

**Janni Andreasen, 20186041**  
**Master's thesis**

**Thesis supervisor:**  
**Mia Thyregod Rasmussen**



# Investigating RTFKT's Brand Awareness strategy

**International Business Communication**  
**Aalborg university**

**Keystrokes: 191.387**



05.31.2023

# INVESTIGATING RTFKT'S BRAND AWARENESS STRATEGY

by

Janni Andreassen



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK

Dissertation 05.31.2023

Keystrokes: 191.687

Thesis supervisor: Mia Thyregod Rasmussen

## Table of content

<b>Abstract</b> .....	3
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>1.3 Clarification of terms</b> .....	8
<b>2. Research design</b> .....	9
2.1 Social constructivism: .....	9
2.2 Ontology: .....	11
2.3 Epistemology: .....	12
<b>3. Literature review</b> .....	13
3.2 Brand Positioning .....	18
3.3 Brand Identity .....	20
<b>4. Theoretical framework</b> .....	24
4.2 Brand Identity .....	29
4.3 Brand Positioning: .....	35
4.5 The interrelations between the chosen theories: .....	38
<b>5. Methodology and Method</b> .....	41
5.1 Qualitative Research: .....	41
5.2 Empirical Data: .....	42
5.3 Data Selection and Collection: .....	43
5.4 About RTFKT .....	45
5.5 Template Analysis: .....	45
6.6 Framework for Analysis: .....	49
5.5.1 Elaboration of the codes:.....	50
<b>6. Findings</b> .....	52
6.1 Brand Identity .....	53
6.2 Brand Positioning .....	60
<b>7. Discussion</b> .....	69
<b>8. Conclusion</b> .....	75
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	77

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the factors and elements that contribute to the establishment of the organization's brand awareness strategy. Specifically, the thesis examines how the organization RTFKT, who create, produce, and sells intangible products such as NFTs, attempted to establish brand awareness through their communicative efforts. The thesis sought to elucidate factors and elements of branding within RTFKT's communication that could help with the comprehension of how an organization can establish brand awareness, or at least what factors influence – either positively or negatively - the degree in which brand awareness has been established.

To investigate this, the thesis examined empirical data that represented RTFKT's communication and was collected on the platform Discord. The empirical data pertained forms of branding that could provide an inkling into the strategy established by RTFKT, as the thesis seeks to investigate the brand efforts and elements that may have had an influence or impact on RTFKT's brand awareness strategy. As mentioned, the empirical data was collected from the organization's Discord server, respectively, the servers called Announcements and Comm-updates were examined. In which the data collected was examined through a branding perspective – specifically with the perspective of being able to determine the brand identity and brand positioning of the organization.

Furthermore, to examine this, the thesis proposed a new approach of brand awareness. The previous literature regarding brand awareness showed a gap, as the perspective of the organization had not been investigated before. Meaning, how the organization's own efforts can contribute to either influence or damage brand awareness through their communicative efforts and factors drawn from the theory. Moreover, the new approach proposed an interconnected relation between the theoretical fields of brand awareness, brand identity and brand positioning, in order to establish a comprehensive conceptualization of brand awareness. The interconnected theory touched upon the idea that each theoretical field in some way contributes to establishing a strong brand awareness through factors of branding, but likewise proposed the idea that the theories in some way 'need' each other to exist.

Additionally, The factors and elements presented in this thesis was based on the theoretical fields of brand identity and brand positioning, as it was determined that these fields could possess contributing factors that can help examine how brand awareness could be

established from the organization's viewpoint and further which efforts were communicated outwards.

In order to effectively identify and emphasize RTFKT's communicative efforts in regard to the establishment of a brand awareness strategy, this thesis utilizes a ramification of the thematic analysis – Template Analysis - as stipulated by Nigel King (2014). The Template Analysis allows the researcher to identify, structure and categories patterns and elements that emerge throughout the data. The method thereby allows for an in-depth analysis of the highlighted patterns, elements and values in regard to how these contribute to the establishment of brand awareness strategy and further contribute to determining the organization's identity and positioning.

The thesis found that the conceptualization of brand awareness could be considered a part of the organization's overall branding strategy in which RTFKT continuously seeks to establish or maintain brand awareness at a "dominant-level". Furthermore, the thesis found that it is possible to argue that the brand efforts relayed through RTFKT's communication could be considered influential factors in the efforts of establishing a 'successful' brand awareness strategy. Thus, relaying that brand identity and brand positioning could participate in the establishment of a brand awareness strategy.

The result of this thesis is therefore relevant to other organizations, students and others interested as it elucidates how an organization can establish a brand awareness strategy by considering elements and aspects of brand identity and brand positioning. It further garners an understanding of how an organization that sells intangible products can provide to the value proposition and thereby create a community or 'following'.

## **1. Introduction**

When establishing an organization, it is imperative that the organization creates and maintains brand awareness. Without Brand Awareness the organization's existence cannot be acknowledged by consumers and can as a result not be recognized or recalled as a brand (Keller 2015). When creating Brand Awareness, the organization thereby seek to emphasize the existence of their brand, by communicating values, identities and other aspects that support the organization's efforts in expressing who they are. The organization thereby needs to persuade consumers that their existence and product is valid and has value. In that regard, it is important that consumers understand the organization's product, and accept the value

proposition assigned to the product and the brand. Therefore, it is imperative that the organization communicate aspects of their values and visions that contribute to the persuasion of their consumers. In order to do so, the organization must determine the right positioning in which the consumers understand the product and its value.

when purchasing a product, most people expect to gain something either a tangible product or an intangible product such as virtual apparel that consumers can use in games or put on one's avatar in the metaverse. However, that is not the case with the new digital trend that is non-fungible-token (NFT). NFTs are a phenomenon dating back to 2014, when the first NFT was minted by Kevin McCoy (Creighton 2022). Since then, the market for NFTs has rapidly ramified into different varieties, ranging from the "Bored Ape", which was a portrait of an ape that looked bored. The portrait gained a huge following in which celebrities such as Justin Bieber purchased an ape NFTs that looked like themselves for approx. \$1.3 mill, to shoes and clothing (Hayward 2022). Additionally, the rapid increase also means that new vendors are joining every day. Such an organization is RTFKT. RTFKT is a virtual fashion company that sells virtual shoes and collectibles. As an NFT organization, RTFKT must establish a form of awareness by emphasizing identifiable factors that consumers can recognize them by. In connection, the industry of NFT is still fairly new and confusing, with many risks attached to the entire industry (Ingold 2022). The risks attached to the NFT industry, brings forth insecurities among consumers in the form of scam, phishing or hacking, in which it is RTFKT's job to convince and persuade consumers that their brand, product and general organization is safe from fraud. Therein lies the challenge, because, in order to be able to establish Brand Awareness, the organization must identify and position their brand within a market in which the consumers are able to comprehend the value and purpose of NFTs. Furthermore, it is imperative that the organization convince that they are different and trustworthy, by showing that they have their consumers best interests at heart.

Therefore, this thesis seeks to investigate how RTFKT has managed to establish Brand Awareness in an industry that does not necessarily have a tangible or intangible product. The thesis further seeks to examine the relationship between Brand Awareness, Brand Identity and Brand Positioning and how these interconnects in the organization's effort to establish awareness. This will assist in providing comprehensible research on how Brand Identity and Brand Positioning influence Brand Awareness, and how digital organizations can establish brand awareness.

### **Focus and purpose of this study:**

From the beginning I was fascinated by the prospect of how NFT's and the rapidly increasing in popularity. The NFT bubble was, and at times still is, deemed the next future for digital assets as well as providing hope for some that it will become connected with the Metaverse. What was baffling, was that NFTs are intangible, they do not provide the consumer with any added value, unless it is decided that this particular NFT should be worth more than it is. The purpose of this study was therefore to look into RTFKT's strategy to determine how they created Brand Awareness for their products, by identifying factors and aspects that could have contributed to generating Brand Awareness. In addition, it was found that a gap was present in the academic perspectives, the conceptualization of brand awareness and how it was influenced by the organization. This thesis therefore intends to fill that research gap and provide a better and more comprehensible conceptualization of Brand Awareness.

Therefore, the following problem statement have been proposed,

**How does RTFKT's communication contribute to the attempted establishment of their Brand Awareness strategy?**

This thesis investigates RTFKT's communication and how they have tried to establish brand awareness. The purpose of this thesis is therefore, to uncover RTFKT's Brand Awareness strategy, and examine what factors play a significant role in and can influence the establishment of Brand Awareness which will be examined through RTFKT's communication in the form of Discord posts. Subsequently, in order to provide a more comprehensible and nuanced answer to the problem statement mentioned above, the following research questions have been proposed.

- RQ 1: How is Brand Identity and Brand Positioning utilized in RTFKT's communication attempt to establish their Brand awareness strategy.
- RQ2: Which branding aspect is more prominent in RTFKT's branding strategy.

The first research question seeks to uncover the comprehensibility of RTFKT's communication strategy based on the theories Brand Identity and Brand positioning in order to influence and establish their Brand Awareness strategy. The second aspect seeks to uncover which factor has been most prominent in RTFKT's Brand Awareness strategy. The aim for this thesis is to investigate a new phenomenon and provide insight to stakeholders,

students and other interested about how an organization that sells an intangible product manages to create a large following through their brand awareness strategy. Furthermore, the aim of this thesis is also to fill the gap in regard to the conceptualization of brand awareness and thereby provide a new perspective on how organizations can establish a brand awareness strategy, through the utilization of elements within brand identity and brand positioning.

## **1.2. Structure:**

This thesis is a case study as it focuses on a single organization for analysis (Saldaña 2011, 8). As this thesis is only focusing on a single unit, it allows for a more in-depth analysis and a greater understanding of the organization and their strategy. As according to Saldaña (2011), by only focusing on a single unit, it does not necessarily mean that the thesis seeks to develop a comparison or a representation of all comparable organizations within the industry, but only seeks to investigate this organization in its entirety (8). The reason why the topic of this thesis is relevant is due to its unique characters, seeing as both theoretically - The establishment of Brand Awareness through the utilization of Brand Identity and Brand Positioning - and topic wise - how an NFT organization has established Brand Awareness -researchers have not investigated this type of organization in connection with the establishment of Brand Awareness. Because this topic is of a unique character, it presents itself as an example for a focused study (9), that is able to delve into the organization's actions and efforts without having to focus on comparing it to other organizations.

In order to answer the problem statement satisfactorily, this thesis will examine RTFKT's communication from its discord server, in regard to their brand awareness efforts, their Brand Identity and their Brand Positioning. The examination will be conducted through the utilization of a coding method, in which values, patterns and potential trends are extracted. To be more specific, the coding method called Template analysis as stipulated by Nigel King will be utilized. The codes extracted from the discord server will act as the foundation to the analysis. Additionally, the codes will subsequently be analyzed through the usage of Brand Identity theory and Brand Positioning theory in order to establish how these has helped in RTFKT's efforts to establish Brand Awareness and subsequently investigate how these have influenced the organization's Brand Awareness efforts.

Lastly, a discussion on how RTFKT has utilized their platform, and whether the platform promotes brand awareness will be conducted. The discussion will debate the pros and cons of utilizing discord to promote brand awareness. In addition, the discussion will also



elaborate on whether RTFKT has attempted to establish brand awareness and debate the contributions obtained in this thesis.

### 1.3 Clarification of terms

The topic of this project is the brand awareness strategies utilized by highly digital companies. More specifically, this project investigates how organizations make customers aware of them and their “product”. This section will introduce some of the terms that will appear throughout the thesis. The term in question is the following: Crypto valuta, Non-fungible Tokens, and Blockchain and will be shortly explained below.

#### **Blockchain:**

Blockchain is an online distributed database that is shared among the nodes of a computer network (Hayes 2023). A Blockchain is used as a way to make the utilization of cryptocurrency more secure, as it maintains a secure and decentralized record of transactions (Hayes 2023). The use of blockchain is not limited to just the utilization of cryptocurrencies. It can be used to produce any type of data and is often applied to No-fungible-tokens, smart contract and other various types of cryptocurrencies (Hayes 2023). NFT organizations often utilize blockchain to secure crypto-valuta and keep the transaction information available and secure for both parties. Blockchain collects information in group also known as blocks that have a certain storage capacity. This means that when the block is filled it links to the previously filled block thus creating a blockchain. Blockchain is often used in cryptocurrencies and other types of situations as they eliminate the third party such as a notary, that adds to the costs and decreases the chances of a mistake happening.

#### **Cryptocurrencies:**

Cryptocurrency, or crypto, is a digital or virtual form of currency or payment system that does not rely on banks or any other type of central authority to verify the transactions (Kaspersky 2022). The cryptocurrency is secured by cryptography, which is a system that makes it impossible to counterfeit or double-spend and can therefore be considered a safer digital payment method (Frankenfield 2023). Even though crypto currencies enable secure online payments, they are likewise achieved through mining, purchased from cryptocurrency exchanges or rewarded for work done on a blockchain (Frankenfield 2023). The

Cryptocurrencies are often based on blockchain technology and thereby warrant safety in that all the information regarding transactions will be stored in the blockchain (Frankenfield 2023).

### **Non-fungible Tokens**

A non-fungible token (NFT) is a digital asset that come in the form of art, music, in-game items, videos and more (Conti and Schmidt 2021). It is a blockchain-based token that each represent a unique asset and that is sold, traded and bought online with cryptocurrency (Conti and Schmidt 2021). It can be considered an irrevocable digital certificate of ownership and authenticity for a given asset whether the asset it physical or digital, and each token is assigned unique identification codes and metadata that makes it possible to distinguish them from other tokens (Conti and Schmidt 2021).

## **2. Research design**

This chapter elaborates on the overall research design of the project. This means that the chapter will account for the study's philosophy of science as well as any components and implications that are present within the study. Additionally, the study's scientific position will also be introduced and elaborated upon.

### **2.1 Social constructivism:**

The theoretical approach to this thesis, is that of the social constructivist paradigm. This means that the project will follow the properties and beliefs that apply to the social constructivist approach.

The concept of the social constructivist paradigm is based on the idea that our reality is socially constructed through our experiences, language, and interactions (Holm 2016, 137). The paradigm of social constructivism draws upon the ideas of Thomas S. Kuhn and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1977), who according to Andreas Beck Holm (2016), can be considered one of the fathers of social constructivism. Within the paradigm of social constructivism, Ludwig Wittgenstein argues that reality and language are somewhat inseparable, because our reality, our world, is created through language (Holm 2016). Thomas S Kuhn (1977) believes that within the paradigm of social constructivism, the social relations between individuals are the very cause for the construction of science (Holm 2016, 122-123). The ideas and beliefs of Kuhn and Wittgenstein (1977), as explained here, characterizes social constructivism because they argue that reality takes place both in and through language. They further comply, with

the beliefs and ideas as stipulated by Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch (2018) who argues that the paradigm is a concept that encompasses not only the nature of social reality, but also believes that reality is a natural occurrence that remains untouched by human interpretation (2). Basically, this means that everything we put value to and believe to exist is a social construct based on our reality and constructed through language. In addition, because everything can be perceived as a social construct, the world, and the individual itself are to be considered independent and are only able to exist based on interactions and dialogues made between people about 'reality'.

According to Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch (2018), 'realities' should be considered as a "never ending process". This is due to the fact, that one's reality is not a constant entity, but rather a continuously evolving and developing entity that is different from person to person. Furthermore, Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch perceive the construction of reality as 'sociohistorical', as in, it is not something achieved by oneself, but rather an entity constructed through the interaction between individuals and environments (2). Additionally, Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch (2018) mention that the construction of reality can also be perceived as being "carried out by entities with action problems" (2). They utilize the wording 'action problem' to describe the change that happens to one's reality when facing issues or social dilemmas, e.g., when debating or being questioned about one's reasoning, in which discussions and interactions among different entities thereby challenge one's perception of reality. Therefore, this should be interpreted as the fact, that it is only when one's perception of reality is challenged through dialogue, discussion, and interactions with different entities that one's perception of reality changes. Additionally, since reality can be perceived as an entity of change, reality should not be seen as absolute, constant nor finite but should rather be perceived as fluid and something that is continuously developing and changing (2).

As written above, reality is constructed through language, meaning the interactions we experience in our everyday. In that sense each belief, argument and idea are subjective to the beholder, and thereby differ from person to person. However, even the most liberated subjective mind still holds some form of objective truth. According to Pfadenhauer, what we see as being 'common sense', an unquestionably given, once started off as being subjective and a 'meaningful acting'. The subjective act gradually over time acquires an objective meaning that eventually gain a general acceptance in society and thereby establish objective truths (9). We see these objective truths as common sense, or even as a part of our culture. For example, it is a well-known fact that monetary assets are something we strive to acquire

one way or the other, as it is necessary in order to survive. We, therefore, see it as common sense to get a job in order to acquire money. Money, however, is a social construct. since it has changed and developed over the years, as it has gone from being a tangible product in the form of coins to being a piece a paper, or a purchased intangible item like an NFT that does not hold a constant value. Nevertheless, the idea and concept of money is something we as a society holds at a great esteem, though its meaning is constructed by factors of culture (Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch 2019, 9). Furthermore, Pfadenhauer mentions that “social construction of reality is therefore determined not by their ability to act but also by their cultural ability” (Pfadenhauer and Knoblauch 2019, 9). The cultural ability is the extent to which the parties involved, animate or inanimate, partake in the act of turning the subjective meaning into perceived truths (09). This is exemplified again through our perception of money and the understanding of it in different social settings and groups, e.g., the perception of NFT’s, some social groups recognize NFT’s as being a good investment whereas others find the concept of NFT’s to be a waste of money.

Similarly, the concept of perceived truths also applies to what we assign value to. In the example above regarding NFTs it is explained how the very idea of NFTs are a social construct as it is something that we have “created”, but it is similarly an entity that we have assigned a form of value to. In actuality, NFTs are worthless, you cannot hang them on your wall or wear them in the physical world nor the imaginary world. However, some social groups have come to an agreement about their value, and therefore acts as if they are valuable. Therefore, NFTs can also be considered a social construct.

This project investigates how the organization RTFKT has attempted to create brand awareness. The project will introduce concepts within branding and strategic communication in order to be able to distinguish and identify the strategies used in their attempt to establish brand awareness within their respective field by making their organization and product appear valuable and legit.

## 2.2 Ontology:

ontology is a term that concern what we as individuals know, meaning our view and understanding of the world. It is defined by Norman Blaike as “claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other” (177). In other words, ontology

concerns about the knowledge we have gathered, our perceptions and understandings of what is and what isn't. It is what we believe constitutes social reality (177). The ontological position in this thesis is a constructivist perspective. This implies, according to Grix that not only is social phenomena and categories constructed through social interaction, but it is also never constant (177), meaning that one's reality is dynamic - that it is changeable. Furthermore, Grix (2002) explains that an ontological position asserts that the construction of one's reality, the meaning, existence and comprehension of their reality exists independently of social actors (177). In connection with this research and the social constructivist approach as explained above, this thesis is relativistic as it draws upon the experiences and understandings of the researcher, me. The thesis draws on the theories of brand awareness, a socially constructed concept that only exists due to the attempt at being conceptualized through language. RTKF attempts to establish brand awareness but will only succeed if people actually know and acknowledge their and their products existence.

