

THE HAGUE UNIVERSITY

Republic of Friends

Developing a positioning strategy

VOGUE
PARIS

Haute couture headphones by Friends



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Executive Summary

This thesis was written as the final project of the study program International Communication Management at The Hague University. The assignment was provided by Friends Europe and was combined with a placement at said company. Friends is a women's headphone brand that produces jewelry-inspired headphones. The market of women's headphones is still new, but many competitor brands have started to implement this trend in their strategy. It was identified that Friends has no clear positioning in the market yet as the brand has to face the challenge of repositioning headphones in the market as a fashionable piece of jewelry. The German-speaking market is a large potential market for Friends Europe. However, it was identified that Friends is not as successful in the German-speaking market as it could be. Therefore, the German market was selected as the primary target group for this research. Therefore, the main objective of this report was to develop a positioning for Friends that appeals to the German-speaking countries. Hence, the central question was as follows: "What differentiates Friends from the competition and appeals to the German-speaking target group?".

One had to identify Friends' strengths and compare these with the competition. Additionally, the German-speaking market was researched by identifying the buying and social media behavior as well as the target group's wants and needs. Relevant literature suggested that consumers who are in need of self-enhancement and ego satisfaction are attracted to brands with a symbolic concept. As Friends is not the most functional headphone brand, it was decided to look further into the symbolic concept and how it applies to the Friends case. This needed to be identified through in-depth research which was divided in two abstract concepts; the functional as well as the emotional needs of the potential consumer. A survey was conducted with sixty respondents. Additionally, ten in-depth interviews were held to understand the degree to which the target group finds Friends headphones appealing. It turned out that Friends' current lifestyle imagery lacks a clear message and the interviewees could not relate to it very well. However, the interviewees were very fond of the product itself. The perceived exclusive design of Friends headphones is the largest strength Friends has and respondents thought of the product to be urban yet chic and cool. Hence, it was considered important to implement the perceptions of the target group into a positioning strategy. New imagery is advised and a catchy and suitable brand slogan should be introduced. Furthermore, the role models of the target group should be used as inspiration to choose future brand ambassadors. Lastly, it is recommended to brief and train retailers, PR agencies and individual agents on the desired positioning to ensure a consistent communication.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The last semester of the study program International Communication Management is comprised of a final research project based on the required completion of a placement. This research project will culminate in a final Bachelor thesis and explores a marketing communication problem at Friends Europe. The report is based on in-depth research and provides recommendations on how to solve the problem.

1.1. The Client

Friends Europe is a subsidiary of Republic of Friends, which is a headphone company founded by a group of snowboarders in California. The company made changes in their business plan in 2012, when the niche market of luxurious designer headphones was considered interesting and profitable. Hence, ROF decided to focus on delicate designs and the fashion-aspect of headphones as an accessory with women as their main target group. The European office focuses on the European market and introduced the product in 2012. Ever since, the company and the products have received very positive coverage from the media from all over the world.

1.2. The Brief

Despite the overall positive resonance, Friends Europe is still in the growth phase, which is why the agenda for 2014 includes the aim to grow in the German-speaking world. One of the reasons why the German-speaking area is of high-priority is that Germany, Switzerland and Austria are among the top ten countries based on per-capita purchasing power. Additionally, it is the biggest market in Europe regarding the joint size of population and can easily be combined due to the shared German language and assumed culture similarities.

In comparison to other headphone brands, such as Sony, Panasonic, Philips or Sennheiser, which have a low or no specific lifestyle appeal, Friends have a very lifestyle-and fashion-driven positioning. Still, there are other headphone companies with lifestyle appeals, such as Beats by Dre, Monster and Molami, which are partly targeted at women too. Beats by Dre are very focused on the Hip-Hop lifestyle but the brand does not focus on a specific gender, whereas Molami and Monster do target women as their main target group (Molami, 2014). However, one can say that Friends does differentiate from these brands by having jewellery inspired designs with features that are based on women's needs (such as the stainless ear cushions and foldable design to fit in a small purse).

1.3. The problem

As this niche market only exists for around one and a half years, most people (or in this case Frends' target group) are unaware of it and do not know that it exists and how it is relevant to them. The brand is already defined to a certain extent, as the term "women's headphones" is part of the logo and the mission statement explains exactly that, too. However, as stated above, there are other headphone brands claiming to be women's headphones, which could harm Frends uniqueness. At the moment, Frends' strengths are practical features such as the interchangeable caps, the collapsible design to fit into a small purse and the stainless ear cushions. These attributes can be copied easily by the competition and as this niche market is assumed to grow in the future, changes must be made. Therefore, it is necessary for Frends to find a distinctive brand essence to manifest their positioning in order to stand out even more. This brand essence should be based on the most important emotional benefit for the target group. Only this way, Frends will be able to stay on top of the niche market and prevent copy cats.

1.4. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to define a positioning for Frends for the German-speaking countries and develop a communication plan by:

- Identifying the priority target group
- Identifying the needs of the target group in the German-speaking market
- Identifying the added value of the Frends headphone brand for the target group
- Analyzing Frends' strengths and differentiation to the competition (points of difference)
- Determining where these unique strengths meet the target groups wants

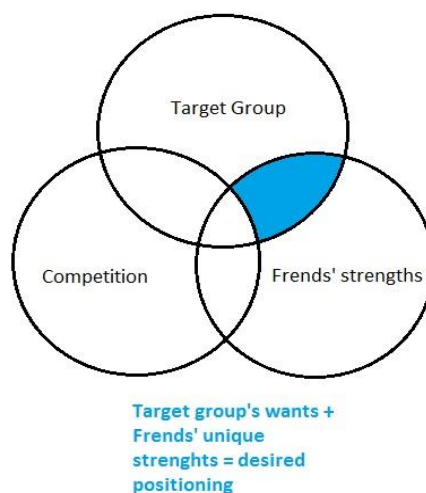


Table 1

(The most important aspect to research now is the overlap between the target group's wants and Friends' strengths that cannot be provided by the competition (see Table 1). To elaborate further on Table 1, it is necessary to research the direct and indirect competitors' positioning strategies in the niche market of lifestyle headphones. This analysis will help to identify clearly how the other brands differentiate from Friends and how Friends is unique in comparison to them.)

1.5. Research Questions

Advice Question

How can Friends position itself in a way that appeals to the German-speaking market?

Central Question

What differentiates Friends from the competition and appeals to the German-speaking target group?

Sub-questions

1. What are the characteristics of the target group (demographics, psychographics, social environment)?
2. What is the target group's attitude and opinion towards the product?
3. What are the needs of the target group (women aged 18-28)?
4. What are the main potential competitors in the German-speaking market and how do they position themselves?
5. What are the strengths of Friends (points of difference)?

Chapter 2 – Situation Analysis

2.1. Micro Environment

Friends is a fashion based electronic accessory brand, which has two main offices of which one is in Encinitas, California and one in Amsterdam, Netherlands. In total, it possesses a workforce of 18 full time employees as well as several external agents. The former professional snowboarder, Keir Dillon, is the founder of the company, who, together with Jan-Hein Habes, owns Friends. Therefore, Dillon manages the US, whereas Habes focuses on the European market. In terms of execution, both parties

are on the same level.

Even though Frends Europe belongs to Frends US, the subsidiary has a slightly different business model, which will be explained in the following section. Frends Europe has three types of accounts, namely its own web shop, distributors and retailers. Distributors operate for countries such as Russia, where sales through Frends' web shop are rather complicated due to shipping restrictions and customs. However, Frends also works with distributors in e.g. Belgium, Ireland and Turkey. The second type of account are retailers, which are either handled by the corresponding distributor or Frends Europe itself. Among these retailers are high profile stores such as Excelsior in Milan, Gente in Rome, Louisa via Roma in Florence, Jades in Düsseldorf, Lodenfrey in München, Selfridges, Harrods and Browns in London. Additionally, Frends headphones are stocked on popular online stores including Net-A-Porter, Avenue 32 and Nelly. Most of the retailers are small boutiques with high-end products, which differs from the American retailers. In the US, Frends Headphones can be found at discount retail stores such as Target instead. To summarize, Frends operates in both business to business as well as business to consumer context. This is relevant, as the retailers might have an influence on Frends' positioning. It is important to monitor whether the external retailers understand the product and present it in a way that is consistent with Frends in-house communication efforts.

The switch to designer women's headphones has proven to be profitable for ROF, as sales figures show that the company has grown since. Furthermore, Frends Europe receives a high amount of exposure in magazines and social media, too. Therefore, the list of European press clippings is very presentable with features in prestigious magazines as Vogue France, Glamour, Grazia and Elle. The latest press clippings booklet contains 54 pages, of which 31 are purely filled with several Magazine press clippings per page. The rest shows all the brand ambassadors, TV appearances and even some best-practice presentations of external stores. Every month, the press clippings booklet is renewed and a booklet targeted at German-customers is planned for the month of June. This edition will exclusively consist of German press.

As Frends' figures show, the German-speaking countries rank rather low in online traffic and purchases on Frends' website. The following data was researched and found through Google Analytics and is based on geographical numbers, meaning that each country was analyzed by territory. These numbers are considered accurate, as Frends' web site identifies IP-addresses by territory and transfers each customer to the matching web site settings. Therefore, the assumption that the UK ranks high because of the English written web site can be excluded. The German-speaking market covered a total amount of approximately 12.000 visits on Frends' web site during the past 8 months (June 2013 – February 2014), which makes up 4.46% of the global visits and therefore ranks seventh in the world make. Interestingly, the UK makes up 6.52 % and therefore ranks first in Europe. In terms

of web orders on Friends' own web shop, it becomes apparent that countries such as the UK and France rank much higher than Germany, Switzerland and Austria, too. Regarding the population of the UK and France in comparison to the joint population of DE-AU-CH, the ranking is quite surprising. The same counts for offline sales, as the distributor in the UK and a large chain department store in France generate a large amount of profit for Friends Europe on a monthly basis.

2.2. Macro Environment – DESTEP

Economic Analysis

As discovered through research by Vouchercloud, every German spends an average of 763 Euro on gadgets per year (Eichenseher, 2014). More than a third of the participants of the research (1874 full-time workers in total) admitted that they would be willing to spend even more if their budget allowed it. Accordingly, 38% of the German population spends more money on gadgets and technology than on clothing, holidays and hobbies (Eichenseher, 2014). Gadgets such as iPads, smartphones, iPods partially require a headphone. Therefore, it is assumed that headphones are a part of this category and therefore an accessory that people are likely to spend money on.

Social/Cultural Analysis

Many psychology experts as well as the general public agree that headphones implicate anti-socialization. According to Dr. Michael Bull, portable music players, and therefore headphones too, help to create “space, time and the boundaries around the self” (Ward, 2004). Especially in urban areas with a visual domination, listening to music privately accomplishes a sense of one's own choice of mood and thoughts. Additionally, wearing headphones signals that one wants to be undisturbed and to seem occupied (Ward, 2004). This is interpreted as being anti-social in public situations. There have been more studies about the topic of isolation through portable audio technology, which suggest that the usage of headphones complicate relationships and interactions. This might lead to alienation of “those around the user who are often put off from making conversation” (Crane, 2005, p. 5). Furthermore, through digitalization, there has been a shift among the importance of aesthetics. The main aesthetic part of music used to be on the cover of a vinyl record and the artwork. As illegal downloading of music has diminished the actual purchase of a record, the aesthetics now lie in the artifact rather than in the object (Kahney, 2004). Therefore, the device itself has gained importance over the years.

Technological Analysis

The largest trends among the technology of headphones are high fidelity, wireless usage and noise-cancelling design. During the past years, consumers have moved away from the average earphones that come with their smartphone and require better sound quality, which they surprisingly are willing to pay more money for, than for the music itself (Klosek, 2011). Therefore, the current preferred headset type moved from the in-ear systems to the larger over-ear headphones. This has two reasons, namely the benefit from an outstanding sound quality as well as the fashion statement a nicely designed headphone can be. What contributes to superior sound experience is the degree to which a headphone cancels out surrounding noises, which is a focus attribute for most headphone companies (Gether, 2013). In addition, the technology sector introduces a large variety of wireless devices. From wireless e-book readers to wireless keyboards, it is very noticeable that an increasing amount of devices pick up on that trend. Therefore, many headphone companies started to equip the headphones with bluetooth to guarantee a simpler way of listening to music (Wireless Technology Advisor, 2013). Another interesting development in technology is the recent collaboration between fashion and technology. In the past, wearable technology, including headphones, has not been designed with women's wants and needs in mind. This has changed recently, which makes fashion a very significant variable for the market growth (Ham, 2014). Examples of this trend are purses that function as phone chargers or EZIO jewelry that can be connected to one's smart phone in order to "alert users of calls or other notifications" (Hamm, 2014). To summarize, style has increased its importance and is now considered to be best paired with functionality, which also applies to Friends Headphones.

2.3. Meso Environment

Having analyzed the Macro environment, it is important to explore the Meso environment, too. Therefore, stakeholder, consumer, communication and market analyzes were conducted.

2.3.1. Stakeholder Analysis

This table represents the most important stakeholders of Frends for this research purpose, including their individual interests in and influences on the company.

