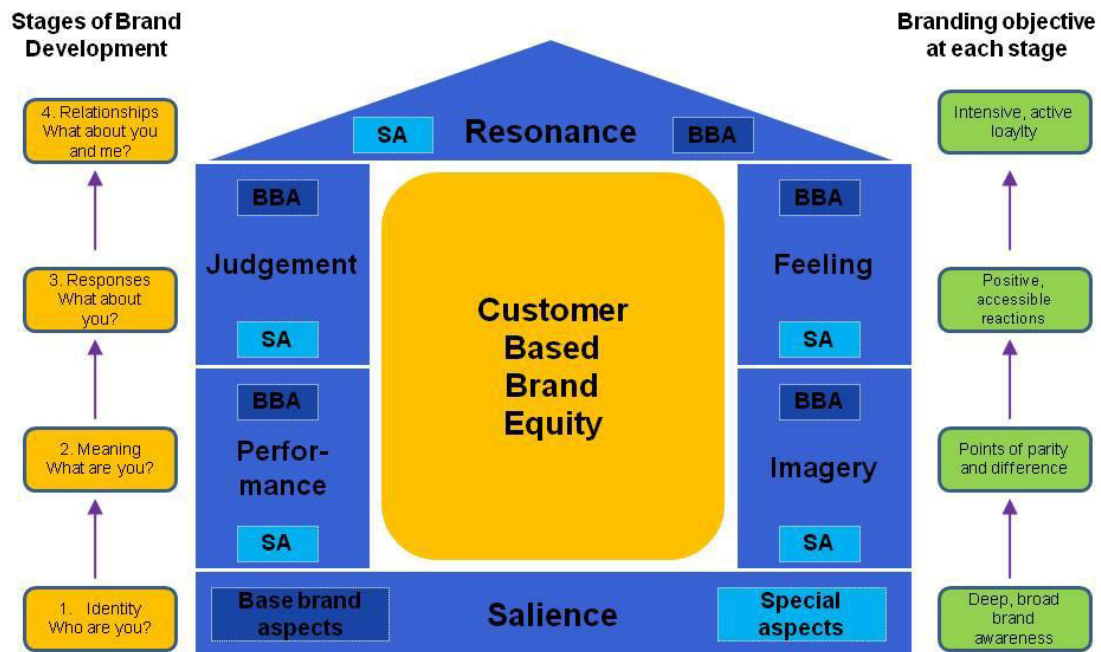
Figure 4: Revised graphical model of customer based brand equity, adapted from Keller (2008), p.60

The revised graphical model first of all depicts customer based brand equity not as a pyramid, but as a house. For this house, all six brand building blocks are of equal importance and support each other (cp. Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). Any flawed or even missing brand building block will make the house collapse and leave the customer based brand equity exposed to negative external influences like for example competition. In addition to that, the base brand aspects as well as the special aspects have been incorporated into the single brand building blocks. For the example of the car modification industry the special aspects of luxury branding did not touch upon all brand building blocks, however for the theoretical model special factors should be present in all brand building blocks, as within a different industry other special factors, which touch upon other brand building blocks might be relevant.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the author will conclude the research and clarify and present the theoretical and practical contributions of this research. In addition to that, the limitations of this study will be clarified and recommendations for further research given.

The underlying research problem and knowledge gap for this thesis were that for the empirical context of brand building for car modification companies, which is as the study has also shown a very competitive market, existing brand building models were not directly applicable. Due to the mentioned high competition, a possessing strong brand is however recommendable for companies within this market.

Derived from this knowledge gap and research problem were the two research questions "How can an existing brand building model be modified to make it applicable to the modification brand – base brand constellation?" and "How can a special factor of brand building theory be integrated into this adjusted model?". This thesis was able to answer both these research questions and to present an adjusted model. By assessing the base brand by means of the individual brand building block of the customer-based brand equity model, relevant factors of the base brand that need to be considered and integrated into the modification brand can be identified. In addition to that, a special branding factor can also be integrated into this adjusted model. By assessing relevant aspects of this branding factor and examining on which brand building blocky they touch upon, the special factor was worked into the adjusted model, thereby making it applicable to the brand constellation modification brand – base brand within the empirical context of car modification brands.