## 2.3 Epistemology:

Epistemology is a term focused on knowledge and how we come to know what we know (Grix 2002, 177). It is defined by Blaike as "claims about how what is assumed to exist can be known", and concerns with ways of gaining knowledge of social reality (177). Meaning, how we as individuals obtains the knowledge we have. Basically, Epistemology focuses on the general knowledge-gathering process and how new methods, models and theories come to exist (177). In connection with the social constructivist approach and ontology, epistemology is also a social construct since knowledge is constructed independently and subjectively from person to person. Additionally, epistemology is in compliance with social constructivism as it is dynamic, meaning that it is forever changing as people gain knowledge constantly (Grix 2002). The epistemological approach complies with the study, as this thesis will contribute with a subjective answer pertaining to the research question. The research in this thesis is based on my knowledge and understanding, which will be influenced by the theoretical and methodological framework utilized in this thesis. For example, the utilization and composition of the sub theories within branding and brand awareness will be influenced by the comprehensibility of the researcher. Meaning, that the connections made between the sub theories and main theory may be interpreted differently by different groups of people, which in turn means that the overall result of this study relies on the researcher's comprehensibility of this concept.

### 3. Literature review

This chapter will critically review the literature pertaining to the research question. Firstly, the chapter will start by introducing literature that was deemed relevant to the scope of the thesis. Meaning that the literature review will introduce theories that are already present within the theoretical field. Secondly, it will provide the theoretical framework and context related to the research question. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the literature by means of a critical approach, which will allow for the literature present within the field of study to be sorted. This means that theories will either be left out or included in the thesis depending on their relevance and contributions to the overall scope of the thesis (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill [2012] 2019, 75). Furthermore, the literature that was sorted / excluded will not be on grounds that it does not fit with my perception of truth, but rather that the theory that was collected either conveyed support or opposition to my views and ideas, but nevertheless contributed to the thesis in some form (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill [2012] 2019, 76). The literature review of this thesis is a theoretical lit review. Which means that the objective of this literature review is to examine the body of the theoretical field that has accumulated in regard to the topics pertaining to the problem statement (76). Additionally, the theoretical literature review allows the researcher to explore already existing theories, how they are interconnected and examine whether there is a theoretical gap that can be filled by the scope of the thesis (74). In context, this literature review seeks to examine the theoretical aspects prominent within the theoretical field of brand awareness, brand identity and brand positioning and to fill the gap within the conceptualization of brand awareness.

#### 3.1 Brand Awareness

The uprising of the NFT industry, has made for curiosities regarding how organizations such as RTFKT brand themselves and create awareness. Being an industry that sells a non-tangible and non-fungible product, the industry has managed to gain rapid growth throughout the last three years. Therefore, I found that it would be interesting to investigate how an organization such as RTFKT has attempted to establish brand awareness, and what sort of strategy RTFKT uses. The scope of this thesis led to a thorough research into the vast array of the theoretical field of brand awareness. This research showed that the concept of brand awareness has been utilized, modeled and placed into frameworks on many different occasions, but the utilization of the concept has stayed consistent, meaning there have not been any new

perspectives developed. This means that the concept of brand awareness has throughout the years sought to reach the same goal, which was to establish a form of brand equity. Brand equity It refers to the value that the organization generates when products are recognized by consumers and is therefore considered a factor that is influenced by brand awareness to a degree (Hayes 2022). However, the concept of brand awareness has not been adequately conceptualized as it only focuses on a consumer-based approach. Meaning that it does not take into consideration other brand elements or acts that can influence the degree of which brand awareness is established by the organization. As mentioned, the literature on Brand Awareness is vast as many theorists have attempted to provide their perspective on the theory of Brand Awareness. This literature review investigates the two prominent theorists of the field David Aaker (2009) and Kevin Lane Keller (2015) in order to create an overview of the literary field of brand awareness.

### **David Aaker**

To start, the theorist David Aaker has been hailed as “the father of branding” and therefore also the father of brand awareness (Rossiter 2014, 533).

Aaker (2009) has throughout the years published many journals and research papers introducing and explaining the effects and influence branding have had on organization’s success. In his book “*Managing Brand Equity*” Aaker (2009) introduces brand awareness as “the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category” (Ch, Brand Awareness) and further mentions that a clear link between product class and the brand itself should be evident to the customer. The definition on brand awareness will not be stipulated by Aaker (2009), Kapferer (2008) or Keller (2015) as none of the theorists properly conceptualize the overall idea and scope this thesis seeks to investigate. Instead, this thesis will propose its own definition to properly conceptualize the aspect of brand awareness according to the scope of the thesis. Furthermore, Aaker (2009) provides organizations with a form of “how to” guide on how to establish brand awareness to the entire brand, by taking on a consumer-based perspective. He argues in his text that brand awareness involves a continuum as the term ranges from uncertainty of the recognition of the brand to the belief that the product is the only one (Bin et al. 2014, 72). He further distinguishes the measuring of brand awareness in the form of a pyramid consisting of the subcategories brand recognition and brand recall (Bin et al. 2014, 72). In the theories brand recognition and brand recall are often mentioned as a way of measuring brand awareness, as they evidently prove the consumers ability to recognize and recall the brand’s image and

products in different settings (Keller et. al. 2015, 48). The subcategories will not be utilized in this thesis, as they focus on the consumer's abilities and not on the organization's efforts to establish brand awareness. However, because of this fact, the subcategories will be utilized as terms that help argue, whether the communicative efforts of RTFKT have attempted to establish brand awareness and thereby influence or trigger brand recognition and brand recall.

In this thesis, Aaker's interpretation and approach on brand awareness will be utilized to help the conceptualization of brand awareness strategy, and thereby create a better understanding of the concept. However, the reason why this study will not utilize Aaker as the sole theorist is due to the focus of this study. This study focuses on the organization itself and its attempt to establish a brand awareness strategy through RTFKT's communicative efforts. Meaning that the thesis does not take into account, to which measure the organization has already achieved said awareness, but rather what efforts have been used to potentially establish it.

### **Kevin Lane Keller**

from Aaker, different theorists ramified, and among them was Kevin Lane Keller (2015). In the book "*strategic brand management: building, measuring and managing brand equity*" Keller (2015) looks into brand awareness and how it is a means to reach brand equity. He expresses that brand awareness can and should be considered the strength of the brand, as it is something the organization should attempt to achieve first before attempting to create a brand image (Keller et al. 2015, 46-50). He adds, that in brand knowledge, brand awareness is an important first step in the creation of brand equity, and it is only when a sufficient level of brand awareness has been reached that the organization can move to other elements (50). Additionally, Keller (2015) perceives brand awareness as a form of tool that measure consumers' ability to identify the organization from products, which complies with Aaker's interpretation of brand awareness (46). It complies as, Keller (2015) express that brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance and believes that both are important in order to establish and sustain brand equity (46). From Keller's approach it can be perceived that he believes brand awareness should not be considered a theory, but a form of framework or approach that consists of Brand recall and/or Brand recognition in order to establish brand equity (48).

The literature of Keller (2015) therefore specifically looks into the advantages of brand awareness from the perspective of the consumer, which does not comply with the focus of this study. Furthermore, Keller (2015) does not properly conceptualize brand awareness as



he does not define nor specifically elaborate on how brand awareness can be established in regard to what efforts and acts organizations can implement. Additionally, Keller (2015) Similarly utilizes the subcategories brand recall and brand recognition to measure brand awareness. Therefore, Keller (2015) perceives the theory of brand awareness to be more of an approach, or a means to obtain the goal of brand equity after the organization has already achieved a form of brand awareness. However, apart from the abovementioned limitations and lacks, Keller (2015) does provide some good points in regard to the effectiveness and use of brand awareness. Additionally, the theory, for all it lacks, will be used to support, and illustrate the ways in which this thesis approach brand awareness differs from a previous approach.

This project will utilize the approach of Keller (2015), like Aaker (2010). The approach created by Keller will help conceptualize brand awareness to create a comprehensive understanding of the concept from an organizational perspective. As mentioned, Keller (2015) distinguishes brand awareness into advantages and motivations for the organization. These will be drawn upon to create a better understanding of the importance of brand awareness throughout the study.

### **Gap in brand awareness and the new approach**

The presented idea that the concept of brand awareness is misunderstood is recognized by John R. Rossiter (2014). In the text *“branding explained: defining and measuring brand awareness and brand attitude”* John R. Rossiter (2014) debates previous literature on brand awareness and expresses some of the problematic discourses that has circulated within the field of brand awareness. Among others, Rossiter problematize the theory of Aaker (1996), as he expresses the lack of attempt at defining brand awareness as a theory and concept. He elaborates that Aaker (1996) has not attempted to define brand awareness, but rather provide a lackluster definition of branding that vaguely insinuate the existence of brand awareness (533). Additionally, Rossiter (2014) goes on to argue that the omission of brand awareness “is the big mistake made by practitioners and by academics” because there is an apparent general assumption that brand awareness can only be measured when it has already been acquired (534). These points will be further elaborated upon below. Apart from his critique regarding the previous brand awareness literature, the purpose of his text is to introduce the C-U-B model and expand the model to encompass three types of brand awareness. The three types of brand awareness proposed is: brand recognition, category-cued brand name recall and brand recall -boosted recognition (535-537). Taking into consideration the critiquing

points stipulated by Rossiter (2014), the three types of bare similarities to the approaches stipulated by Aaker and Keller, as they also utilize the concepts of brand recall and brand recognition. Additionally, his definition of brand awareness bares resemblance to that of Keller (2015), in which he defines brand awareness as the “*buyer’s ability to identify (recognize or recall) the brand, within the product or service category in sufficient detail to make a purchase*” (535), meaning that Rossiter’s approach is also from the perspective of the consumer and not the organization.

The overall literature of brand awareness has somewhat similar approaches and perspectives on how to utilize brand awareness. The common discourse shown throughout the literature, is that the establishing of brand awareness comes from measuring the buyers/ consumers ability to recognize, identify and recall products and services of the organization before, during and after their intent of purchase. In the literature, brand awareness was shown utilized as an already existing entity. It was explained as something that existed by default, and not as a concept the organization must establish, maintain, and sustain. As stipulated by Rossiter (2014), brand awareness has been omitted in the branding process continuously and is still being omitted (533). It is expressed throughout the literature that the common goal of brand awareness is to measure the effect of brand awareness to achieve a form of brand equity, and not investigate the overall strategy that goes into establishing brand awareness. In order to achieve brand equity, the organization must therefore first be able to measure brand awareness. However, none of the above-mentioned theories approaches the idea of establishing brand awareness from the organization’s perspective. Brand awareness has therefore, not been adequately conceptualized in the literature as an independent strategy in which the organizations intentionally communicate brand aspects and efforts in order to influence their brand awareness. The objective of this study is to investigate how RTFKT has attempted to establish brand awareness in their industry, thereby taking an organization-based perspective and not consumer-based. The angle of this study is a new theoretical proposition and a new utilization of brand awareness, therefore, because a definition of brand awareness does not exist within this scope, this study will provide a definition.

After some reflection, it was determined that the thesis instead will investigate how selected branding theories influence and contribute to the attempted establishment of brand awareness. The theories chosen for this project is: Brand Identity and Brand Positioning. The purpose of these theories is to help provide factors and approaches that are applicable to

establish awareness to the organization and their product. In connection, the theories should also provide a better insight and understanding into the considerations and factors necessary within the field of marketing and branding, as they act as a component in the establishment of the organization's overall branding strategy to create awareness. Furthermore, the subcategories should shed some light into the considerations and thought processes organizations go through in order to establish what and how the organization will make customers aware of their brand and their product. As a result, this thesis should provide a greater understanding into the organization's possible considerations of establishing brand awareness. A deeper explanation of each theory chosen for this project and why, will be explained below.

### 3.2 Brand Positioning

As mentioned previously, the objective of this study is to investigate how the organization RTFKT has attempted to make themselves noticeable in their target market. The thesis therefore seeks to identify factors that possibly could contribute to influencing the organization's awareness. In order to clearly comprehend "how" the organization attempted to establish awareness, I found it necessary to investigate the theoretical field of brand positioning, as this theory provides an insight into factors and considerations of the organization's positioning.

Brand Positioning is a prominent theory located within the heart of marketing strategy (Keller 2015, 54). It is a theory that is important to consider before one's product is placed on the market, as the theory focuses on the identity, the vision, the values, the principles, and dimensions of the overall organization and utilizes these to determine where and which market the organization belongs to and will be able to survive in (Keller 2015, 54). Like Brand awareness, Brand Positioning is an extensive theory, that has been looked upon by many theorists. Among those theorists are Aaker (2015), Keller (2015) and Anne Bahr Thompson (2014).

Aaker (2015) believes brand positioning to be a representation of the organization's communicative objectives. He elaborates that brand positioning is a theory that help the organization communicate and convey the values, visions and effectively the parts of brand identity the organization wants their consumers to know, into the appropriate market. In the books "*building a strong brand*" (1996) and "*Strategic Market Management*" (2015) Aaker Introduces the reader to two fundamental choices the organization must make in order for the

organization to be able to position themselves on the market. The first question is about whether the strategist wants to create a credible position or an aspirational position (Aaker and McLoughlin 2015, 191-192). The second and last question is about whether the organization wants to emphasize points of differentiation or points of parity when branding (Aaker and McLoughlin 2015, 191-192). The two questions will be shortly elaborated upon in the theoretical framework as they both provide an insight into the reasonings of the organization's positioning. He argues that the strategist must choose one or the other, because the answer will affect the overall direction of the organization's target market.

Keller (2015) argues, in his literature, that the organization must first establish their brand positioning strategy before proceeding with their actual marketing program (34). He introduces the phrase "frame of reference" a term that means that the organization must determine who, what and where their target market is. I.e., the organization must first determine who they are and what they stand for in order to be able to select the correct target market. Like Aaker (2015), Keller (2015) mentions that the organization must identify and determine the optimal target market for the product as well as the optimal 'points-of-parity' and points-of-difference'. Meaning that the organization must first identify, understand, and thereafter decide the general message of the brand and identity of the organization, that they want to convey to their customers in order to trigger the wanted image perception. The text by Keller (2015) provides the reader with a great insight into the theory of brand positioning, and similarly provides a useful and comprehensible guideline that can be used by organizations to establish a strong brand.

The theorist J.N. Kapferer (2008) presents in "*the new strategic brand management*" a broad understanding of the field of brand positioning. The text provided additional insight into the workings of brand positioning, by introducing and indicating that positioning is a two-stage process, that is necessary for the organization to consider before attempting to establish themselves in a market (176). The two stage-process is elaborated upon in the theoretical framework. Kapferer (2008) further emphasizes factors and elements that must be considered prior to positioning one's brand. These factors constituted the reasons why the organization choose to create their product and brand - their reason for existing - and likewise what the organization contribute with on the market - also called their competitive sets. The theory stipulated by Kapferer (2008) will in this thesis contribute to the conceptualization of brand positioning.

The theorist Anne Bahr Thompson (2004) provides the reader with definitions on Brand Positioning stipulated by other theorists, in the book "*Brands and Branding*" (2004).

From this book the definition utilized in this project was found. The definition used in this thesis is stipulated by Al Ries and Jack Trout (1981). The definition will be used to explain brand positioning in the theoretical section, as it perfectly encapsulates the fact that the organization must be able to create a brand that is both credible and profitable in order to create value in the consumer's mind. The perspective of the consumer will, however, not be prominent in this thesis, as the point of the study is, among others, to investigate the components and factors utilized in the organization's strategy to position themselves in their attempt to create brand awareness. Additionally, the elements presented by Thompson (2004) will further be used in this project, to identify organization's core idea brand positioning (4). In her text, Thompson (2004) present the reader with four factors, in which the researcher can identify the organization's reasoning behind their choice of position for their brand. The four factors will help identify RTFKT's brand positioning efforts and reasonings for positioning which will further contribute to the investigation of determining their brand awareness strategy. The theory corresponds with the other theories as stipulated by Aaker (2009), Keller (2015) and Kapferer (2008) who will be present in this theory.

The theories as stipulated by both Aaker (2009), Keller (2015), Kapferer (2008) and Thompson (2004) was stipulated as they each contribute to the conceptualization and understanding of the elements and considerations necessary to position one's brand. Additionally, The Brand Positioning theory was chosen because it gives the reader an insight into the considerations and the factors the organization must determine to be established on the market. The theory creates a connection to the other theories utilized in this thesis - Brand Identity - by exemplifying the values and visions the organization wants to convey to their customers. In connection, Brand Positioning helps establish Brand Awareness, as it illustrates the components and factors the organization actively utilizes in their strategy to create awareness in the selected market. The interrelations between the theories will be explained in the theoretical framework.

### 3.3 Brand Identity

I found that in order to create brand awareness and understand the organization's decision to position themselves, it required knowledge regarding the organization's overall identity. Brand identity is a theoretical field that has been investigated and researched extensively. The literature includes models, frameworks, conceptualizations, and reconceptualization's that each bring a new concept or idea to the field. Additionally, throughout the vast literature of

brand identity, many theorists have compared their approaches and ideas to other theorists works in an attempt to expand the knowledge of brand identity (Da Silveira et al. 2013, 29). This thesis seeks to investigate the brand efforts and acts made by the organization in order to determine the strategic elements present within their communicative efforts. This includes the definition of brand identity. Similar to brand awareness, the theorist David A. Aaker (2010) has a significant role within the research scope of brand identity. His conceptualization and definition of brand identity has made a consistent appearance in the literature as it takes a strategic perspective to the notion of brand identity. This notion will be applied within the thesis, as it seeks to investigate the strategic elements evident in RTFKT's communicative efforts to establish a brand awareness strategy. The definition as stipulated by Aaker (1996) will be used in this thesis and is elaborated upon in the theoretical framework. The definition by Aaker (1996) however, has been challenged by other theorists. e.g., the theorist de Chernatony (1999) argues that the definition provided by Aaker (1996) lacks the perception of the customer (158). However, in this thesis, the definition of Aaker (2010) complies with the intention of the study by looking at brand identity through the glasses of the brand strategist.

The concept of brand identity stipulated by Aaker (2010) takes a strategic approach, in which it is only achievable long term. In addition, Aaker acknowledges that brand identity is an entity that must be established and maintained in the organization and is a strategic tool utilized by brand strategists to figure out and reflect upon the organization itself (Aaker [1995] 2010), 68). In this thesis, the theory of Aaker (2010) will help provide a comprehensive insight into the concept of brand identity. The definition and approach of Aaker (2010) will therefore be evident throughout the theoretical framework as it complies with the overall scope of the study and thereby with the conceptualization of brand awareness.

