Determinants of Consumers' Fast Food Hamburger Restaurant Choice

Implications for Brand Positioning

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the competitive Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market where pure product differentiation is hard to achieve. Based on this argument we investigate the role of brand positioning as an alternative to product differentiation. A survey based research method was used to reveal the most important determinants of consumers' restaurant choice. The restaurants included are Burger King, Max and McDonald's. The main study examines the ten most relevant variables that were selected through a pre-study. In addition each restaurant was ranked with respect to these specific variables. The results reveal that the most successful brands are distinctly positioned based on the important variables stated by the consumers. These findings have implications for brands present on the Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market.

CONCLUSION

This paper has noted the difficulty to be successful on the Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market due to high competition, which has in turn led to a situation where pure product differentiation is hard to achieve. Applying marketing theory to this situation generates reasons to investigate the role of differentiation through brand positioning on this market. This issue is quantitatively approached with the following purpose: (1) What are the determinants of Swedish city dwellers' choice of fast food hamburger restaurant? (2) What do the determinants imply regarding brand positioning on this market?

The study is conducted in the city of Gothenburg and includes the brands Burger King, Max and McDonald's. The study is carried out in two parts, the first is a pre-study that allows respondents to choose among a list of variables and pick the factors that they believe most affect the choice of restaurant. The top variables from the pre-study are then used in a main study where respondents rank the importance of each variable. In addition, the main study allows the respondents to rank the three brands with respect to each variable. The contributions of the paper are (1) that we, by including a pre-study, allow for a more relevant selection of variables for measuring the choice determinants in a consumer view. This method is not found in the earlier studies that we have found. (2) This study targets Swedish city dwellers specifically. Although earlier papers on this subject have been found, none of them targets this specific market/consumer group.

The results of the study reveal a ranked list of the 10 most important factors that affect consumers' choice of restaurant. They also reveal the relative performance of each brand regarding each factor. The findings are consistent with existing marketing theory and indicate that brand positions on this market should (1) be distinct and clear, and, (2) that they should be connected to consumers' buying motifs. The 3 most important variables found are "Taste", "Quality" and "Cleanliness" (see the results section for the complete list). A comparison between the top variables from this study with earlier studies that are conducted elsewhere, confirms the importance of some variables, but also reveals differences. This implies that every specific market- and/or consumer group should be separately examined in order to reveal the correct associated choice determinants. Also highlighted is the fact that, in line with marketing theory, companies with a smaller market share need to invest more than larger companies in marketing activities aimed at maintaining a brand position (in terms of percentage of sales).

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1. INTRODUCTION
This chapter presents the background, purpose and contributions of the paper.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The fast food industry is characterized by a high growth rate that leads to a very competitive market. A driving factor to the growth rate is that a larger share of meals is eaten outside the home. According to Nordic Service Partners (2015) the hamburger restaurants are one of the most successful parts of the QSR industry (Quick Service Restaurants).

To succeed on the Swedish fast food market one has to have a deep understanding of consumers' attitudes and behavior. The market is complex and there are many factors that affect how the market develops. In addition to what companies can control, the general society and how it evolves also plays a major role. Food, as a phenomenon, is under constant progress and food trends are generally discussed topics. Attitudes change, for example when it comes to environment and sustainability, which puts pressure on the participants of the restaurant market. To survive on the market you have to be highly differentiated and give the consumers incentives to choose a particular fast food restaurant. When product differences are of relative small importance, the brand association takes a larger share of the differentiation process (Mårtenson 2009). The main problem this paper tackles is, in other words, the difficulty to be successful on a highly competitive market when pure product differentiation has played out its part (Mårtenson 2009). The paper focuses on this particular problem in the Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market. The previous reasoning leads to how branding and positioning could affect the outcome when being present in this industry.

The Swedish fast food market is a large market that turned over 22,6 billion SEK in 2014. In this market the hamburger restaurants are by far the largest part of the market with 38,9% of the total market (in terms of turnover). The three main hamburger restaurants, McDonalds, Max and Burger King, make up for almost 94% of this market share (McDonalds = 57%, Max = 23% and Burger King = 14%). This means that the market is dominated by these large companies and the smaller restaurants are more or less local companies. Worth mentioning is that there are many indirect competitors, for example Subway, but this is something that is excluded in this paper (Delfi Marknadspartner 2015).

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to reveal what determines Swedish large city consumers' choice of fast food hamburger restaurant based on information provided by the consumers themselves. Further, based on consumer attitudes we aim to detect implications for brand positioning within this market.

1.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

While many earlier studies - see for example Kara et al. (1997) and Knutson (2000) - have focused on measuring consumer preferences regarding factors that are automatically implied by the fast food concept, so called hygiene factors, and measuring how different fast food restaurants perform with respect to these factors, this paper includes additional factors that are of importance when consumers choose fast food restaurants. Hygiene factors are for example aspects of the price and service speed. Additional factors that we add in this study are for example the importance of whether the product is locally cultivated, or whether the company is perceived trustworthy. Put shortly, the contributions of this paper are (1) that we incorporate a broader perspective when examining consumers' choice of fast food hamburger restaurant, and (2) that we study the specific market and consumer group: Swedish fast food hamburger consumers in Swedish large cities.

1.4 THE CONTENT OF THE PAPER

After the introduction we will provide a few clarifications for better understanding of the paper. The following section gives a brief view of the theories that helped shape our perception of the subject as well as earlier studies with similar approaches that we will use to contrast our results. The theories are followed by the method, including both empirical- and analysis method, where we explain in detail what, why and how we have collected and analyzed our data. The results will be presented next, both embedded in the text and in greater detail in associated Annexes. Then we go on and analyze the results and compare them with marketing theories and previous papers' results. We will then conclude the paper with a discussion involving implications and proposals for future research. A conclusion sums up the paper.

2. CLARIFICATIONS
This chapter presents the demarcations, assumptions and important concepts.

2.1 DEMARCATIONS

This study is limited to the three largest fast food hamburger restaurants present in the Swedish fast food market: McDonalds, Burger King and Max. Therefore, throughout the study, these are the restaurants/brands that are being addressed whenever phrases such as "fast food hamburger restaurants", "hamburger restaurants" or just "restaurants" are used. The consequence of this demarcation is that the results will be mostly relevant for these, and other similar restaurants, in the Swedish market. Moreover, since the study targets consumers in Swedish large cities, the results about consumer- attitudes and behavior will only represent such consumers.

2.2 ASSUMPTIONS

Whether or not attitude drives behavior, or vice versa, is not obvious and is in fact an ongoing academic discussion (Evans et al. 2006). This is important to mention since an underlying assumption for the usefulness of the results of this study, is that one can change consumer behavior by affecting her attitudes. Therefore the whole logic of this study relies on that attitudes drive behavior. Another assumption that is needed in order for the results of our study to be relevant is the following. Considering the design of this study, it is desirable that the target restaurants are as similar as possible. We assume that the three restaurants in question have a product range that is similar enough for us to be able to isolate the effects of marketing and brand positioning. While this assumption is necessary, it also explains why we exclude other large actors on the fast food market such as Subway etc. It also explains why we exclude other smaller fast food hamburger producers such as Sibylla. Including these would render the results of the study invalid.

2.3 BRAND POSITION: IMAGE AND IDENTITY

It is important to clarify the distinction between the terms brand image and brand identity, and how they are related to brand positioning. In this study a brand's position is defined as the unique associations to that specific brand. For example, a fast food hamburger restaurant's brand position includes the unique associations to that specific restaurant and not the fact that they sell hamburgers (unless selling hamburgers is unique). This position is in turn referred to as brand identity or brand image. The difference is linked to what perspective one has when using the terms. Brand identity describes, from the company's point of view, the desired perception. The brand image on the other hand roots in the consumer perspective and describes how they perceive a brand. Both terms are often used in the same context and as equals. The reason why is obvious, the terms are equal unless there is an inconsistency between how the company wants its brand to perceived (identity) and how consumers perceive it (image). This way of distinguishing the brand- identity and image is inspired by Mårtenson (2009).

3. THEORY

This chapter presents inspiring theories and earlier studies.

3.1 THEORIES THAT HAVE INSPIRED THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Here we present the theories and models that have helped shape our perception of the subject. It is with them in our minds that we have arrived at the purpose of this study, that is, that the brand is an important part of successfully differentiating the product in question; fast food hamburger restaurants. The overall logic is the following. (1) Differentiation is important in order to be successful in competitive markets and (2) price competition is undesirable. Based on which we arrive at (3): since pure product differentiation is hard to maintain on a market of this kind, non-product differentiation becomes a more realistic strategy of coping with the competition. (4) Finally, differentiation in itself is not enough in order to succeed. The ultimate goal is to change consumers' behavior and increase profits. This is where marketing connects to the story. Marketing, in the sense of a communication tool, is the link between good non-product differentiation and changes in consumer behavior. And although brand positioning is always an important part of a successful marketing strategy, its role becomes augmented when the goal is to communicate a position that does not appear by the physical product itself.