Stakeholder	Interest	Influence
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New innovative products• quality at a reasonable price(as large quantity of consumers are students, they probably cannot naturally afford high end headphones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High impact on Frends' profit& results, as consumers are the main source of sales• inspiration for new product ideas, as current trends are taken into account when it comes to new designs• shape the brand, as they represent Frends by wearing the headphones
Retailers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New consumers: if a store starts to sell Frends headphones outside of the Netherlands, it might lead the potential consumers in that country to that store• profitable business• awareness & promotion: appearing on the dealer list of Frends; social media promotion by Frends• good B2B relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High impact on Frends' profit: the more a retailer sells, the more profit Frends makes through potential re-orders• High impact on Frends' image: a store might present Frends headphones in a non-consistent way to Frends' own communication&presentation• promotion of Frends' products: retailers can promote Frends headphones on their own social media, website, etc.
External PR Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• News to communicate to the press• Frends' growth: the more effective the PR efforts are, the more Frends will want to work with this agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on Frends' image in front of the press• can choose the channels

2.3.2. Consumer Analysis

The consumer is in this paper defined as the customer of Friends' own web shop as well as the customers of Friends' external retailers.

According to Friends' employee Shane Lakatos, the largest part of the web traffic is generated by females of the age of 18-28 years (Lakatos, 2014). With regards to Friends' retailers, one can argue that the target audience can also include women of the age of 28-35. This is concluded by observing the target audiences of the individual external stores. Many of them, including stores such as Net-a-Porter, Luisa via Roma or Lodenfrey, sell exclusive high-end brands with men and women with a high income as their target group. The same counts for the small high-end boutiques, which compile the largest part of Friends' dealers. Additionally, Friends reaches out to consumers, who can be described as fashion-forward and tech-savvy, by using social media and collaborating with fashion bloggers and DJs. Friends Headphones are Apple-certified, and one could thus argue that a majority of consumers own iPhones, iPads or iPods.

In order to understand the motivations of the consumer to buy and wear headphones, one has to analyze the consumer behavior and trends within this category. Here it is of importance to make a distinction between rational buying motives and emotional buying motives as well as high involvement and low involvement buying procedures (Brands Audit, n.d.). Especially high-end headphones require a high involvement of the consumer. This can be concluded by taking the following factors into account: high price, low frequency of purchase, symbolic meaning as in social visibility and technical complexity. Another factor contributing to the buying behavior is the large range of differentiated positioning between headphone brands. As most high-end headphone brands launch new innovations and carry a particular brand essence, it has become more complicated for the consumer to choose which one represents his or her wants and needs. With regards to the buying motives, headphones generally cannot be categorized in one of the two. Some consumers might place value on rational factors such as the quality of the sound and wearing comfort, whereas others appreciate an individual design or lifestyle appeal (Brands Audit, n.d.). Specifically for Friends, one can say that consumers usually purchase with emotional buying motives, as Friends Headphones possess design-related qualities rather than rational and technical attributes. Especially the fashion-aspect of Friends Headphones, including the collaborations with fashion designers, attracts consumers that are looking for a prestigious accessory rather than a high quality of sound. The assumption that Friends' consumers do not care about the style of their headphones can be excluded, as it is assumed that these consumers would choose a much more inexpensive alternative.

As Friends utilizes social media as the main communication means for business to consumer communication, it is important to understand the social media behavior of the German market. The German Social Media Consumer Report 2012/2013 by the University of Münster and Roland Berger Strategy Consultants revealed that on average, every German has a profile on three social media networks (Hennig-Thurau & Vor dem Esche, 2013, p. 13). Furthermore, 7.6% of buying decisions are influenced by social media, which is almost as much as Television, which scored 7.8% (Hennig-Thurau & Vor dem Esche, 2013, p. 12). On a daily basis, the average social media user spends two to three hours each day online and every fourth German is busy on social media more than four hours a day (Hennig-Thurau & Vor dem Esche, 2013, p.15). Further figures of The German Social media Consumer Report 2012/2013 showed that, the more significant the purchase, the more the consumer addresses social media for information (Hennig-Thurau & Vor dem Esche, 2013, p. 21). Concerning the demographics and psychographics, this research found out that age, educational income and location do not influence whether a person is using social media or not (Hennig-Thurau & Vor dem Esche, 2013, p. 6).

2.3.3. Communication Analysis

The following paragraphs contain an analysis of the current communication tools utilized by Friends, which includes online communication tools such as the web site, social media channels and e-mails as well as offline communication tools such as trade shows, celebrity endorsement and PR. It is important to acknowledge that these communication tools refer to Friends Europe unless indicated differently.

Starting with the online tools, the web site can be rated as the main and most important communication means. Friends' web site serves as a catalog to browse the current products but also includes the in-house web shop and a dealer list with all the retail partners. Google AdWords plays a decisive role for the web shop's promotion, as many important search terms in several European languages directly refer to Friends' web site.

Apart from this tool, Friends is very active on the social media channels Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media is the main communication tool that connects Friends with the consumers. Through social media the company announces promotional discounts, carries out giveaways and shares news with the followers. Here it is important to mention that Friends US (Facebook name: Friends) and its European equivalent (Facebook name: Friends Europe) have their individual social media channels with different input. However, the US channels have a much larger amount of followers, which can be explained by the simple fact that consumers would generally search for the

brand name excluding the location. Therefore, Frends Europe has a slight disadvantage.

Additionally, e-mails are used as a commercial tool as well. These e-mails are exclusively used to inform B2B partners about new products or events and never function as newsletters for (potential) consumers.

Regarding the offline communication tools, Frends attends several fashion trade shows during Fall-Winter and Spring-Summer fashion week season. The last two years, Frends participated in the Premium Fair in Berlin, Pitti W in Florence and Modefabriek in Amsterdam among others. So far, trade fairs have been a significant success for Frends and largely contributed to new retail partnerships.

As for most companies, PR is necessary to a certain extent. However, Frends has an interesting approach to advertising and PR. Even though the company never pays for PR-related matters, the press clippings are very extensive and prestigious, including multiple articles and features from top fashion magazines such as Vogue, Elle, Cosmopolitan and Instyle. In addition, Frends has a large number of celebrity endorsers and brand ambassadors, which stem solely from sending celebrities the headphones and hoping that they would like and wear it. Therefore, Frends has never paid celebrities with additional fees. The same counts for bloggers, who have represented the headphones in front of large audiences, too. This approach has also been used in the German market by equipping the most influential bloggers in Germany with Frends Headphones. In return, the bloggers publish a review on their blogs or social media and link these posts back to Frends. This has worked very well and is assumed to have influenced an increase of brand awareness in the German-speaking countries.

2.3.4. Market Analysis

Headphones belong to the market of consumer electronics and the sub-category has proven itself as a very lucrative segment. Recently, the GfU (Gesellschaft für Unterhaltungs- und Kommunikationselektronik; engl: Society of Entertainment and Communication Electronics) announced in the Consumer Electronics Market Index for Germany, that the headphone market had a turnover of 81 million Euros in the first quarter of 2014. Therefore, there has been a rise of 2.1% compared to the previous year (GfU, 2014).

The headphone market has grown immensely in the past years, including the comeback of the on-ear and over-ear headphone, which has been replaced by in-ear headphones for a long time. At the moment, on-ear headphones offer the largest variety of styles and brands and generally, the music taste is represented in one's headphone (Ehneß, 2013).

2.3.5. Competitor Analysis

As Frends Headphones have moved to a gender specific electronics device, one must take into account that this new segment of women's headphones has to be analyzed on its own. When Frends launched its women's line in October 2011, this new market was still mainly undiscovered territory. Therefore, Frends could be recognized as one of the pioneers in this product category. However, an increasing number of headphone brands started to incorporate women's wants and needs into their design, such as Molami and Skullcandy. In terms of price and product design, Molami is Frends' largest direct competitor, as both brands describe their products as fashion-forward accessories (Molami, 2014). Skullcandy released its women's line Muse in January 2014, which could be seen as a direct competitor if the design and prices were closer to Frends' products. The Muse line has the slogan "You know you're a dime" and includes prominent colourways and floral patterns.

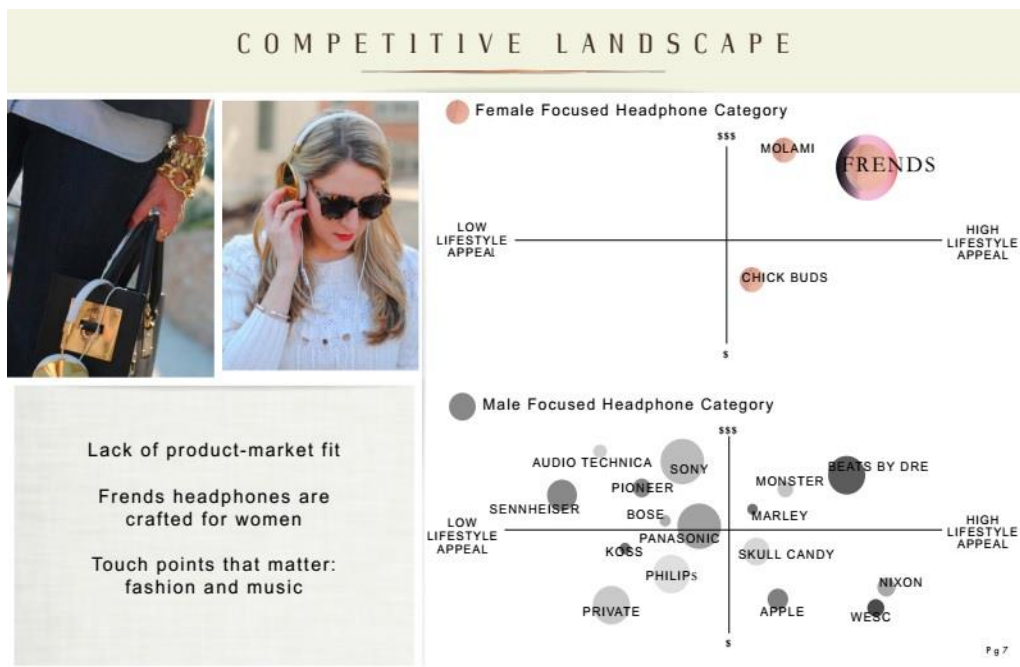


Table 2: Positioning Chart by Frends

Apart from women's headphones, there are indirect competitors for Frends among the gender neutral brands. In order to understand what the competition offers in comparison to Frends, it is of importance to study their positioning. Sennheiser positions itself as the headphone company in pursuit of perfect sound (Sennheiser, 2014) whereas Beats by Dre produce the ultimate cool Hip-Hop oriented headphone. Another aspect important to note is the fact that some headphone brands, such as Parrot, already show indications of imitating Frends' product design. Frends' first headphone line included the colorways of white and gold, white and rosegold and black and silver. Parrot uses the exact same colors with leather materials and a very similar shape to Frends Headphones (Parrot,

2014). The table below shows the points of parity and points of difference between Friends Headphones and its competitors in a clear overview.

Points of Parity	Points of Difference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functionality • Reliability • Noise Canceling • Traveling item • High-end position • Celebrity endorsement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interchangeable caps • exclusive materials (no plastic) • very fashion-forward with actual fashion trends and seasonal collections • fashion designer collaborations • Americana lifestyle appeal • unique retail (boutiques) • jewelry-making production • aspirational

2.4. SWOT Matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread widely across Europe (36 countries) • Unique selling points → sold in fashion boutiques • Fashion-forward design • First headphone with interchangeable caps → consumers can have one headphone but different styles • Great press coverage & large number of celebrity brand ambassadors • Strong lifestyle appeal • headphone market is generally a growing market • aspirational, as in the first headphone brand with interchangeable caps • highly active on social media (through collaborations with bloggers, own social media...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound quality • High pricing • Awareness of women's headphones still low • Not suitable as DJ headphone • Low technological products • Reaches a rather small part of the headphone market due to specification • no clear positioning with emotional added value
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand further in the fashion industry • Collaborations with Designers • reposition headphones as an accessory • Increase accessory value by even more jewelry inspired designs • create a deeper lifestyle appeal for the target audience • make usage of high social media engagement in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could create hype due to sudden large press coverage (magazines, blogs...) • Too expensive for the large audience in regards to sound performance • Copy cats of interchangeable caps • Immense growth of women's headphones market; threat of copy cats

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter identified internal and external influences with regard to the consumer's motivations and disparities with the competition. After conducting this research, internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats of Frends have been recognized and understood.

As the headphone market in Germany is currently situated in an ongoing growth stage, Frends already has an advantage due to its product category. It appears that German consumers already feel a motivation to spend money rather on consumer electronics, including headphones, than on holidays and hobbies. This confirms that the most important factor to focus on for Frends now is to lead this motivation towards buying Frends Headphones. Additionally, the competitive landscape showed that many headphone brands still have a low to non-existent lifestyle appeal. However, competitor brands are catching up with the trends very quickly. While Frends still counts as the market leader in women's headphones, the mainly male-driven product category is slowly taking women's perspectives into account. One of Frends' main points of difference is the jewelry inspired product design, which highlights a gap with the other commercial products. Another crucial strength is the innovation of Frends' interchangeable headphone caps, which creates a benefit for the consumer to use different styles with one pair of headphones. This innovative idea can be combined with the general consumer electronics trend to incorporate style and fashion, which has not emerged in any other headphone brand as much as it has in Frends products. This means that the case of Frends includes the challenge of re-positioning headphones generally as a jewelry item.