The approach from Aaker (2010) did provide a clear definition of brand identity, however, it was found that a deeper insight into potential factors that contribute to the establishment of brand identity would be useful in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept. In the book "*the new strategic brand management*" by J. N Kapferer (2008) brand identity is introduced as an entity that represents the organization's tangible and intangible characteristics (178). The characteristics can be discerned to what Kapferer (2008) distinguishes as being the concepts brand identity and graphic identity, as he acknowledges that the identity of the organization is much more than just the visual aspects like brand colors, logo and name (172). In his text Kapferer (2008) explains that brand

identity is the first step in the branding process and is also one of the most necessary steps in order to create a consistent and trustworthy brand (171). He further expresses that compared to brand image, a theory that has often been used interchangeably with brand identity, brand identity is sender oriented whereas brand image is receiver based (171). Meaning that brand identity is something the organization actively can do something about (171). Whereas with brand image is influenced by the consumers perception of the organization and is therefore an external factor that the organization is unable to do anything to (171). Within his text, Kapferer (2008) introduces the six facets, hereinafter mentioned as the brand identity prisms (182). The brand identity prism is represented by a hexagonal prism that consists of six interrelated facets, namely, physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image (182). The model can be used to gain a greater insight into the considerations and factors taken by the organization in order to create a successful brand. It is also for this reason, that Kapferer (2008) will appear throughout the text, as his theory is based on the sender and not the recipient - meaning the consumer, and therefore brings perspectives and factors from the organization's perspective into the theory. Even though Kapferer (2008)'s identity prisms look into the characteristics of the organization's identity, it was interpreted as focusing on the visual identity of the organization, which is why the entire prism was not utilized. In the theoretical framework, the prisms Reflection and Relationship was utilized as it provided a factor that investigates the organization's perception of their ideal consumer and a factor that emphasized the necessity of establishing a relationship between the organization and their consumer (182). This factor adds to the identity of the organization as it illustrates values and goals.

As the brand identity prism showed an emphasis on the organization's visual elements, it was considered necessary to find factors that would allow the researcher to identify the core of the organization's identity. The theorists Greyser and Balmer (2009) propose a test called the *AC<sup>3</sup>ID* that introduced six identity types namely, actual identity, communicated identity, conceived identity, covenanted identity, ideal identity and desired identity (19-20). In the thesis the identity type conceived identity was not utilized as it focuses on the actual perception held by consumer of the organization (20). The identity type was therefore excluded as it does not contribute to support or oppose the scope of the study. The test was established to identify any misalignments within the organization's identity, but at the same time provides insight into the other identities formation and management (19). The *AC<sup>3</sup>ID* test accommodates both the increasingly important dimensions of the brand and

the various roots and identities that can be present within the organization and brand (19). The text emphasizes the importance of aligning the organization's identity within the entire organization and thereby correlates with the statement of Aaker (2010), who will also be present within the theoretical framework.

Both the theories of Kapferer (2008) and Aaker (2010) talk about a consistent, aligned and stable brand identity, that should be evident throughout everything that the organization does, and who they are, however, they are not opposed to the idea of a dynamic brand identity. meaning an identity that changes as the market progresses. Seeing as this project seeks to investigate brand awareness in the digital industry, it is also necessary to take the market into consideration and how fast the market can change. As the technological industry is a rapidly changing market it is only natural that organizations within these markets must be susceptible to the changes protruding in the industry. In her text "*reconceptualizing brand identity in a dynamic environment*" (Da Silveira et al. 2013), Da Silveira introduces a reconceptualized approach of brand identity, that proposes the idea that the brand identity of an organization should be susceptible to change in order to survive otherwise it will be lost in the vast array of other organizations who are able to keep up with the demands of the market. The text provides the reader with a short literature review of the theorists who have previously discussed that there is a need for change within the industry, and thereby the reader gains an insight into the field of study and can simultaneously understand Da Silveira's approach and thoughts about brand identity. The purpose of the study is to revise previous literature and expand the notion that brand identity is "dynamic, constructed over time through mutually influencing input" (Da Silveira et al. 2013, 28). The theory of Da Silveira (2013) encapsulates the notion that organization's must adhere to the demands of their market, and that the organization's strategy is depending on the market. Thereby the theory provides a reason as to why some organizations act the way they do in accordance with their brand identity. This literature will be utilized in the thesis to gain better awareness of the organization's brand awareness strategy in a dynamic market.

Throughout the literature search, it was evident that there was a gap. The utilization of brand identity as a way to help establish brand awareness has not been done previously, as many theorists believe that brand awareness is one of the factors that help establish brand identity. However, as according to Kapferer (2008), brand identity is the first step necessary in order to establish a successful brand. Furthermore, if the brand does not have a successful and aligned brand identity, it will be hard for the organization to establish brand awareness. Therefore, it was found that brand identity was suitable to help answer the problem statement.



The theoretical field of brand identity was chosen due to the fact that it is sender oriented. Meaning that it is a theory that focus on the communication and the messages the organization attempts to convey to their customers (Kapferer 2008, 171). As mentioned above, brand identity is also one of the necessary factors that organizations must have established and aligned throughout the entire entity of the organization otherwise brand awareness will not be adequately established. If the organization does not know who they are or who they want to be perceived as, the alignment within the organization will be considered weak and the organization can as a result not successfully establish brand awareness, as their consumers will not find them worthy of recognizing.

brand identity will be utilized in this project to support the examination of how RTFKT attempts to establish awareness to their organization through their communication and likewise attempt to establish a brand awareness strategy. The theory will, therefore, be helpful in identifying and analyzing factors that showcase what kind of strategy RTFKT utilize. Brand identity will furthermore, help conceptualize the new brand awareness approach as it provides factors and elements that indicate the considerations of values and elements important to the organization and brand when they seek to communicate and further establish awareness.

In summary, the above-mentioned theories all act as inspiration for this thesis theoretical framework and will be utilized in order to contribute to the theoretical scope of brand awareness and provide a better understanding of the field. The theories brand positioning and brand identity have been chosen as they work interconnectedly by influencing one another and can help in the attempt to establish brand awareness in varying degrees. How the theories are connected will be elaborated upon in the theoretical framework. Additionally, it is important to mention that this thesis will draw upon the concepts and approaches of several theorists in order to establish a comprehensive and understandable conceptualization of the theories.

## **4. Theoretical framework**

The following chapter will explain and elaborate the theoretical framework utilized in this thesis. The chapter will introduce the concepts of Brand awareness, Brand Identity and Brand Positioning as well as elaborate on the usage in this thesis. The concept of Brand Awareness will be thoroughly explained in this section as to provide an understanding of the approach taken and will be explained with a particular interest of delving into a new theoretical

approach, regarding the establishment of a brand awareness strategy from the perspective of the organization. The new approach should help potential organizations, students or others interested grasp the extensive concept of Brand Awareness, and how it could also be comprehended, utilized, or approached. In connection, the theoretical fields of Brand Identity and Brand Positioning will be elaborated upon, particularly with respect to how these can help establish Brand Awareness and vice versa. Lastly, the interrelations between the theories presented will be explained and elaborated upon in terms of how the theories affect each other and how they contribute to establishing brand awareness strategy.

#### 4.1 Brand awareness:

As mentioned in the literature review, Brand Awareness has previously been used as a concept or an approach that can help the organization establish brand equity. It was implied that the theory consisted of the two subcategories brand recall and brand recognition (Keller et. al. 2015, 48). The subcategories investigated the consumer's ability to recognize and recall the brand (48). As mentioned in the literature review, the thesis will not look into whether the organization has been able to establish recognition or recall. However, the two terms can instead be used as a way to argue whether the communicative acts and brand elements have participated in the establishment of creating recognition and/or recall. Additionally, the notion that Brand Awareness was a preexisting factor, almost automatically achieved without action, was also implied (Rossiter 2014, 534). While this thesis agrees on the notion that Brand Awareness can be a contributor to the achievement of Brand equity, it investigates how RTFKT attempted to establish Brand Awareness, and therefore denies the notion that Brand Awareness is something the organization achieves automatically. Instead, it acknowledges the fact that other factors can contribute to the establishment of brand awareness. For example, elements of the theories such as brand identity and brand positioning will be argued in this thesis to potentially contribute to the establishment of brand awareness and will be further discussed below.

##### **Defining brand awareness**

Brand awareness has previously been defined as “The buyer's ability to identify the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase” by John R. Rossiter (2014) and was similarly defined as the “customer's ability to recall and recognize the brand under different conditions, and to link the brand name, logo, symbol and so forth to certain associations in memory” (Keller et

al. 2015, 84-85). As exemplified by these quotes, Brand Awareness has previously taken a consumer-based approach, in which it focusses on the value it gives the consumer, instead of the efforts and actions taken by the organization, in order to make the consumer recall/ recognize the brand. As this thesis seeks to investigate the communicative efforts and actions put into the attempt at establishing brand awareness from the perspective of the organization, the definitions will not be appropriate for this thesis. Therefore, this study proposes a new definition that encompass and highlight the organization's efforts in attempting to establish brand awareness strategy - from the perspective of the organization.

This thesis defines brand awareness strategy as:

*“The strategic efforts and actions made by the organization in their attempt to establish awareness of the organization and brand “*

The definition recognizes and emphasizes the strategic efforts and actions made by the organization in order to create awareness in their respective market. It further recognizes the fact that the establishment of brand awareness does not lie in the hands of the consumer, but rather in the efforts made by the organization. Meaning, that the organization is in control of creating brand awareness through their strategic actions to emphasize the qualities of themselves and their brand. The organization themselves are therefore in control of establishing brand awareness, however, the messages communicated outward in regard to their brand, their values, identity etc. is up to their consumers to interpret and perceive as according to their reality. Therefore, whether brand awareness is successfully achieved, or to what degree brand awareness has been accomplished lies with the consumer's perception. This thesis will, therefore, only be able to argue that the organization has attempted to establish brand awareness and not whether it has been a success, as this will require a different perspective and scope of study. Because this thesis objective is regarding the organization's communicative efforts and acts and does therefore not look into how their efforts and acts have been received by the consumer.

### **The purpose of brand awareness**

The purpose of brand awareness is to make sure that the organization's target group is aware of their existence. The ideal brand awareness level is according to Keller (2015) the “extent and ease with which consumers recall and recognize the brand and can identify the products and services with which it is associated” (106). The degree in which consumers are aware of the organization can therefore vary depending on the organization's efforts to continuously expose the consumer to their brand and product. This is further emphasized, as

according to Aaker (1991) “brand awareness engages in a continuum ranging from an undecided feeling that the brand is recognized to a faith that it is barely one in the product class” (Bin Latif, Islam, and Mdnoor 2014, 72). This shows that consumers' cognitive abilities to remember the organization and their product can vary, for example, when consumers converse about NFTs, is it RTFKT they refer to or is it another organization entirely? Keller (2015) explains that “with a fading brand the depth of brand awareness is often not a problem as much as the breadth; that is consumers tend to think of the brand in a very narrow way” (500). This means that, if the organization has created a big enough impression, and has succeeded in their attempt to make their product seem valuable [to the consumer], the consumer should be able to recollect and/or recognize the brand and its product and thereby further spread awareness of the organization. However, if the organization has not exposed the consumer to their products, brand or values - in general, left a great enough impression - in the moment of the consumer's purchasing process, the product will not come to mind. In regard to the quote, it is important to note, that Keller (2015) distinguishes between the two terms depth and breadth as two different entities. He refers to depth of Brand Awareness as a term that “measures the likelihood that consumers can recognize or recall the brand” (73-74). Breadth is referred to as a term that “measures the variety of purchase and consumption situations in which the brand comes to mind” (73-74). These terms are both palpable within the consumer-based Brand Awareness but can be utilized to discuss whether RTFKT's communication attempts contribute to the depth and breadth of the organization. Meaning, whether the branding efforts of the organization seeks to increase the likelihood of the consumer being able to recognize the organization.

### **Establishing and maintaining brand awareness**

According to Keller (2015), the creation of brand awareness is an effective marketing strategy that can be accomplished in a short amount of time and help the organization achieve brand equity (101). From this, it can be interpreted that brand awareness can only be established once as the minute brand awareness has been accomplished the organization can move on to other factors (Keller et al. 2015, 50). Additionally, the notion implies that brand awareness is an entity that does not require much thought or time. However, this thesis argue that brand awareness must be established, maintained, and repaired if damaged, and is therefore not an entity that can only be established once. If the organization believe that brand awareness should only be established once and not maintained thereafter, there is a high likelihood that consumers forget the organization's existence and thereby move on to the

competitor. This is relevant to the scope of the study, as it conceptualizes the fact that brand awareness can be considered a dynamic entity that has to be continuously developed and updated, to trigger recognition and recall from consumers. Aaker (2015) mentions that “Brand awareness is an asset that can be extremely durable and thus sustainable” (177), he elaborates that if the organization has managed to achieve a “dominant awareness level”, it will be extremely difficult for other brands to take over their “position” in the market (177). This could, for example, be the case with the market leader of the NFT creators’ market Beeple (Geysler 2021). For example, when consumers converse about NFT creators there is a chance that they mention Beeple instead of RTKFT, because Beeple has managed to establish a higher degree of brand awareness and may therefore gain a higher position in the market (Geysler 2021). However, if RTFKT has not achieved a dominant level of awareness or in general does not continue their pursuit of establishing brand awareness, the likelihood of the organization being forgotten, and/or lost within the sea of competitors, will increase significantly.

Keller (2015) further, explains that brand awareness can be achieved through the visual aspects, also referred to as brand elements, such as name, logo, symbols etc. (XXI). Keller (2015) therefore implies that brand awareness more or less is achieved through the visual aspects of the organization's overall branding. As it was proposed in the definition, this thesis acknowledges the efforts and actions put into the organization’s visual branding, however, the efforts of brand awareness extend beyond that of the visual effects of the brand as it encompasses the organization’s overall communication as well. This means that brand awareness as previously defined in this thesis, is evident in the organization branding efforts and communicates to their consumers, in regard to their brand, product and the organization’s identity. Therefore, it can also be argued that brand awareness can be depicted through the organization’s communication and overall branding efforts, as it is the organization’s attempt at making their consumers aware of their existence. It can therefore be determined that this thesis acknowledges brand awareness as part of the organization’s branding process. Because the factors and efforts that contribute to the establishment of the organization’s brand awareness can be considered general brand efforts.

When it comes to establishing Brand Awareness, the organization must look into their own values, brand, visions and identity, and determine how, what and who they want to be acknowledged as and with whom they want to be associated with. It is important that the organization is aware of how the image of the brand can be perceived as Kevin Lane Keller (2015) mentions that “establishing a positive brand image in consumer memory - strong,

favorable and unique brand associations - goes hand-in-hand with creating brand awareness” (Keller 2015, 47). He further adds that “the strength of brand associations to the product category is an important determinant of brand awareness” (53). This basically means that the way the organization communicates their brand, their organizational values and product to their consumers must be done in an effective and positive way in order to establish a positive cognitive connection with the consumer. Thereby establishing a strong brand association is a must as it helps connect the consumer’s association with the brand. The organization must, therefore, be able to convince their consumers that their product has value to them and in some way fulfills a “need”, otherwise the consumers will disregard the brand, and instead acknowledge competitors who have been successful in establishing a strong brand association through communication. Keller (2015) emphasizes the importance of a positive brand association when it comes to the establishment of brand awareness (53). Due to the fact that a negative perception of the organization’s brand and image can have a detrimental effect on the overall success of the organization, as it effects the consumer’s ability to recognize and/or recall. If the organization decides to highlight certain parts, e.g., a value, vision or in general a part of the organization’s identity, that the consumers cannot associate themselves with - or worse, a part they completely disagree with - the consumer will disregard the organization and turn to their competitors. Additionally, if the organization has a negative brand association, meaning that the consumers are in disagreement with the organization and their values, they may decide to spread negative awareness. Therefore, how the organization decides to communicate and what they want their messages to be interpreted as can influence their Brand Awareness depending on the market they are connected to.

This project will keep this conceptualization of brand awareness in mind as it seeks to uncover the communicative brand awareness strategy employed by RTFKT. This will be done with the help of factors presented in the rest of the theoretical framework. Meaning that the conceptualization and identification of RTFKT’s brand awareness strategy, will be identified and determined through contributing factors within brand identity and brand positioning. Both theories will in this thesis, help examining potential brand efforts that can support the approach presented above. Brand identity and brand positioning will be elaborated upon below.

## 4.2 Brand Identity

Before an organization can begin their branding efforts it is important that they know who they are and what they stand for. Specifically, the organization needs to determine their brand and thereby their identity. As Kapferer (2008) writes “A brand is not the name of a product. It is the vision that drives the creation of products and services under that name. That vision, the key belief of the brands and its core values is called identity” (171). Meaning that brand identity is not just the product the organization is trying to sell but could be considered the embodiment of the entire organization, it’s visions and values. It is everything that the organization is communicating outward to their consumers. Furthermore, Brand Identity should be considered as an entity that helps the organization feel like it exists and that it has a place and a coherent history of its own (Kapferer 2008, 172).

In order to fully grasp the concept of Brand Identity a definition is in order. Aaker (2010) defines Brand Identity as:

*“A unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members” (68)*

The definition implies that Brand Identity, is a set of factors that should make the organization seem unique to the consumer and thereby differentiate themselves from the other competition on the market. By expressing unique facets pertaining particularly to the organization, the organization is thereby expressing a part of their identity with which they can both appeal to their consumers, but also further divert themselves from the competition. The expressed facets and association sets are wording the organization believes describes them, their brand and their product. Therefore, the organizations should emphasize certain words in their communication that reflects their value proposition and thereby express ‘who they are’ to the consumer. Basically, in the organization’s communication to their customers, Brand Identity must express specifying facets that show the uniqueness and value of the brand (Kapferer 2008, 171).

### **Purpose of brand identity**

Aaker (2010) further mentions, one of the purposes of Brand Identity is to establish a relationship between the organization and the consumer, by generating value propositions that involves either functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits (68). For example, RTFKT could use words like ‘exclusive’ and/or ‘original’ as a way to express a part of their brand and to make the consumer believe that their product is one of a kind, something that they can/want to associate themselves with or relate to. These value propositions should be

evident throughout the entire organization as Kapferer (2008) mentions that brand identity is” the common element sending a single message amid the wide variety of its products, actions and communications” (172). The facets that the organization determines, describe and encompass the organization’s vision, values and message are also the words and associations that should be consistently present throughout the communication of the organization’s brand. Thereby the value proposition mentioned by Aaker (2010), should align throughout the entire organization in order for consumers perceive the organization as trustworthy and establish a strong relationship. Kapferer (2008) further introduce prisms within the field of brand identity. As mentioned in the literature review, this thesis only utilizes the prisms reflection and relationship as these prisms communicated facets that were not present within the *AC<sup>3</sup>ID* tests by Greyser and Balmer (2009). According to Kapferer (2008) the brand identity should reflect their desired consumer. This means that since RTFKT wants to be perceived as being a fashion forward digital asset organization, the ideal consumer for RTFKT would thereby be people who reflect that form of lifestyle (186). Additionally, the reflection prism also reflects who the consumer wants to be seen as when purchasing a product from the brand. Therefore, it is important that the organization is aware of who their ideal target group is and how they can best persuade them into believing that their identity will reflect the wanted reflection. This can be difficult however, as Kapferer (2008) mentions that reflection and the actual target group can often get mixed up. It is important to note that the “target describes the brand’s potential purchasers or users” (186) and should therefore not be considered their reflected consumer. This means that the organization can have multiple target groups - potential consumers - however the organization will attempt to reflect the ideal consumer, in order to attract their ideal consumer. Additionally, as mentioned, Aaker (2010) emphasizes the fact that it is important for the organization to have a relationship with their consumers. This corresponded with the relationship prism, as it illustrates the organization’s attempt at establishing some form of a relationship with the consumer - whether it being a ‘love affair’ or a genuine friendship depends on the “mode of conduct” of the brand (Kapferer 2008, 186). This means that the relationship depends on the organization’s way of branding its behavior and actions that relates to its consumer (186).