(1) The importance of differentiation - Porter (1996) discusses how, in a strategic point of view, product differentiation is essential to competitive advantage. And as we have discussed, the market in question is in fact subject to high competition. Although his work has a much broader application, there are implications for marketing. For example, Porter's (1996) point about operational effectiveness - performing similar activities as those of the competitors' more effectively - applies to hamburgers; the implication here is that in order to be superior to competitors, hamburger restaurants should aim for production that is efficient enough to decrease the average unit cost of production. However, as Porter (1996) points out, operational effectiveness is easy to imitate. Therefore, in the long run, all competitors should be able to be as effective. He further argues that, based on the previous statement, companies should perform different activities in order to gain competitive advantage, instead of performing similar activities.

(2) The undesirability of price competition - Another source of inspiration to the purpose of this paper is the fact that, in competitive markets, price competition is undesirable in the long run, which again confirms the important role of differentiation through strategic brand positioning. This issue is well described by Porter (2008); pure price competition is harmful in the long run - in the firm's point of view - since it exploits the market producer surplus and transfers the surplus onto consumers. Therefore price competition is harmful to the overall market and its disadvantage affects every market participant. Porter (2008) further discusses other dimensions of competition that are preferable in order to preserve market profitability. He mentions, among other things, competition based on brand image

and other extended product features that help create a price premium, which leads to an increased, instead of exploited, producer surplus.

(3) Non-product differentiation - In the case of the hamburger market, differentiation is hard to maintain at the product level partly since the variety of supply is already very high, but mostly because pure product differentiation is easy to imitate; which is in fact an implicit assumption of competitive markets; that new products will be imitated and confronted by other producers. This leaves the hamburger market with the choice of performing similar activities - selling fast food hamburgers - in a different way (Porter 1996), which is where we investigate the role of brand positioning in non-product differentiation and disregard other strategy aspects that may interfere with the business concept and operations, since it falls outside the scope of this paper.

(4) Marketing, brand positioning and consumer behavior - Once a unique position has been decided for, the company wants to use it to increase profits through either increasing the scale by selling more products, or increasing profit margins by selling products to premium prices. Achieving this means changing consumers' behavior to buying the product more often, or pay premium prices for the same product. Marketing as a communication tool is what bridges the gap between a well differentiated and competitive product and the desired change in consumer behavior (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2013). Put differently, marketing is used to change existing consumer behavior into desired consumer behavior based on the unique benefit(s) provided by the product, through changing consumer attitudes.

It is important to avoid confusion on the following matter. Marketing as a tool to communicate has a very broad application. And based on the idea that a sound marketing strategy requires the desired brand identity to pervade all of the company's activities (Mårtenson 2009), one quickly realizes that it is more suitable to speak in terms of the desired identity itself, rather than different communication activities, when attempting to detect (potentially) successful identities on a specific market. This is the reason why we take the brand positioning perspective when conducting this study.

3.2 EARLIER STUDIES USED TO CONTRAST THE RESULTS OF THE PAPER

Some earlier papers that have purposes similar to ours have been found. These papers have, apart from being sources of inspiration to the method of this study, been used to contrast and compare the results of this study. Since they are not identical to this study, no attempt is made to confirm nor to invalidate this study based on them. However, they are useful as points of reference when interpreting the indications of the results of this study; this role of the earlier papers is important primarily due to the limited number of respondents in this study. Below follows a brief description of some earlier papers.

Knutson (2000) studies American college students with the purpose of finding what determines the students' choice of fast food restaurant and how fast food restaurants are positioned in the college market. This study is not limited to hamburger restaurants as in our case. However, the two internationally known restaurants in our study are also included in this study; Burger King and McDonald's. And since college students still constitute a significant part of the sample of our study, it becomes relevant to compare our results to Knutson (2000). The top five variables driving students' choice of fast food restaurant in Knutson's (2000) study are (1) cleanliness, (2) friendliness, (3) price, (4) speed and (5) consistency in menu items.

Kara et al. (1997) conducted a survey based study about fast food from the customers' viewpoint. The study took place in two important markets, USA and Canada. This paper does not only include hamburger restaurants, but is does include both McDonalds and Burger King. 200 questionnaires were distributed in 6 cities in the USA and Canada. The locations targeted in the study were similar to make sure that the results were comparable. The paper used 11 variables and examined how important these different aspects were for customers when choosing restaurant. These 11 variables are included in our study as well and therefore it is interesting to compare the results. Kara et al. (1997) came to two different conclusions, one for each country. In the USA the top 6 attributes, influencing fast food restaurant preferences, were delivery service, variety, speed of service, quality, cleanliness and friendly staff. In Canada on the other hand, the top 5 were seating capacity, cleanliness, nutritional value, friendly staff and variety.

Luke et al. (1997) did an onsite (at restaurants) study where they wanted to explore what drives customer satisfaction. They asked 300 respondents to be part of the study and the questionnaire involved general questions about different variables and also different restaurants. Five fast food restaurants were included and McDonalds and Burger King were two of them. The variables were rated in terms of their importance with a Likert scale (1=unimportant to 5=most important). The top 5 variables, in ranked order, were food quality, cleanliness, value, price and convenience.

4. METHOD

This chapter illustrates how the study was conducted.

4.1 WHY WE STUDY CONSUMERS

In order to investigate successful brand identities it is more suitable to take the consumer perspective (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh 2013) since everything ultimately depends on the consumers' behavior. This is the reason why we put emphasis on brand image, and study consumer- attitudes and behavior. By studying consumers' perceptions about the brands in question (image) and their attribute attitudes we hope to detect successful potential and existing positions that are valuable points of difference in the consumers' viewpoint. We base the logic of this method, that consumers' criteria for choosing restaurants are important aspects when evaluating a point of difference, on the fact that brand positions need not only be unique but must also be relevant for- and connected to consumers' buying motifs (Mårtenson 2009).

4.2 EMPIRICAL METHOD

To collect data about the hamburger restaurant market we used a quantitative data collection method. When using a quantitative approach there is no requirement for a clear hypothesis, the theory could instead be a less strict indicator about the purpose of the research. There are a few reasons to do quantitative measuring, and the main reason in this paper is to have a tool for measuring differences. We want to find out how different consumer attitudes and brand positions affect the outcome on the hamburger restaurant market. Because of the size of the target population, the data collecting method needed to be able to describe a large market with a restricted sample. This is called generalization and this paper attempts to describe the hamburger restaurant market through a representative sample. A requirement for the quantitative method is that the phenomenon is measurable. The measurement should also be unbound to time, in other words, other researchers must be able to measure the same phenomenon in the future. Our phenomenon, consumer choice of hamburger restaurant, can be measured and the measurements can be reproduced (Bryman & Bell 2013).

4.2.1 WHY WE INCLUDE SO MANY VARIABLES

Once again, note the important distinction that brand identity, which denotes the company's desired perception about the brand, is different from, and not necessarily consistent with, the brand image which denotes the consumers' perception about the brand. This is the reason why we still include basic factors such as price and service speed instead of excluding them. Based on earlier arguments about the imitability of tangible aspects of the product, operational effectiveness and the difficulty to maintain competitively advantageous prices in competitive markets, one might argue that the hygiene factors are not interesting to consider at all. This is because, even if these factors are the source of failure, they can be readily imitated. This is where distinguishing the brand identity and the brand

image comes in handy; whether or not different restaurants, for example, have equal prices, offer equally fast service etc., does not necessarily mean that consumers share this opinion. And since this paper focuses on consumer perceptions and implications for positioning through brand differentiation, we are still interested in measuring consumers' perceptions regarding hygiene factors such as price and service speed, as well as other factors as mentioned before. With this approach we are able to (1) identify relevant points of difference that can be used by restaurant managers to position or reposition the brand and (2) reveal whether or not, or to what extent, the restaurants' current desired brand perceptions are to be considered as valuable points of difference.

4.2.2 PRE-STUDY

In the main questionnaire we wanted to have the most relevant factors that influence consumer choice of hamburger restaurant in the Swedish market. To reveal the most relevant factors, we used a two stage selection method. The first stage consisted of a selection based on earlier studies, analysis of the Swedish hamburger restaurant market and the hamburger restaurant brands. Note that from now on we sometimes refer to these factors as variables.

