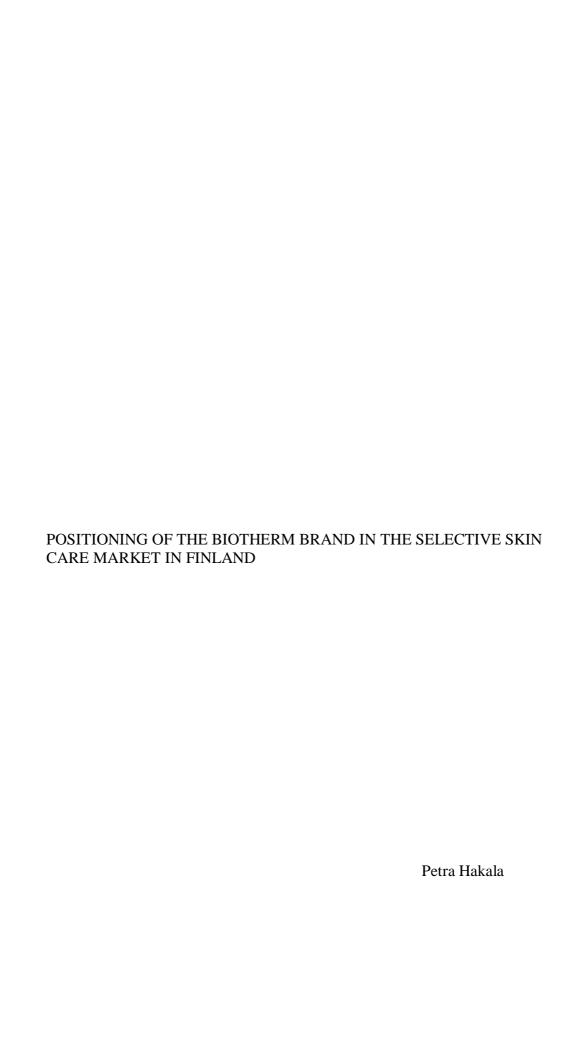METROPOLIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
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POSITIONING OF THE BIOTHERM BRAND IN THE SELECTIVE SKIN
CARE MARKET IN FINLAND

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to reveal the positioning of the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland. The research methodology was developed to identify and explore customers' behaviour, attitudes, motivations and processes related to the brand and the skin care market. The brand was disassembled and the relationship of the constituent parts worked out. The focus group conducted can be regarded as the first exploratory step in viewing the options around the issue and revealing the factors that are considered as influential. However, the research findings presented in this study cannot be regarded accurate enough to be suitable to base any strategic decisions upon. The value of the study lies in discovering what is going on rather than if anything should be done. The results of the study indicate that Biotherm should strive towards effectiveness, greater originality and a more modern image. The brand should communicate its technology-based skin care solutions in a modern way to assert its knowledge in the field of anti-aging to attract its target market. Although the brand is easily differentiated from the mass market brands, Biotherm should enhance its frame of reference to attract also the most demanding target market. By offering both functional and emotional benefits based on the values and goals of the target market, the brand is able to position itself as being part of the highly lucrative trend towards naturalness, good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

Tiivistelmä

Opinnäytetyön päätavoite oli selvittää, kuinka Biotherm-brändi on positioitu selektiivisen ihonhoidon markkinoilla Suomessa. Positiointi on toimenpide, jossa tuotteeseen liitetään kuluttajan mielessä jokin kilpailijoista erottava ominaisuus, kilpailuetu, jonka takia kuluttaja valitsisi juuri kyseisen tuotteen. Positioinnin päämäärä on saavutettu, kun kuluttaja tuotteen nimen kuullessaan pystyy kertomaan, että jokin tietty piirre tai ominaisuus erottaa sen kilpailevista tuotteista. Tutkimusmenetelmä kehitettiin tunnistamaan sekä asiakkaiden käyttäytymistä että tarkkoja käsityksiä ja mielikuvia, jotka liittyvät Biotherm-brändiin. Kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen perustana oli ryhmäkeskustelu, jota voidaan pitää ensimmäisenä askeleena aiheen kannalta merkityksellisten tekijöiden selvittämisessä. Tutkimustulokset eivät kuitenkaan ole tarpeeksi tarkkoja, jotta niitä voitaisiin käyttää strategisen päätöksenteon perustana, mutta niiden avulla saatiin selville, mitkä ovat brändin todelliset kilpailuvaltit. Tutkimuksen mukaan Biotherm-brändin tärkeimmät kilpailuedut ovat teknologinen osaaminen ja innovaatiot. Nämä tulisi viestiä entistä tehokkaammin kohderyhmälle, jotta brändi pystyisi erilaistamaan ja positioimaan itsensä kohderyhmän arvojen ja tavoitteiden mukaisesti. Brändin positiointi auttaa tällöin priorisoimaan ja tarkentamaan koko brändi-identiteettiä; Bioitherm-brändin on mahdollista saavuttaa vahvempi asema selektiivisen ihonhoidon markkinoilla Suomessa panostamalla tehokkuuteen, omaleimaisuuteen ja modernimman imagon kehittämiseen.