Regarding social media, Frends is highly active on several platforms. Firstly, the company regularly engages with the target group through posts, promo codes and giveaways on its own social media sites. Secondly, due to the frequent collaborations with bloggers and celebrities, Frends receives coverage, reviews and recommendations from their channels. This is very important, as German consumers tend to rely on social media information, when deciding on a purchase. Furthermore, this will help to increase brand awareness among the target group, which could help overcome the weakness that is the lack of knowledge of women's headphones.

Nevertheless, there are several possible threats for the brand. First of all, online consumer reviews have shown that the sound quality of Frends is good, but not comparable to other headphone brands or DJ quality headphones (Barry, 2013). Even though Frends certainly does not claim to have DJ sound quality, the high pricing combined with an average sound quality might drive those away who rank sound quality foremost. Hence, Frends needs to focus strongly on those who prefer quality of design over quality of sound.

Concluding, the current strengths of Frends mainly stem from the fashion-tech savvy design

combination. However, the collapsible design, noise cancellation and interchangeable caps have a high risk of being copied by the competition, which leaves Friends with only a few advantages. Therefore, it is necessary to find a unique positioning to set Friends apart from all the other headphone brands on an emotional level that cannot be copied.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

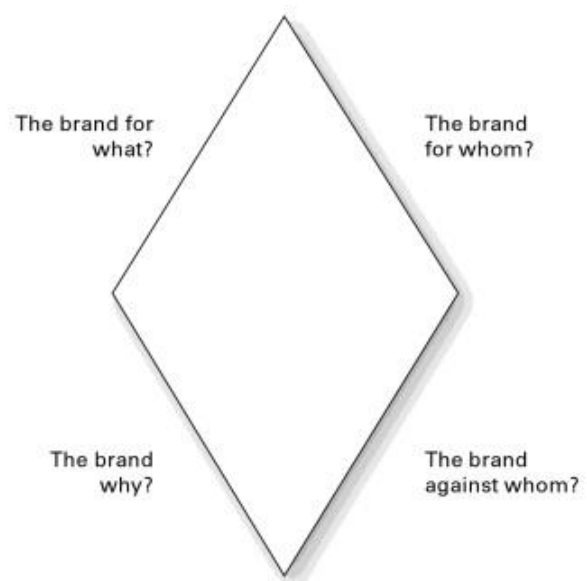
On account of the growing headphone market with a focus on the increasing amount of claimed women's headphones, the fundamental core problem of this research is captured as the lack of differentiation and unique brand positioning of Friends. The literature shall:

- identify the definition of brand positioning
- identify the different positioning concepts
- identify the criteria to choose a positioning
- identify the factors that influence and build a brand
- identify Friends' product category

3.1. What is brand positioning?

According to positioning experts Ries & Trout, “positioning is not what you do to the product. Positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect” (Ries&Trout, 2001, p.2). Therefore, they suggest that the solution to any communication problem can never be found in the product or in one's own mind. Understanding the prospect's or receiver's mind to the extent of having an insight in his or her perception is the key to solving any problem (Ries&Trout, p.25).

Kapferer, however, defines positioning slightly different than Ries & Trout. His definition argues that positioning a brand equals the emphasis of “the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public” (Kapferer, 2012, p. 152). Herewith, Kapferer introduces four main factors which are: the target audience, the consumer's benefit, the factors that confirm this benefit and the competitive context (Kapferer, 2012, p. 152). Hence, positioning is the



overlap of the strengths of a brand among the competition and the wants and needs of the consumer. As argued by Dougherty, positioning also demands a “greater knowledge of the target market” (Dougherty, 1996). At the same time the brand position needs to be relevant to them.

3.1.1. Positioning concepts

There are three types of positioning concepts, namely the functional concept, symbolic concept and experiential concept, of which each is relevant to a particular product type. Starting with the functional concept, it is used by brands that offer products or services of a highly functional and rational nature (Aaker & Biel, 2013, 154). Products that fall into this category could be power tools, tooth paste or vacuum cleaners. By emphasizing on the problem-solving attributes of the product itself, consumers will recognize how it could satisfy one's functional needs. Secondly, symbolic concepts are used for buyers who are in need of “self-enhancement, role position, group membership or ego satisfaction” (Proctor, 2013, p. 200). Cosmetic brands, clothing brands, car brands but also beverages generally apply this concept to their brand strategy. Consequently, symbolic brands need to represent a lifestyle-appeal that the consumer can easily identify with. If a company wants to create a new market space, ebon Kim argues that one must be “willing to challenge the functional-emotional orientation of their industry” (ebon Kim, 1999, p.90). In addition, ebon Kim believes that no brand exclusively uses a functional or emotional appeal. Often, traits of both appeals can be found within one brand, even though the focus might lie on only one. Lastly, product categories that promise “sensory pleasure” would opt for the experiential approach. This method is used to convey the positive attributes of the provided experience (Aaker & Biel, 2013, 154). For instance, amusement parks would show happiness and adventure in their advertisement.

3.1.2. Criteria to choose a positioning

Unlike choosing the competitive positioning strategy of a simple product as toothpaste, selecting the right positioning strategy for a unique and complex product requires careful strategic thinking and decision-making. Hence, it is advised to first list all potential alternatives that fit the requirements and set the brand apart from the competition. Subsequently, these possible strategies are evaluated by certain criteria. Possible criteria for this measurement can be the following: compatibility between positioning and product, relevance of insight, market size and growth potential, power over competitor's weakness, and sustainability of positioning (Kapferer, 2012, p. 153). As Chevron agrees, the selected positioning of a product should be the one attribute “that will make that product most

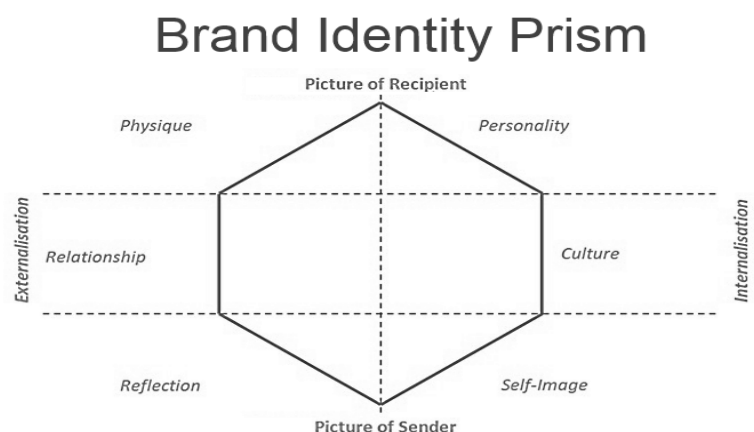
attractive when compared to its competitors“ (Chevron, 2007). Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of utilizing the “Single-Minded Communication Principle” (Chevron, 2007). Consequently, the selected unique attribute should become the main focus of any communication of the brand. According to Chevron, this does not count for brands however. He claims that the values that a brand represents almost form a sort of personality and character. In order to restore these dimensions and multi-facets, . Moreover, characteristics, as they are for people too, possess a complexity of traits, which cannot be expressed when only taking one trait (Chevron, 2007). Therefore, a brand should not represent only one single attribute or value but rather be diverse and flexible to a certain extent.

3.1. The Identity Prism

All important factors and characteristics of a brand can be summarized in a Brand Identity Prism. It consists of six factors, which will be explained and analyzed in the following paragraph. Starting with the visible attributes of a brand, the actual physique of the brand needs to be taken into account. This physique is usually the shape of a brand's flagship product, which comes to the mind of the consumer in the first moment of talking or hearing about the brand. In Coca-Cola's example, this physique would be the traditional shape of the Cola bottle. Even though Coca-Cola also sells cans now, most people still associate the old-fashioned glass bottle with the brand (Kapferer, 2012, p. 159).

Secondly, brands have personalities similar to human beings. For instance, people associate a particular personality with a brand's tone of voice. Endorsement also plays a certain role; for instance in the case of the popularity of using celebrity endorsement or a spokesperson in advertising in order to enhance the perceived link. Quoting Burke, “brand personality should be at the core of consumer messages” (Burke, 1994), he agrees that brand personality increases the impact of individual communications.

Beyond being a personality, a brand should also represent a particular culture. Said brand culture is especially important for brands pursuing a symbolic or lifestyle-oriented positioning (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Moreover, a brand culture can represent an ideology that matches the target group. Brand culture has only recently gained recognition by scholars, even though it has been used for some time among



large brands, such as Nike (Holt & Cameron, 2010).

The fourth part of the Identity Prism is called brand relationship. It suggests that the consumer builds a relationship with the brand and vice versa. However, brand relationships are most crucial to companies who offer a service (Kapferer, 2012, 162).

In addition, Kapferer claims that a brand is the reflection of its customers. At this point it is important to distinguish between the reflection and the target. "The customer should be reflected as he/she wishes to be seen as a result of using a brand" (Kapferer, 2012, 162), indicating that advertising should not target the buyers with a true reflection of who they are, but with a portrait of who they wish to be.

Lastly and slightly similar to the previous brand reflection, brands should also incorporate the prospects' own self-image (Kapferer, 2012, 162).

3.2. Product category: Luxury, premium or fashion?

As Frensdorff claims to be one of the luxury brands in the headphone market, one has to research the meaning of a luxury brand and the necessary steps to position it as such. The target group must recognize the prestige of the brand, and according to Grier, the main ingredients to achieve this are "exclusivity, provenance, scarcity, craftsmanship and innovation" (Grier, 2009). As an example, he takes the whisky brand The Macallan, which sets out with the mission to produce "the world's most precious whisky brand" (Grier, 2009). Every brand needs a particular "X-Factor" to claim the prestige with. In The Macallan example, innovation and partnerships support the X-Factor. For instance, The Macallan brand had a collaboration with the French crystal makers Lalique, who designed and produced special carafes for a limited-edition Macallan whiskey, retailing for \$12.000 (Grier, 2009). These partnerships, he says, can only be successful if both brands share the same values and objectives, in order to enhance each other's prestige and move from a quality brand to a luxury brand.

Kapferer adds that, luxury and premium is recently used as interchangeable synonyms, whereas he suggests differentiating between the two (Kapferer, 2012, p. 66). Hence, he believes that luxury ranks much higher than premium as it stands for a "personal reward, a deep pleasure and a message about where the person stands in the social hierarchy" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 66). At this point, one has to recognize that luxury does not equal "more premium" or mass prestige, it simply ranks higher in quality, exclusivity and pricing. A luxury image is therefore managed by the creator and not adjusted to the consumer, whereas premium products follow traditional marketing strategies (Kapferer, 2012, p. 67).

Another term often confused with premium and luxury is fashion. According to Kapferer, fashion is almost the opposite of luxury. His argument is that, fashion is in as fast as it is out and therefore concentrates on short-term trends. Luxury, however, is enduring and meant to last. Furthermore, the location of production, which in fashion often is in Asia, is a crucial difference to luxury, as well (Kapferer, 2012, p. 67).

3.3. Conceptual Framework

The aim of this chapter was an in-depth assessment of existing literature and expertise in order to find answers to the research questions of this report. Consequently, it has been established that most scholars and experts of the field agree on the importance of positioning. While some professionals suggest focusing primarily on the prospect's mind, others believe that the emphasis should be with identifying one's strengths over the competition. Nevertheless, there is a scientific consensus that every brand requires a clear positioning to differentiate in an overloaded market.

Regarding the three positioning concepts, it is debatable that every brand can fit in only one of the categories. Although most professionals name the same three concepts, one can assume that many brands from the same product category use different concepts. For instance, one car can be more functional whereas another one has a strong symbolic lifestyle-appeal. The same would count for Frends, as headphones belong to consumer electronics, and therefore always have a highly functional purpose. Still, it is believed that a symbolic concept would be the right fit for Frends, too. This is achieved by creating a lifestyle-appeal that potential consumers can identify with, and is therefore a mirror of the consumer's image and identification with the brand. It follows that, Frends' aspired positioning concept could be categorized as symbolism with traits of functionality at the same time.

Concluding the Identity Prism, it is apparent that Frends lacks several decisive factors. Evidently, Frends needs to create a brand personality, brand culture, customer reflection and self-image with the target consumer in mind. Experts suggest that a brand identity can be intensified by celebrity endorsement. As stated in the Communication Analysis, Frends collaborates frequently with highly influential bloggers. Therefore, it would be interesting for the company to find out which personalities the German consumers admire, including role models and sources of inspiration.