The first stage was to choose variables for the pre-study. As mentioned earlier, in order to choose potential determinants of consumers' choice of fast food hamburger restaurant, we incorporate hygiene factors such as aspects of price and service speed, as well as additional factors that might affect consumers' choice of restaurant. Our inspiration to the compilation of these hygiene factors is earlier studies with a similar approach (Kara et al. 1997; Knutson 2000) where we simply pick the factors that appear most important based on the results of the studies. When it comes to the additional factors that we believe might affect consumers' choice of restaurant we turn to earlier studies (Choi & Zhao 2010; Lindbom & Medelberg 2008). Furthermore we used the marketing information company Delfi Marknadspartner (Börjesson 2015) to detect current trends and incorporated these trends as variables. We also include variables that reflect the current brand identity that the hamburger restaurants in question communicate on the market. We analyzed McDonald's website (McDonalds 2015) and then confirmed the variables in question by e-mail (Sara 2015). We did the same thing with Burger King (Burger King 2015) and once again confirmed variables by e-mail (Marcks 2015). When it comes to Max we picked the variables we thought reflected their current position and confirmed them by checking their website (Max 2015). All of these variables were compiled (Annex 1) and adjusted for duplicate errors. In addition, variables that were very similar in meanings have been combined.

The second stage of determining the most relevant variables was the pre-study. In the pre-study respondents were provided a range of 36 variables that are potential determinants of the choice of hamburger restaurant. Examples of these factors are price, friendliness, service speed, trustworthiness, atmosphere etc. (Annex 2). The respondents were then

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asked to choose twelve factors that were, in their opinion, the most important when choosing hamburger restaurant. There was no requirement to rank the variables. The assignment only stated to choose the twelve most important personal determinants. Moreover they were asked to provide their gender, age, living situation and if they had eaten at one of the restaurants in question the past month. The 160 surveys were handed out and almost 100% were filled in correctly. To be able to get a high amount of respondents in the pre-study we made a convenience sample (Bryman & Bell 2013) and did the survey at schools of higher education in Gothenburg. We believe students are close to the main population due to the age distribution among university students and the fact that many students live alone. According to (Börjesson 2015) the typical fast food hamburger consumer is of young age and lives on her own or in a family in a relatively large city. We conducted the survey at university campuses in the following four areas: (1) business, economics and law, (2) technology, (3) political science and (4) education. 40 surveys were handed out at each location. A random sample method was used at the locations, every third person or group were approached and asked to do the survey. Only respondents that claimed that they had eaten at a hamburger restaurant at least once the past month (94 respondents) will be presented in the results. This criterion is inspired by Knutson (2000).

4.2.3 MAIN STUDY

The main questionnaire (Annex 3) was done based on the results of the pre-study and consisted of the following parts. (1) The ten most frequently chosen factors in the pre-study are provided and the respondent is asked to rank the factors with respect to their importance when choosing hamburger restaurant. (2) The respondent is asked to rank the three hamburger restaurants with respect to each factor in (1). For example, if one of the factors is price, the respondent will rank the hamburger restaurant that she believes has the best price as number one. (3) This part collects answers to the question about which restaurant the respondent visited most recently. (4) In the next question they answered why they visited this particular restaurant. (5) Finally the respondents were asked to provide information about their demographics such as age, gender, living situation and main occupation.

In the parts of the survey that asked for ranking we used an ordinal scale. We had two main reasons for that. First of all we had, in relation to the population, a relative small sample. If using for example a Likert scale (interval) our concern was that the results would be difficult to analyze. Remember that all the ten variables consisted of the top variables from the pre-study, hence all of them are of importance when choosing hamburger restaurant. Therefore the possibility of high scores for all of the variables could make it difficult to distinguish the variables that are most/least important. The second reason was mainly of convenience reasons for the respondents. We could have used some type of ratio scale. That could be asking the respondents to distribute 100% over the variables, with a higher percentage indicating that the variable in question was of high importance. But with ten variables that approach seemed as a bit confusing, which could lead to internal errors.

The population in question is Swedish hamburger restaurant consumers. As stated before the typical Swedish consumer is relatively young and lives on her own or in families in a larger city (Börjesson 2015). For that reason we restricted the population to people between the age of 15 and 60 who live in the Swedish large cities.

We conducted the survey in the city of Gothenburg. The respondents were found in the central parts of the city, mainly in the Central station, a place where people wait for trains and buses. We used this location because the survey is quite extensive and takes about 4-5 minutes. For that reason people had to be able to really think through their answers. People that were sitting down and had little to do met these criteria. At the location we approached people that looked like they were in the age span of 15 to 60. By making sure we asked everyone in this age span we avoided making subjective choices of respondents. We used the same criterion as in the pre-study; in order to be eligible for the main study survey the respondents were asked if they had eaten at one of the restaurants in question at least once the past month, and only those who answered yes were allowed to take the survey. We approached respondents in different times of the day, during four separate days, to avoid bias due to time. Most people were willing to do the survey but we had about 35 people that did not want to do the survey for various reasons. In the end we collected 101 correctly done surveys that make up our sample.

We intended to, as far as possible, use a probability sampling method for the survey. We wanted to use this method to be able to make a good generalization about our population. But to be able to find respondents we had to, in some way, use convenience sampling (described in the previous paragraph). To get a representative sample we wanted to avoid sampling errors as much as possible, but because of imperfect probability sampling we cannot be sure to what degree the sample is representative (Bryman & Bell 2013). Even though there are concerns about the sampling method we feel confident that the results are good indicators about consumer attitudes, partly because the results are in many ways consistent with results from previous studies. This is discussed in the analysis section.

4.2.4 TRANSLATIONS

Note that the variables that we have considered and eventually used in this paper come from sources written in different languages; Swedish and English. Additionally the study is conducted in Swedish among consumers, but reported in English. These situations have forced us to translate every variable that was included in the pre- and main study in some way. (1) Variables that were written in English were translated to Swedish before they were handed out to the respondents. (2) Variables originally written in Swedish were translated to English before they were presented in this report.

Although there might be reasons to discuss whether the translation process interferes with the validity of the variables or not, our extensive work in order to ensure the right translation leaves us confident that the variables reflect the meaning that was originally intended.

4.3 ANALYSIS METHOD

4.3.1 PRE-STUDY

After the data collection the respondents that met the requirement of having eaten at one/more of the restaurants in question at least once the past month were selected. This left us with a total of 94 out of the 160 surveys that were filled in correctly. The 94 responses were then analyzed with simple descriptive statistics calculations such as averages, medians and percental distributions. The variable ranking was based purely on frequencies. For example the top ranking variable "Taste" was selected 87 (93 %) times out of the 94 possible. We wanted about ten variables for the main study and there was a natural limit at the tenth variable (45%). That is why the main study incorporates variables with 45% or higher ratios in the pre-study.

4.3.2 MAIN STUDY

Once the data collection was complete, we started the process of analyzing the gathered data. The first and most necessary step was to decompose the data into an analyzable format. This was important due to the rather complex survey design where many questions are interconnected. The first and second parts of the survey were decomposed into 40 different questions: every variable (row) had 4 related questions. And there were 10 rows in total. Together with the six remaining questions that follow parts 1 and 2, there were a total of 46 questions answered by each respondent. The ranking scores were put into the analysis format in reverse. For example, a variable that ranked no. 1 in the survey obtained a score of 10 when it was fed into the computer. This was done partly in order to make the interpretation of the results more intuitive. But also because it allowed us to assign the omitted answers in the surveys a score of zero. In this way the zeros do not affect the rest of the results as they will be interpreted as blanks. See Annex 4 for a precise illustration of the data analysis format.

The tools used to analyze the data were, to begin with, simple descriptive statistics calculations such as averages, medians and percental distributions. We also ran regressions in order to check whether there were any significant effects in the data. The regression was done on the 52 respondents that stated that their last visit to the specified restaurant was their own decision. The specific regression method used was a multinomial logistic regression with the dependent variable being "Which restaurant did you visit most recently?" and the remaining 45 variables as explanatory variables. However, as expected, there were no significant results ($p \leq 0.05$), which may be due to various reasons: (1) low number of respondents (52 in this model), (2) such a model is invalid unless our assumption about attitudes driving behavior is correct. And based on that assumption, the dependent variable which is about the respondents' last visit may not, but should, reflect the stated attitudes.

(3) Although we have put much effort into selecting a valid and blanket range of variables to include in the pre-study, there might be very important variables that are omitted. (4) Even if the pre-study variable selection is highly valid, this model relies on the results of the pre-study being reliable, which we cannot guarantee due to the pre-study's limited sample size.