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Introduction

Positioning is about the position a brand occupies in a market in the minds of consumers. Strong brands have a clear, often unique position in the target market that can be achieved through several means (Kotler *et al*, 2005). Without realizing the complexity of a brand, it is not possible to understand what the brand means to consumers. Mass marketing is no longer a viable option for most companies. Instead, niche markets must be attached because they exhibit unique needs and wants. By identifying the target market the brand is allowed to reach consumers that have similar needs or characteristics and therefore likely to exhibit similar purchase behaviour (Kotler *et al*, 2005; Tybout & Sternthal, 2005; Keller, 2001). This is the foundation of positioning because it guides the brand to design responsive products to meet the needs of the target market, attain competitive edge and gauge the perceptions' of current and potential customers.

Traditional approaches to positioning focus on brand definition and differentiation and emphasize the relationship between the product and its competition (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005; Keller, 2001). Competition-based positioning clarifies what a brand should be compared to and why it should be preferred to those alternatives. However, deeper positioning is often needed to make connections with important consumer goals and values. Goal-based positioning enhances the chance that a brand's position will provide enduring competitive advantage. The underlying aim of a brand position should be to enable it to survive and thrive forever, regardless of how competitive dynamics and business needs evolve over time. The challenge, therefore, is to identify a core idea that frames an ambition or aspiration for the brand that will be relevant to target audiences over time. However, in most cases, some modification of the position is needed to sustain a brand over time.

In line with this study's main objective of exploring the positioning of the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland, the research methodology was developed to identify and explore customers' behaviour, attitudes, motivations, and processes related to the brand and the skin care market. The aim therefore was to both investigate the key values and dimensions of the brand and also focus on competitive brands and comparison between them and Biotherm. The brand was disassembled and the relationship of the

constituent parts worked out to reveal its position in the market. Due to the fact that a brand is instanced in people's heads, rather than only being the concrete manifestation that we see on the shelf, a qualitative method to investigate the matters was chosen.

The focus group conducted can be regarded as the first exploratory step in viewing the options around the issue and revealing the factors that are considered as influential. However, it is presumable that the research conducted suffers from the lack of complete information and bias. Therefore, it does not reveal accurate perceptions of the brand at issue. The value of focus groups lies in discovering what is going on but not whether if anything should be done (Kaden, 2006). The insights that came from the group interaction enabled in understanding the real issues but further research, including quantitative research, is needed to measure their importance. Otherwise, any strategic decisions should not be formed.

The findings of this study reveal that Biotherm should strive towards effectiveness, greater originality and a more modern image. The brand should hence communicate its technology-based skin care solutions in a modern way to assert its knowledge in the field of anti-aging to attract its target market. The strength of Biotherm is the authenticity of the brand and the values it has had for over 50 years. It is hence important that the brand is not reinvented but rather restaged. In Finland, Biotherm should invest in the issues revealed in the study to position itself as the new-generation skin care line and as the brand that is leading the way to the skin care of the future. By offering both functional and emotional benefits based on the values and goals of the target market Biotherm is able to promote itself as being part of the highly lucrative trend towards naturalness, good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

The subsequent sections in this study are organized as follows. First, the literature review related to the Biotherm brand, brand positioning and sustaining the position over time is presented. Secondly, the research methodology is introduced and discussed. Thirdly, the findings of the research are presented and followed by the analysis of the findings related to the theory adapted. Finally, conclusions on the positioning of the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland are made.

1 Literature Review

1.1 The Biotherm brand

The Biotherm brand is a French selective skin care brand that was created over fifty years ago. Founded in 1952, it was taken over by the L'Oréal Group in 1970 before becoming a part of its Luxury Products division in 1991. Today, Biotherm has a presence in 66 countries around the world and its products are available from over 13,000 points of sale. Biotherm offers a complete range of selective skin care for the face and body including products to cleanse, tone, and treat all skin types. Every product is formulated to work perfectly with the skin's natural processes to renew, restore and rejuvenate. In addition, Biotherm offers a range of targeted skincare solutions to address more specific needs such as aging, acne-prone skin, and eye area concerns.