In connection, Kapferer (2008) distinguishes between two types of identity within the organization’s branding efforts namely Graphic Identity and Brand Identity (173). He mentions that in order to fully comprehend Brand Identity, it is necessary to be able to distinguish between Graphic Identity and Brand Identity. Firstly, Graphic Identity is the visual identity of the organization, as it is described as the “visual recognition of the brand



i.e., the brand's colors, graphic design and type of print" (173) meaning that it incorporates the visual determinants that make the consumer able to recognize the brand. Brand Identity, however, involves the vision, values and the overall message the organization wants to convey to their customers (173). According to Kapferer (2008), the Graphic identity is often the first thing the organization wants to implement right away but forget the factors behind the visual facets. Additionally, he argues that it is the Brand Identity that matters, first and foremost, as it is the key message the organization wants to communicate outwards. He argues that the visual identity of the organization, stems from the brand's 'core' that lies in the foundation of the overall brand (173). This is similarly expressed by Aaker (2010) who argue that an organization's Brand Identity structure includes a core and an extended identity.

The core identity is referred to as the timeless essence of the brand or the soul of the brand (85). It is the fundamental beliefs and values that drives the organization, their competencies, and their conduct (86). In the text, Aaker (2010) uses the example of an artichoke to illustrate the concept of core identity (86). He explains that the core identity will be the core that is left after each leaf has been peeled off of the artichoke (86). For example, the organization RTFKT's core identity could be based around values such as innovation, creativity and exclusivity. Therefore, the core identity expresses the fundamental beliefs that establishes the organization and makes them, 'them'. Additionally, the core identity is the part of the brand's identity that is most likely to stay constant and resistant to change throughout the organization's lifetime, if the organization has managed to create a strong brand (85-86). Aaker (2010) mentions that if the organization has been able to establish a strong brand, the identity of the organization will be and stay consistent throughout the entire brand and products. However, a weak brand is most likely to appear inconsistent or disjointed (93). Aaker (2010) elaborates that an organization's core identity should be able to contribute to the brand's value proposition and credibility and include elements and facets that make the brand unique and valuable to the consumer (86). Meaning, that the core identity of the organization should also contribute to help make the consumer believe that the brand and its products are trustworthy and valuable. Furthermore, Aaker (2010) mentions that the core identity should not be perceived as a singular entity but should rather be perceived as a multifaceted entity as it can include multiple sets of visions and values (86).

The extended identity is referred to as the identity that provides texture and completeness to the organization's identity. It adds to the core identity by adding details that can help the organization portray what the brand stands for (87). According to Aaker, the core identity rarely possesses enough details to perform all functions needed within the brand

identity (87). Thus, the extended identity acts as a supportive entity to the core identity and the overall brand, by providing elements of detail that become visible associations of the brand (88). The extended identity includes elements such as the logo, the brand personality, local and global scope, symbols, users etc. which basically means that it consists of the small details that help the organization in determining the proper target market for their product (89-93). Additionally, Aaker (2010) mentions that the details provided by the extended identity can contribute to amplifying the brand's values if they are in synergy with the brand identity (43). The details once interpreted can thereby serve to express a broader and deeper strategy (43). This thesis proposes that the extended identity also encompass trends and societal issues such as political, environmental, social causes as these causes can serve as a detailed portrayal of the organizations' deeper values e.g., human rights (core id) = black lives matter (Ext. id). However, compared to the core identity, the extended identity does not have a basic foundation, and can be changed depending on the market and the interests of the organization (88). It is therefore possible to argue that the extended identity is dynamic, because the organization is able to change the elements to better suit their target market's needs.

Kapferer (2008) suggests that the organization needs to keep their identity consistent as the "brand identity is the common element sending a single message amid the wide variety of its products, actions and communications" (172). He explains that the more brands expand and diversify in the market, may result in consumers being more inclined to believe that they are dealing with multiple brands instead of just one (172). Therefore, it is very important that the organization stays consistent in the communication of their identity throughout the entire organization and brand, otherwise they may lose credibility. In addition, when the organization is expanding, misalignments with the organization's identity may occur due to the identity not being consistent throughout the entire organization. As mentioned in the literature review John Ts Balmer (2009) felt that the field within Brand Identity did not take into consideration the fact that there could be more than one identity, and therefore he created the *AC<sup>3</sup>ID* test. The purpose of the *AC<sup>3</sup>ID* test was first and foremost to identify and determine whether there were any misalignments in the organisation's identity, as this was - and still is - a common occurrence among organizations (19). The test was meant to act as a tool for executives to be able to comprehend their organization strategically and at the same time gain an overview of the various identities present in organizational context (18). Additionally, the test provides a deeper insight into the formation and management of the other identities within the organization (19). Balmer (2009) identified six types of identities

that together forms the acronym *AC<sup>3</sup>ID*, namely: actual identity, communicated identity, conceived identity, covenanted identity, ideal identity, and desired identity (19-20). As mentioned in the literature review, the identity type conceived identity, will not be present in this thesis as it focuses on how who the consumers actually perceive the organization to be. As this does not fit the scope of this study or contribute to answering the problem statement, this identity will not be elaborated upon further. The identity types will be explained below:

- Actual identity is referred to as “The distinctive attributes of the organization, including business activities, purposes, corporate style and ethos, markets covered” (19). The actual identity illustrates who and what the organization really is and not the associations they want to be perceived as.
- Communicated identity refers to” The messages emitted from the organization” (19). This is the identity the organization communicates outwards to their consumers.
- Covenanted identity is the “underlying promise that is associated with the corporate name and /or logo” (20). The Covenanted Identity reflects the underlying messages, values, and causes e.g., political, environmental or general causes, that the organization stand for. It is the elements that the organization wants to be associated with when recognized by consumers.
- Ideal Identity is described as “The optimum strategic (future-oriented) positioning of the organization in a given time frame” (20). The Ideal Identity represents what the organization should be and want to be. It is as the name implies the ideal identity the organization is trying to reach in order to gain a better positioning on the market (20). The Ideal Identity can first be established after the organization has scrutinized the entire market for external and internal factors that could influence or damage the organization’s identity. This could be factors such as organizational competencies, assets, competition, changes in the political, ethical, social and technological environment etc. (20)
- Desired Identity refers to “the sought-after future positioning of the organization that lives in the heart and minds of corporate leaders” (20). Like the ideal identity, this identity is future oriented as it seeks to reach the wanted identity of the organization. It focuses on the CEO’s and the board’s visions and intentions with the organizations’ identity and what they wish, for the organization’s future positioning in a given time frame (20).

The intention behind the utilization of the  $AC^3ID$  test in this project is not to determine whether or not RTFKT has misaligned the identities in their branding communication. The test will instead be utilized to identify aspects of the Brand Identity of RTFKT and determine how this has influenced the establishment of their brand awareness strategy.

### 4.3 Brand Positioning:

When attempting to establish brand awareness, it is vital for the organization to identify and determine the correct location for their product and brand in order for the brand to have the best recognizable effect on the consumer. As the name implies, Brand Positioning is about finding the proper location in the minds of the consumer (Keller 2015, 54). This means finding the correct segmentation, target group and market, that will be the most beneficial and maximizes potential benefits to the organization (54). In order to be able to make a clear and comprehensible conceptualization of Brand Positioning, a definition is in order. This project utilizes the definition as stipulated by Al Ries and Jack Trout (1981). As they define brand positioning as:

*“Owning a credible and profitable “position” in the consumer’s mind, either by getting there first, or by adopting a position relative to the competition, or by repositioning the competition”* (Thompson 2004, 1).

The definition emphasizes the fact that the organization must make an effort to be perceived as seeming relevant to their consumers and thereby be recognized. It further emphasizes the fact that efforts must be made to differentiate themselves from the competition in their market by either becoming a niche (differentiating), be a follower (doing the same as the competition) or become the market leader on the market (being the first one doing a particular thing). The definition further adds the dimension in which the organization must attempt to define the market themselves instead of attempting to map their brand into an already existing market or category in relation to the current competition (1). This is particularly relevant for niche organizations such as RTFKT, as they are providing a service that does not necessarily fit on the same market as their competitors. RTFKT must therefore, define their own market and determine their own target group to be able to gain the beneficial advantages of being in a market best suited for them. As mentioned in the literature review, Aaker (2015) mentions that the brand must consider whether they want to be credible or aspirational (191). In the text, Aaker (2015) mentions that it is easy for an organization to indicate that they want to be perceived as being a credible organization, however, the credible

position may not support the organization's new strategy (191). On the other hand, by focusing on being aspirational would be considered 'on strategy' but can in turn make the organization be considered as being not credible (191).

As mentioned previously, it is important for a brand to be distinctive from their competitors and appealing to their consumers otherwise they will be disregarded and forgotten. brand positioning, therefore, focus on emphasizing those characteristics that creates value to the consumer and at the same time differentiates them from their competition (Kapferer 2008, 175). According to Kapferer (2008), Brand positioning is a two-stage process in which the organization must determine the following aspects:

1. To indicate the competitive sets the brand wants to be associated and/or compared with (176)
2. To indicate the essential difference and 'raison d'être' of the brand (176)

The first stage indicates that the organization must choose the 'competitive set' meaning the values the brand wants to be associated with. e.g., RTFKT wants to be known for their NFT forging events that allows readers to obtain (and pay) for exclusive NFT's - the competitive set in this instance is the fact that RTFKT has realized a segmentation strategy in which they know that their consumers value the 'journey' of obtaining an NFT and not just the purchase. In addition, RTFKT is a niche organization, and it can therefore be hard to determine the competitive set of the organization. This is pointed out by Kapferer (2008) as he mentions that for a niche product choosing the competitive set can be difficult because the products are already unique and original (176). The second stage indicates the 'raison d'être', meaning the reason for the brand's existence and the relevance of the organization. This stage essentially also speaks to the organizations' values and how they convey those to their consumers e.g., does RTKFT describe themselves as unique, exclusive? or are there any other facets in the organizational brand or product that the organization should emphasize? Additionally, Keller (2015) speak of points-of-parity (PoP) and points-of-difference (PoD) (58). In regard to PoP, this refers to the ways, aspects and elements in which the organization either does or should resemble their competitors. The aspects of PoP can reflect the things that are necessary to even be considered in the market or industry the organization is attempting to penetrate. E.g., an NFT organization may not be considered an NFT organization if they did not offer forging events or collaborations with other creators. The Points-of-parity are therefore aspects that are necessary for the organization to implement in order to even be considered a certain type of organization. The points-of-difference, however, reflects the ways, aspects and services

that makes the organization stand out from their competitors (59). It is the values, the product features, brand elements etc. which the organization can implement in order to be perceived relevant and 'fresh'. For example, a PoD of RTFKT could be the fact that they are offering physical sneakers that resemble the limited-edition sneaker NFTs (RTFKT n.d.).

When the organization's brand and identity is ready to be launched it is, as mentioned, up to the organization to take into consideration the facets, components, and attributes of both the brand, the identity and the potential market, that will constitute the ideal market. It is therefore necessary that the organization identifies and recognizes the potential of each market in order to determine the correct one that suits the organization. Thompson (2004) proposes four aspects that the organization must focus on when identifying their market, namely, relevance, differentiation, credibility and stretch (4-5). The four aspects help the organization figure out what elements of the brand and its identity should be focused on in order to determine the most optimal and beneficial market in terms of organizational success. The four aspects is elaborated upon below:

- 1. Relevance:** Relevance refers to the connection between brand and consumers (4). It reflects the needs and desires of the consumer (4-5), by defining the organization's assumption of both existing and potential consumers' ideal experience and perception of the world.
- 2. Differentiation:** As implied throughout this section, the organization must emphasize aspects of the brand that sets them apart from the competition. Differentiation refers to the conveyed value the organization highlights which make them stand out from their competitors (5).
- 3. Credibility:** In order for consumers to be loyal and believe in the organization, the organization itself must stay consistent and credible (5). The Credibility factor refers to whether the organization is consistent and credible in their communication and conduct by staying true to itself and the promises it makes to their consumer (5). This factor further identifies aspects of the organization's competencies that must be either improved or expanded (5).
- 4. Stretch:** Stretch refers to the organization's ability to stay relevant and foster innovation (5). In order for the organization to stay relevant with the current consumers and attract new, the organization must continue developing their brand and product to adhere to the market. This is done by, among others, introducing new initiatives, new updates or a new aspect of the organization to the value proposition.

The four aspects provide the organization with a way of identifying attributes that help defining their value proposition, and further help determine the ideal market in which the organization should launch and locate their organization. Additionally, it further develops their position within the market to attract more attention from existing and potential consumers. Essentially, the four aspects can help the organization establish Brand Awareness.

#### 4.5 The interrelations between the chosen theories:

As mentioned in the meta text above, this section will talk about the interrelations in the theories brand awareness, brand identity and brand positioning. This means that this section seeks to elaborate on how each of the three theories are connected, and how they influence and affect each other.

This thesis investigates how brand awareness has been established in RTFKT's communication by means of brand identity and brand positioning. In connection, this thesis argues that there is an interrelationship between the three theories. This means that this thesis argues that each theory in some way affects and influences the establishment and success of the other. The relationship between the three theories can best be described with a Venn diagram as illustrated below:



As illustrated by the wenn diagram, aspects of the theory influences and affects the other. Each relation and how they are connected with each other will be elaborated upon below.

### **Brand Awareness and Brand Identity:**

As stipulated in the Brand Awareness section of the theoretical framework, one of the purposes of Brand Awareness is to make the customer understand the value of the product. This is done by, inter alia, establishing, emphasizing and linking certain brand elements to the brand and its product (84-85). These elements are often connected to the brands core and extended identity as these reflects the “deepest values” of the organization that should reflect the external signs of recognition and that should be visible from the minute stakeholders look at the organization (Kapferer 2008, 173). As mentioned above, one of the purposes of Brand Identity, is to specify the uniqueness and value of the organization, and make sure that these are consistent throughout the entire organization. In correlation, Brand Awareness influence the brand identity by utilizing communicative acts that contribute to establishing a coherent and comprehensible message of these values and acts of differentiation to make the organization worthy of recognition. Therefore, brand awareness and brand identity acts coherently as they both seeks to emphasize the alignment of the identity and the overall brand, in order to be perceived as a trustworthy organization worthy of recognition.

### **Brand Awareness and Brand Positioning:**

As mentioned in the brand positioning section, it is necessary for the organization to create a memorable and trustworthy brand in order for consumers to prefer one brand over the other. Essentially according to Kosteljik (2020) consumers prefer well-known brands because the consumer will most likely go for the brand, they have the most knowledge about. The brand positioning aims to provide the brand with strong and unique associations that makes it easy for the consumer to distinguish the product and thereby choose the product they perceive to fulfill their needs (1.3.2). This is consistent with the fact that brand awareness communicates the value proposition in the form of a promise that positioning should aim to fulfill, and thereby the organization will attempt to convey to current and potential consumers that they can, in fact, fulfill their needs (Kosteljik and Alsem 2020, 1.3.2). As brand positioning is regarding positioning the organization in the consumers cognition, it is imperative that the organization creates a brand that could be considered memorable. This is done by continuously exposing the consumer to knowledge regarding the organization’s value proposition that in turn should trigger the consumers cognitive preferences. Meaning that the



more the consumer knows of the organization the chances of the organization being preferred over other competitors increases. Additionally, by utilizing the organization's own knowledge regarding their desired and targeted consumers and in general the market contributes to a stronger and potentially successful brand awareness. In connection, the more the organization expose consumers to their value proposition helps creates a stronger positioning.

### **Brand Positioning and Brand Identity:**

Brand positioning and brand identity correlates to each other's, as they are both concerned with communicating the brands values and distinctness to fulfill the needs of the consumer. The brand identity reflects and expresses the values imbedded in the organization, shows what the organization stand for, and who they want to be perceived as (Kosteljik and Alsem 2020 5.7). When considering and implementing the values of the organization, it is necessary that the values embedded in the brand are relevant to the target group. If the brand identity does not in some way align the values with that of the target group, the chances are that the cognitive preference of the consumer will deter towards competitors. Meaning that the organization will lose market share and thereby not gain their desired position. The brand identity thereby establishes priorities that contribute to establishing a stronger positioning, however, the knowledge provided by brand positioning in regard to the demographic and the general market shows the organization how and what to prioritize. Additionally, when positioning the brand, it is imperative that the organization choose the identity elements that shows how the organization distinguish themselves from the competition, which in turn garner the recognizability for consumers, who are now able to gain more awareness of the organization (Kosteljik and Alsem 2020, 5.7).

### **Brand Positioning, Brand Identity and Brand Awareness:**

As mentioned above brand awareness focuses on getting potential stakeholders to accept the value proposition communicated in a credible way. The Brand Identity establishes the identity in which the core identity and extended identity's values will be presented as aspects that will contribute to positioning the organization. These aspects should align with the ideal and the actual target group in order for the brand positioning to be successful otherwise the market will not grasp the relevance of the organization. Ideally, the knowledge the organization has obtained in regard to their ideal and actual target market should however

help determine which values and acts of differentiation suit their desired positioning best. The value proposition established should then be communicated out towards the consumers in a way that attracts new and potential consumers, and simultaneously satisfy current consumers. Brand Awareness thereby promise that they can fulfill these values through the positioning. Furthermore, Brand Awareness exposes consumers to the selected values in order to increase the degree of which brand awareness is established.

## 5. Methodology and Method

In continuation of the research design, this chapter account for the methodological approach. The chapter will describe the qualitative research approach and elaborate on how this is applicable to this thesis as well as why it corresponds with the social constructivist approach. Additionally, the chapter will present the empirical data and the selective criteria made for the collection of the data. Subsequently, the choice of method will be introduced and elaborated upon. The method section will further introduce and present the choice of method as well as present and elaborate on the framework for the analysis.