Based on the above, we chose to continue the process by analyzing multivariate frequency distributions. For this we primarily used pivot tables which are very suitable since they also allowed us to discriminate within each variable. For example, they allow for analyses of the kind: "Which restaurant has the highest taste rank according to the women in the sample?" In order to make sure that we did not miss any interesting results, we systematically checked variable and restaurant rankings with respect to every subgroup that met the requirement of a minimum of 30 respondents. The subgroups were defined via (1) the demographic variables, and, (2) the question about the respondent's most recently visited restaurant and the reason to that visit. For example within the variable "Main occupation", one can isolate students and see how the 10 variables, and the 3 restaurants with respect to each variable, rank according to them. One can also check if there is consistency between the most recently visited restaurant and the highest ranking restaurant among individuals who stated that the visit was their own decision.

Secondary sources are used to increase the reliability of some measurements. Our main source for this purpose has been Mediakompaniet (2015), a Swedish media company that also provides compiled reports regarding different aspects of brands in different markets. Although Mediakompaniet's (2015) definition of the fast food market is, unsurprisingly, much more inclusive than three hamburger restaurants, we find their reports valuable since they include the three brands that are of interest to us, and therefore also allow for valid comparisons/classifications between the three brands. The most recent reports are from 2014, which ensures that the data is up to date. Moreover, the sample size is large enough (1500 respondents) to ensure reliable results.

5. RESULTS

This chapter presents the main results. Detailed results are found among the Annexes.

5.1 PRE-STUDY

94 out of 160 respondents met the criterion, i.e. had eaten at one of the restaurants at least once the past month. The respondents' age ranged from 18 to 38 years old, with a mean of 24 years. There were 38 females and 56 males. The demographics and top 10 variables (based on frequencies) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre-study results

Number of respondents	94		
Gender distribution		**Living Situation**	
Male	60%	Living alone	43%
Female	40%	Cohabitant	36%
Age distribution		Living with parents	15%
Mean	24	Family	5%
Median	23	Unknown	1%
Variable frequency rank			
Taste	93%	Drive-through	26%
Price	80%	Organic	24%
Location	79%	Friendliness	24%
Quality	78%	Responsibility	20%
Business hours	67%	Trustworthiness	19%
Value for money	66%	Customizable products	18%
Cleanliness	64%	Confidence inspiring	18%
Sevice level	60%	Professional	17%
Service speed	57%	Coffee quality	16%
Atmosphere	45%	Competent	16%
Menu variety	40%	Locally cultivated	15%
Grilled	37%	Innovative	11%
Sustainability	32%	Honest	10%
Promotional products	30%	Consistency in menu items	9%
Swedish	29%	Novelties for children	5%
Customer oriented	28%	Premium products	4%
Food presentation	28%	Delivery service	4%
Healthy products	27%	Masculine/feminine	1%

5.2 MAIN STUDY

In the main study we had 101 respondents that filled in the survey correctly. The age span spread from 16 to 58 years old. There were 56 females and 45 males. Further demographics are presented in Table 2. The variables ranking and the restaurant rankings with respect to each variable are presented in the Tables 3 and 4. Table 5 presents the remaining results.

Table 2. Main study demographics

Gender Distribution		Age distribution	
Male	45%	Mean	29
Female	55%	Median	27
Living situation		**Main occupation**	
Living alone	26%	Student	42%
Cohabitant	36%	Job-seeker	3%
Living with parents	13%	Working	52%
Family	24%	Other	3%
Other	2%	**Number of respondents**	101

Table 3. Main study variable rank

Rank	Variable	Frequency	%
1	Taste	886	16%
2	Quality	771	14%
3	Cleanliness	657	12%
4	Price	534	10%
5	Service speed	534	10%
6	Value for money	514	9%
7	Location	500	9%
8	Service level	491	9%
9	Atmosphere	419	8%
10	Business hours	249	4%
TOT		5555	100%

Table 4. Main study restaurant ranks

	Variable	Frequency BK	Frequency Max	Frequency McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
1	Taste	203	240	152	Max	BK	McD
2	Quality	206	257	132	Max	BK	McD
3	Clean-liness	193	247	149	Max	BK	McD
4	Price	185	164	234	McD	BK	Max
5	Service speed	188	170	240	McD	BK	Max
6	Value for money	199	222	171	Max	BK	McD
7	Location	190	147	252	McD	BK	Max
8	Service level	189	222	187	Max	BK	McD
9	Atmosphere	243	197	158	BK	Max	McD
10	Business hours	174	144	247	McD	BK	Max
TOT		1970	2010	1922			

Table 5. Main study restaurant visits

Which restaurant did you visit most recently?		BK	Max	McD
%		32%	22%	47%

Why?	The children decided	I decided	The company decided	Other
%	8%	51%	21%	20%

6. ANALYSIS

This chapter presents analyses of- and interesting conclusions about the results.

6.1 VARIABLE ORIGINS

The main study variables presented in the results have in many ways different origins. While for example taste is a purely subjective variable, price on the other hand can be traced back to a number (the restaurants have fixed prices). But remember, all of our results are based on consumer attitudes which roots in consumer images. This has great implications for the restaurants when it comes to brand positioning. Even if a specific restaurant is not perceived as best regarding some variable, it can still, with the help of brand positioning, change that perception. Our results give an indication about what restaurants could highlight in their identity when present on the Swedish fast food hamburger market.

6.2 COMPARISON WITH EARLIER STUDIES

In Table 6 our top five variables from the main study are shown together with earlier studies' results. A quick look reveals that there is lots of common ground. All of our variables, except taste, are found in the earlier studies. In addition cleanliness is in the top five in all of the studies. The other variables, quality, price and service speed are each represented at least twice in the reference studies. The similarity in results gives us confidence that our results are to a great extent representative and strengthens the following analysis.

Table 6. Comparison with earlier studies

This study	Knutson (2000)	Kara et al. (1997)(USA)	Kara et al. (1997) (Canada)	Luke et al. (1997)
Taste	Cleanliness	Delivery service	Seating capacity	Quality
Quality	Friendliness	Variety	Cleanliness	Cleanliness
Cleanliness	Price	Speed of service	Nutritional value	Value
Price	Speed	Quality	Friendly staff	Price
Service speed	Consistency in menu items	Cleanliness	Variety	Convenience

6.3 WHY CONSUMER ATTITUDES LEAD TO DIFFERENT BRAND POSITIONS

The ten variables in the main study have been selected through the pre-study. The selection was based on "What is important when choosing hamburger restaurant?" These attitudes can be seen as goals for the consumers. If for example taste is important, there is a clear connection that good taste is a goal when visiting one of the restaurants. This analogy works for all of the variables in the main study. If the consumers see these variables as goals, they use them in the process of selecting a particular brand (Mårtenson 2009). When consumers are exposed to brands in the same product (or service) category they tend to have associations to the different brands. This is called brand associations, and incorporates everything linked with brands in the consumers' memories (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010). Our ranking of the restaurants regarding each variable reveals these associations. When for example McDonald's is ranked no. 1 when it comes to location, we make the assumption that McDonald's is associated with being easiest to access. As a brand, to be highly associated with a specific attribute (variable) leads to a clear market position. Changing consumers' brand associations makes it possible for companies to influence their market position.

6.4 POSITIONING
6.4.1 ECONOMIC VALUE

In order to keep things objective, we need a point of reference for evaluating a company's relative success. It is obvious that, whatever point or conclusion that we make about brand positioning, the ultimate value of that point depends on its ability to generate economic value. Therefore, if for example we state that a specific brand has a valuable and competitively strong position, it all makes more sense if the argument is, if not traceable in detail, at least consistent with the economic prosperity of the company behind that specific brand. As we have mentioned before, a position is not valuable in isolation. It might however be very valuable as a point of difference, and so a competitive strength, which in turn leads to higher economic value that might be in terms of increased sales, higher prices and so on. This point of reference is not very easy to look up since the companies in question, or at least two of them, are multinational franchise companies. And since we are only interested in the Swedish market, we cannot simply find an answer in financial reports such as income statements etc. Such information, decomposed to be presented country-wise and including every franchise taker, is not as easy to come by. The best way that we have found, in order to define such a point of reference, is a report compiled by Delfi Marknadspartner (2015). The report includes information about turnover and number of restaurants on the companies in question, delimited to the Swedish market. Based on this, one can extract a hypothetical "turnover per restaurant" in order to obtain a fair indication of the best performing brand. We are fully aware of the fact that this is not a correct way of ranking the brands' economic performances (to begin with, we do not even have any cost information/appreciation). But based on the information available, it is the best we can do. And regardless, we believe that this will indicate a correct ordinal scale ranking between the restaurants' rela-

tive performance, which is enough for the purpose of our study. Not to lose track, based on the report the company with the highest turnover per restaurant is McDonald's, followed by Max and finally Burger King. And while the difference between McDonald's and Max is very low, the difference between them and Burger King is huge.