7.1 Theoretical contribution

Within this thesis, an existing knowledge and research gap, namely the fact that existing brand building models are not directly applicable to the brand constellation of modification brand – base brand was discovered. By adjusting the model of consumer-based brand equity, it was made applicable to this mentioned unconventional brand constellation. In addition to that, the special branding factor luxury branding was incorporated in order to make the adjusted model applicable to the unresearched empirical context of car modification companies. Therefore it can be said that the main contribution to theory and research within the field of branding of this thesis is the identification and filling of the mentioned existing research gap. The developed adjusted brand building model is however not limited to the empirical context of car modification companies and the special branding factor luxury branding. It can be transferred and applied to different empirical contexts with similar brand constellations and different special branding factors that need to be incorporated. In addition to that, with the previously mentioned contribution it has demonstrated that a theoretical model originating in 1993 is still adjustable to and applicable on current and even unusual empirical contexts. Furthermore, it has explored and given an overview of a field that has not been touched upon properly by research before and revealed it as an interesting empirical context for further exploration and theory building.

7.2 Practical contribution

This underlying thesis has on the one hand given an exploratory overview of the market of car modification companies regarding the different brands that are present on it, their country of origin and the brands for which they offer modifications. This overview is a useful starting point for practitioners who want to have a condensed summary of the market for example in order to assess possible competition. In addition to that, the revised model of customer based brand equity can give managerial implications for the brand building of car modification companies, but due to its theoretical nature also for modification companies outside of the car industry.

7.3 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the fact that within the given frame of the empirical data collection only the supplier side, but nor the customer side of the examined industry was available for data collection. Therefore the results are very much influenced by how the supplier side perceives the perception of the customer side and do not reflect the actual perceptions of the customers. In addition to that, although six companies that were willing to participate in the study could be found, a higher number of participants would have made it possible to make more conclusive statements, as the companies within the car modification industry are very heterogeneous. Furthermore, it would have been beneficial to be able to interview those modification brands that offer modifications for different base brands under a sub brand regarding their reasons for offering modifications for different base brands under different modification brands. Five out of the six respondents were representing brands that originate from Germany, for a conclusive representation of the international car modification market within this thesis it would however been beneficial to be able to interview more brands from different countries. As stated before, due to the lack of reliable literature and also possible changes that might have occurred during the time in which this thesis was created, the given overview of the car modification market can also not be seen as conclusive.

7.4 Implications for future research

As this thesis has explored a field that has not been getting a lot of attention by research, there are several implications for future research. The connected modification brands and the base brands that were examined within this thesis were legally and economically independent, however future research could examine the applicability of the revised model on co-branding or brand extensions. This is for example relevant as several respondents mentioned the growing competition for the modification industry coming from the base brands. As this thesis has among other things examined how the base brand can have an impact on the modification brand, it would be an interesting topic for future research to assess if and in which way the modification brand has an impact on the base brand and if this is beneficial for the base brand. In addition to that, future research could examine the customer side of the car modification industry, for example in order to gain a better understanding of the brand perception and the motivations for purchasing modified products. Furthermore, future research could assess whether modification brands exist in other industries than the car industry, if the theoretical frameworks of modification brands in these different industries are the same, overlapping or even different. Apart from that, future research could attempt to identify

if there are industries in which no modification brands exist, but in which the establishment of a modification brand would make sense.

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Appendix

Appendix A: First approach Email in English

Dear Sir/Madam,

For my masters thesis within the subject of marketing at the Umeå School of Business and Economics (Sweden) I am researching brand building of car modification companies. The purpose of the thesis is to develop a theoretical model that incorporates relevant factors such as luxury brand building and the connection with the brand of the base car.

I am interviewing relevant persons with expertise in this field. As [Company name] is an established company within this field, the opportunity for a brief phone or Skype interview with an employee of your company would be highly interesting for me.

The interview will not touch upon sensitive internal topics and can be done anonymously if desired.