Having analyzed the differences and similarities between luxury, premium and fashion, it has become apparent that Frends might not be as luxury as claimed to be. Taking all three categories into account, Frends would best fit the category of premium products, as it is of higher quality and exclusivity as other headphone brands, yet follows the traditional marketing strategies. The reason

why fashion is not the right match is obviously because of Friends product category of headphones. Seasonal sales are not used for Friends Headphones, on that account the fashion characteristic of being ephemeral is not applicable. However, this should not be confused with Friends being a fashionable headphone brand, which is still the fact.

3.4. Knowledge gap

In general, the Literature review provided consistent principles to a successful positioning strategy. Still, it is significant to discover an approach suitable for Friends' case. Friends holds a unique product and operates in a niche market that has not fully established itself yet. Therefore, no best-practice example with the same or similar situation can be deployed. As positioning is so consumer-driven, one has to realize and fully understand the potential consumer's motives, lifestyle, self-image and personality. An insight into the triggering factors of buying a Friends Headphone has to be found, which reaches its limits in desk research. Furthermore, the needs as well as opinion of the potential consumers need to be explored. Lastly, Friends operate on different continents, of which the US and Europe are the most significant ones. Positioning the product in Germany would require a strategy that seamlessly works in the rest of Europe too. Even within Europe, many cultural differences can be found, which is why it is important to find a flexible solution. As this research focuses on the German-speaking market, this territory will serve as the foundation of the field-research. However, one needs to keep in mind to not drive the positioning strategy in a too geographically focused direction.

Chapter 4 – In-depth Research Methodology

As a consequence of the critical analysis of relevant literature, several knowledge gaps have been established. These knowledge gaps shall be answered through in-depth research, in order to understand how the previously analyzed theory can be adapted to Friends' case. Hence, the field investigation shall identify the customer's needs.

4.1. Conceptual Design

In order to create a positioning for Friends, one needs to research the consumers' expectations, wants and needs in the market of headphones. Hence, this research will identify the specific consumer needs and expectations of the product. Apart from that, the consumers' own personality and lifestyle need to be identified in order to establish a positioning with a symbolic concept based on the consumer.

Research Objectives

The aim of this research is to develop a brand positioning that will appeal to the German target group by:

- Identifying the product needs of the target group in the German-speaking market
- Understanding the target groups opinion about the product
- Identifying the consumers' lifestyle
- Determining where Friends' strengths meet the target groups wants and need

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of the German target group (ambitions, self-image, status)?
2. What is the target group's attitude and opinion towards the product?
3. What or who does the target group look up to?
4. What are the target group's needs and expectations of Friends' product category?

4.1.1. Operationalization

Abstract Concept: Functional needs of consumers

Variables: Product use, Product expectations, Functional purpose

Indicators:

- situations when consumers use headphones
- the consumers' main purposes to use headphones
- the consumers' perceived relevance of headphone attributes (sound, design, materials,...)
- general relevance of headphones in consumers' lives
- the extent to which the consumers are satisfied with their current headphones
- the reasons why they are satisfied/dissatisfied

Abstract Concept: Emotional needs of consumers

Variables: Self-Image, Aspirations, Personal Identification with the brand

Indicators:

- the extent to which other headphone brands appeal to the consumer
- the extent to which Friends appeals to the consumer
- role models the consumers look up to
- the consumers' fashion style

- the consumer's free time activities
- the degree to which the consumer cares about own physical appearance
- the consumer's goals in terms of career

The operationalization required thorough planning and was comprised of two abstract concepts, the variables and the indicators. Concerning the abstract concept, the big picture of the operationalization were the needs of the consumer with the symbolic concept discussed in 3.1.1. kept in mind. In order to understand these needs, it is important to distinguish between functional and emotional needs. Both categories need to be taken into account for the research, as Friends operates in the headphone industry, which requires communication of the functional attributes of the product, too.

To define the functional needs of the consumers, the variables product use, buying behavior, functional purpose were chosen. The indicators to measure these variables were defined as when and how consumers use headphones, the consumers' reason to use headphones, the consumers' perceived relevance of certain headphone attributes (sound, design, materials,...), the consumers' general perceived relevance of headphones in their lives, the headphone brand they own at the moment, the extent to which the consumers are satisfied with their headphones, the reasons why they are satisfied/dissatisfied and the type of stores consumers look for headphones.

Regarding the emotional needs, the variables self-image, aspirations and personal Identification were chosen. These were measured by identifying the extent to which other headphone brands appeal to the consumer, the extent to which Friends appeals to the consumer, the role models the consumers look up to, the consumers' fashion style, the consumer's free time activities, the degree to which the consumer cares about physical appearance and the consumer's goals in terms of career.

These indicators are commonly used by branding scholars and thus judge to be useful.

4.2. Technical Design

Based on the conceptual design, the details of the technical design were established. Therefore, a descripto-explanatory research approach was chosen, which suggests a descriptive study as “a precursor to explanation” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 140). Additionally, the strategies chosen for this research were a survey and several interviews.

Concerning the survey, sixty respondents were selected through judgment sampling, as it is important to ensure a representative sample for this research (Bajpai, 2011, p. 105). First of all, the sample was chosen with the German-speaking market kept in mind. Therefore, the majority of

respondents were German. However, a few Dutch and Swedish respondents were chosen in order to avoid a too geographically focused outcome. In addition, the sample was chosen by age and appearance.

Regarding the interviews, ten interviewees were selected through judgment sampling, too. This sample resembles the one from the survey, as it was based on the same criteria. The interviews were decided to keep relaxed and open, in order to create a discussion rather than a Q&A. However, as interviews should always follow the same structure, “meaning the variation in the data collection should be as small as possible” (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, p. 59), the interviews were planned and structured in an equal manner. Therefore, the interviewees were first asked to evaluate product and lifestyle imagery of Friends as well as competitor brands and subsequently had to describe how and why different images are appealing or not. The other brands chosen for the interview were Beats by Dre, Sennheiser, Skullcandy and Molami.

4.3. Limitations

The potential limitations that could influence this research are:

- The survey sample might be too small, which creates the risk that the answers do not represent the target audience
- The answers might not be honest or accurate.
- The questions might be misunderstood by the respondent and therefore answered inaccurately
- As the research is based on the German-speaking market, the results might be culturally influenced and therefore not applicable in a global context. Therefore it was important to also select a few non-German samples.

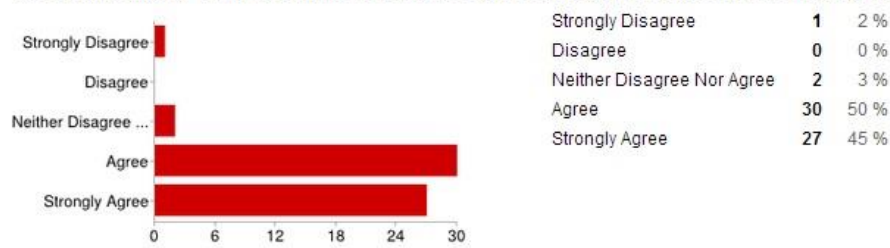
Chapter 5 – In-depth research results

In this chapter, the results of the previously conducted in-depth research will be described and analyzed. The survey served to learn more about the functional and the emotional needs of the consumers and helped to understand the self-image and aspirations of the consumers. The interviews, however, clarified the extent to which consumers find other headphone brands appealing, but also clarified how Friends appeals to the target group. Hence, an insight was gained into why certain headphone brands are more appealing than others. In contrast to the survey, the interviewee could directly describe her opinion about Friends in particular, as imagery was shown and compared during the interview.

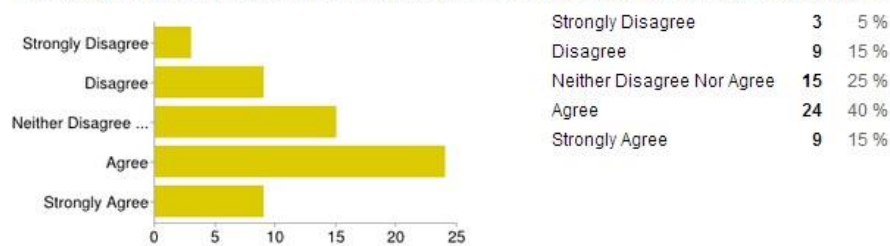
5.1. Functional needs

The majority of respondents (86%) answered to use their headphones weekly or 3-5 times a week, which indicates that headphones play rather important and frequent role in the consumer's daily lives. When asked if the currently owned headphone brand is satisfying, 83% answered positive. Those who are dissatisfied with their current headphones either wish for a better sound or more comfortable wear. As the Technological Analysis in 2.2. indicated, most consumers do value sound quality as a crucial factor. In total, 95% of the respondents agreed that good sound quality is an important quality of a headphone. Regarding the importance of the design of a headphone, 55% agreed or strongly agreed that they value this attribute as a quality. Those who answered that design is a crucial factor were most likely to agree that headphones are an accessory. However, 40% and therefore the majority of respondents disagreed that headphones should fit their fashion style. This clashes with the recent trend of collaborations between technology and fashion, which was found in the Technological Analysis in 2.2. Those who do align their headphone choice with their fashion style formed 33% of the respondents. Despite the rather small percentage of people associating headphones with fashion style, it is still interesting for Friends as a design driven brand that those who do buy a headphone for the design would clearly be more attracted to a headphone brand with a fashion influence.

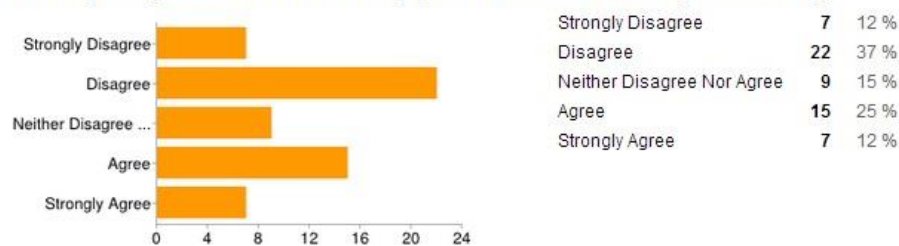
The sound quality of my headphones is important to me. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



The design of my headphones is important to me. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



I see my headphones as an accessory. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



The respondents were additionally asked to rank the relevance of the types of materials used for a headphone, which resulted in 37% being indifferent. Moreover, 33% value the choice of materials strongly or moderately, whereas the same amount of respondents felt the exact opposite. What seemed to be important to most respondents, too, was the ability to store their headphones easily in a handbag. Here, 85% answered that this is very important to them, which creates another strength for Friends, as the headphones are collapsible and come with a small clutch to store in one's purse. Lastly, it appeared that consumers use their headphones primarily while commuting or travelling, followed by sports activities and at home.

5.2. Self-image of the target consumer

The respondents organize their free time mainly with social activities such as dinners or drinks with friends, party and social media and 50% of the respondents also answered to do sports in their free time. Furthermore, 33% and therefore the majority, follow current fashion trends, which indicates an interest in fashion. It was found, that the target consumer likes to take care of herself and places

value on a well-groomed appearance, as 76% answered to feel more confident when wearing make-up and 73% like to put effort into choosing an outfit for the day.

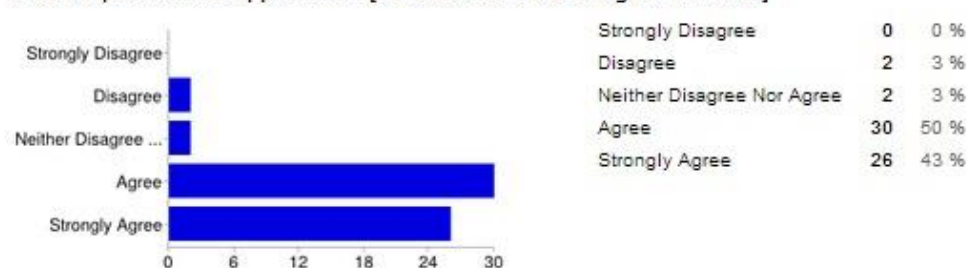
I feel more confident about myself when I wear makeup. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



I like to put effort into choosing my outfit for the day. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



I value a presentable appearance. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



This confirms the symbolic concept approach for Frends, as Proctor suggested in the literature review that said concept is applicable for consumers who among other things are in need of self-enhancement and ego satisfaction. Frends' target consumer wants to maintain a sleek appearance, which means that this is triggered by ego satisfaction, or self-enhancement by looking good in front of others. Furthermore, the respondents appeared to be very ambitious in their lives and having rather clear goals in life. As shown by the survey, a majority of 73% agreed or strongly agreed to the following statement “I am striving to work my way up to a high position in my professional field”, which demonstrates another aspect of the self-enhancement pattern. In addition, 78% think a good salary is important in an occupation.

5.3. Role models of the target group

As was found in the literature, a brand identity requires a persona that represents the brand. This character should be based on who or what the target group looks up to. Hence, in the survey, the respondents were asked the open question “Who is your role model? Please describe shortly why this person is your role model“. Almost every respondent had a different role model, however, all role models had something in common. The most frequent words used to describe why a certain person is a role model were confidence, strength and being persistent in life. A few examples of responses are as follows:

- *“My role model is Kate Moss, although she has made negative headlines too she has proven to be responsible and focused when her career and family are concerned. She also has impeccable taste and knows how to get up when knocked down“*
- *“I would say that I don't have a specific person whose steps I follow. Mainly, I try to focus on the important things in life, such as getting a prosperous career, look as good as possible and take care of my family and friends. I would say that I value my beloved ones and know what my priorities in life are.“*
- *“Oprah Winfrey. Because she stayed confident that one day she was going to make it. Besides this she is a generous and spiritual person who does not take anything for granted.“*

Concluding, the target group looks up to mainly female role models that are strong and confident. However, many answers also indicated style as an important factor. Therefore, the average role model of this target group is a successful woman, who knows what she wants in life and also has a great sense of style.