6.4.2 BRAND IMAGE

According to marketing theory, when speaking of brand positioning, one important aspect is that the brand position should be clear and easy to communicate (Mårtenson 2009). This point makes the results of our main study interesting in a particular way; the pattern in the ranking of the restaurants with respect to the variables. Note that in total, Burger King is ranked no. 2 in 9 out of 10 variables. McDonald's and Max on the other hand are most often either ranked no. 1 or no. 3. Table 7 shows this distribution which makes it clear that McDonald's and Max are the brands that are most polarized and distinct among consumers, while Burger King seems to be, for the most part, the brand in between.

Table 7. The restaurants' ranking pattern

	Number of times ranked no. 1	Number of times ranked no. 2	Number of times ranked no. 3	TOT
Max	5	1	4	10
BK	1	9	0	10
McD	4	0	6	10
TOT	10	10	10	30

Our results on this matter are partly confirmed by the following source. Mediakompaniet (2015), a Swedish media company, compiles reports based on surveys about different aspects of brands in Sweden. Their surveys are made on a larger scale. And very suitably they present results that are specific for Swedish large cities. One of their reports, "Värdetoppen Storstad" (Mediakompaniet 2015), includes information about how the largest brands in different markets are associated with certain market-specific attributes in 2014. The restaurants in this study are all included in their report on the fast food- and restaurant chains market. In addition, five of the attributes in their report are also included in our main study, which means that we can use Mediakompaniet's report to contrast/control some of our results. The five variables are (1) taste, (2) price, (3) service, (4) speed and (5) freshness. The corresponding variables from our study are "taste" for "taste", "price" for "price", "service level" for "service", "service speed" for "speed" and "cleanliness" for "freshness". Although "Freshness" and "Cleanliness" might appear as different variables, we want to highlight that "Freshness" as used by Mediakompaniet (i.e. used in a Swedish context), refers to "Cleanliness". Finally, the restaurant ranking extracted from their report on these five variables corresponds exactly to the one indicated by the result of our main study.

Mediakompaniet (2015) offers another report, "Tydligast varumärke Storstad" from 2014 that provides answer to the question about which brand that is most clear and distinct in general in Swedish large cities. Since the restaurants of our study are all included, one can extract the three restaurants' relative ranking. According to this report, McDonald's is the clearest brand among the three, followed by Max and finally Burger King. Even on this matter, the results match those obtained by our main study based on the interpretation that McDonald's is the clearest brand since it is ranked on an extreme (no. 1 or no. 3) 10 times, followed by Max (9 times) and finally Burger King (once). See Table 7. This intimate consistency between the results of our study and those of Mediakompaniet is important to mention because it greatly increases the reliability of the results of our study, which is conducted on a much smaller scale.

A second important aspect in brand positioning is that the chosen position should be connected to consumers' buying motifs (Mårtenson 2009). As we have discussed before, this is part of the reason why we take the consumer perspective in the performance of this study. Therefore, the ranking of the variables in our main study can be interpreted as buying motifs. Based on this idea, things become more interesting since being polarized and distinctly positioned through the right attributes and associations is better than being clearly positioned on an attribute that is unimportant to the consumers. And although the variables in the main study are all important according to the consumers (remember that they topped the pre-study results), being positioned through the no. 1 variable is more valuable than being positioned through the second top variable and so on. With this new aspect in consideration, it is clear that Max is the restaurant with the most valuable position; while Max and McDonald's are very close in terms of distinctness (McDonald's is slightly more polarized), Max is obviously ranked no. 1 with respect to variables that are more important than McDonald's no. 1 variables. And once again, while indistinct and in between almost all the time, the one variable that Burger King is the winner of (ranked no. 1), is "Atmosphere", which is ranked no. 9 out of 10 variables.

So, in order to reconnect to the introduction of this section, are our results consistent with our point of reference for ranking the restaurants in terms of economic performance? The answer is partly no, but mostly yes. A total consideration of the two important aspects of positioning would indicate that Max has the most valuable position, followed closely by McDonald's, which is in turn followed distantly by Burger King. Our hypothetical turnover per restaurant indicated that McDonald's ranks no. 1 in economic performance, followed closely by Max which was in turn, again distantly, followed by Burger King. Burger King is the reason we believe that our results are mostly consistent. Their huge slack in both measurements makes us confident that the results of our study make the right indications. What regards Max and McDonald's, who switch places between the measurements, this is why the results are partly inconsistent. But again, their proximity to each other in both measurements is another indication that we should be able to confidently state that they are both in the top.

Their exact relative ranking however, is almost unimportant to us of two reasons: (1) the turnover per restaurant performance indicator is incorrect enough for us to be unable to use, unless the gaps are extreme, as in the case of Burger King. (2) Regardless of the exact rank, the conclusion here is that Max and McDonald's are both beneficially positioned on this market where they perform very well. Hence the exact relative ranking of the two restaurants is not as interesting since this is not a ranking competition. Remember however that this is in the consumer perspective, meaning that positions in this section are positions in terms of consumer image. This means that there might well be inconsistency between brand- identity and image regarding these brands. The point is that the consumers' image is of course the position that 'matters' and that is suitable for a comparison with the turnover per restaurant. Of course the brand identity is still very important. If a brand has a position that is valuable but unintended, it indicates that the company in question cannot control the evolution of the brand. And in a managerial point of view, being able to control the brand position (consumer image), is highly preferable. The company's perspective, the brand identity and the connection to brand position, is the topic of the coming section. But before diving into that, we need to clarify the following.

Although mentioned earlier, the logic of this analysis relies on the fact that we interpret the ranking of the restaurants in the main study in the way that we have done. Meaning that the ranks 1 and 3 are interpreted as the most distinct and polarized, while being ranked 2nd means being in between. Another way of interpreting those results would be to rank the restaurants according to how god they are regarding each variable, corrected for the importance of that variable. Such a compilation of the results would place Burger King above McDonald's, which is not a surprise considering the results. This then becomes a question of interpretation. We believe that, when speaking of brand positioning, based on the theory that distinction and clarity are important aspects of valuable positions (Mårtenson 2009), the analysis becomes elevated if the rankings are interpreted based on distinction and clarity. The alternative method simply does not pay enough attention to those aspects.

6.4.3 BRAND IDENTITY

This section is about the brand- identity and position. In other words it shifts perspective over to the company's. But before firing the discussion away, there are a couple of issues that need to be addressed. To begin with, since we will in this section be referring to- and comparing results with what we have used as the different companies' brand identity, (i.e. the attributes included in the pre-study based on what the different companies want to communicate on the market), we need to clarify that we are aware of the fact that those attributes/variables cannot be interpreted as the truth regarding the brands' identity. Although we have made a solid attempt to distinguish the right attributes, there might be attributes that are excluded because (1) we have not gotten hold of spokespersons with enough power to be able to fully answer such questions and (2) even if we had, we would not have been certain whether they were willing to reveal such information, hence we

would not have known whether they were giving us the whole story or not. Secondly, even if the brand identities are correctly defined, some variables might be taken for granted to an extent that they appear as less important in the results of our study. Alternatively, some variables might be very important determinants of consumer behavior and at the same time be less important within consumers' attitudes. Such variables can be interpreted as very important regardless of consumer attitudes because of their power in driving behavior. Examples of such variables from our main study are "Business hours" and "Location".

Considering brand identities as defined in our study, we can state that the level of success in communicating those differs vastly between the brands. Let us begin with the variable "Quality" that is included in the brand identity of all three restaurants. This may be interpreted as a point of parity rather than a point of difference since every brand claims it (Mårtenson 2009). However, based on our results Max is the brand with the best quality, and "Quality" is the second most important variable.

We now consider the remaining variables for each brand. Max communicates the variables "Taste", "Sustainability" and "Swedish". While "Sustainability" and "Swedish" did not make it to the top ten in the pre-study, "Taste" ranks no. 1 in the main study and Max is considered the best restaurant regarding taste. And although "Swedish" and "Sustainability" did not make it to the top 10, they may still be considered at least moderately important since they made it to the top 15 in the pre-study. The overall conclusion about Max is that they focus on important variables and consistently transfer the brand identity over to consumers and create valuable associations. This is a very valuable asset in a managerial point of view.