The origin of Biotherm brand is an extremely gentle micro-flora, *thermal plankton,* that appeared on earth three billion years ago and recalls the first forms of life on the planet. It thrives in sulphurous thermal springs of the mountains that are particularly rich in minerals. Over 50 years ago Biotherm biologists discovered its perfect affinity with the skin and its remarkable effectiveness and after 20 years of research they managed to isolate this substance and subsequently reproduce it by bio-fermentation to obtain an even more active and concentrated form: *Pure Extract of Thermal Plankton.* The extract is 100% natural as its origins are at the very heart of mineral springs and is at the heart of Biotherm's innovation and expertise. It is a powerful activator that soothes the skin and reinforces its natural defence against aging (Aubert, 2009). It is regarded as a new kind of pro-biotic, a dermobiotic, that has a unique effect on the skin. Today, Biotherm is the only brand able to boast the use of this ingredient in its skin care products. (Biotherm, 2009)

In Finland, the Biotherm brand has become one of the leading selective skin care brands (Kurkilahti, 2009). Its expansion reflects the very close affinity of its dynamic, fresh and natural image with the beauty aspirations of Scandinavian consumers. Its success can also be put down to a product range carefully adapted to meet the preferences of Finnish women. The best-selling products are the facial skin care line Aquasource, whose sales

have increased substantially, and Age Fitness in the anti-aging segment. Lastly, in the men's market, Biotherm Homme is the unchallenged number one in Finland. However, Biotherm is facing major challenges related to its biggest competitors, Clarins and Clinique, and the changing environment of selective skin care market. According to Saara Kurkilahti (2009), the Product Manager of the Biotherm brand in Finland, Biotherm has to be more effective and more natural than what is already on the target market. The brand needs to be accelerating strongly to become the top-selling skin care brand in the selective segment in Finland. Kurkilahti (2009) stresses the belief that natural and effective skin care products are a long-term trend but the Biotherm brand needs to revise and clarify its positioning in the target market.

1.2 Brand positioning

"Positioning is not what you do to a product, positioning is what you do to the mind of the prospect." (Ries & Trout, 1993)

Brand positioning is regarded a key tool for brand implementation in competitive markets. Miller and Muir (2004) state positioning is a useful way of thinking about branding – so much so that *positioning* and *branding* have almost become synonyms of each other. In today's marketing literature, there are several definitions, each a variation on the same basic theme: positioning is about clearly differentiating the brand of its competitors – finding the gap and then filling it. Positioning is about the position a brand occupies in a market in the minds of consumers. Strong brands have a clear, often unique position in the target market that can be achieved through several means, including brand name, image, service standards, product guarantees, packaging and the way in which it is delivered (Kotler *et al*, 2005). Successful brand positioning often involves a combination of them all as well as affiliating a brand with some category that consumers can readily grasp and differentiating the brand from competitors.

1.2.1 The complexity of a brand

Brand is a complex symbol and needs to be fully understood by marketers to position their brands clearly and successfully in the target market. Kotler *et al* (2004) defines the five

levels of a brand's meaning: *attributes, benefits, values, culture* and *personality*. The challenge of positioning the brand is to develop a deep set of meanings or associations for the brand, i.e. marketers need to decide the level or levels at which they will position the brand and to promote it. Brand attributes, although being the first thing in mind when thinking of a brand, should not be the only thing to be focused on because buyers are interested not so much in brand attributes as in brand benefits. Competitors can easily copy attributes or the current attributes may later become less valuable to consumers, hurting a brand that is tied too strongly to specific attributes (Kotler *et al*, 2005). Therefore, the brand should excel at delivering the benefits customers truly desire (Keller, 2001) as well as communicating effectively the brand's core values and personality. Altogether, they define the brand's essence.

Without realizing the complexity of a brand, the brand's managers are not able to understand what the brand means to consumers. Keller (2001) states that the totality of the brand's image, whether created intentionally or not, must be appreciated before the brand can occupy particular niches in consumers' minds and hence be well positioned in the market place. They are similar to and different from competing brands in certain reliably identifiable ways.

1.2.2 Positioning fundamentals

Traditional approaches to positioning focus on brand definition and differentiation thus emphasize the relationship between the product and its competition (Miller & Muir, 2004; Keller, 2003; LePla & Parker, 2002; Keller, 2001; Tybout & Sternhal, 1999). The brand is defined for consumers by highlighting the features that it shares with other products – that is, its *points of parity*. Brand differentiation is then introduced by identifying *points of difference* that allow the brand to dominate competition on a benefit important to consumers.