5.4. Personal Identification with the brand

The following answers arose from the individual interviews, in which interviewees were asked to explain how and if the images of several headphone brands are appealing. In general, most pictures of the collage conveyed a somewhat consistent lifestyle to the interviewees. The imagery of Beats by Dre for example, clearly reminded all respondents of a sporty, urban lifestyle and Molami's imagery reminded of jet-setting models that like to attend fancy events. The lifestyle imagery of Frennds appeared to be the most difficult to grasp a specific lifestyle from. Most explanations of the lifestyle that a Frennds' image portrays were very vague, too. Therefore, the first image of Frennds was mostly described as preppy, but when describing the personality of the girl, the responses varied from smart to having everything planned out in her life as well as from party girl to bookworm. The second image

of Friends was criticized by two interviewees for being too simple to interpret much. Furthermore, this image also triggered very varying answers such as “she enjoys her single life” and “I can imagine she has two kids and a husband and music is her balance in life”. This shows that the brand Friends does not have a clear message or target group in its imagery, which greatly influences its communication on social media and the in-house website and web shop. The other brands seemed to convey a much clearer personality, which Friends lacks at the moment.

It was important to analyze how the product itself is perceived by the respondents. From the selection of Beats by Dre, Skullcandy, Urbanears, Molami and Friends, Friends' headphones were considered the most beautiful and extraordinary. None of the interviewees have heard of the interchangeable caps, but found the idea very interesting. The product images of Friends were reminded some interviewees of accessories and jewelry. Therefore, one interviewee said “being able to change these caps would already make me buy them”, and other interviewees appreciated the diversity of styles that are offered. Friends Headphones scores with eye-catching design, which according to the respondents, cannot be compared to the other brands. One respondent described Friends headphones as “a great deal, because you do not only get a headphone but a piece of jewelry, too” (Laura Pföhler, Appendix 3). Surprisingly, eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that the materials stand out, too. Most other headphones are made of plastic, so the utilization of metal hardware, leather and horn imitation made of acetate of Friends headphones seemed greatly appreciated. This finding clashes with the outcomes of the survey where 69% of respondents were either indifferent about the materials used or disagreed that it is important at all. This might be due to the fact that most other headphone brands only utilize plastics in their fabrication, so the respondents of the survey did not associate headphones with more exceptional materials.

When asked what or who they think of when looking at the product only, every girl answered that it reminds them of a big city lifestyle. Most interviewees pictured a girl in her twenties that is at the beginning of a promising career and who has a chic and preppy style without being too polished. When asked how one would feel wearing a pair of Friends Headphones, one interviewee answered “I usually do not like big headphones, because I would feel like everybody is looking at me. But with these headphones, I would think: yes, please look at me and my headphones!” (Johanna Arnold, Interview, Appendix 3). Furthermore, it was hinted that they would feel very cool, because wearing the headphones means being occupied and inaccessible while still being very prominent due to the statement accessory (Appendix 3). In addition, respondents liked the different sizes of the headphones, so that girls with smaller sized heads are able to wear on-ear headphones, too.

Chapter 6- Conclusions

The aim of this research was to understand the functional and emotional needs of the German-speaking target group regarding the headphone market and subsequently develop a brand positioning with a symbolic concept for Friends in the German-speaking countries. Hence, the in-depth research investigated the product expectations, usage behavior, self-image and aspirations of the target group as well as the degree to which the target group can identify with the Friends brand.

Regarding the functional needs of the respondents, almost all respondents (95%) of the survey strongly value a good sound quality. As was previously identified, the sound quality of Friends Headphones has been criticized by online reviews for being mediocre for being in such a high price category. As the amount of respondents who care about sound quality was significantly high, this can be a strong weakness for Friends. However, the majority of respondents (55%) also answered that the design of a headphone is important and 33% choose their headphones based on their fashion style. There is a possibility that, the reason why only a third of respondents think a headphone should fit one's sense of fashion is because headphones are generally not associated with fashion yet. This forms an opportunity for Friends to reposition headphones, and especially women's headphones, as a true fashion accessory. The same counts for the perceived importance of materials used for headphones. In the survey, one third of respondents said they see the materials as an important aspect whereas another third of respondents disagreed with that statement. However, in the in-depth interviews it was apparent that the interviewees found the exceptional and non-plastic materials of Friends very appealing. Subsequently, it is believed that the survey respondents' opinions were influenced by the fact that headphones are mostly made of plastic materials and therefore have not been associated with more creative materials such as leather, enamel and even python leather. Clearly, the opinion was changed once the interviewees saw imagery of the headphones. In conclusion, the creativity of materials used for Friends headphones forms another strength.

After analyzing the results of the self-image investigation of the target group, one can describe the potential consumer as a girl in her 20's, who appreciates a good-looking appearance with a hint of vanity, but also has high ambitions in terms of her career. This is in line with the explanations of the target group's role models, who are being looked up to due to persistence, success and fashion style. These answers could be a helpful inspiration to identify a brand personality as well as bloggers or public figures to collaborate with in the future.

The in-depth interviews additionally showed that Friends lifestyle imagery lacks a clear and consistent picture of the brand. No other brand was as difficult to describe through the imagery as Friends. Furthermore, the new imagery of Friends was voted unappealing to the interviewees, as the model was perceived as older and in a different stage in life than the target group. Some competitor

brands, such as Molami and Beats by Dre, conveyed the same message to most interviewees. This shows that the Friends brand needs a clear message and target group in mind for all its communication and imagery.

One point was agreed by every interviewee, namely that Friends has the most appealing product. Especially the interchangeable caps were considered as outstanding, and the interviewees thought that design-wise, the other brands are not in the same league as Friends. This was justified by the above mentioned materials, shape and sizes of the headphones. Some of the interviewees appreciated the smaller sized Layla model, while others described the in-ear headphones as a piece of jewelry or earring that plays music. Another advantage perceived by the respondents, was the fact that purchasing Friends headphones would get you two things in one, namely a unique headphone but also an accessory. This was very well received by the target group, which creates a strong advantage for Friends, as none of the other headphones were associated with jewelry or accessories to the same extent. Lastly, the headphones were perceived as conveying a cool, preppy chic and slightly nonchalant style, and the respondents felt that the headphones would make them feel very confident. This is another proof that Friends is a brand in need of a symbolic positioning as Friends headphones appear to trigger self-enhancement and improve the self-image.

Chapter 7 - Recommendations

This chapter shall serve as a plan to implement the conclusions of the research results into a positioning for Frends. In Chapter 1, the advice question *“How can Frends position itself in a way that appeals to the German-speaking market?”* was introduced and will be answered in the following paragraphs.

7.1. Strategic justification

It was concluded that the brand Frends should be positioned with a symbolic concept, as the target group indeed appeared to be in need of self-enhancement. The in-depth research showed that Frends' main strength lies in the product design. During a comparison, all interviewees claimed Frends would be the brand they would choose out of a selection of well-known headphone brands. Therefore, it is important to further stress the design-related attributes of Frends headphones. As the lifestyle imagery of Frends was perceived as rather bland and inexpressive, it is important to create a stronger and clearly focused lifestyle-appeal in all future communications.

7.2. Communication strategy

The objectives of the communication strategy are:

- 6 months after implementation, Frends will use imagery and communication adjusted to the target groups perceptions of the product
- 6 months after implementation, Frends will have a positioning that conveys a clear lifestyle that appeals to the target groups emotional needs
- One year after implementation, Frends will be associated with this lifestyle by those who know the brand

In order to achieve the first objective, Frends will need to invest in new imagery. This will of course require a certain budget, but will be effective in the long-run. As imagery of a brand does not necessarily have to be renewed frequently, this should be viewed as an investment in the success of the company. The new imagery should include an urban setting and portray a fashionable girl. The headphones should stand out in the picture, as the target group perceived the product as an eye-catcher with wow-effect that would make people stare. An example of suitable settings could be in front of the Soho House in New York City or at the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin. It could, however, also portray a fashion forward girl walking out of a tube in the London Underground, listening to her music

with Frends headphones. Moreover, the imagery should portray confidence, as this was the main feeling that the target group has from wearing the headphones.

Regarding the communication of Frends, one can say that a slogan is necessary to stress the brand's positioning. At the moment, Frends does not have a slogan besides "Women's Headphones". This needs to be discussed with the copywriter of the company as decisions on that cannot be made at this stage. It is strongly recommended to play on the jewelry-inspired design, emphasizing the fact that Frends has the opportunity to reposition headphones as an accessory.

Frends is very active on social media and it is advised to continue this, as the German target group is very active on social media. Considering that Frends has collaborated with many bloggers already, the brand should focus on choosing girls that fit the desired lifestyle appeal. Therefore, collaborations should be made with influential fashion bloggers in their early or mid-20's. Well known fashion icons of this age group could be selected as brand ambassadors, in order to further manifest the desired positioning.

7.2.1. Tactical plan for implementation

In order to choose the right settings for the lifestyle imagery, it is advised to research locations in metropolises that are considered equally hip and fashionable. It is considered important to choose models that are more appealing to the target group than the ones from the current imagery. This means that the new models should be slightly younger than the current ones.

The slogan is a very big part of a brand, which is why this is advised to be discussed with the US office. Frends is a global brand and therefore should have a logo and positioning that is in line with the US team's opinion. PR agencies and individual agents need to be informed about the desired lifestyle-appeal and changes of the brand as well, in order to make sure that every channel and account communicates the brand in an aligning way. Additionally, the external stores that sell Frends should be informed. This can be performed by briefing and training the sales department of each store to present Frends in the right way. Keywords could be of interest to ensure a consistent tone of voice as well as best practice examples of stores that present the headphones in a suitable way to have a corresponding presentation of the brand.

Future collaborations with bloggers and celebrities should have clear requirements. In the past, headphones were randomly sent to celebrities in hope of receiving a photo on social media or through paparazis. Instead, Frends should focus on creating relationships with influential bloggers or celebrities who will frequently wear the headphones on events or share the headphones on social media.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey

Final Paper Research

Hey there! I am currently doing research for a headphone company in correspondence with my Bachelor thesis. I would very much appreciate it, if you could take a couple of minutes to answer my questions. You would help me immensely. Please choose your answers as honestly and specifically as possible. Your answers are of course 100% anonymous and won't be published or used for any other purpose. Thank you!

* Erforderlich

1. How old are you? *

- ☐ 16-18
- ☐ 19-22
- ☐ 23-29
- ☐ 30+

2. Which of the following categories best describes your status? *

- ☐ High school student
- ☐ Undergraduate student
- ☐ Post-graduate student
- ☐ Young professional
- ☐ Unemployed

3. What do you enjoy doing in your free time? *

You can tick more than one answer.

- ☐ Sports
- ☐ Going to concerts
- ☐ Cultural activities (museums, galleries...)
- ☐ Shopping
- ☐ Dinner/Drinks with friends
- ☐ Party
- ☐ Reading books
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Sonstiges:

4. Which of the following categories best describes your fashion style? *

- ☐ Rock-chic/Edgy
- ☐ Preppy
- ☐ Bohemian
- ☐ Current Trends
- ☐ Sporty/Comfy
- ☐ Simplistic/Monochrome

5. Evaluate the following statements. *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel more confident about myself when I wear makeup.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to put effort into choosing my outfit for the day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I value a presentable appearance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am striving to work my way up to a high position in my professional field.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the salary is an important aspect of a job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Who is your role model? Please describe shortly why this person is your role model. *

7. Do you own headphones? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

8. Which headphone brand do you own? *

9. Why did you choose that brand? *

10. Are you satisfied with your headphones? *

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. If you answered Yes to Question 10: Why are you satisfied with your headphones?

12. If you answered No to Question 10: What would you wish to be different about your headphones?

13. When do you use your headphones? *

You can tick more than one answer.