McDonald's on the other hand is different in the way that all of their identity variables made the top 10 in the pre-study, and so were included in the main study. However, Max ranks no. 1 in all of those variables and McDonald's no. 3. This indicates that McDonald's suffers from great inconsistency between brand- identity and image. Instead McDonald's tops the rankings with regards to "Location", "Business hours" "Service speed" and "Price". With the issues addressed earlier in the section in mind, the position of McDonald's regarding the variables "Location" and "Business hours" is very valuable due to the power of these factors in driving behavior. Another such variable that appears unimportant when studying attitudes but might be very important in driving behavior is "Novelties for children" which was among the bottom 5 variables in the pre-study. This is important to mention since McDonald's appears as the brand that focuses much on children and there is a possibility that this variable is very important, but missed when using the method that we have used in this study. Our results in fact show that among those who stated that their children decided which restaurant they had visited most recently, McDonald's was the most visited restaurant. But since (1) that group did not meet the requirement of a minimum of 30 respondents, (2) the fact that McDonald's might be the most visited restaurant solely due to their superior accessibility and (3) that we have not investigated whether McDonald's really focuses on children or not, we raise this only as an interesting question and make no

further statements. "Price" and "Speed" both make the top 5 variables and contribute to the value of McDonald's position. In a managerial perspective however, McDonald's position is not as valuable as Max's because it appears to be inconsistent with the desired position and hence somewhat 'out of control'.

Finally, Burger King's remaining identity variables "Grilled", "Customizable products" and "Masculine" were all excluded in the main study, i.e. they did not make the top 10 in the pre-study. However, the variable "Grilled" is also to be considered as at least moderately important since it made the top 15 in the pre-study. "Customizable products" was in the bottom 15 and can hence be interpreted as relatively unimportant. At last, the identity variable "Masculine" was the least important variable according to the pre-study results, where it takes the shape of "Masculine/feminine". Based on these results, Burger King's position is to be considered less valuable in comparison to Max's and McDonald's. Whether they appear to suffer from inconsistency between brand- identity and image is difficult to say since the variables did not make it to the main study. One interesting mistake that Burger King seem to do is that they, by focusing on a masculine identity, in some ways ignore half of the potential customers.

6.5 RESTAURANT ATTITUDES COMPARED TO BEHAVIOR

One key question we intended to answer with the survey was whether or not consumer attitudes reflect their behavior. An ongoing discussion within the field of marketing is if attitudes themselves can predict behavior. Most research leans to the belief that attitudes can at least give indications about behavior, even though it does not reveal the complete explanation (Evans et al. 2006). In the main study we asked the respondents to state which restaurant they visited most recently (behavior). The following question asked why they went to this particular restaurant (Annex 3). When it comes to whether or not attitudes predict behavior we are only interested in the respondents that claimed that themselves decided. This group makes up 52 respondents in our sample. We analyzed this group in two different ways to see if they did "as they should" with respect to their attitudes. (1) Each respondent was analyzed according to her ranking of the restaurants. Let us say that a specific respondent in an extreme example ranked Max as no. 1, Burger King as no. 2 and McDonald's as no. 3 in all 10 variables. This should indicate that her last visit (remember that she decided herself) was at Max. So the next step was to check if that was the case or not. We conducted this test for all 52 respondents in this group and the results were that 38 respondents visited the particular restaurant that their attitudes indicated. This method can be questioned because the rankings of the restaurants did not take in account that some variables are of higher importance to the respondents. That is why we took another step in the analysis. (2) This method used the basics of the previous method but with the difference that the ranking of the restaurants in each variable were weighed with respect to the importance of the variable. Let us say that a specific restaurant is ranked no. 1 in the most important variable for the respondent. And the same restaurant is ranked no. 1 in

the least important variable. Then the first ranking should have higher impact in the total attitude against the restaurant. So in this method we weighed all restaurants' rankings with respect to the importance of the variables (from 10 to 1). After doing so for each and all respondents the results were that 33 out of the 52 respondents did as their attitudes indicated. Worth mentioning is that this second method also has its flaws. And that roots in the data scale. All of our rankings are in ordinal scale and that includes the importance of the variables. Even though "Taste" i ranked no. 1 and "Quality" no. 2 for some respondents, we cannot know how much more important "Taste" is than "Quality". There could be a massive or a very small gap, the only thing we know for sure is that "Taste" is of higher importance. This means that neither the results of method- (1) nor (2) can be recognized as absolutely certain. But we do feel that the methods and their results give a good indication that attitudes indeed in some ways drive behavior. 38 and 33 respondents are in fact large shares out of 52. We can see a tendency, but not predict behavior solely based on attitudes. The results of these analyses are in line with the issues presented in the beginning of this paragraph. Considering our concerns about the analysis methods in this section, we will not go further than claiming that attitudes probably have a high impact on behavior.

6.6 CONTRASTING THE TOP 10 VARIABLES

In this section we will compare the results of the pre- and main study. First of all we want to highlight that the pre-study and the main study are based on different data scales. The pre-study, where the respondents were asked to pick the twelve most important variables when choosing restaurant, is in a nominal scale while the main study is based, as stated before, on an ordinal scale. The main study top 10 variables, in order of importance, are therefore more interesting when it comes to rank. That is because the ranking can be analyzed on two "levels", both as individual respondents and as a group. The pre-study top ten ranking, on the other hand, can only be detected based on frequencies within the group of respondents. With this in mind, we still found it interesting to at least do a simple comparison of the two top 10 rankings from the studies. The two top 10 rankings are presented in Table 8. If we start with the top 5 variables, we can see that "Taste", "Quality" and "Price" are represented in both rankings. And "Taste" is the top variable in both results. Otherwise the rankings are pretty different. But have in mind the previous claim regarding data scales. The result of this comparison is for that reason, no surprise. The intuitive response could be that the top 10 should be identical. But the pre-study involved 36 variables and was therefore open for more variance. For that reason we feel confident that the main study ranking is much stronger. This is expected, because the sole purpose of the pre-study was to reveal the most important variables for the main study.

Table 8. Pre- and main study results in contrast

Rank	Main study	Pre-study
1	Taste	Taste
2	Quality	Price
3	Cleanliness	Location
4	Price	Quality
5	Service speed	Business hours
6	Value for money	Value for money
7	Location	Cleanliness
8	Service level	Sevice level
9	Atmosphere	Service speed
10	Business hours	Atmosphere

6.7 RESULTS DIVIDED BY DEMOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS

When not analyzing the main study results with respect to all respondents, we divided the respondents into groups based on various demographics. A criterion when doing this was that the group would make up a sufficient amount of respondents. We had the criterion that at least 30 respondents would be in each group. The simple reason for the limit is because it allows us to see some kind of patterns in the data, without the concern of low amount of respondents. The demographic groups that met this criterion were divided into six groups. The first two groups are women and men. And then (women and men included) age 15 to 30, age 30 to 45, students and working. At a first glance it is obvious that the results are extremely similar (Annex 5). The top 3 variables are identical in all groups, which is the case with the bottom 2 as well. The other five variables located in the middle vary in terms of rank between the groups. Since the top and bottom ranking variables are most interesting to analyze we find no reason to discuss further the small differences in the other variables. We can only conclude that the importance of the variables is slightly different between these groups. When it comes to the restaurant rankings with respect to each variable the results are even more analogous. The ranking in terms of restaurants in the top 3 and bottom 2 variables are exactly the same. And in the other variables the restaurant rankings are close to identical in all groups. These findings lead us to the conclusion that there are no significant differences between these groups. Worth mentioning is that all groups' results, both in terms of the importance of variables and restaurant rankings, are in line with the total sample that is used in the main analysis paragraph.

7. DISCUSSION

This chapter presents managerial implications and proposes future research subjects.

7.1 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper has implications for companies on the Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market in terms of brand positioning. Contributions to marketing units are important insights about how to position brands in this specific market. The fact that the study is conducted in a consumer perspective means that the results are important for marketers when trying to understand consumer attitudes and behavior.