### 5.1 Qualitative Research:

This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach. The qualitative research approach can be considered an umbrella term for various approaches and methods to the study of “natural and social life” (Saldaña 2011, 3). The data set collected in this thesis will consist of smaller quantity and is generally procured through written text (Saldaña 2011, 3). By utilizing smaller data sets of textual material, means that the researcher is able to create a more in-depth analysis. In turn this establishes a better representation of the data and thereby results in a more comprehensive study (Shutt 2019, 249). Furthermore, the utilization of a qualitative approach means that the result of the analysis will not be quantifiable in any way shape or form, as according to Schutt (2019) the qualitative approach seeks to “capture the setting of people who produced this text on their own term rather than in terms of predefined [by researchers] measures and hypotheses” (250). This means that the data should be considered emergent data instead of predefined data and hypothesis. The data set collected, selected and analyzed in this thesis can therefore be considered, nonquantitative in character as it does not include any measurable elements such as statistics and it only consists of textual materials that document socially constructed experiences either by oneself or by others (Saldaña 2011,

3-4). From this, it can be determined that the scope of this study complies with the notions of the qualitative research, as this thesis seeks to examine RTFKT's communicative efforts and acts in their attempt to establish a brand awareness strategy through forms of text. This means that the thesis will not utilize any form of quantifiable measures such as statistics or surveys to answer the problem statement. In connection, unlike the quantitative approach, this thesis does not seek to create a representation or a generalized framework from the collected data (Saldaña 2011, 8). Correspondingly, this thesis seeks to introduce a new perspective on brand awareness, it is therefore necessary to note that this thesis does not perceive previous results as right or wrong. Instead, it acknowledges previous research as a subjective interpretation of the data and emphasize the fact that each subjective interpretation may vary due to the researcher's reality and objective truth (Schutt 2019, 249). This corresponds with the social constructivist approach, which is also utilized in this thesis, as one's reality is constructed through language. Thereby the interpretations of the data will reflect the way the researcher perceive and comprehend the world based on experiences and their nature of reality. The interpretations made in this thesis will therefore differ from other researcher's interpretations.

## 5.2 Empirical Data:

This chapter will present and elaborate on the empirical data selected and collected for this project. It will shortly provide a description of RTFKT to provide a better understanding of the organization. Furthermore, this section will explain how the data was collected and selected, and subsequently, elaborate on the criteria chosen to collect the data.

This thesis analyses RTFKT's communicative efforts in connection with their attempt at establishing a Brand Awareness strategy and will on those grounds conduct an analysis based on empirical data that was selected and collected from RTFKT's Discord server. The data chosen, was selected based on a number of selective criteria that were found suitable for the purpose of this thesis and will be further elaborated upon below. The selected empirical data consist of 17 posts that were collected from RTFKT's Discord servers named: Announcements and Comm-updates. The posts collected were collected based on the grounds that they each in some way fulfill the criteria set for this thesis. The criteria are elaborated upon below. The servers, in which the posts were collected from, can be considered an information room in which the organization can communicate to their community and rely important information regarding the brand, their product, updates and developments. The servers selected in this project, are closed information rooms, which means that consumers

can only react and not comment on the information as provided by RTFKT. The sender of the posts is mainly RTFKT employees who have access to the discord server. The way this was determined was due to the avatars set as the sender's profile picture as well as the fact that they are listed on the servers "members" feature as employees (RTFKT 2015). Discord is a predominantly international community building platform in which like-minded individuals can gather and share knowledge and interests (Discord 2022). The purpose of Discord is "about giving people the power to create space" (Discord 2022), which means that it can be considered a safe space for individuals to share their interests and connect with other users. Additionally, Discord is a platform that allows unlimited text, use of animations, videos and gifs without limiting the number of characters of one post. The empirical data selected for this thesis will be used in the analysis and serves as a representation of RTFKT's external communication to their consumers. As mentioned previously, the selected data has been distributed into 17 appendixes from the servers announcements and comm-updates, and have been distributed so that it ranges from Appendix A to Appendix Q.

As mentioned, these appendixes will be used as data for the analysis and discussion. They will be utilized as a way to help answer the problem statement, in relation to RTFKT's communicative efforts in regard to their attempt at establishing a Brand Awareness strategy.

The following section will account for the data selection and collection and will further elaborate on the criteria made as well as the relevance of these criteria.

### 5.3 Data Selection and Collection:

This thesis collected data through the utilization of the Documentary Research approach as stipulated by Gibson and Brown (2011). The documentary Research approach refers to "the process of using documents as a means of social investigation and involves exploring the records that individuals and organizations produce" (Gibson and Brown 2011, 2), i.e., the researcher is able to gain a broader and more comprehensive insight of the organization and its strategies by utilizing data to investigate social causes or queries. The Documentary Research approach thereby suits this thesis as it seeks to investigate RTFKT's strategic communication in how they attempted to establish their Brand Awareness strategy. In addition, a prominent feature of the Documentary Research approach is that the method can be either analytically focused or analytically filtered (Gibson and Brown 2011, 2). The analytically focused approach means that the researcher creates strategies that generate data that is relevant to answer the problem statement through, e.g., interviews (Gibson and Brown 2011, 2-3). In other words, the data seeks to establish a discourse through dialogue between

the interviewer and the interviewee. The analytically filtered approach refers to pre-existing document that was not generated in order to answer a research question (Gibson and Brown 2011, 3). From this it can be determined that the analytically filtered approach has been utilized within this thesis. Because the data collected for this thesis had already been published previous to the research taking place, and the data was therefore not created or produced solely on the grounds of answering a problem statement. Correspondingly, the criteria made for this thesis will be elaborated upon below.

**Must be written content.**

This thesis aims to uncover RTFKT's brand awareness strategy through their communication on discord. Therefore, in order to answer the problem statement, this thesis will only utilize written material, as it is the written communication of RTFKT this thesis is concerned with. This means that implicit communication that is portrayed through RTFKT's use of logos, design, fonts, pictures, animated videos and pictures etc. will not be considered. In order for this study to include visual elements, the thesis would have to make a more comprehensible study that includes both. Correspondingly, the perspective this thesis takes on brand awareness, brand identity and brand positioning are more concerned with the written aspects of RTFKT's communicative strategy, which was deemed most feasible through text.

**Must be from the direct source.**

In order to eliminate any potential 'noise' that can occur within the empirical data, this project will not accept or include secondary data taken from other website. This means that in order to eliminate the risk of the empirical data being stained by external opinions and bias this project will only investigate RTFKT's own communication from their Discord server, as the empirical data should reflect RTFKT's communication only. This is also the reason why the Discord servers announcements and comm-updates were selected, as they are not explicitly tainted by the opinions of others. Therefore, the material must be created and published by RTFKT, thereby coming from the direct source.

**Must have something in regard to branding present.**

Correspondingly, to the criteria above, since this thesis seeks to investigate the communicative strategy of how RTFKT has attempted to establish brand awareness, the data should revolve around branding aspects of the organization. This means that data that solely focus on expressing a product will not be included in the data. Instead, data that in some way,

shape or form express, present, or illustrate a branding aspect of RTFKT, will be prioritized and incorporated in the data sets.

## 5.4 About RTFKT

RTFKT is a digital fashion organization that produce and sells NFTs in the form of shoes and sports/streetwear. RTFKT was founded in 2020 during the pandemic by three digital entrepreneurs namely, Benoit Pagotto, Chris Le and Steven Vasilev (RTFKT n.d.). RTFKT is known for creating, producing NFTs in the form of viral sneaker designs, collectible exclusives, 3D & AR wearables, and unique avatars (RTFKT n.d.). They pride themselves on being “more than a little ahead of the latest cutting-edge technology” and can from that be considered a niche organization within the industry (RTFKT n.d.).

## 5.5 Template Analysis:

This chapter accounts for the chosen method of analysis. In order to answer the problem statement, the method Template Analysis was chosen as it is an approach that allows the researcher to structure and section the data through themes and codes. Template Analysis draws inspiration from the perspectives and approaches of Nigel King and his studies. This section will first describe and elaborate on the Template Analysis approach in order to provide an understanding of the method. Thereafter, the framework for the analysis will be presented and elaborated upon with a specific focus on introducing and explaining the codes that was established and selected for the analysis.

According to Nigel king (2014) template analysis, hereinafter referred to as TA, is a method that derives from thematic analysis and that allows the researcher to organize and create conceptual relationships between themes (4). Template analysis is “a method of thematically organizing and analyzing qualitative data” that functions within various forms of qualitative research approaches (King and Brooks 2014, 4). TA is essentially a method that allows the researcher to create and develop codes formed into a coding template (King 2004, 256). The codes selected for the coding template will be defined through topics that the researcher deems to characterize significant features or elements identified within the empirical data (King and Brooks 2017, 4). After defining the codes, the researcher can then organize the codes into structures that represent the conceptual relationship evident between the themes

(4). This means that the researcher can organize and structure the themes, codes and categories so that it reflects the relationship between them.

The empirical data typically used within TA is mostly interview transcripts, however, the method is flexible and can therefore, according to King (2012), be applied to other forms of qualitative research, which in this thesis is textual posts collected from RTFKT's discord server (426). This is possible as TA does not belong to a particular epistemological approach and can be easily adapted to one's epistemology (King 2012, 427). In this context, the method has been applied to a social constructivist approach and mindset, which means that the codes and themes defined in this thesis will be of a subjective and interpretative nature belonging to the researcher. Therefore, the findings and the end result depend on the researcher's interpretations and understanding of the empirical data.

As implied above, the process of doing a template analysis revolves around the definition and establishment of themes and codes - it is therefore necessary to be able to distinguish the two - themes will be defined further below. King (2004) defines codes as "a label attached to a section of text to index it as relating to a theme or issue in the data, which the researcher has identified as important to his or her interpretation" (257). Basically, a code is a short and precise word or phrase that captures the essence of a portion of the language-based material. In addition, it can be argued that codes can be either descriptive or interpretive (King 2004, 257). Descriptive codes usually require little to no analysis by the researcher and is often easier to comprehend than the interpretive codes (257). For example, a descriptive code could be "Design", a code that refers to a specific function of RTFKT's products. Codes that are interpretive relies on the researcher to define the code and reflect on the significance and the meaning applied to the data (257). For example, an interpretive code could be "creating a we" - a code that may need to be specified in order for the audience to completely comprehend its meaning. Interpretive codes, therefore, often requires a greater amount of interpretation and analysis at a greater extent than descriptive codes (257).

King (2004) introduces two ways of coding, namely, parallel and hierarchical coding. Parallel coding allows for the same segment to be classified within more than one code at the same level (258). Whereas hierarchical coding is the structuring of codes in which groups of similar codes can be clustered together to establish a general higher order of codes (258). This form of coding allows the researcher to analyze at varying levels of specificity and does not limit the amount of levels of themes, categories and codes produced, as it is up to the researcher's interpretation and ability to identify how many are deemed useful to create a comprehensive and comprehensible analysis and answer the problem statement (King 2012,

432). This thesis utilizes the hierarchical coding structure as it provides a great overview of the codes while also allowing specific relations and distinctions to be made among the codes.

When developing the template, it is normal to start by predefining codes in advance of the initial coding. These codes are known as *a priori* codes. A priori codes are produced because the researcher has “started out with the assumption that certain aspects of the research question being investigated should be focused on” (King 2014, 6). The researcher has therefore made assumptions prior to coding, that certain aspects would be more prominent within the data or have developed a priori codes because they have found certain issues or aspects to be extra important or already well established within the data (6). In this thesis, a few a priori codes have been established and defined, because they were deemed to be important to the empirical data and thereby the problem statement. For instance, the categories Core Identity and Extended Identity are a priori codes, as it was expected that they were important in regard to expressing the identity of the organization and help establishing and determining RTFKT’s Brand Awareness strategy. It is important to note, that a priori codes are tentative, which means that they are susceptible to be either changed or removed if the assumption of their significance turned to be false (King 2014, 6). They act as a useful way to initiate the overall coding process and create a certain direction for the coding. It is therefore important, to make neither too little nor too many. Too few priori codes can make for redundant codes and lack of direction, whereas too many a priori codes can cause a ‘blinking’ effect (6). A blinking effect means that the researcher becomes blind to any other codes that may be present within the data, and therefore the researcher becomes negligent and define new codes evident in the data (6). The researcher should therefore attempt to keep an open mind while coding to make sure that neither loss of direction nor negligence to the empirical data occurs.

According to King (2014), themes are the “recurrent features of participants’ accounts characterizing particular perceptions and/ or experiences that the researcher sees as relevant to their research question” (4). In addition, King (2012) mentions that themes should not be applied to a single instance, but rather appear multiple times within the data over several instances (431). Furthermore, King adds that themes can be “relatively distinct from each other” which means that sometimes the themes found in the data overlap (King and Brooks 2017, 28). Therefore, themes can be considered the overall pattern that is evident within the data and that is composed by means of categories and codes. It is considered to be the general outcome of the coding in the data (Saldaña 2013, 14). Within the hierarchical order of categories and codes, themes can be considered the ‘top’, as the themes are the



aspects that the cluster of codes constitute. The purpose of coding is to identify patterns within the data that can be translated into themes which in turn will be applied to discuss the findings of the analysis. In this thesis, the template will be utilized to search for patterns that can illustrate the elements and efforts that constitute establish the brand awareness strategy within RTFKT's communication.

Through his literature, King outlines steps that illustrate the process of doing a template analysis:

### **Initial template:**

Firstly, the researcher should be familiarized with the raw data before developing the preliminary template (King 2014, 5). Subsequently, the researcher should highlight aspects in the textual data that are found to be of significance and potentially contributing to the research question (6). Thereafter the researcher should translate the highlighted aspects into codes (6). Here, the researcher starts pre-defining and creating a priori codes for the template, by looking at the data and determining what the researcher deems as being important to the data. After the identification of codes, the researcher can start defining the initial coding template. The initial template should be organized in a way that illustrates the relationship between themes and codes, to make the template more comprehensible (King 2014, 7).

### **Revising the template:**

After the initial template has been developed, it is time to revise the overall template by re-defining, modifying, or removing codes that does not particularly fit the data (King 2014, 7). To revise the template King (2004) proposes four main types of modification that are likely to be made during the process, namely, insertion, deletion, changing scope and changing higher-order classification. The four main types will be elaborated upon below (261-263):

- **Insertion:** the researcher identifies a code that was not part of the initial template but deems the code to be important to answering the research question (King 2004, 262). The researcher defines the code and insert it into the final template.
- **Deletion:** During the coding process some codes may have been found to overlap too much with other codes or simply irrelevant to the research question (262). The code will therefore be deleted from the final template.

- **Changing Scope:** when defining a code in the initial template, it may be found that the code has either been found too narrowly defined or too broadly defined (262). The code will therefore be re-defined at a lower or a higher level to suit the final template and the data (262).
- **Changing Higher-Order Classification:** When developing the initial template, the researcher ‘ranks’ the codes into different levels and categories. Therefore, when revising the template, the researcher may decide that a code e.g., initially classified as a code, should be levelled as a higher-order category, or belong better with a different higher-order category (262-263). This modification type allows the researcher to change the hierarchical order of the template, so that it better suits the problem statement.

### **Final template:**

Finally, after revising the template, the final template can be developed and inserted into the thesis. As King (2004) mentions, it is possible to continue modifying and changing one’s template, even after the final template has been developed as it is a continuous process (263). It is important that the researcher is open to themes, categories and codes that may not be directly relevant for the problem statement when interpreting and defining codes. Themes, categories and codes produced as such, often provide an interesting discussion and provide relevant information in regard to the topic, this was for example seen with the category ‘Consumers’, a category that provided background knowledge and elucidated values that may not have been identified otherwise.

## **6.6 Framework for Analysis:**

In order to clearly illustrate the relationship and hierarchy of the codes, I have chosen to name them categories and codes instead of calling them e.g., codes and subcodes, or code level 1 and code level 2.

In addition, it is worth to note that when establishing the initial template, the codes identified corresponded with the theoretical framework of brand identity and brand positioning. Some of the codes present in final template thereby represent some of the theoretical aspects, that was introduced and elaborated upon in the theoretical framework. Therefore, some of the codes that was identified and implemented in the empirical data and in the analysis has drawn inspiration from the theoretical framework.

### 5.5.1 Elaboration of the codes:

- **Core identity:** Reflects the organization's core values and belief foundation. It illustrates the causes and belief system that the organization stand for.
  - Actual identity:
    - The code expresses who the organization really is. This code appeals to the attributes of the organization e.g., business activities, purposes, corporate style, ethos etc. (Balmer et al. 2009, 19)
  - Desired identity:
    - The code refers to the organization's desired identity. It is the identity sought after by the top administration of the organization (Balmer et al. 2009, 20).
- **Extended identity:** Helps portray what causes RTFKT stands for. Additionally, the extended identity supports the core identity by providing details regarding RTFKT's identity that the core identity will not be able to provide.
  - Reflection:
    - This code refers to who the organization perceives to be their ideal consumer (Kapferer 2008, 186). The code can e.g., be expressed through use of jargon.
  - Covenanted identity:
    - The underlying promise conveyed by the organization. This is expressed through underlying messages, values and cases e.g., political, environmental etc. (Balmer et al.2009, 20)
  - Ideal identity:
    - The conveyed identity the organization should be and want to be striving towards. The code indicates to the visions and the values of the organization as it reflects the ideal future of RTFKT. It is the optimal

identity the organization communicated through the organization's branding (Balmer et al. 2009, 20).

- **Consumers:** The organization's attempt at conveying and establishing a relationship with their consumers.
  - Engaging the audience: The organization's involvement and engagement of their audience. e.g., can be seen through their use of the personal pronouns "you" and "your", or by indicating a 'call to action'.
  - Creating a "we": The organization's attempt at creating a sense of community and unity with the consumer by utilizing pronouns such as "we" and "our".
  - Storytelling: The organization's attempt at creating a relation with existing and potential consumers by conveying messages and narratives.
- **Relevance:**
  - The connection between brand and consumers. This code reflects the needs and desires of the consumer as described by the organization.
- **Differentiation:**
  - The conveyed aspects of the brand that is highlighted by the organization that makes them stand out. This code can also appear through explicit or implicit comparisons conveyed in text.
- **Credibility:** The organization's efforts to convey trustworthiness within text.
  - Consistency:
    - The organization's demonstration of consistent behavior. Can be shown through e.g., the organization's actions, claims, values, and promises.
  - Transparency:
    - The organization's attempt at conveying openness, accountability and honesty through their actions, behaviors and communication.

- **Stretch:**
  - Refers to how the organization attempts to stay relevant. It generates through acts of innovation, updates, new partnerships etc.

## 6. Findings

This chapter presents and elaborates on the findings of the analysis. It was conducted through the utilization of the final template in order to uncover RTFKT's communication and strategy by identifying their efforts at establishing Brand Awareness through their utilization of branding theories such as Brand Identity and Brand Positioning. The analysis further investigates how these theories can affect the potential success of the organization's Brand Awareness strategy without implying whether it has been a success.

The categories and codes were uncovered during the initial reading of the empirical data. These categories and codes uncovered patterns that revealed the organization's efforts and motivation to establish Brand Awareness and can be distinguished into two themes: Brand Identity and Brand Positioning. What they consist of and how they have contributed to the organization's efforts of creating Brand Awareness will be elaborated upon in the findings.

The findings are structured based on the two main themes, Identity and Positioning, that were uncovered through the established categories and codes seen from the final template. Because the themes are the outcome of the analysis they will function as headings in the findings. Additionally, the examples illustrate potential factors or efforts that reflect the organization's efforts to establish Brand Awareness.