Please let me know if an employee of your company would find the time for an interview between the 1st and 17th of April.

Best regards

Sven Adrian

Appendix B: First approach Email in German

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit im Fach Marketing an der Umeå School of Business and Economics (Schweden) beschäftige ich mich mit der Markenbildung von Automobilveredelern.

Ziel der Arbeit soll es sein, ein theoretisches Modell zu entwickeln welches relevante Aspekte wie z.B. Luxusmarkenbildung und den Zusammenhang mit der Marke der Basisfahrzeuge berücksichtigt.

Für den empirischen Teil der Arbeit würde ich gerne Personen interviewen, die über fundiertes Fachwissen in der Vermarktung von Fahrzeugmodifikationen verfügen. Dementsprechend wäre die Möglichkeit mit einem Mitarbeiter der Firma [Commpany Name] ein kurzes Gespräch (max. 30 Minuten) zu führen für mich von großem Interesse.

Es würde mich sehr freuen, wenn ein Mitarbeiter Ihres Hauses zwischen dem 01. und 17. April Zeit für ein Interview finden würde.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Sven Adrian

Appendix C: German interview questions for Mr. Albert

1. Bitte stellen sie sich kurz vor und gehen auf ihre Erfahrungen innerhalb der Tuningbranche ein.

2. Sind ihrer Meinung nach Tuningmarken unabhängig von der Marke der Basisfahrzeuge oder besteht eine enge Verbindung? (Unabhängig nicht im rechtlichen oder wirtschaftlichen Zusammenhang, sondern im Bezug darauf wie die Marke wahrgenommen wird.)

3. Ist es vorteilhaft für die Markenbildung einer Tuningmarke wenn diese sich nur auf eine Basismarke konzentriert?

4. Haben Tuningmarken eine andere Zielgruppe als die Marken der Basisfahrzeuge oder ist die Zielgruppe lediglich ein Teilsegment der Zielgruppe der Basismarken? Macht es ihrer Meinung nach Sinn auf ein anderes Kundensegment als die Basismarke abzuzielen?

5. Sollten ihrer Meinung nach Tuningfahrzeuge die auf unterschiedlichen Basismarken basieren unterschiedlich vermarktet werden / sind die Kunden je nach Basismarke unterschiedlich?

6. Hat die Marke der Basisfahrzeuge eine positiven Einfluss auf die Tuningmarke / wirken sich negative Aspekte der Basismarke (z.B. Imageprobleme) auch auf die Tuningmarke aus?

7. Welche Unterschiede zwischen der Basismarke und der Tuningmarke existieren / Gibt es generelle Unterschiede oder sind diese eher spezifisch?

8. Macht es ihrer Meinung nach Sinn das eigene Markenzeichen auf dem Tuningfahrzeug anzubringen, z.B. neben dem Basismarkenzeichen? Macht es ihrer Meinung nach vielleicht mehr Sinn das Originallogo komplett durch das Tuningmarkenzeichen zu ersetzen?

9. Wird ein getuntes Fahrzeug im Vergleich zum Basisfahrzeug als luxuriöser wahrgenommen?

10. Hat das Image von Deutschland einen positiven Einfluss auf das Image deutscher

Tuningmarken?

11. Erwarten die Kunden von Tuningmarken dieselbe oder bessere Qualität als von der

Basismarke / erwarten die Kunden der Tuningmarke dass diese bestimmte Dinge besser

macht?

12. Haben die Tuningfirmenkunden eine andere Meinung über die Tuningmarke als über die Basismarke?

13. Erweckt eine Tuningmarke andere Gefühle bei den Kunden als die Basismarke?

14. Fühlen die Kunden eine stärkere Verbundenheit mit der Tuningmarke als mit der Basismarke / sollte dies ein Ziel der Tuningmarke sein?

15. Wie kann eine Tuningmarke Markenbekanntheit/ brand awareness erreichen? Sind die Methoden/Maßnahmen dieselben wie die der Basismarke?

16. Wie sehen sie generell die Zukunft der Tuningbranche, in Bezug auf die emerging markets und in Bezug auf die Konkurrenzentwicklung?