- ☐ When I do sports
- ☐ When I travel/commute
- ☐ At home
- ☐ At work
- ☐ Sonstiges:

14. How often do you use your headphones? *

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ 3-5 times per week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Never

15. Evaluate the following statements. *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I see my headphones as an accessory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sound quality of my headphones is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The design of my headphones is important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me what types of materials my headphones are made of.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to be able to store my headphones easily in my handbag.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want my headphones to fit the rest of my fashion style.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Where would you most likely search for headphones? *

- ☐ Electronic Stores
- ☐ Department Stores
- ☐ Online
- ☐ Sonstiges:

Senden

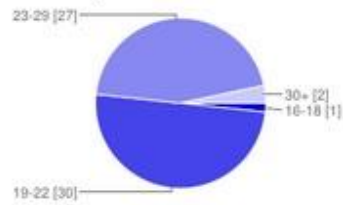
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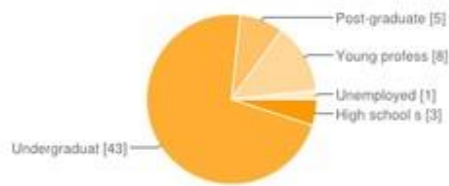
APPENDIX 2 – Results

1. How old are you?



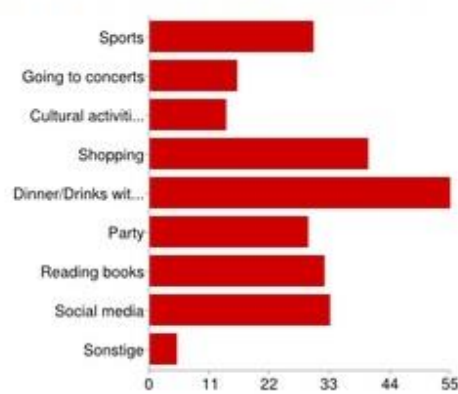
16-18	1	2 %
19-22	30	50 %
23-29	27	45 %
30+	2	3 %

2. Which of the following categories best describes your status?



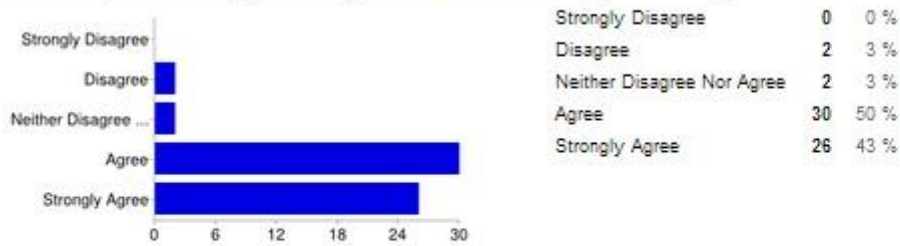
High school student	3	5 %
Undergraduate student	43	72 %
Post-graduate student	5	8 %
Young professional	8	13 %
Unemployed	1	2 %

3. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

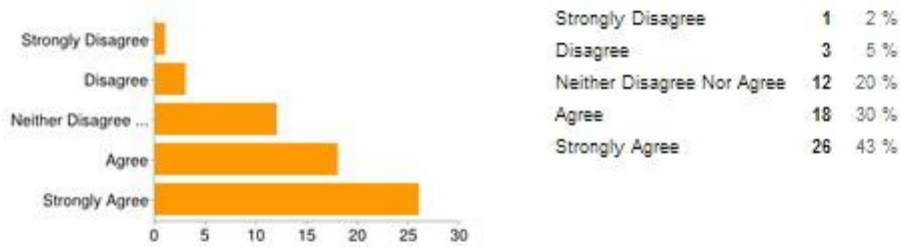


Sports	30	12 %
Going to concerts	16	6 %
Cultural activities (museums, galleries...)	14	6 %
Shopping	40	16 %
Dinner/Drinks with friends	55	22 %
Party	29	11 %
Reading books	32	13 %
Social media	33	13 %
Sonstige	5	2 %

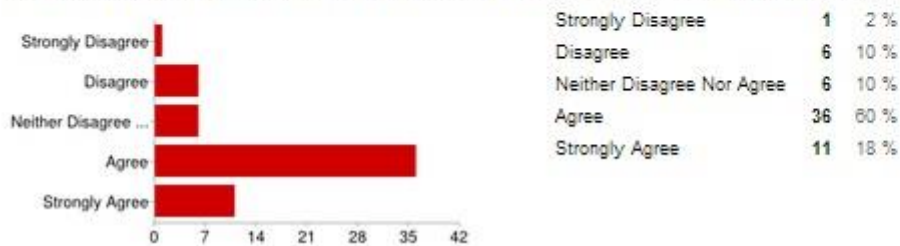
I value a presentable appearance. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



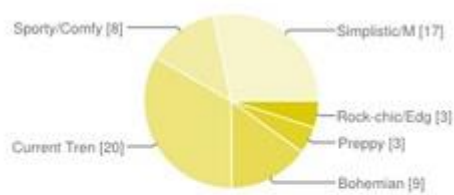
I am striving to work my way up to a high position in my professional field. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



I believe that the salary is an important aspect of a job. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]

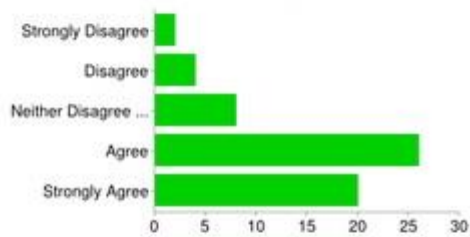


4. Which of the following categories best describes your fashion style?



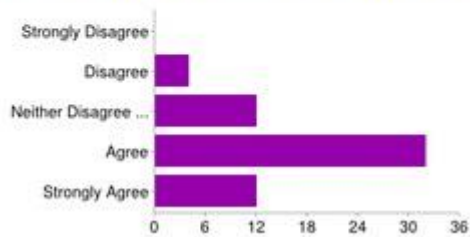
Rock-chic/Edgy	3	5 %
Preppy	3	5 %
Bohemian	9	15 %
Current Trends	20	33 %
Sporty/Comfy	8	13 %
Simplistic/Monochrome	17	28 %

I feel more confident about myself when I wear makeup. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



Strongly Disagree	2	3 %
Disagree	4	7 %
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	8	13 %
Agree	26	43 %
Strongly Agree	20	33 %

I like to put effort into choosing my outfit for the day. [5. Evaluate the following statements.]



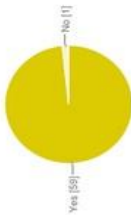
Strongly Disagree	0	0 %
Disagree	4	7 %
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	12	20 %
Agree	32	53 %
Strongly Agree	12	20 %

6. Who is your role model? Please describe shortly why this person is your role model.

Really don't have one, sorry! :) No answer. I do not specifically have a role model. However, I admire women that have a family and have a job that they love to do. I think it is very hard to manage both at the same time. Actually I don't have one :) Do not have one. Beyonce - strong and powerful woman, mother and wife, she is very disciplined. I do not really have a role model as I get inspiration from a lot of people around me that help me become my own role model and hopefully those of others. - I don't think I have a role model. The most cliché answer ever. My mom, because she is resourceful, never giving up and has been through a lot. And still laughs constantly. Nikki Sharp. Rachel Brathen, because she's full of energy and lives every day as if it's the last. My mother mostly because of her confidence and intelligence. My parents. Both are very hard working and always aiming for the best result. don't really have one. Jane Goodall- passionate, compassionate and simple in her life style. I appreciate that. Richard Branson because he creates opportunities and has a vision for future and sustainability, and a really positive attitude towards life. Those kind of people have special energy and create awesome things and are true leaders. If she was a real person, Jessica Pearson, from Suits. The woman has balls, she knows what she wants and she goes for it. She is not afraid of other people's opinion and she is flawless. Or at least appears to be so, never showing any weakness. Whitney Houston - inspired to spread love all over the world - with words and with actions. Beyonce, since she is a strong, modern woman who seems to have it all in place. too many. I don't have a specific role model. I admire the people around me, my closest friends, my family. Emanuele Alt. Leighton Meester, because of her great and individual clothing style. He is very positive and intellectual. Leighton Meester, because she has a good styling and attitude. I do not really have a role model. I do not like comparing and measuring myself with others. Instead I try to live according to my life's desires. Don't have one. I always try to be the best me. My role model is Kate Moss, although she has made negative headlines too she has proven to be responsible and focused when her career and family are concerned. She also has impeccable taste and knows how to get up when knocked down. My grandmother. Because she is always kind, caring and loves endlessly. Marissa Mayer - Yahoo's CEO- successful, intelligent and good looking woman. My role model is a teacher I had at school, as she was beautiful, classy and intelligent. Sir Richard Branson- his entrepreneurial skills are highly encouraging and motivating. He has many good tips and ideas of how to "rock" in the business world. Unserer mudda, well sie uns immer unterstützt und obwohl sie ihren partner und fast all ihren besitz verloren hat, es geschafft hat wieder aufzustehen und viel aneiner um sich und ihren kindern das zu ermöglichen. My role model is my dad as he worked his way up to be on his current position. Not a single person, but anyone who is not pretending to be someone else and who is happy to be unique. samantha from sato, because she is so free minded yet successful and doesnt care what other think of her. My role model is my mum, because she gets through everything with so much courage, strength and love. Even if it is impossible to handle the situation. My role model is my mother. She is that to me because of all the things she have been through and the manner she used to deal with everything. I don't have a specific role model, but I do like and admire people who strive for their dreams. my role model is bob marley He died for his beliefs. Karl Lagerfeld. I would say that I don't have a specific person whose steps I follow. Mainly, I try to focus on the important things in life, such as getting a prosperous career, look as good as possible and take care of my family and friends. I would say that I value my beloved ones and know what my priorities in life are. I don't have one. My parents, since they worked themselves up from nothing and do what they love as a profession. Oprah Winfrey. Because she stayed confident that one day she was going to make it. Besides this she is a generous and spiritual person who does not take anything for granted. I don't have one. Mahatma Gandhi is not only a role model for me, but for the world at large. Many, including Martin Luther King, have followed his ideals to fight an injustice with non-violence. He did a lot for women's rights in India and mainly, thanks to him, women have an important social and political role in India. He is recognized as The Father of the Nation there and the world is inspired with his faith in truth and justice for all mankind. Oprah, she is a strong independent woman who is a great inspiration. My dad, probably. He didn't have anyone to help him though he achieved a lot and opened his own firm which is quite successful. Angelina Jolie hard working woman. She knows what she wants. A good friend of mine, he is a hard worker and always strives to better himself, both personally and professionally. This inspires me to better myself. Every person that is able to have a family and a career at the same time. Kerz Zouten, she is a very successful blogger and started her own clothing line. Audrey Hepburn- timeless style jess j. outrageous singer in general ambitious people who take matters into their own hands. My mom, because she is able to make everything possible. And feminists in general. In my opinion, they suffered heavily in order to assure us "some" equality. My role model is myself. I do not want to look at anyone and act like him/her, I'm striving for my best possible self.

7. Do you own headphones?

Yes 59 98 %
No 1 2 %



8. Which headphone brand do you own?

Beats Urbanears iPhone Skullcandy HTC I don't know Monster Semihisar Apple Iphone Philips house of marley Sony Marshall Friends apple earpods WESC torlbo Nokia apple Philips Don't know no special brand Samsung Sony Apple sony Semihisar (or smth like this)

9. Why did you choose that brand?

They came along with my iPhone. Because they came with my telephone. Because they are pretty. It was the most famous one for me. They were affordable and I don't need them often so for my situation it's the best option. They were together with my iPod. I don't listen to music with headphones daily, and therefore the quality and the comfort doesn't play a big role for me. Only when travelling, though I find the ones I have comfy enough for that matter. My Brother gave them to me. Love the style! because it's the one for iPhones. I received them when I bought the phone. quality. I really like the design. friend's recommendation. Because I had previously used them and never had any problems, so I stayed with that brand. It came with my iPod. It had the most reasonable price. It was cheap and needed some in short time, so I choose this brand. They are really great because of the quality! Most of the headphones can survive with me only 2-3 months max but this ones are working perfectly at least for a year. Best while affordable. I chose the brand because they are known for great sound in their amplifiers and I figured that their headphones should be great because of that. I chose the specific model because of the look of the headphone, it got a couple of different textures which makes them interesting to the eye. The model had gotten good reviews from both professionals and ordinary people. The headphones also got a headset and a long cord which is a must for me. The price seemed okay in comparison to other headphone brands. It was expensive and the seller assured me some quality. Bought them at the freestore for 10 euros. Price/ quality seemed good. I received them when I purchased my iPod. My cell phone is HTC. Because when I bought my iPhone, I received them (it was part of the package). Got them from work. cheap but good quality. quality. Don't chose by brand but by sound features. Because the headphones have a great sound, the brand is trustworthy for it's good quality, the headphone looked nice and the price wasn't too high. Because it came with the phone. they were cheap and have a good sound. I received them with my phone. Good relationship between price and quality. - well-known brand - good sound. I was going for something that had a good quality-price ratio. These earplugs seemed to be what I was looking for! Believe it is reliable quality. I am a lover of hip hop and R&B music. For that kind of style beats headphones offer the best quality. Good price. They came with my iPod. It was a gift, but I would choose for it because of it is supposed to be good quality. It was a recommendation and cheap because they were pretty and cheap. just like this brand. Because they are a beautiful accessory to my personal style. I also really like that I can change the caps to match my outfits. Because they make beautiful headphones. They came with my iPod. My daughter is doing her internationalen there in Amsterdam. Because they make quality headphones and the price wasn't too harsh on my wallet. because of their brand values and esp. the incorporated sustainability aspect (less plastic, donations to charity). Because Sony is an innovative brand. Practically. They are not ear buds so they wrap around your eyes and you have better sound as well as comfort. It came with my cell phone. like apple, like the white color. they were cheap and colorful and I was young and stupid. P.