Since the results of the study are in harmony with the theories used about the importance of distinct brand positions, and the importance of them being connected to relevant buying motifs (Mårtenson 2009), the implications of the analysis are pretty straightforward. To begin with, managers must choose positions that take root in what consumers believe is important in the context of fast food hamburger restaurants. Based on this the top 10 variables are great starting points when choosing new positions where "Taste" is the most impactful factor; a position that is clearly owned by Max for the moment. However, considering that every factor in the top 10 list is to be interpreted as important, there are plenty of available positions out there. Examples are "Cleanliness" or "Value for money". Note that it is essential to further examine whether there might be other indirect competitors occupying a specific position. For example, one might argue that "Cleanliness" is owned by Subway and its "Eat fresh" position. The downside by choosing the 'wrong' position is clearly demonstrated by Burger King's male oriented identity and the choice of "Customizable products" as a point of difference, expressed through the "Have it your way" slogan; although we do not know why, consumers seem to think that these are relatively unimportant factors.

Another important lesson is that it is important to deliver on promises made by the brand, i.e. stated by the brand identity. Failing at this is illustrated by McDonald's who, although beneficially positioned in terms of brand image, performs relatively poor regarding the promises made by its identity. Likewise, if "Quality" is a point of parity among the three companies, it is important to defend it as a point of parity and deliver on that promise; based on our results Max is clearly in the lead when it comes to "Quality".

Finally, the most important implication is that once the appropriate position is chosen, it must be communicated in a way that leads to a clear and distinct position. Therefore, attempting to take a bit of many positions instead of clearly focusing on a few, is not a good strategy. The obvious example here is Burger King who, whether it is intended or not, is constantly the brand in between.

One of the earlier studies that we contrasted our results with conducted a survey in two separate countries (Kara et al 1997). The results of the two studies were similar, but not identical. On top of that there is also a general opinion in the field of marketing that different cultures often have great effects when it comes to branding etc. All of this has implications regarding the results of our study. Everything mentioned in the- results and analysis is in fact based on the Swedish market. Even though we can assume that there are great similarities between countries with small cultural gaps the results would, without doubt, not be exactly the same. Therefore we suggest that companies use our method: choosing a range of variables and conduct a pre- and main study to reveal important factors in specific markets. Our model of revealing determinants of consumers' choice can be replicated and give important insights in other countries.

In the analysis section we, to some extent, mapped out the market positions of the restaurants in our study. These positions have been created, and are protected, in many ways through communication efforts. Having a certain position, and a specific market share, has implications regarding communication budgets. In this paragraph we shortly present theories about communication investment and the implications for the market participants. There are theories about how much companies should invest in market communication. One is called the "Share-of-voice"- "Share of market" method (SOV and SOM). This model takes in account the competitors' investments in communication (Mårtenson 2009). To be able to use the model the companies being compared need to have similar goals with their communication. One can argue that this is the case with the three major brands on the Swedish fast food hamburger market. The SOV-SOM model roots in the following simple equation: The company's share of the market communication = The company's share of consumers' consciousness = The company's share of market sales. But there has been proven that the equation cannot be as simple as that. Smaller companies need to have a larger communication budget than their market share (in terms of percentage) to keep their market share. This is also valid in reverse; larger companies can "underinvest" in communication with respect to their market share and still keep their market share. Where the line is drawn, for companies having a large enough market share to be able to "underinvest", cannot be clearly stated. But the analogy, that the smaller you are on the market, the more you need to invest in communication to keep (or improve) your market share is clear. There are implications of these theories regarding our data that can be stated. McDonald's has by far the largest market share and could with these theories in mind "underinvest" in market communication. Max is no. 2 in terms of sales and must therefore be up to the challenge to invest a larger portion (than McDonald's) of their sales in communication efforts. Finally Burger King has by far the smallest market share in terms of sales and is in a position where they, according to the theories, need to invest an even larger part of their sales to close in on their competitors.

7.2 SHORTCOMINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH PROPOSALS

As with most studies, we have made certain assumption and demarcations in order to simplify matters and to be able to come to valuable conclusions. However, since the value of the results of the study relies on the correctness of the assumptions and the safety of the demarcations, it is very suitable to further examine those issues. Here we present the shortcomings of this paper and other interesting questions that have risen during the process; issues that we believe make out great prospects for future research and that can help increase certainty about the results of this study, i.e. to confirm or reject its results.

When it comes to reliability, there is one concern. We only conducted the study once, therefore the question whether the results are stable over time is unknown. Validity on the other hand, is harder state the certainty of. We intended to measure attitudes that affect behavior in the survey. The behavior could be influenced by more than the attitude variables included in the survey. Then again, we conducted a pre-study and carefully selected the included variables, out of which we chose the top 10 variables for the main study. Although it is difficult to state whether the main study variables are valid or not when it comes to attitudes, we can state that the probability of them being valid is greatly increased by this method of selecting the 10 main study variables (Bryman & Bell 2013).

Do attitudes drive behavior, or is it the other way around? As mentioned earlier, this is an issue that many researchers ponder. We do not intend making the obvious research suggestion "What drives what?". However, we would find it interesting to test our assumption in the same context, but with a dedicated focus. In this study the focus has been the attitudes themselves and our attempt to integrate the behavior control is not very convincing. A future study could use the results of our study regarding attitudes, and test their consistency with behavior by actually observing the behavior of consumers that match the demographics of our study. Alternatively, in order to increase reliability, one could re-conduct the whole study (except for the question intended for measuring behavior) and observe the behavior of the same respondents.

One of the first thoughts that triggered our interest for the role of brand positioning in the context of fast food hamburger restaurants was that "They all sell the same products, hence consumers' choice of restaurant must depend on the brand image". This thought was developed into the assumption that the different restaurants' product range is similar enough for us to be able to isolate some effect of the brand position. Although we are confident in making this assumption, we have no proof. A future study could be focusing on investigating this issue; while some variables are difficult to measure in a meaningful way (how should "Tastiness" be be measured?), others are considerably less problematic. For example, one can easily observe the service speed at the different restaurants.

Finally, however much someone wants to visit a specific restaurant, they might stumble upon one or two obstacles on the way. It might be the children insisting on a Happy Meal, or simply the fact that a visit to the nearest Max comes at the price of a 30 minute walk. It has crossed our minds that some factors seem to have their own power in driving behavior, regardless of the attitudes. We pointed to some of them in the analysis. For example, McDonald's seems to be benefitting from high accessibility, generous business hours and the great efforts of Ronald McDonald. A future study could focus on detecting and further investigating the role of such variables.

8. CONCLUSION
This chapter sums up the paper.

This paper has noted the difficulty to be successful on the Swedish fast food hamburger restaurant market due to high competition, which has in turn led to a situation where pure product differentiation is hard to achieve. Applying marketing theory to this situation generates reasons to investigate the role of differentiation through brand positioning on this market. This issue is quantitatively approached with the following purpose: (1) What are the determinants of Swedish city dwellers' choice of fast food hamburger restaurant? (2) What do the determinants imply regarding brand positioning on this market?

The study is conducted in the city of Gothenburg and includes the brands Burger King, Max and McDonald's. The study is carried out in two parts, the first is a pre-study that allows respondents to choose among a list of variables and pick the factors that they believe most affect the choice of restaurant. The top variables from the pre-study are then used in a main study where respondents rank the importance of each variable. In addition, the main study allows the respondents to rank the three brands with respect to each variable. The contributions of the paper are (1) that we, by including a pre-study, allow for a more relevant selection of variables for measuring the choice determinants in a consumer view. This method is not found in the earlier studies that we have found. (2) This study targets Swedish city dwellers specifically. Although earlier papers on this subject have been found, none of them targets this specific market/consumer group.

The results of the study reveal a ranked list of the 10 most important factors that affect consumers' choice of restaurant. They also reveal the relative performance of each brand regarding each factor. The findings are consistent with existing marketing theory and indicate that brand positions on this market should (1) be distinct and clear, and, (2) that they should be connected to consumers' buying motifs. The 3 most important variables found are "Taste", "Quality" and "Cleanliness" (see the results section for the complete list). A comparison between the top variables from this study with earlier studies that are conducted elsewhere, confirms the importance of some variables, but also reveals differences. This implies that every specific market- and/or consumer group should be separately examined in order to reveal the correct associated choice determinants. Also highlighted is the fact that, in line with marketing theory, companies with a smaller market share need to invest more than larger companies in marketing activities aimed at maintaining a brand position (in terms of percentage of sales).