<b>Brand Identity</b>	<b>Brand Positioning</b>
<b>Core identity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Actual Identity</li> <li>● The Desired Identity</li> </ul>	<b>Consumers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engagement of the audience</li> <li>● Creating a "we"</li> <li>● Storytelling</li> </ul>

<b>Extended Identity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reflection</li> <li>● Covenanted Identity</li> <li>● Ideal Identity</li> </ul>	<b>Relevance</b>
	<b>Differentiation</b>
	<b>Credibility:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consistency</li> <li>● Transparency</li> <li>● Conveying Credibility</li> </ul>
	<b>Stretch</b>

## 6.1 Brand Identity

In the analysis, the theme Brand Identity became apparent as the categories Core Identity and Extended Identity was identified. The theme was established as the empirical data provided patterns in terms of values, beliefs and behaviors that made it possible to interpret and somewhat determine the communicated identity of RTFKT. This means that it was possible to gain a general idea of RTFKT's identity and thereby somewhat define "who they are" as an organization, and who they want to be perceived as and what they want to be associated with. The categories mentioned above helped compose the theme as they contributed to the clarification of identity and thereby the establishment of the theme as well. This means that the analyzed communication allowed for a general impression of RTFKT's identity to be determined, and therefore the theme Brand Identity was established.

### Core Identity

The category Core Identity is related to the theme Brand Identity as it provides insight into who the organization 'truly' is and not just who they want to be perceived as or associated with. The category exemplifies the actions, beliefs, and values that the organization are steadfast about and will not change contrary to the demands, beliefs and trends of the public.

The category contributes to the establishment of the organization's Brand Identity as it further provides the organization with a sense of direction, by looking into desired long term and short-term goals. The direction helps the organization determine and establish themselves as a brand.

Within the category two codes emerged in the empirical data: Actual Identity and Desired Identity. These two codes helped establish the category as they provide the overall foundation for what could be interpreted as the organization's Core Identity. Meaning that they help emphasize the core values, visions and beliefs the organization perceives and focus around when building their brand.

### **The Actual Identity**

The code **Actual Identity** contributes to the establishment of the category Core Identity, as it provides the consumer with knowledge that reflects and express who the organization really is, by relaying the organization's purpose and structure. The code helps the reader gain an understanding of the relevance of RTFKT, as it either implicitly and/or explicitly express aspects of the organization's value. Essentially, the Actual Identity somewhat reflects the essence of the organization's beliefs and principles. The Actual Identity reflects who the organization really is by emphasizing organizational attributes such as, purpose, ethos, corporate style and business activities (Balmer 2009, 19). These attributes proved to be of significance to the findings and the problem statement, which is why the code was established.

Firstly, it was possible to discern RTFKT's corporate style as it emerged through the entire empirical data in many ways. The corporate style reflects the way the organization utilizes marketing, it exemplifies the tone of the text, whether the RTFKT has utilized formal or informal language and use of slang, the structure of the posts etc. At first, it was evident in the empirical data that RTFKT does not elaborate, but rather keeps short and matter-of-factly texts in a way in which it is quick and easy to discern the overall message. For example, in appendix H the organization uses short sentences "it's time to create" (App H). Therefore, the message that RTFKT wants to convey is more explicitly written and rather direct as the consumer does not need to search for the overall meaning of the posts thereby limiting the risk of miscommunication. Apart from the overall structure of the posts, it is also possible to argue that the tone of the posts reflects the corporate style of RTFKT. This can be seen through RTFKT's utilization of slang words which appeal to their target group. By utilizing slang RTFKT is expressing a part of their identity as they express a want to connect with

their consumers. This is seen through RTFKT's usage of the word "Noobs" (Appendix N) and "dope" (Appendix E). The slang word noobs are utilized when RTFKT is referring to people who are inexperienced in the world of NFT. The utilization of the slang word noobs will be elaborated upon in the reflection section within the Extended Identity section. Additionally, the word dope is used to describe when something is good and exciting. By using common slang words that the ideal target group uses, RTFKT is somewhat showing that they are aware of the norms of the industry they have ventured in to. It establishes a relation between consumer and organization, as the consumers are now aware that the organization understands them because RTFKT's identity is perceived as being that of a tech savvy/ gamer organization. This shows that RTFKT has competencies within the field, which in turn places them as somewhat of an expert, or at least a competent NFT organization, which creates a form of credibility that further establish awareness as people will most likely recommend RTFKT based on the competencies.

Secondly, in the empirical data, RTFKT implicitly expressed their purpose. By doing this, RTFKT is allowing the consumer to know the reasons for their existence and at the same time gain insight into the core values and ideas that has helped establish the foundation of the organization, which allows consumers to align their values with the organization. For example, in the empirical data, RTFKT makes the consumer aware that they wish to merge worlds "RTFKT World Merging" (App B). This means that RTFKT wants to combine the digital world and the physical world, which can be argued to be one of the reasons why RTFKT was established in the first place. By conveying this knowledge to their consumers, RTFKT is exposing a part of their identity in the hopes that it will be accepted and even supported. They make their consumers aware that this purpose is one of the long-term goals that they are working towards, and that the actions and decisions are implemented with the intent of reaching this goal. Additionally, the purpose is also expressed through general values that also contribute to the establishment of the foundation of the organization. This is shown through the following examples "Quality is the motto" (App. O) and "we're expecting [to] unite and CREATE" (App H.) and "Innovate in world merging products and experiences" (App. O). The examples each show some form of value or vision that can be interpreted as purposes of RTFKT as each aspect is something that the organization is striving towards. These purposes reflect visions and values that drive the creation of their products. In the first two examples, the word quality is utilized. This word expresses that the experiences, services, and products provided by RTFKT should be of quality, and therefore, RTFKT has created a purpose for their products and experiences. In connection the last



example “Innovate in world merging products and experiences” (app. O) further shows that RTFKT’s purpose is creating innovative products and experiences for their consumers. This, therefore, further aligns with a part of the organization’s identity as they value innovative products and experiences. The purposes mentioned in this section all illustrate values and visions that embody the entire organization and thereby express the core identity of the organization.

### **The Desired Identity**

The code **Desired Identity** contributes to the establishment of the category Core Identity as it reflects the organization’s visions and goals, as stipulated by top management. The Desired Identity of RTFKT provides the organization with a form of direction as it expresses where they want to be positioned. It can be considered the aspects that drive the organization by expressing the visions that contribute to the organization’s efforts toward reaching certain goals to fulfill their Desired Identity. This is for example seen as RTFKT makes it known that it is their intent to merge worlds “Welcome to the start of RTFKT World Merging” (App, B). The quote emphasizes the fact that this is a vision RTFKT has worked towards presumably since the beginning. Thereby the idea of merging worlds can be considered a vision that depicts the desired future of RTFKT’s activities. This can be further argued, as RTFKT expresses in appendix J, that the “World Merging experience is constantly evolving” (app, J), which implies that they will continue to work on this project until it has reached the desired outcome. The vision of being world merging connects with RTFKT’s vision of being an innovative organization as well as being acknowledged as one. This is indicated by the quote “continuing to work with NIKE and Partners to innovate in world merging products and experiences” (app, O). The quote illustrates that RTFKT strives to become an innovative organization and that it is an aspect they perceive to be a necessity in order to grow as an organization. This is further acknowledged in appendix O when RTFKT is saying “we will continue to innovate and involve our community in our lore”. This quote further emphasizes RTFKT’s desire to be an innovative organization.

Furthermore, from the data it is possible to argue that RTFKT also desires an identity that encompasses a positioning that allows for exclusivity and uniqueness. The unique experiences RTFKT seeks to give their consumers can be illustrated through the following “thank you for being part of this unique experience” (App, L). This is elaborated upon in the **Reflection** code. From the quote RTFKT utilizes the word unique in order to emphasize the fact that the event they had established was in fact original and not something that can be

experienced every day. Their desire to be considered unique is further emphasized as RTFKT mentions other types of NFT “holders” that indicate that exclusive events has taken place. For example, “Now open for Lace Engine Holders” (App, C). The quote illustrates that there have been previous events and activities in which consumers have had the opportunity to gain a Lace Holder NFT. Therefore, the quote exemplifies exclusivity as it can be perceived that only Lace Holders can gain access to the forging event at that point in time. The argument is further established because RTFKT expresses that the forging event is a “private Mint”, which basically can be interpreted as an exclusive event that only incorporates parts of their community. By marketing the event as private and exclusive, it acts as a way to attract new members to join the community in general, e.g., through word of mouth, if current community members find the event too good to pass up. By claiming that their events are exclusive, it acts as a way for RTFKT to attract new members to their community in general but also pressure current community members, who are not a part of the Lace NFT, to join.

### **Extended Identity**

The Extended Identity contributes to the establishment of the theme Brand Identity as it reflects the minor supportive aspects of the organization’s identity. It reflects the values, visions and beliefs that can be considered changeable, but simultaneously acts as a form of support for the construction of the overall essence of the identity. Essentially, the Extended Identity represents the aspects and facets that RTFKT stands for and can be considered dynamic as it depends on factors like trends.

Within the category Extended Identity, three codes emerged: Reflection, Covenanted Identity, and Ideal Identity. The codes contributed to the establishment of the category as they each illustrate and express values and beliefs that can be considered dynamic. Additionally, the codes also provide a deeper insight and understanding of the organization’s awareness strategy by supplying the reader with knowledge that illustrates RTFKT’s communicative considerations regarding the values and trends they adhere to.

### **Reflection**

The code Reflection illustrates RTFKT’s perception of who they believe their ideal consumer to be. The code contributes to the establishment of the organization’s Extended Identity as it provides knowledge regarding certain demographic factors relevant to RTFKT. For example, should the consumer be lay, low- or high-tech audience, meaning to what degree does the

consumer understand the material and how willing are they to participate and learn. This can be depicted through communicative patterns within the data. Additionally, the factors should align with RTFKT's identity otherwise the organization's strategy may not be successful. In addition, the code contributes to the establishment of RTFKT's identity as it reflects their values and beliefs.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework it is important to discern between the organization's perceived ideal consumer and their actual target group (Kapferer 2008, 108). Seeing as the organization can have multiple target groups consisting of people that may not encompass who RTFKT perceives to be their ideal consumer, it is important to note the difference. It is evident in the empirical data that a clear distinction has been drawn that portrays the target group and RTFKT's perceived ideal consumer. For example, the target group includes newcomers, which is evident seeing as RTFKT had increased security within their community (App N). However, it was evident through the data that their ideal consumer group does not include lay consumers. Throughout their communication, RTFKT utilizes jargon that is specific to their community. This is evident in the following examples "iRL" [In real life] (App C), Vtubing (App H) [Digital avatar] and "Noobs" (App, N). The quotes show jargon that is usually utilized in gamer context and does not resemble typical day-to-day speech. By using jargon, RTFKT is first of all expressing that their ideal consumer is either high- or low-tech, as they do not elaborate on the meaning of the words. It is therefore possible to interpret this as RTFKT expecting their consumers to possess some degree of interest and knowledge. This is further argued as the organization utilizes the word "Noobs" (App, N). The word Noobs is a jargon that holds negative connotations as it refers to people who knows very little of the subject and who is unwilling to learn the given topic. RTFKT therefore, perceives their ideal consumer to fit the category of a low-tech/ high-tech consumer as they possess knowledge and are willing to learn more about the subject.

### **Covenanted Identity**

The Covenanted Identity conveys promises made by RTFKT. It portrays the different causes and values which RTFKT stands for, and in turn implies the underlying messages that express what the organization wants to be associated with. The code helped establish the category, as it expresses socially motivated values and beliefs. This means that the code will express values and beliefs motivated by forms of social issues, societal pressure or even follow trends. Additionally, this also means that this code is changeable depending on whether the social discourse. An example of RTFKT's Covenanted Identity can be seen

through the following example “to innovate at the foundation level and follow a one-by-one pace. Quality and sustainable building is the priority above all” (App E). First, from the example it is possible to deduce the fact that RTFKT values innovation. However, it is also possible to interpret the underlying promise within the text as RTFKT is implying that they promise to value quality over quantity as mentioned by the “one by one pace”. It implies that the organization will not make any haste decisions or changes to the identity of the brand and the organization itself, as they are aware of the value their consumers hold towards them. Additionally, the quote exemplifies an explicit social issue which is “sustainable building” (App E), which is followed by “is the priority of all” (App E). Through the quotes RTFKT is explicitly promising their community that they will prioritize sustainability, and more specific create sustainable build, which can refer to the entire organization’s foundation but also the products and their methods of creation. By explicitly expressing their value in regard to sustainability, RTFKT is showing a potentially shared interest with their consumers. This can result in an increase in their brand awareness, because if the consumer's interests and values align with the organizations, they are more inclined to share this with other potential consumers.

### **Ideal Identity**

The code Ideal Identity portrays the optimal identity RTFKT should be striving towards as conveyed through communication and branding. The code illustrates the direction RTFKT should be going. This code partially overlaps with the code Desired Identity, as both codes portray facets and aspects that the organization strive to become. The Ideal Identity, however, incorporates other external factors such as the organization’s competencies and potential competition to illustrate the ideal identity that RTFKT should be striving towards. In contrast the Desired Identity focuses on the organization’s own perception of their optimal market and not the actual ideal market.

The Ideal Identity code contribute to the establishment of the category Extended Identity and thereby the theme Brand Identity as it portrays the most optimal identity for RTFKT, by conveying factors that contribute to the organization gaining the market position that will establish the best possible success and garner the most profit. Additionally, the code gives the audience a further understanding of factors that the organization may not be able to control and that can be detrimental for the organization’s identity in the form of competition, environment, social and political surroundings etc. Therefore, the code encompasses not only factors that the organization wants the reader to comprehend, but also factors that the

organization is pressured to incorporate in their value proposition. The Ideal Identity code emerged when RTFKT mentioned that “whatever the market conditions, we are lucky to build in those times” (App E). Firstly, the quote expresses a form of competency regarding the organization implying that they would be able to endure whatever happens on the market. Secondly, the quote shows that there are external factors that can inflict the organization and the market position, however, it further shows that RTFKT acknowledges that fact. It shows acknowledgement towards the fact that the NFT market changes rapidly and it is therefore necessary that RTFKT is adaptable. This is also implicitly expressed by RTFKT as they show that they are aware of the changing market conditions which portrays RTFKT’s desire to be associated with being a strong and adaptable organization.

Furthermore, the Ideal Identity can also be expressed as RTFKT elucidate that their consumers should “be aware of phishing, scams and impersonators” (App A) and to “stay safe out there” (App M). The quotes illustrate Ideal Identity as it can be deduced that RTFKT are aware of external factors such as phishing and scams that can cause consumers to leave the community and thereby have a negative effect on RTFKT if they are involuntarily associated with and blamed for such occurrences. The acknowledgement of such occurrences can be perceived as RTFKT being concerned in regard to their consumers safety. Therefore, it is necessary that RTFKT convey and emphasizes a sense of security and safety in their communication otherwise they may lose potential consumers. By acknowledging that implications and risks occurs can make RTFKT seem more consumer-oriented rather than profit-oriented. By being associated with consumer-orientation is an advantage and can be considered a ‘leg up’ compared to competitors, who may not portray the same identity.

## 6.2 Brand Positioning

The theme **Brand Positioning** became apparent as the categories **Consumers, Relevance, Differentiation, Credibility** and **Stretch** was identified. The codes compose the theme as they touch upon the market in which RTFKT is placed, provides an insight regarding the decisions and considerations when selecting a positioning for the brand. Through the empirical data, RTFKT showed patterns that made it possible to comprehend factors and aspects that the organization has used to determine their market position. The patterns showed ways in which the organization has attempted to establish themselves in their market and maintain their current market position. This gave an inkling on how the organization creates awareness to themselves and their brand.

This section will elaborate on the abovementioned codes, and how they each contribute to the composition of the theme and further demonstrate RTFKT's attempt at establishing awareness through their communication.

### **Consumers:**

The category **Consumers** express the organization's attempt to engage their consumers in their efforts to establish a community. It reflects the strategies utilized by the organization in their attempt to form and establish a relationship between the organization and their consumers, which in turn helps in the establishment of inducing shared values. The category contributes to the composition of the theme, as it emphasizes values that the organization wants their consumers and potential consumers to associate them with. The category further shows acts of differentiation that contribute to the establishment of the market position as it provides patterns that illustrate the organization's segmentation.

The category was established based on three codes: **Engaging the audience**, **Creating a 'we'** and **storytelling**. The codes composed the category as they each illustrate patterns that show different parts of the segmentations, which help the establishment of the organization's Brand Positioning.

### **Engaging the Audience**

The code **Engaging the Audience** refers to the communication aimed at involving and/or engaging their consumers. It reflects how RTFKT addresses their consumers in an attempt to include them in their communication. The code further illustrates the context in which RTFKT has decided to involve consumers into their communication and further attempts to establish a relation by inviting them to partake in actions presented by RTFKT. Additionally, the code contributes to the establishment of brand awareness, as consumers will feel involved in the actions of the organization, which can compose a sense of loyalty with the consumers as they feel like they are an integral part of the organization. The code contributes to the establishment of the category as it express call-to-action that contribute to the consumer feeling involved in the organization's communication.

The code was detected through RTFKT's use of the personal pronoun 'you'. By utilizing the personal pronoun 'you' RTFKT is directly addressing their consumers to partake

in some form of action as asked by RTFKT. This can be seen through the examples “let us know if your language is missing” (App P), “You are free to post anything in the topics! Share your favorite movies” (App P). In the examples, RTFKT ask their consumers to commit some form of action, such as being free to share posts. The first example shows values of inclusivity as RTFKT compel their consumers to reach out if they have forgotten a language. Additionally, RTFKT compels their consumers to perform a particular action, when saying “Always double check the contracts you sign in your metamask to make sure you are safe” (App Q). The example compels the consumer to double check their contracts when purchasing an NFT. In the quote, RTFKT addresses the consumers to guide them through the NFT purchasing process to limit the potential of their consumers being scammed. The organization thereby takes their consumers by the hand to guide them through the necessary steps of establishing a secure transaction between seller and buyer. This feeds into a specific strategy, in which RTFKT attempts to convey a sense of security for their consumers by providing information.

### **Creating a ‘We’**

The code **Creating a ‘We’** refers to RTFKT’s attempt at creating a sense of community. It is the efforts and actions implemented by the organization to establish a feeling of unity among the consumer and the organization. The code contributes to the category as it seeks to create a connection between the consumer and RTFKT. By establishing a connection, RTFKT attempts to create a community feel, in which the consumer and the organization are placed on the same level. The code thereby, seeks to provide their audience with a community-feel and make them believe that they are an integral part of the organization. An example of this occurs in appendix O as it commences by saying “this year we are all on a journey” (App O). In the post, RTFKT seeks to establish community by implying that the oncoming year should be considered a journey that involves both the organization and their consumers. This establishes the sense of unity as the consumer feel included in the organization’s future. This is further implied when RTFKT describes their new challenge and initiative of merging worlds together, “we’re preparing for the future, together” (App K). RTFKT again implies that the future is a journey in which the consumer and RTFKT will make together. Therefore, RTFKT states the relevance of the future events by implying that it is something the community must get behind. The connection between RTFKT and their consumer is thereby

established once more, as the organization exemplifies a mutual need, in which the consumer feels involved and simultaneously signifies the fact that the consumers and RTFKT are on the same level. In addition, by making the consumer feel involved in the communication, RTFKT stresses the importance of their participation in organization activities and events and indicates the significance of the relation between the two parties as well. This is exemplified when RTFKT says “It’s not only about us, but about what we all build towards” (App E). In the quote RTFKT utilizes an inclusive ‘we’ that further emphasizes the sense of community. Additionally, the quote stresses the fact that RTFKT indicates towards a shared vision on how NFTs should progress. This is especially prominent when RTFKT says “what we all build towards” (App E), as RTFKT draws on their consumers sense of community to stress the fact that in order to fulfill their shared vision, both parties need to collaborate. By expressing that consumers can help realize the vision, establishes a form of belonging, and thereby further creates the sense of ‘we’, as the consumers will believe that they are important to RTFKT. RTFKT is thereby creating value to their product and organization in order to establish loyalty and commitment. According to Ghodeswar (2008), in order for an organization to be able to be considered successful it is necessary that they focus on value creation and creating a relationship, as consumers should feel a sense of belonging or commitment to the brand (6). This further indicates a competitive set in which RTFKT is differing from competitors, which as Kapferer (2008) mentioned is an important aspect of establishing a Brand Positioning. Furthermore, this establishes Brand Awareness as potential consumers may choose RTFKT over any other competitors due to their dedication to the community.