10. Are you satisfied with your headphones?

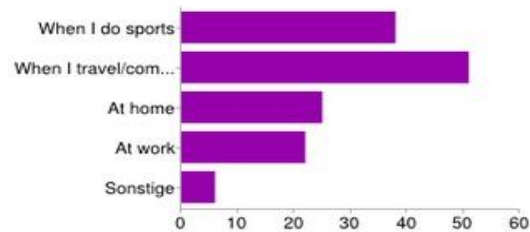
Yes	50	83 %
No	10	17 %



11. If you answered Yes to Question 10: Why are you satisfied with your headphones?

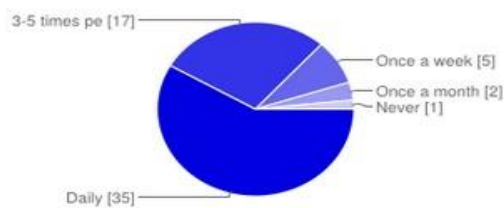
- good quality - no problems with the headphones. They have the exact sound I like to have when listening to music. comfortable. you can regulate the volume. The quality of the sound is great and they don't break easily. They are just perfect. The bass is awesome. The sound in general. The look nice. They are convenient. They're small and have a great sound. Quality of the Sound and Ease of Use are brilliant! high quality beautiful design. They have been working perfectly for 2 years, almost the longest yet. sound & looks go well together. They work. They work as they should and they work with every style you wear. Good design, practical and trendy. - good quality - plain design - good price. Clear. Because the quality is great, the sound is satisfying, and they make me feel cool. The audio quality is very good. I am satisfied with the high quality of sound, the sound is good. they do fit me. Yes I am. they do the job and have a decent sound. They provide a proper quality in music and are small and well designed. The sound quality is good. Very good sound and sturdy. Comfortable Affordable Quality is ok. Good quality. As I said, because of the quality. They do what they need to do. But I do want over ear headphones, they are just too expensive. Great sound, nice look, good function, easy to store and carry even though they are not that comfortable after a couple of hours. But the good outweigh the bad because I personally don't use my headphones more than a couple of hours at a time. everything I have is apple, I have never been disappointed in their products and I like the quality. They look cool and work fine after 1 year. They have good sound quality. Good sound, simple but elegant design. Because they are small and not in the way when I do sports, on the bike or in my hair. Because they really are practical and comfortable- met expectations. They have good bass and I can listen loudly music. Good sound, good quality. because they sound good. Because the quality of sound is good. I have them since 5 years and never had any problems. Because I love the design and the amazing sound. They do what they have to, play music or conversations when I am calling. Cheap, good sound and they are comfortable to wear.

13. When do you use your headphones?



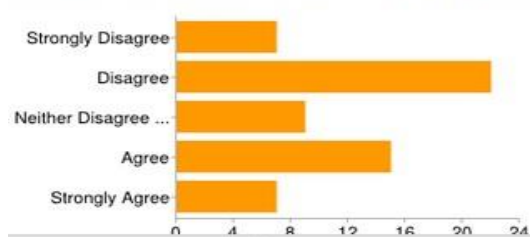
When I do sports	38	27 %
When I travel/commute	51	36 %
At home	25	18 %
At work	22	15 %
Sonstige	6	4 %

14. How often do you use your headphones?



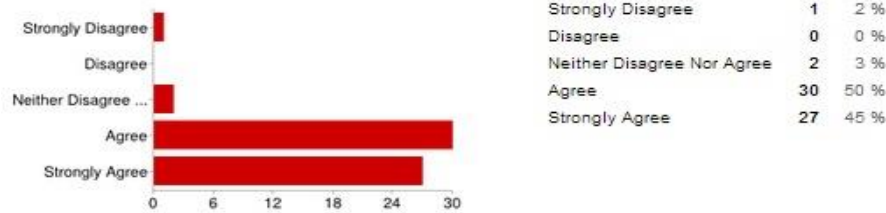
Daily	35	58 %
3-5 times per week	17	28 %
Once a week	5	8 %
Once a month	2	3 %
Never	1	2 %

I see my headphones as an accessory. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]

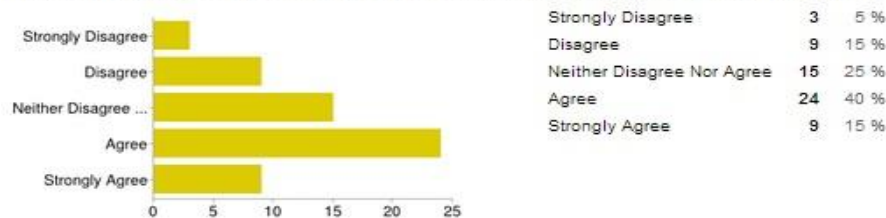


Strongly Disagree	7	12 %
Disagree	22	37 %
Neither Disagree Nor Agree	9	15 %
Agree	15	25 %
Strongly Agree	7	12 %

The sound quality of my headphones is important to me. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



The design of my headphones is important to me. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



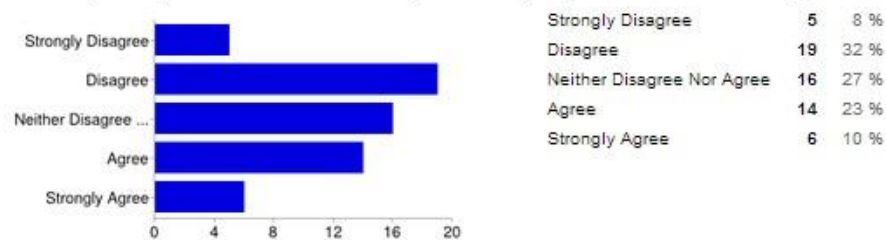
It is important to me what types of materials my headphones are made of. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



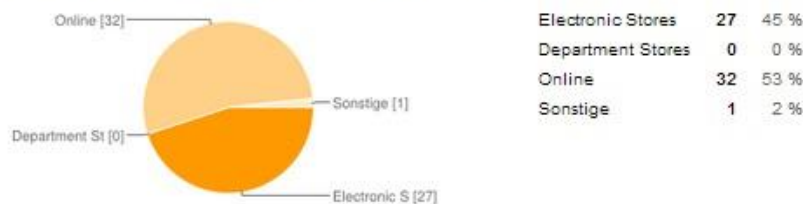
It is important to me to be able to store my headphones easily in my handbag. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



I want my headphones to fit the rest of my fashion style. [15. Evaluate the following statements.]



16. Where would you most likely search for headphones?



APPENDIX 3 - Interviews

DISCLAIMER: The interviews were conducted in German.

PART 1

Question 1: What or who do you think of when you look at this picture?

Questions 2: Please explain whether that person or lifestyle relates to you or your lifestyle.

Alina Müller:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: I think of an urban lifestyle, creative, someone who works in an advertising agency or something like that.

Q2: Okay. Well the first one I can't associate with at all. Well it looks very sporty to me and I am not a sporty kind of person. And I guess it is supposed to look edgy, but to me that's not very appealing because it has this way too sporty and urban appeal.

Sennheiser

Q 1: With this one I have to think of a free spirit place, like Australia. She looks like she could be a business woman who likes to take care of herself.

Q2: Same, I don't think this displays the product that well. I think it seems more to appeal to a higher age group, maybe 30-ish. I don't feel targeted by that at all. Also because it is super healthy and sporty again.

Molami

Q 1: The first word that pops into my head is glamour. Maybe something like Sex& the City, going out with your girls. But really care about how you look, and kind of Zara fashionable.

Q2: I kind of like that one. It has this nightlife going on, it looks like they are going out clubbing. Also, the way their hair is fixed. They seem like girls that go out three times a week, super glamorous, drinking Martini's.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I think of a rebellious teenager, underground scene in Berlin...kind of cool but not really my style.

Q2: Ugh, that one doesn't appeal to me at all. I don't know. I think it would've appealed to me 6 years ago. But now when I look at that I just think it is trashy. It looks way too underground, like they are on drugs or something.

Friends 1

Q 1: This one is really cute, timeless, a bit French. I love the make up! Just really preppy and chic, ... just really cute.

Q2: That one really appeals to me, because it has this preppy, timeless appeal going on and the girl looks really cute and she seems to be my age. I really like that one! But I don't know if that would be a poster picture. If I would see that on social media, then yes. You kind of get the style of what they want to convey and I think it stands for timelessness and classic beauty with a modern edge. So, I think you kind of get the point of the brand but it could be clearer.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: I have to think of a dreamy goddess, obviously French too with the Eiffel Tower. It looks very girly, and it is also kind of young and happy.

Q2: It is very cute and girly so to some extent it does appeal to me. It is however a little bit too dreamy and reminds me of My Little Pony. To be honest I don't really get the Eiffel Tower there.

Without it, it would be better. Now it is a little bit cliché Paris-romantic style. But I guess it does fit the product because it is pink and shiny. Even though I think the headphones are nice, I would not go for this. I would be slightly embarrassed if people saw this advertising and then see me with it. People might think I want to live in my teenage years forever.

Friends 2

Q 1: I think of city life, walking around in Stockholm in the Summer.

Q2: That does not really appeal to me to be honest. I think that's because of the model. She looks kind of masculine and older. I think my sister would like this and she is 30. Also the simple outfit reminds me of a woman in her thirties.

Elena Brand:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: A successful young woman, who is sporty and not too preppy. She also seems to be very happy with herself and in her mid 20's.

Q 2: This one represents my lifestyle the best, I would say. I am also a rather sporty type of person, and she looks like she's standing in life with both feet. I also hope to be able to achieve that one day and lead a good life with a nice job.

Sennheiser

Q 1: Very sporty, maybe she's a personal trainer or nutritional coach. She looks a little more mature and probably already achieved a few important things in life. Maybe sport and listening to music is how she balances out her work.

Q 2: Well she looks very ambitious, and I am an ambitious person, too. She does look a lot older though.

Molami

Q 1: High-fashion lifestyle, I guess models who travel all over the world. They know how to enjoy a party and probably do not sit in front of a desk the whole day. Party here, party there, and walking on a catwalk.

Q 2: Yes kind of, but they seem a little irresponsible maybe.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I think she has not found her ambitions in life yet. Looks like a blogger in a big city. She has an alternative look and probably does not hang out with the „high society“. She also looks a bit younger.

Q 2: No, she looks a little bit too freaky, I don't think that appeals to me.

Friends 1

Q 1: She looks quite young too. Could be a model but also a business woman, one can't say. She looks very innocent. I would not say she is a party girl, I think she prefers bars or fancy dinners.

Q 2: I think this photo is a little bit too boring. I like some action in my life.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: She is probably a student, in France. She also looks very dreamy.

Q 2: No, this one is way too cheesy and immature.

Friends 2

Q 1: She has fun in life. Pretty but not a model. Maybe she works in marketing for a few years already.

Q 1: I can't really say what I think of that picture. So, I guess that means it does not appeal to me.

Bianca Vogel:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: She looks really sporty and creative. Probably lives in a cool city and has a fun job.

Q 2: I like to describe myself as a creative person. So it does appeal to me in that sense but the sporty part of it does not really apply to my lifestyle.

Sennheiser

Q 1: Nothing too exciting here, in my opinion. It kind of looks like a fitness commercial targeted at middle aged people. The woman in the photo seems to take care of herself and wants to stay in shape.

Q 2: No, I don't think I am the target group for this. It also looks very functional.

Molami

Q 1: They look like fancy girls living in Manhattan. Maybe top bloggers or models. Definitely some glamorous job, which might not be their long-term occupation. They enjoy their lives at the moment and do not have too many worries.

Q 2: I love that one, I wish I could live like that.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I have to think of some emo kids that hang out at the train station.

Q 2: No, too trashy. I would have liked it in my rebellious teens though!

Frends 1

Q 1: She likes to dress very cute and innocent, but something in her facial expression tells me that she has a cheeky personality.

Q 2: This photo looks very chic, I like to be polished rather than messy, too. So it does appeal to me, yes.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: This looks really cheesy. It portrays a very content young girl. Generally the picture is very girly with the pink clouds and the Eiffel Tower.

Q 2: No, as I said it is a little bit too much of everything.

Frends 2

Q 1: She is a little bit older, maybe just hit her 30's. I like the simplicity of the photo, but I cannot say much about it, besides that she seems to have fun.

Q 2: Yes, she looks happy. It is a happy photo, but it isn't very expressive.

Nicole Brandhofer:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: I would say this portraits a woman in her mid-30's that still has a lot of fun.

Q 2: No this one I cannot associate with too much. She seems to be at a different stage in her life. I would say she is a little older than me.

Sennheiser

Q 1: She looks very ambitious and has clear goals in her life. I can imagine she already achieved a few things in life, has children, a husband and a dog. A working mum who still has a traditonal family.

Q 2: She looks like a strong woman, I like that part. But otherwise it is not very interesting to me.

Molami

Q 1: I can imagine they belong to the in-crowd. They seem very inaccessible, because their eyes are

closed or they look away.