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ANNEX 1. PRE-STUDY VARIABLE CANDIDATES

Kara et al. (1997)	Choi and Zhao (2010)	Lindblom and Medelberg (2008)
Price	Service	Customer oriented
Friendliness of personnel	Ambiance	Responsibility
Variety of menu	Cleanliness	Trustworthiness
Service speed	Food presentation	Confidence inspiring
Calorie content	Rating	Professional
Cleanliness		Competent
Convenience	**McDonald's (2015)**	Innovative
Business hours	Cleanliness	Honest
Delivery service	Value for money	Quality
Novelties for children	Service	
Seating facilities	Quality	
Knutson (2000)	**Burger King (2015)**	**Börjesson (2015)**
Cleanliness	Grilled	Coffee quality
Friendliness	Quality	Healthy products
Price	Customizable products	Premium products
Speed	Masculine	Locally cultivated
Consistency in menu items		Organic
Menu variety	**Max (2015)**	
Location	Taste	
Combination meals	Swedish	
Discount coupons	Sustainability	
Atmosphere	Quality	
Drive-through		
Promotional menu items		
Add-on coupons		

Al variables from the following studies were included in the pre-study. The exceptions and modifications that were made are described below.

Kara et al. (1997)
"Calorie content" was merged with "Healthy products" (Börjesson 2015).
"Convenience" was merged with "Location" (Knutson 2000).

Knutson (2000)
"Add-on coupons", "Promotional menu items" and "Discount-coupons" were transformed into the variable "Campaign products".
"Combination meals" was excluded due to high similarity between the restaurants regarding the variable.

Choi and Zhao (2010)
"Rating" was excluded due to similarity with the variables "Trustworthiness" and "Confidence inspiring".
"Ambiance" was merged with "Atmosphere" (Knutson 2000).

Lindblom and Medelberg (2008)
All variables above 50 % in their study were included .

Fast food hamburger restaurant choice

Pick the twelve factors that are most influential in your choice of fast food restaurant (Burger King, Max & McDonalds). Consider the whole company including the brand when making your choices.

Make your choices by checking the box next to each factor.

Atmosphere	☐	Location	☐
Business hours	☐	Masculine/feminine	☐
Cleanliness	☐	Menu variety	☐
Coffee quality	☐	Novelties for children	☐
Competent	☐	Organic	☐
Confidence inspiring	☐	Premium products	☐
Consistency in menu	☐	Price	☐
Customer oriented	☐	Professional	☐
Customizable products	☐	Promotional products	☐
Delivery service	☐	Quality	☐
Drive-through	☐	Responsibility	☐
Food presentation	☐	Service level	☐
Friendliness	☐	Service speed	☐
Grilled	☐	Sustainability	☐
Healthy products	☐	Swedish	☐
Honest	☐	Taste	☐
Innovative	☐	Trustworthiness	☐
Locally cultivated	☐	Value for money	☐

Age   **Gender**   **Living situation**

☐

Male ☐   Living alone ☐

Female ☐   Living with parents ☐

Cohabitant ☐

Family ☐

☐ **I HAVE** eaten at one or more of the restaurants in question at least once the past month.

☐ **I HAVE NOT** eaten at any of the restaurants in question the past month.

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Fast food hamburger restaurant choice

BK=Burger King   Max=Max   McD=McDonald´s

1. Rank the following variables from **1 - 10**, where 1 is the most important when choosing restaurant.

2. Rank the following restaurants with respect to each variable from **1 - 3**, where 1 indicates the best restaurant regarding the variable in question.

	BK	**Max**	**McD**
Atmosphere			
Taste			
Quality			
Location			
Price			
Cleanliness			
Service speed			
Service level			
Value for money			
Business hours			

3. Which restaurant did you visit most recently? CHECK

BK	**Max**	**McD**

4. Why?

	I decided
	The company decided (friends, colleagues etc.)
	The children decided
	Other

Age	**Gender**		**Living situation**		**Main occupation**	
	Male		Living alone		Student	
	Female		Living with parents		Working	
			Cohabitant		Job-seeker	
			Family		Other	
			Other			

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ANNEX 4. DATA ANALYSIS FORMAT

	Variable/Respondent	1	...	101		Variable/Respondent	1	...	101
1	Age				24	Location (BK)			
2	Gender				25	Location (Max)			
3	Living situation				26	Location (McD)			
4	Main occupation				27	Price (BK)			
5	Atmosphere				28	Price (Max)			
6	Taste				29	Price (McD)			
7	Quality				30	Cleanliness (BK)			
8	Location				31	Cleanliness (Max)			
9	Price				32	Cleanliness (McD)			
10	Cleanliness				33	Service speed (BK)			
11	Service speed				34	Service speed(Max)			
12	Service level				35	Service speed (McD)			
13	Value for money				36	Service level (BK)			
14	Business hours				37	Service level (Max)			
15	Atmosphere (BK)				38	Service level (McD)			
16	Atmosphere (Max)				39	Value for money (BK)			
17	Atmosphere (McD)				40	Value for money (Max)			
18	Taste (BK)				41	Value for money (McD)			
19	Taste (Max)				42	Business hours (BK)			
20	Taste (McD)				43	Business hours (Max)			
21	Quality (BK)				44	Business hours (McD)			
22	Quality (Max)				45	Last visit			
23	Quality (McD)				46	Why?			

ANNEX 5. RESULTS DIVIDED BY DEMOGRAPHIC SEGMENTS

Men

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	413	17%	92	110	64	Max	BK	McD
Quality	358	14%	93	117	56	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	261	11%	84	109	67	Max	BK	McD
Value for money	245	10%	92	101	70	Max	BK	McD
Price	240	10%	81	81	98	McD	BK/Max	BK/Max
Service speed	240	10%	85	74	110	McD	BK	McD
Location	211	9%	76	69	115	McD	BK	Max
Service level	207	8%	87	95	87	Max	BK/McD	BK/McD
Atmosphere	183	7%	92	105	72	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	117	5%	72	67	115	McD	BK	Max
TOT	2475	100%						

Women

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	473	15%	111	130	88	Max	BK	McD
Quality	413	13%	113	140	76	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	396	13%	109	138	82	Max	BK	McD
Price	294	10%	104	83	136	McD	BK	Max
Service speed	294	10%	103	96	130	McD	BK	Max
Location	289	9%	114	78	137	McD	BK	Max
Service level	284	9%	102	127	100	Max	BK	McD
Value for money	269	9%	107	121	101	Max	BK	McD
Atmosphere	236	8%	105	138	86	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	132	4%	102	77	132	McD	BK	Max
TOT	3080	100%						

Students

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	362	16%	88	95	62	Max	BK	McD
Quality	303	13%	90	105	50	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	257	11%	88	100	57	Max	BK	McD
Service speed	230	10%	80	65	100	McD	BK	Max
Price	229	10%	85	57	103	McD	BK	Max
Location	218	9%	88	53	104	McD	BK	Max
Value for money	216	9%	85	87	73	Max	BK	McD
Service level	200	9%	78	90	77	Max	BK	McD
Atmosphere	157	7%	85	96	64	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	138	6%	79	58	108	McD	BK	Max
TOT	2310	100%						

Working

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	472	16%	104	133	77	Max	BK	McD
Quality	421	14%	103	140	71	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	362	12%	95	134	79	Max	BK	McD
Service speed	278	10%	97	95	125	McD	BK	Max
Value for money	273	9%	102	124	85	Max	BK	McD
Price	266	9%	91	100	117	McD	Max	BK
Service level	263	9%	101	119	97	Max	BK	McD
Location	257	9%	90	84	134	McD	BK	Max
Atmosphere	222	8%	100	134	83	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	101	3%	87	80	129	McD	BK	Max
TOT	2915	100%						

Age 15-30

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	557	16%	131	148	93	Max	BK	McD
Quality	467	13%	132	164	76	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	401	12%	122	160	90	Max	BK	McD
Service speed	335	10%	115	106	151	McD	BK	Max
Price	334	10%	126	100	146	McD	BK	Max
Location	323	9%	127	90	155	McD	BK	Max
Value for money	323	9%	125	140	107	Max	BK	McD
Service level	284	8%	114	144	114	Max	BK/McD	BK/McD
Atmosphere	265	8%	121	158	93	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	176	5%	118	92	156	McD	BK	Max
TOT	3465	100%						

Age 30-45

Variable	Count	%	Count BK	Count Max	Count McD	Rank no. 1	Rank no. 2	Rank no. 3
Taste	268	16%	57	77	50	Max	BK	McD
Quality	241	14%	60	77	47	Max	BK	McD
Cleanliness	202	12%	58	71	49	Max	BK	McD
Service level	177	10%	60	65	59	Max	BK	McD
Price	168	10%	47	50	75	McD	Max	BK
Service speed	166	10%	61	50	73	McD	BK	Max
Value for money	153	9%	57	67	54	Max	BK	McD
Location	143	8%	54	44	80	McD	BK	Max
Atmosphere	129	8%	62	69	53	Max	BK	McD
Business hours	58	3%	45	41	74	McD	BK	Max
TOT	1705	100%						