### **Storytelling**

The code **Storytelling** refers to the organization’s efforts to establish a relationship through use of narratives and messages that elucidate and emphasize values and visions of RTFKT. By presenting RTFKT through a narrative, the consumer gains further knowledge about who the organization is and what values RTFKT believes to be most important. The code partakes in the establishment of the theme Brand Positioning as it helps emphasize ways the organization differ from competitors as well as provide more knowledge into the market.

The code **Storytelling** emerged throughout the empirical data, when RTFKT presented what the organization expects and what the consumers can expect from the year ahead. This is expressed when RTFKT says “a new era begins” (App H). The organization



continues by expressing how excited they are of the idea of new ‘Creators’ and new NFTs emerging. By referring to the year ahead as a “new era” RTFKT is telling a story that emphasizes the beginning of something they perceive to be revolutionary. It highlights the fact that the events and actions that will take place will be something the community and potential consumers should look forward to. Additionally, the Storytelling code is further signified in the empirical data as RTFKT says “one year ago, you got a home, in January it’s time to leave it” (App E) and “we now have a home for RTFKT @creators” (App I). The first quote exemplifies a journey in which it is expressed that there is no ‘place’ dedicated predominantly for the creators of RTFKT NFTs. The consumer is afterwards taken on a journey in which a ‘home’ is being established and “moved into”. The journey described in the quotes exemplifies a narrative in which RTFKT express concern and care towards their community members, who may not feel included in the server. The consumers are thereby able to follow the entire endeavor, as conveyed and narrated by RTFKT, of establishing a home for the creators, which can create a perception that the organization values their consumers. This shows significance to the community as it acts as a way of transparency by letting them follow the progress. Furthermore, it creates a clear picture of the timeframe in which the organization starts to acknowledge the “issue” and until the problem was solved. Essentially, RTFKT invites their consumers to follow the progress and development of the organization, allow them to accept the implementation or undertake their own interpretation and opinion of the solution. The utilization of **Storytelling** increases the consumers sense of community, as they are able to follow the organization and get to know more about the brand, which creates a sense of belonging. By doing this and establishing a connection, RTFKT emphasizes characteristics that creates value to their consumers and thereby the market in which they are positioned (Kapferer 2008, 175). Therefore, Consumers are more likely to recommend RTFKT as they accept the narratives conveyed by the organization and thus increasing the Brand Awareness.

### **Relevance:**

The category **Relevance** appeared as RTFKT attempted to fulfill the ideal consumer experience as perceived by them. It elucidates a connection between the brand and consumer, as RTFKT deems themselves capable to develop aspects of the organization, they perceive fulfills the needs of their consumers. The category contributes the theme **Brand Positioning** as it depicts the organization’s ability to predict and be aware of the needs of the consumer.

This is expressed in appendix Q, in which RTFKT express concern for their consumers safety by addressing the issue of fake NFTs that are being posed as RTFKT products. In the data, RTFKT acknowledges that there are fake NFTs circulating, and in that regard, express what the consumer should do. The data thereby shows that RTFKT has taken into consideration their consumers' needs and attempts to fulfill the need by providing advice on how to avoid purchasing fake NFTs. The quote therefore shows that RTFKT has been able to predict a potential consumer need, and initiate actions to solve it. Additionally, this further emphasizes the organization's positioning, as RTFKT is expressing characteristics and values that are shared by their consumers. By showing that they have the ability to somewhat predict their consumers' needs, shows that they share a close connection with their consumers and has knowledge regarding consumer behavior. Thereby, the organization is able to increase their Brand Awareness as they show consideration and acknowledgement towards potential threats to the consumer experience, before the consumer may have brought it to attention.

According to Thompson (2004), it is important that the organization takes into consideration the desires and potential demands of the consumers to create the best consumer experience (4-5). This means that apart from trying to predict what the consumer needs, RTFKT should also listen when consumers request changes within the organization. The data further exhibited patterns that determined that RTFKT listens to requests and suggestions by consumers. When RTFKT says "better communication: the message is clear" (App E) it can be deduced that consumers requested that RTKFT improve their communication. By expressing a will to improve this, RTFKT shows that they listened and are now taking steps to improve their communication. The consumer therefore feels acknowledged and appreciated because of the fact that RTFKT actually implemented a request for change. This is further emphasized as RTFKT even requests that consumers reach out by saying that if "you have any questions, suggestions or content you want us to highlight" (App I). In connection, this further establishes the community feel for both the organization and their consumers as the link between them aligns even further - meaning that the connection between RTFKT and their consumers are tighter. This feeds into Kapferer's (2008) statement that, in regard to brands, the consumer makes a choice based on characteristics, values and comparisons (178). Therefore, by listening to the suggestions requested by their consumers, RTFKT will most likely be chosen instead of their competitors, as they welcomed suggestions and even encourage their consumers to participate. In connection, this contributes to the establishment of Brand Awareness, as potential consumers will most likely join an organization that listens.

**Differentiation:**

When positioning one's brand it requires defining reasons as to why consumers should take the organization and its product into consideration, to fulfill certain needs (Keller 2015, 42). The category **Differentiation** appeared as RTFKT emphasized characteristics such as values and beliefs that illustrate how RTFKT distinguishes themselves from the competition. It expressed the aspects, values and characteristics of the brand and the organization itself, that RTFKT has decided to emphasize in order to 'reel' potential consumers in and maintain current ones. The Category contribute to the establishment of the theme Brand Positioning as it illustrates the characteristics and brand associations that RTFKT has decided to be their 'frame of reference'. In addition, the category expresses points-of-parity (PoP) and points-of-differentiation (PoD), meaning ways in which the values and characteristics are either the same as or different as their competition (Keller 2015, 42).

The category **Differentiation** emerged when RTFKT expressed that "Today we are merging worlds" (App J). The quote does not explicitly compare RTFKT to one of its competitors, however, it is an aspect RTFKT has decided to emphasize through their communication. As mentioned previously, RTFKT's vision regarding merging worlds are an integrated part of their brand prospects, meaning it can be considered a long-term goal that the organization strive to reach - in that regard the aspect can be considered a POD as it is a goal or value that is strongly emphasized throughout the data and that acts as a way to differ from the competition.

As mentioned, the organization may exhibit points-of-parity, meaning values, actions and characteristic that can be assumed to be the same as competitors. In the empirical data RTFKT asks "do you want to communicate in your native language? look into international chat" (App P). The quote expresses a request made by the organization in which they enquire whether the consumer wants to converse on RTFKT's discord server in their own native language. The quote shows PoP as it can be assumed that competitors also offer multiple languages. However, RTFKT follow the question by enquiring that those consumers "let us know if your language is missing" (App P). The quote expresses points-of-difference, as the organization enquire consumers to reach out if their language has not been included, which shows that RTFKT is willing to add more languages. This further supports RTFKT's attempt at being associated with inclusiveness and community because they are open to add other prospects to their discord server, in order to appease their consumers. From this it can be

deduced that the **Differentiation** category, further increases the **Brand Awareness** of RTFKT as it emphasizes the way RTFKT stand out in the market by illustrating the actions and values they want to be associated with.

### **Credibility:**

The category **Credibility** refers to the organization's efforts to convey trust in their communication. It illustrates aspects, viewpoints, and characteristics in which the organization attempts to make themselves associated with being a credible organization, by the consumer. The **Credibility** category contributes to the theme Brand Positioning as according to Thompson (2004), the organization must be considered a credible and profitable brand in their positioning in order for consumers to even consider the organization worthy of being recalled (1). The category consists of two codes: **Consistency** and **Transparency**.

### **Consistency**

**Consistency** refers to RTFKT's demonstration of showing consistent behavior. It contributes to establishing the community aspect and adds value to consumers because they can be perceived as being trustworthy through consistent communication and not straying from previous arguments. The code contributes to the establishment of the category **Credibility** as it illustrates the organization's efforts to establish trust. The code has been recurring throughout the data set, specifically when RTFKT mentions safety in regard to their consumers. This is seen when RTFKT says "taking further safety measures" (App M). In Appendix M, RTFKT express that they are taking further action against scammers, by disabling a function that enabled scammers. The text continued to ensure consumers that it is still possible to purchase digital assets but ends the post by reminding consumers to "stay safe" (App M). In addition, appendix N and Q also acknowledges the potential risk of scammers and the issue of safety in regard to their consumers. The appendixes show that RTFKT is consistent in their behavior and values as they believe that their consumers should feel safe when interacting on their server. By continuously reminding consumers about safe conduct RTFKT attempts to establish a form of trust by showing their consumers that they are empathetic towards those who have experienced being scammed and emphasizes that they are taking step to avoid this occurrence, thereby fulfilling their promise. RTFKT thereby seeks to establish some form of trust, by promoting safe conduct, and which entice consumers to stay loyal to the brand and recommend the organization.

## Transparency

The code **Transparency** refers to RTFKT's attempt at conveying openness and honesty through communication. It is an aspect that helps enrich trust and confidence for the consumer in regard to the organization's business conduct (Swift and Dando 2002, 199). The code help compose the category as it emphasizes aspects that create trust among consumers. As RTFKT create and sell NFTs, trust is a major aspect that the organization must implement in their communication. If RTFKT fails to convey trust the organization's Brand Awareness will decrease, as consumers will not feel secure in either the community or as a collector of RTFKT's NFTs. An example of the code **Transparency** was evident as RTFKT said "if everything runs smoothly, I will update holder roles for various RTFKT NFTs tonight" (App F). In the quote RTFKT express transparency as they acknowledge the fact that there is a possibility of a problem or mishap ensuing in regard to their Holder Verification, as it goes live. The quote illustrate transparency as it shows a degree of uncertainty towards the new channel and what might ensue when the channel goes live. RTFKT is therefore staying candid, and express explicitly that problems can occur, and they will hold consumers updated.

In connection RTFKT further express transparency when mentioning safety. Typically, an organization will not admit potential risks or issues that consumers may meet as it can reflect badly on the organization. However, it was clear in the data that RTFKT decided to stay candid and acknowledge the fact that safety in regard to purchasing NFTs are and should be a concern for consumers. This is illustrated as RTFKT says "please be careful about fake (RTFKT) NFTs / Crypto in your wallet" (App Q). The quote illustrates that RTFKT knows that fake NFTs are circulating, and further express what consumers should not do. The quote shows transparency as the organization admits that this is an issue in the industry, and further refers to this issue throughout the data, such as "Taking further safety measures" (App M) and "please be aware of phishing, scams and impersonators" (App A). In connection, RTFKT is allowing consumers to see uncertainties from the organization, which can make the consumer associate the organization with being candid, thereby transparent. If RTFKT is associated with transparency, it further emphasizes a mean of differentiation. This further adds to the establishment of **Brand Awareness** as the association with being transparent and candid shows consumers that they can trust the organization.

## Stretch

The category **Stretch** refers to RTFKT's attempt at staying relevant on the market and up to date on the consumers' needs and desires. It is generated through RTFKT's efforts to show innovation, presenting a new partnership, or introducing an update to the product. The category contributes to the establishment of the theme, as it provides the consumer with new forms of services and products that serves as a reminder of RTFKT's presence on the market. As mentioned by Thompson (2004) in order for RTFKT to continue being perceived as relevant, requires act of innovations to their value proposition otherwise they will be forgotten by consumers (5). It was possible to identify the category as it emerged when RTFKT expressed a new partnership "we're partnering with Ledger" (App N). In context, RTFKT decided to partner up with an organization that can help keep the community and in general their platform safe. By introducing a partnership RTFKT emphasizes that they are upgrading their organization so that it is able to encompass newcomers who are not aware of the conduct in the server. The quote emphasizes the fact that RTFKT acknowledges that their organization has attracted lay audience, as they are actively seeking to better their platform because of them. Thereby including both newcomers and current consumer's needs.

The category further emerges when RTFKT presents new events/ projects such as "Our expansion packs will be an ongoing project for us" (App I), "Eggs are just the beginning of our next big IP, Project Animus" (App A) and "RTFKT's World Merging experience is constantly evolving" (App B). The quotes illustrate RTFKT's efforts to keep their consumers engaged, by continuously providing new updates or events that contribute to keeping brand loyalty. By emphasizing the **Stretch** category RTFKT is showing points-of-difference as they are constantly trying to develop their organization to stay ahead of the competition. RTFKT thereby attempt to establish **Brand Awareness** through the utilization of **Stretch** as it promotes organizational relevance.

## 7. Discussion

This chapter elaborates and discuss the findings, in relation to whether RTFKT has attempted to establish Brand Awareness through their communication. The chapter will look into the platform utilized by RTFKT in relation to their use of Discord as a branding tool. In addition, the chapter will express the contributions to the current literature, and how Brand Identity and Brand Positioning can be used efficiently in regard to Brand Awareness. Lastly, the chapter will elaborate on theoretical limitations that were evident in the thesis.

## 7.1 Does Discord promote Brand Awareness?

When investigating RTFKT's communication it was found that they use the platform Discord to communicate. The platform is, as mentioned in the empirical section, a community building platform that serves to connect individuals with shared interests. In addition, RTFKT utilizes some of their servers, mainly Announcements and Comm-updates, as an information-room in which members of their community can get updates on the brand and products. From the servers it was found that posts written and published by RTFKT, could only be reacted to and not commented on. This means that consumers only have the opportunity to post a reaction that suits their state of mind or in general that they perceive to suit their reaction to the message conveyed by RTFKT. On one hand, by removing the option to comment on announcements and updates, RTFKT is establishing a one-way communication, and simultaneously removing the option to 'hype' over the conveyed message. Instead, the option of "reacting" to the post may provide an inkling of consumers opinion, but it does not clearly convey the true feelings and opinions of the consumer. On the other hand, by limiting the reaction of the consumer, RTFKT is limiting the 'noise' present on their server. Meaning that posts written by RTFKT are not covered by consumers comments. As a result, this can contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness, as it makes it easier for newcomers and current consumers to find previous posts.

By utilizing Discord as their main form of communication to their customers, RTFKT is enhancing the notion made in the findings, that they want to be perceived as a community building organization. However, to become a member of the Discord server, it is imperative that consumers are aware of its existence, as Discord does not actively provide options to organizations that help reach a broader audience. Therefore, it requires that RTFKT have a clear perception of where to position their markets and what sort of values they emphasize, otherwise their attempt at creating awareness can be considered futile. Additionally, RTFKT must actively seek to broaden their community, through their own branding and brand awareness strategies. The way in which consumers can be made aware of the server is through two ways; Discover the server on Discord Explore, invitation from other consumers and/or the organization (Leah 2022). First, the consumer can find RTFKT's server by searching for certain buzzwords on Discord that trigger the server to appear on the Discord Explore page. However, as mentioned previously the market for and interest for NFTs is extensive, which means that there is the possibility of other NFT vendors utilizing discord as

means to brand their organization. If RTFKT relies solely on being ‘discovered’ by consumers on the Explore page, it is imperative that RTFKT knows precisely which words and terms their desired consumers would utilize in order to increase their chances of being noticed. Therefore, by relying on consumers stumbling upon the server is not realistic, as the organization can quickly become lost in the vast array of other competitors. Therefore, this can have a negative effect on RTFKT’s Brand Awareness strategy as it can be argued that they are not differentiating their brand and product enough to stand out to consumers and make them differ from competition. Secondly, consumers can be invited to join RTFKT’s discord server by other consumers. When current consumers invite other potential consumers, it may be based on word-of-mouth, meaning that the consumers have found a common interest, in which the subject of RTFKT and their community was brought up and recommended. It can be argued that in order for this to occur, it demands that RTFKT has been able to establish a strong customer relation and equally obtained some form of brand loyalty from their consumers. Additionally, it would require that RTFKT continue to nurture this relation for consumers to even consider recommending them to their connections.

From the above mentioned, it can be argued that the tools Discord provide to get consumers into the server does not contribute to the establishment of the community of RTFKT and thereby does not contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness. However, the features Discord provide, such as the community building aspects and forums, does contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness.

## **7.2 Did RTFKT attempt to establish Brand Awareness through their communication?**

From the findings it was possible to argue that RTFKT has attempted to establish Brand Awareness through its communication. It is possible to argue this as it was evident by the categories and codes that both Brand Identity and Brand Positioning were present throughout the entire empirical data. Additionally, it was evident as the use of both Brand Identity and Brand Positioning emphasized factors that contributed to the establishment of the organization’s Brand Awareness. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the fact that both Brand Identity and Brand Positioning is present throughout the data, shows that the organization has attempted to establish Brand Awareness. This is especially since the data showed the factors of Aaker, Balmer and Thompson in order to generate brand awareness. Additionally, the organization’s brand awareness strategy was evident through elements and factors that emphasized who they are and what the ideal positioning would be. In connection, RTFKT did emphasize visions and values that made it possible to determine the overall



identity of the organization and simultaneously showed ways in which RTFKT distinguishes themselves from the competition. Firstly, it was evident in the analysis that they were focused on establishing and maintaining brand awareness, as the more prominent categories were **Stretch** and **Differentiation**, as RTFKT continuously attempted to express new ways to develop their organization or to further emphasize potential ways they could differ from the competition. As mentioned in the findings, RTFKT does show PoP as they expressed a desire to combine the digital world and the physical world, by producing some of the NFT shoes they sell. This, however, was not an explicit comparison but rather a vision the organization emphasized to their consumers, and it can therefore be assumed that this differs from other competitors. However, RTFKT does not effectively utilize the **Differentiation** category as there is a lack of comparisons to competitors, in which RTFKT emphasize precisely how they are different. By not utilizing comparisons RTFKT show transparency as they want to let their consumers make a decision, and potentially let their ‘product’ speak for itself. Additionally, it can be argued that, that it is a conscious choice in which the organization does not want to invoke their consumers interest to seek out other competitors, and instead wants to keep consumer in the community server. Furthermore, as mentioned previously it was evident that RTKFT wanted to grow a community that could nurture brand loyalty that in turn would result in brand awareness being established. As shortly argued in the findings, by nurturing brand loyalty RTFKT is depending on the fact that their current consumer’s values, visions and identity align with the organization, and based on that will reach out to people who have the same interests as them. Thereby through word-of-mouth the organization can create a loop as the new members may also recommend RTFKT, and so on. This can be further argued as the organization slowly gain an increase in members day by day, as illustrated by appendixes **R** and **S**.