Q 2: They look a little bit unfriendly, which makes it look like it is too cool for me. If they would look more accessible, I would like it better.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: There is too much going on this photo. She is dressed in so many patterns and colours, and the hair. It looks trashy to me. So maybe she is some kid that is too cool for school.

Q 2: No thanks, it is so wanna be.

Friends 1

Q 1: She is really pretty. I could imagine she is a student and has an interest in fashion. Otherwise, I cannot say that much about her.

Q 2: I study textile sciences, which is close to fashion. I can see myself in her, yes.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: It reminds me of a perfume ad. The soft colors and the whole French theme that is going on.

Q 2: It's very girly girl, which is quite appealing to me.

Friends 2

Q 1: She enjoys her single life and she seems to be dancing. So maybe she likes to go out a lot.

Q 2: I don't really like the model. But she looks very content.

Laura Phöhler:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: I don't really understand the connection between headphones and the color splash, but it is a cool image. I imagine her to have a vibrant and adventurous life. Nothing too boring.

Q 2: Yes, I think I can relate to the person on the photo. The image is exciting, and I like to do exciting things.

Sennheiser

Q 1: Even more sporty than the photo before. She looks kind of strict to me. I don't think this should be a commercial photo for a headphone brand. The product is not displayed well, and it seems like it is more about that iPod she has wrapped around her arm.

Q 2: No, I don't find it appealing. It looks too strict and is very sport oriented.

Molami

Q 1: To me they look a little bit arrogant, not the friendliest girls on earth. Probably belong to the high society, wear designer clothes and get invited to the coolest parties. Kind of reminds me of a younger version of the Sex & the City women.

Q 2: Not really, I can't really identify with this scene.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: It reminds of a hipster. She listens to unknown music, goes to concerts and festivals and likes to party.

Q 2: No that is too hipster for me. If I would wear this headphone, I would be scared that people think I am like that, too.

Friends 1

Q 1: Being well-groomed is important to her and she likes to get dressed up and do her make up. I can see her sitting at a bar, sipping at a cocktail.

Q 2: I find this one quite sympathetic. She looks very pretty and flirty but her expression still looks friendly.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: Very dreamy person, maybe dreams a little too much than actually handling situations.

Q 2: No, this is a little too girly for my taste. If it wasn't all pink and without the Eiffel Tower it might be more appealing.

Friends 2

Q 1: It reminds me of a working young mother. I can imagine she has a baby but she is working part-time. She enjoys that stage of her life.

Q 2: No, I don't see babies in my near future, so I think this addresses a different target group.

Pelin Caner:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: I have to think of a sporty girl or woman, who dances Hip Hop, wears Nike shoes and generally does not worry too much about styling.

Q 2: She looks a little too sporty to me. I personally prefer to dress up and wear make up and so on. She seems a little more relaxed in that sense.

Sennheiser

Q 1: I think of a very successful and strict business woman, who draws a clear line between private life and professional life. On that photo she is probably portrayed in her private life, but still looks very ambitious.

Q 2: It is very sporty and functional, so I would not say this is a photo that has a special appeal.

Molami

Q 1: They definitely seem to lead a jet set life, or some kind of adventurous stage in life. They are dressed very elegantly and all in black. It looks really glamorous, also the way their hair is styled.

Q 2: I like that a lot, it has this cosmopolitan lifestyle appeal which I think is great.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I can't say if I like that image or not. Maybe not, it looks like somebody that tries a little too hard.

Q 2: So, no it does not appeal to me.

Friends 1

Q 1: Maybe she works in fashion. She looks very classy with her red lipstick and eyeliner. Definitely has taste.

Q 2: I love the overall styling. Kind of innocent but still stylish and beautiful. It does appeal to me, because I would say I have a similar style.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: To me, this picture looks a little bit naive. Or just very young. She is a student who does not know fully what her plans in life are.

Q 2: No, too pink and fluffy.

Friends 2

Q 1: The woman in the photo looks very content, like something positive just happened to her. Maybe she just got her dream job in marketing.

Q 2: I think the photo makes you smile with her, which is nice. Other than that, the photo is quite boring.

Johanna Arnold:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: This looks very urban. In comparison to the other images, she wears a plain white t-shirt which seems to be quite oversized. Probably does not care too much about styling, but is the creative type. Maybe works in an Art gallery in Brooklyn.

Q 2: I find this picture appealing, it is very laid back and not too complicated.

Sennheiser

Q 1: Based on the age of the woman on the photo, I think she is a career woman who puts career before everything at this stage of her life. I could imagine she is single and does not have any children planned in the near future.

Q 2: She looks so disciplined. Maybe too much. But the photo also has a very technological appeal with the cable and iPod.

Molami

Q 1: In comparison to the pictures we saw before, this one could be from some fashion magazine like Vogue or Elle. The posing reminds me of fashion photography, too. Everything is very cool and kind of distant.

Q 2: I find this very appealing. It is so different to the other photos.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: She looks to be into rock music and festivals. In the weekends she likes to party hard and during the week she follows a study program. I could imagine she would like to work in a creative field and not in a formal office.

Q 2: I think it could appeal to me. She looks very creative, and her style is very individual.

Frends 1

Q 1: She is around 24 years old and likes to hang out with her girlfriends in the weekends. She landed her first job, which she enjoys. Maybe works in a big company.

Q 2: Yes, I think it looks cute, but it is also a little bit boring.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: That picture looks pretty and she looks like an angel in the clouds or so. Maybe has her head in the clouds, too.

Q 2: This one I find cute, too. It looks very romantic but I also think that it is quite childish.

Frends 2

Q 1: I like the dress or top. She looks mature and is maybe in her early thirties.

Q 2: I find this appealing. It looks very natural and not too posed.

Katharina Lotter:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: Definitely on the sporty side. I know that this is a Beats by Dre image, so my answer might be biased, but I guess she is into Hip Hop or R'n'B and a little "cooler" than the average person.

Q 2: No, Beats by Dre are really not my thing. It is way too Hip Hop driven for my taste.

Sennheiser

Q 1: Very health conscious, maybe vegetarian. She seems to have everything sorted out in her life and is very content with herself.

Q 2: Yes, I like to be organized and disciplined myself. So I think it is appealing to me.

Molami

Q 1: Very hip. I can imagine they have a fast-paced life if that makes sense. I mean, they probably attend many events and have to travel a lot.

Q 2: It's like the photos in fashion magazines. You like to look at the photos, but you don't need that kind of lifestyle. It is a really nice photograph, but also not really the life I lead.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: She likes to have fun and maybe is a little freaky. I can imagine she has the courage to try new things all the time, like motorcycling or bungee jumping.

Q 2: Yes, I like that. In comparison to the hip girls before, she looks less stuck up, which makes it likeable.

Frends 1

Q 1: She looks very innocent and smart. I don't really like her outfit, it makes her look older than she probably is. I can imagine in her free time she likes to relax at home and read a book.

Q 2: No, she looks boring.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: She could be a writer for some lifestyle magazine. Maybe travels a lot to find new stories to write about. But I don't think she has a very high position in her field yet.

Q 2: She looks quite young, and as I said I think she is at the beginning of her career, just like me. And in that age you dream big, which she seems to do too.

Frends 2

Q 1: She likes to listen to music and dance. I see her in a city environment.

Q 2: I find this one quite boring, too. If every brand would just have a smiling girl in front of a grey background, advertising would be quite boring.

Kristin Hefner:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: Comfy styling but still pretty. I like the color splash, it reminds me of a creative environment. She seems to be in her mid 30's or so. Therefore, I assume she has a steady job, in which she is successful.

Q 2: Yes, I want to be successful in my job and life in general too. I like the hip artsy angle, too.

Sennheiser

Q 1: I think she is somebody who likes to challenge herself. Maybe she just reached a new record in her work out routine or so. Definitely ambitious and mature.

Q 2: No, I am the least sporty person ever.

Molami

Q 1: I find that image very artsy. The way they pose and how dark it is through their hair and clothes. It also looks quite sexy.

Q 2: I think the whole sexiness of the photo makes the product seem like a cool, sexy accessory. I find it appealing.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I can imagine she is a student and still trying to find herself. Her style is very individual and she probably does not want to fit the norms. Maybe a little rebellious too.

Q 2: I can see who this brand wants to target – the hipster generation. It is too obvious, which makes it difficult to identify with it as a “non-hipster”.

Friends 1

Q 1: This girl might be a blogger and this is one of her outfits that she shows her followers regularly. I can imagine she lives in the city and meets a lot of interesting people and goes to a lot of parties.

Q 2: Yes, I think she is beautiful, and has a nice style.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: She looks very innocent, still going to high school. As typical girly girl she is interested in beauty and fashion. And Paris.

Q 2: I think I am a little too old to feel attracted to this photo.

Friends 2

Q 1: I find this picture a little bit more difficult than the other ones. Her styling is very simple so it is hard to interpret much into her appearance.

Q 2: Not really, it is kind of bland, besides her smile.

Saskia Schneider:

Beats by Dre

Q 1: It seems very urban to me. That woman is probably very laid-back and likes to lounge in her sweat pants and hangs out with her friends a lot.

Q 2: No not that much, I prefer it a little bit more classy.

Sennheiser

Q 1: For some reason she looks like a teacher to me. I guess the hard workout is her balance in life. I can imagine she has a boyfriend, who is sporty too.

Q 2: I don't think I can identify with this photo. I do sports, but I am not all in like her.

Molami

Q 1: Probably 20-something years old, young professionals, single. I can imagine that they enjoy living on their own and spending all the money they earn on themselves.

Q 2: Yes, it looks glamorous, fun and young.

Skullcandy 1

Q 1: I could imagine she is a DJane, playing her music in some underground clubs, where she gets to meet a lot of people.

Q 2: Yes, the photo is creative and she looks like a fun person to hang out with.

Friends 1

Q 1: I love that picture the most. It looks very timeless and preppy. I can imagine she has everything planned out in her life but still enjoys the moment. She also looks very smart with that pose.

Q 2: Yes, this one I can identify with the best. It gives a cute touch to a product that is usually portrayed as cool.

Skullcandy 2

Q 1: Cute girl, it looks very friendly and almost naive.

Q 2: No, it is a little too much with the clouds and the Eiffel Tower. I don't understand what headphones have to do with Paris.

Friends 2

Q 1: I can imagine she has a two kids and a husband and music is her balance in life

Q 2: No, I am still a student and she appears to be a little older than me.

PART 2

Pick the headphone you like the most and explain who you think would wear this.

Alina Müller

"I love the idea with the interchangeable caps. It looks very sleek and timeless. I also think it is nice that they have a smaller headphone model. I would not buy the earphones though. They look nice, but noone would probably see the design when they are in the ear. But the on-ears are neat and feminine but still cool. I also like the colorways.

I think wearing these headphones would make me feel feminine but still cool. Like a boss. Especially the big over-ear headphones. The smaller on-ears would make me feel cute. The big ones are more of a statement.

Because the headphones to me are something a young 20-something, hip girl in a city would wear."

Elena Brand

"Being able to change these caps would already make me buy them. They are very unique in comparison to the other headphones, and it would just feel special to wear these, as they stand out so much. The different materials are very convincing, too. I like the incorporation of metal, combined with the colors and different patterns. I would feel very cool wearing these and I can imagine they are quite the eye-catcher for the people around. I think this product is suitable for stylish girl in their 20's, a young professional that is really non-chalant and hip."

Bianca Vogel

"I would definitely choose the Friends headphones. They look so special, a mixture of cool and feminine. They stand out so much, and I think I would feel very confident wearing these. Like everybody will look at me and think, that girl is stylish."

Nicole Brandhofer

"The Friends headphones are so pretty! I would go for the smaller on-ear in rosegold. It is so classy and makes an urban thing very chic. It is the perfect deal too. I buy a headphone and receive a headphone plus an accessory."

Laura Pföhler

"I love these headphones, also the in-ears are great. It is a great deal, because you do not only get a headphone but a piece of jewelry, too. The design is really pretty and looks like an earring. But I would probably still take the big ones for the wow-effect."

Pelin Caner

"These headphones are my favorite. It stand out so much from the others, look at all the different materials. Eventhough it is quite flashy, it is super chic, too and very fashion forward. Who would think that a headphone could be an accessory."

Johanna

"I usually do not like big headphones, because I would feel like everybody is looking at me. But with

these headphones, I would think: yes, please look at me and my headphones! I can imagine walking through the city and feeling very out there, because everybody would be jealous of the headphones.”

Katharina Lotter

“I like that the size adjustment is inside of the headphone. The other headphones all have it outside, and it always looks strange, like little antenna, if you have a small head. These headphones look like something I could imagine on a street style inspiration photo in a fashion magazine. On a cool girl, that works for Elle magazine in New York.”

Kristin Hefner

“I like the Molami headphones, too, but the Friends ones are kind of a whole new level of headphone. It is really cool that you can adjust the caps, and the variety is very large as it ranges from quite flashy and colorful to cute and chic with the rosegold and timeless with the horn imitated look.”

Saskia

“I would take these. They would make me feel really fashionable and like I am wearing something, that nobody else has. I can imagine they are very apparent to those around, but in a nice way. I would think people look at you for sure, if you walk with them into the subway. It's an urban product with a very elegant touch.”