Even though this thesis does not investigate whether RTFKT has tried to establish credibility through communication, this category was still incorporated. The category **Credibility** was selected, as patterns expressed within the data could be identified as RTFKT’s way of establishing credibility. The category showed that RTFKT utilized the category specifically when conveying safety in their communication. According to Ingold (2022) the market for NFT’s has a significant presence of fraud in which buyers can be exposed to ‘wash trading’, in which a seller falsely inflates the price on NFTs. Due to this, it is imperative that RTFKT in some way convey credibility and trustworthiness through their communication in order to persuade their consumers that they are a safe ‘place’ to purchase NFTs. The credibility conveyed in the data emerged when the organization spoke of safety.

However, it is possible to argue that by mostly conveying credibility when speaking of safety can be perceived as RTFKT fulfilling the minimum of the consumer's needs. It is therefore imperative that the organization continues to establish credibility to further establish a stronger Brand Awareness.

### 7.3 Contributions

The thesis contributes to the current literature as it reflects the importance of utilizing strategic tools when communicating, when an organization attempts to establish a Brand Awareness strategy. It further illustrated how important a brand's identity and positioning is in terms of establishing, maintaining and sustaining Brand Awareness is to make sure consumers continue being able to recognize and recall the organization.

This thesis attempted to provide further insight into the considerations and decisions organization's make as they establish their strategy when seeking to create or increase brand awareness through communication. It delves into the aspects and factors such as the values and visions communicated, that organizations should consider in order to create a communicative strategy that contribute to increasing the awareness. Through the theoretical framework, the analytical framework and the codes devised in this project, a template was constituted that can be used as sort of a guideline with regards to how organizations can establish a comprehensive Brand Awareness strategy that considers factors and aspects of Brand Positioning and Brand Identity. The factors constituted the brand's overall identity as well as the considerations and factors that made the organization determine their market position. These factors will be elaborated upon in the following, in which the findings of the analysis will be reflected upon.

The analysis of this thesis revealed a set of strategic factors that contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness, and further emphasized factors that generate more awareness than other categories and codes. For example, it was observed that the categories **Stretch** and **Relevance** were prominent contributors to the establishment of the organization's Brand Awareness strategy as they showed a higher degree of differentiation. However, categories such as **Consumers** showed to be not as effective, but instead proved important to particularly RTFKT's community building. The categories **Relevance** and **Stretch** emphasized factors that contributed to the establishment and maintainability of Brand Awareness, by indicating forms of the organization's value proposition. This suggests that the categories **Relevance** and **Stretch** thereby, include attributes that can have a greater effect on RTFKT's Brand Awareness and thereby include elements relevant to the overall

establishment of the organization's strategy. As mentioned, the category **Consumers** did not prove to be as effective at establishing Brand Awareness in itself but may indirectly contribute to the organization's brand awareness. It was uncovered that RTFKT further attempts to establish a community, in order to be perceived as being relatable and simultaneously attempt to establish some form of meaningful relation between the organization and consumers through communication. This further expressed the brand identity and brand positioning as it uncovered values that emphasized the identity of the organization and simultaneously showed acts of differentiation. Additionally, the organization's attempt at establishing a community showed traces of brand loyalty in the findings. The notion of establishing community in order to gain brand loyalty could be argued, to implicitly contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness, as it further feeds into the notion that RTFKT may partially depend on 'word of mouth'. Meaning that RTFKT showed a form of dependence on their consumers to engage with potential consumers. Therefore, the category does not reveal a direct link to Brand Awareness strategies, but instead contributes by emphasizing notions of community and loyalty that can influence the establishment of Brand Awareness. In connection, even though the category does not contribute directly to the establishment of Brand Awareness, it still strengthens the communicated identity and positioning emphasized by the organization, through e.g., acts of differentiation.

Furthermore, this thesis contributed to the literature by proposing a new theoretical approach. Firstly, the theoretical framework proposed a new perspective in which Brand Awareness was constituted from the perspective of the organization, rather than a consumer-based approach. The perspective of the organization proved to be a new approach, as theories previously has focused on the notion that brand awareness per default had already been established, and it would therefore only be possible to look into how consumers perceived the organization's brand awareness. The theory proposed in this thesis argued, however, that there should be factors that contribute to the establishment of brand awareness. Furthermore, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, Brand Awareness in this thesis, does not constitute whether the organization have established Brand Awareness, but instead looks into factors that organizations can implement and utilize in order to potentially increase their perceived Brand Awareness. It is therefore possible to argue that the factors presented in this thesis are based on the assumption that they to some degree contribute to the increase of awareness, however, it cannot be effectively proven due to the scope of this thesis. The thesis has therefore provided a foundation for further research, as the theoretical framework

provided grounds that indicate signs of Brand Awareness having been established, however, in order to prove the efficiency of the factors presented calls for further research. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this thesis elucidated a new conceptualized perspective on Brand Awareness, in which the ‘theory’ should rather be considered a ‘Brand Awareness Strategy’, that organizations can try to implement to increase awareness within their market. Additionally, the theoretical framework proposed that Brand Identity and Brand Positioning to some degree contribute to the establishment of Brand Awareness, as these emphasized ways to identify the organization’s values, visions, and strategies. Furthermore, the theory argued that the three theories; Brand Identity, Brand Positioning and Brand Awareness could be considered interconnected, as each theory in one way influence the other. This can be argued based on the grounds that the three theories seek to emphasize different values, visions and goals that establish the value proposition of the organization and simultaneously showed the desired associations of the organization.

## 8. Conclusion

From the research conducted in this thesis, it can be concluded that RTFKT have to some degree attempted to establish a brand awareness strategy through their communication within the empirical data. This was possible to deduce through the findings of the analysis as it resulted in a greater insight and comprehension of RTFKT’s considerations, decisions, and communicative acts towards establishing Brand Awareness strategy.

From the analysis of the empirical data two themes emerged; Brand Identity and Brand Positioning after the categories and codes had been composed and employed to the data. As mentioned in the method section, the themes reflect the main topics evident in the empirical data that could provide a deeper insight into the communication, and thereby elucidate the message conveyed. The themes illustrated that RTFKT’s communication mainly revolved around conveying parts of their identity in a somewhat comprehensible manner to provide consumers with relevant knowledge about who they are, who they want to be perceived as and what they stand for. From the empirical data it could be deduced that the Brand Identity contributed to the establishment of RTFKT’s Brand Awareness strategy as it emphasized the overall nature of the brand and thereby showed the outward recognizable features RTFKT desired to be associated with. Meaning that brand identity contributed by illustrating the deepest values of RTFKT that should be apparent from first sight.

Additionally, RTFKT's communication further focused on the attempt at expressing their value proposition through e.g., communicative strategic tools such as differentiation, stretch or relevance. Therefore, brand positioning contributed to RTFKT's brand awareness strategy by emphasizing the alignment between the brand and its positioning, which was conveyed through the organization's illustration of a conveyed understanding of their positioning and consumers.

Through the analysis and the discussion, it was possible to conclude that there were a number of prominent branding aspects in RTFKT's communication that contributed to the brand awareness strategy. The categories Relevance, Core Identity and lastly Consumers were the most prominent within the empirical data. The most prominent, however, is the category stretch. As mentioned in the discussion section the category stretch was most apparent, as RTFKT continuously presents new partnerships, updates, or challenges that consumers can partake in. This was driven by the fact that the organization wants to be perceived as being relevant, and thereby establish competitive advantages, since consumers can always count on a new development from the organization. It was therefore apparent, that the category stretch was utilized to make RTFKT stand out from the competition, and thereby either establish or maintain their market position.

In connection, it is worth mentioning that it became clear in the empirical data, that RTFKT further focused on conveying a community aspect, by trying to persuade their audience that they align with the values of the organization, which could be determined through the codes 'engaging the audience' and 'creating a we'. It could be determined that a clear prominent aspect was the consumer category, as RTFKT wanted to establish some form of community that would garner brand loyalty. This aspect was thereby also an important aspect, as it seemed as if RTFKT wanted to further their community through the utilization of WOM - as mentioned in the discussion - which in turn would organically make RTFKT's brand awareness stronger.

Based on the analysis, the discussion and the aspects mentioned above, it was possible to determine that RTFKT's communication contributed to their attempted establishment of a brand awareness strategy, through communicative acts and tools that was evident in the theories Brand Identity and Brand Positioning. The communication of RTFKT served as a contributor by expressing recognizable values and conveying visions that further create value to consumers who in turn are able to position the organization in their mindset.

Therefore, in conclusion, to answer the problem statement, RTFKT does attempt to establish a brand awareness strategy.

## Bibliography

A Aaker, David. (1995) 2010. *Building Strong Brands*. Vol. 1. New York: Pocket Books.

Aaker, David A. 2009. *Managing Brand Equity : Capitalizing on the Value of a Brand Name*. New York: Free Press ; Toronto.

[https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=r\\_TSY5sxnO8C&oi=fnd&pg=PT10&dq=david+aaker+managing+brand+equity&ots=Ax5Helw0Y3&sig=8D4mm-ZnMi3OP9wTqPGDnfi0et0&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&](https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=r_TSY5sxnO8C&oi=fnd&pg=PT10&dq=david+aaker+managing+brand+equity&ots=Ax5Helw0Y3&sig=8D4mm-ZnMi3OP9wTqPGDnfi0et0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&).

Aaker, David A, and Damien Mcloughlin. 2015. *Strategic Market Management : Global Perspectives*. Special edition. Hoboken N.J.: Wiley, Cop.

Andreas Beck Holm. 2016. *Videnskab I Virkeligheden : En Grundbog I Videnskabsteori*. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Balmer, John M. T., Helen Stuart, and Stephen A. Greyser. 2009. “Aligning Identity and Strategy: Corporate Branding at British Airways in the Late 20th Century.” *California Management Review* 51 (3): 6–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166491>.

“BAYC.” n.d. Boredapeyachtclub.com. <https://boredapeyachtclub.com/#/>.

Bin Latif, Wasib , Md Aminul Islam, and Idris Mdnoor. 2014. “Building Brand Awareness in the Modern Marketing Environment: A Conceptual Model.” *International Journal of Buisness and Technopreneurship* 4 (1): 69–82.  
[272161898\\_Building\\_Brand\\_Awareness\\_in\\_the\\_Modern\\_Marketing\\_Environment\\_A\\_Conceptual\\_Model](https://doi.org/10.2307/41166491).

Campbell, Suzanne. 2014. “What Is Qualitative Research?” *American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science* 27 (1): 3–3. <https://doi.org/10.29074/ascls.27.1.3>.

Chambliss, Daniel F, and Russel K Schutt. 2019. *MAKING SENSE of the SOCIAL WORLD : Methods of Investigation*. 6th ed. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.  
[https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=jnl\\_DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&](https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=jnl_DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=david+aaker+managing+brand+equity&ots=Ax5Helw0Y3&sig=8D4mm-ZnMi3OP9wTqPGDnfi0et0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&)

q=making+sense+of+the+social+world&ots=bcqMUFm1vE&sig=J-wJ2ezhfI0hXXWqgCSeaLdQk2M&redir\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

- Chandon, Pierre. 2003. "Note on Measuring Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand Equity and Brand Value." Fontainebleau, France: Insead. <https://courseware.cutm.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2003-19.pdf>.
- Conti, Robyn, and John Schmidt. 2021. "What Is an NFT? Non-Fungible Tokens Explained." Forbes Advisor. April 29, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/investing/cryptocurrency/nft-non-fungible-token/>.
- Creighton, Jolene. 2022. "NFT Timeline: The Beginnings and History of NFTs." Nft Now. December 15, 2022. <https://nftnow.com/guides/nft-timeline-the-beginnings-and-history-of-nfts/>.
- Da Silveira, Catherine, Carmen Lages, and Cláudia Simões. 2013. "Reconceptualizing Brand Identity in a Dynamic Environment." *Journal of Business Research* 66 (1): 28–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.020>.
- Discord. 2022. "About Discord | Our Mission and Values." Discord. 2022. <https://discord.com/company>.
- "Discord - a New Way to Chat with Friends & Communities." n.d. Discord. Accessed May 25, 2023. <https://discord.com/channels/686661995121868830/828346862993014834>.
- Frankenfield, Jake. 2023. "Cryptocurrency Explained with Pros and Cons for Investment." Investopedia. February 4, 2023. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/cryptocurrency.asp>.
- Geyser, Werner. 2021. "Top Selling NFT Creators in 2022." Influencer Marketing Hub. April 16, 2021. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/top-nft-creators/>.
- Ghodeswar, Bhimrao M. 2008. "Building Brand Identity in Competitive Markets: A Conceptual Model." *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 17 (1): 4–12.

[https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/2492230/mod\\_resource/content/3/Building%20brand%20identity%20in%20competitive%20markets.pdf](https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/2492230/mod_resource/content/3/Building%20brand%20identity%20in%20competitive%20markets.pdf).

Grix, Jonathan. 2002. "Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Social Research." *Politics* 22 (3): 175–86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00173>.

Gwin, Carol F., and Carl R. Gwin. 2003. "Product Attributes Model: A Tool for Evaluating Brand Positioning." *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 11 (2): 30–42. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40470109.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A703317bda707cd1a7ca9975556a4eb4d&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40470109.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A703317bda707cd1a7ca9975556a4eb4d&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1).

Hayes, Adam. 2022. "Brand Equity: Definition, Meaning, Effect on Profit Margin, and Examples." Investopedia. December 20, 2022. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brandequity.asp>.

———. 2023. "Blockchain Facts: What Is It, How It Works, and How It Can Be Used." Investopedia. April 23, 2023. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blockchain.asp>.

Hayward, Decrypt / Andrew. 2022. "Justin Bieber Paid \$1.3 Million for a Bored Ape NFT. It's Now Worth \$69K." Decrypt. November 16, 2022. <https://decrypt.co/114718/justin-bieber-bored-ape-nft-now-69k>.

Ingold, Lucy. 2022. "NFTs: Risks, Rewards, Ethics." Seven Pillars Institute. September 16, 2022. <https://sevenpillarsinstitute.org/nfts-risks-rewards-ethics/>.

J. Gibson, William, and Andrew Brown. 2011. "Using Documents in Research." In *Using Documents in Research*, 1–26. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kapferer, Jean Noël. 2008. *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*. 4th ed. London: Kogan Page.

Kaspersky. 2022. "What Is Cryptocurrency and How Does It Work?" Kaspersky. 2022. <https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/definitions/what-is-cryptocurrency>.

Kevin Lane Keller, Ambi M G Parameswaran, and Isaac Jacob. 2015. *Strategic Brand*



- Management : Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. Noida: Pearson.
- King, Nigel. 2004. "Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text." In *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, edited by Gillian Symon. London: SAGE Publications.
- . 2012. "Doing Template Analysis." In *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage Publisher Ltd..
- King, Nigel , and Joanna Brooks. 2014. "Doing Template Analysis: Evaluating an End-of Life Care Service." In *Sage Research Methods Cases*, 1–21. Sage Publications Ltd. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/19707/>.
- King, Nigel, and Joanna M Brooks. 2017. *Template Analysis for Business and Management Students*. London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE.  
[https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=KQJADQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=nigel+king+template+analysis&ots=lEM8ybEzWB&sig=4249WroxkMQ0KIMHb5SD2SX1wpY&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=nigel%20king%20template%20analysis&f=false](https://books.google.dk/books?hl=da&lr=&id=KQJADQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=nigel+king+template+analysis&ots=lEM8ybEzWB&sig=4249WroxkMQ0KIMHb5SD2SX1wpY&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=nigel%20king%20template%20analysis&f=false).
- Kosteljik, Erik, and K J Alsem. 2020. *Brand Positioning : Connecting Marketing Strategy and Communications*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, Ny: Routledge.
- Leah. 2022. "Discord Marketing: How to Use Discord for Insane Growth in 2022." P2P Marketing. August 11, 2022. <https://peertopeermarketing.co/discord-marketing/>.
- Macdonald, Emma, and Byron Sharp. 2003. "Management Perceptions of the Importance of Brand Awareness as an Indication of Advertising Effectiveness." *Marketing Bulletin* 14 (1): 1–15. [http://marketing-bulletin.massey.ac.nz/V14/MB\\_V14\\_A2\\_Macdonald.pdf](http://marketing-bulletin.massey.ac.nz/V14/MB_V14_A2_Macdonald.pdf).
- NG, Julia . 2023. "Most Popular NFT Marketplaces by Market Share." CoinGecko. April 13, 2023. <https://www.coingecko.com/research/publications/market-share-nft-marketplaces>.

Nike. 2022. “Nike Acquires RTFKT.” Nike.com. 2022.

<https://about.nike.com/en/newsroom/releases/nike-acquires-rtfkt>.

OpenSea. 2022. “OpenSea: Buy Crypto Collectibles, CryptoKitties, Decentraland, and More on Ethereum.” OpenSea. 2022. <https://opensea.io/about>.

Pappu, Ravi, Pascale G. Quester, and Ray W. Cooksey. 2005. “Consumer-Based Brand Equity: Improving the Measurement – Empirical Evidence.” *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 14 (3): 143–54. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420510601012>.

Pfadenhauer, Michaela, and Hubert Knoblauch. 2018. *Social Constructivism as Paradigm?* Routledge.

“R/RTFKTstudios.” n.d. Reddit. Accessed May 24, 2023.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/RTFKTstudios/>.

Rossiter, John R. 2014. “‘Branding’ Explained: Defining and Measuring Brand Awareness and Brand Attitude.” *Journal of Brand Management* 21 (7-8): 533–40.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2014.33>.

RTFKT. 2015. “Discord - a New Way to Chat with Friends & Communities.” Discord. Jason Citron and Stan Vishnevskiy. May 15, 2015.

<https://discord.com/channels/686661995121868830/828346862993014834>.

———. n.d. “WTF Is RTFKT.” Rtfkt.com. Accessed May 29, 2023. <https://rtfkt.com/wtf>.

Saldaña, Johnny. 2011. *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 2013. “The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.” London: SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://emotrab.ufba.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Saldana-2013-TheCodingManualforQualitativeResearchers.pdf>.

Saunders, Mark, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill. (2012) 2019. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 8th ed. United Kingdom : Pearson.

Shares, 199, and 3 3k Reads. 2022. “What Is Discord & How Can You Use It for

Marketing?” Search Engine Journal. February 16, 2022.

<https://www.searchenginejournal.com/discord-marketing/437388/#close>.

Swift, Tracey, and Nicole Dando. 2002. “Transparency and Assurance: Minding the Credibility Gap.” *Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 2002 (8): 195–99.

<https://doi.org/10.9774/gleaf.4700.2002.wi.00009>.

Thompson, Anne Bahr. 2004. “Brand Positioning and Brand Creation.” In *Brands and Branding*. The Economist. <https://annebahrthompson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Brand-Positioning-Creation.pdf>.