According to the customer-based brand equity model (Keller, 2003) deciding on a positioning requires determining a frame of reference by identifying the target market as well as the nature of competition and the ideal points of parity and points of difference

brand associations. Tybout and Sternthal (2005) agree on this by illustrating the four critical components of positioning (p. 12):

1. Identifying the *targeted consumers* in terms of demographics and psychographics.
2. Stating the target's goal that will be served by consuming the brand, commonly referred to as the *frame of reference* or *points of parity.*
3. Asserting why the brand is superior to alternatives in the frame of reference, referred to as the *points of difference.*
4. Supporting evidence for claims related to the frame of reference and points of difference, referred to as *reasons to believe.*

According to Keller (2003), points of difference are strong, favourable, and unique brand associations for a brand that may be based on virtually any type of attribute or benefit association. A brand's points of difference indicate why it is a superior means of achieving the consumers' goal. Points of difference can take the form of functional or emotional benefits (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005) and are usually the most potent association for a brand. Differentiating a brand in terms of functional benefits is attractive because such benefits are relatively concrete and easy to communicate to consumers and other stakeholders. However, functional benefits are typically linked to more abstract benefits that provide a basis for making an emotional connection with the brand. Emotional benefits shift the emphasis from the brand and its functions to the user and the feelings to be gained by using the brand.

Position-led strategies often overlook the importance of awareness and of establishing points of parity (Miller & Muir, 2004). Points of parity can be based on either product features or consumer goals (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005; Keller, 2003). According to Tybout and Sternthal (2005), viewing the points of parity as the goal that a brand promises to achieve allows a company to consider competition and growth opportunities outside the brand's own category whereas claiming membership in a product category assumes the consumer will understand that the brand serves the goal that is associated with the product category. In Keller's opinion (2003), the points of parity are those associations that are not necessarily unique to the brand but may in fact be shared with other brands. They fall into two categories: category points of parity and competitive points of parity from which category points of parity associations are those associations that consumers view as being

necessary to be a legitimate and credible product offering within a certain category. Competitive points of parity associations on the other hand are those associations designed to negate competitor's brand positioning and dictate the desired brand knowledge structures.

1.2.3 Competition-based and goal-based positioning

As the traditional positioning models discuss the brand's position must be both defined and also differentiated from other members of the category. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) define positioning as "how a brand compares to competing brands" (p. 73). Often this entails focusing on how the brand dominates its competitors with respect to some benefit important to consumers. The strongest position is one where "a brand has a point of difference on the primary benefit that motivates consumers to buy the category" (Tybout & Sternhal, 1999, p. 46). The leader in a category usually claims this benefit, whether or not it actually has an advantage, and defends the position by relying on heavy advertising expenditures, intensive distribution or some other marketing mix vehicle. Whatever the basis for differentiation, an effort should be made to give consumers a reason to believe that the brand possesses the benefit.

From the positioning fundamentals discussed above two positioning strategies can be derived: competition-based and goal-based positioning (Hartmann *et* al, 2005; Tybout & Srernthal, 1999). Competition-based positioning clarifies what a brand should be compared to and why it should be preferred to those alternatives. However, it is seldom adequate on its own to produce sustained success. Therefore deeper positioning is needed, i.e. making connections with important consumer goals and values. This enhances the chance that a brand's position will provide enduring competitive advantage.

Strong brands add value, which makes them stand out from their competitors (Thompson, 2003). Goal-based positioning entails a deepening of competition-based positioning. Its frame of reference is not a product category but rather consumers' goals and values. Thus a position that focuses on some feature might be deepened by using a benefit implied by the feature as the basis for the brand's next position (Tybout & Sternhal, 1999). Brand positioning is first recognised through relevance and differentiation by developing a deep

appreciation for customers' functional and emotional needs and then defining thorough grasp of the marketplace and competitive dynamics. It can be regarded as a contract to the customer regarding how the brand will deliver value and satisfaction.

1.3 Sustaining a position over time

The marketplaces in which brands exist are evolving faster than ever before. The speed of innovation has increased competitors' ability to imitate one another, and the proliferation of media vehicles makes long-lasting differentiation on basic product grounds increasingly difficult (Thompson, 2003). With established brands, competitive forces often dictate shifts in positioning strategy over time. The underlying aim of a brand position should be to enable it to survive and thrive forever, regardless of how competitive dynamics and business needs evolve over time. The challenge, therefore, is to identify a core idea that frames an ambition or aspiration for the brand that will be relevant to target audiences over time. However, in most cases, some modification of the position is needed to sustain a brand over time (Cheverton, 2006; Keller 2003; Tybout & Sternthal, 1999).

1.3.1 Fortifying strategies

The first class of enhancing a brand's position is to fortify the brand position. This entails maintaining the same brand and position but embellishing the positioning. This is especially good for established brands that cannot change their positions to accommodate changing consumer tastes and competition. There are three ways of fortifying the brand position: *modern instantiation, laddering* and *reacting* (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005; Keller, 2003).

If an established brand cannot readily change its position to accommodate changing consumer tastes and competition, it needs to sustain the relevance of its already-established position. Tybout and Sternthal (2005) describe this as *modern instantiation* that is usually achieved by identifying modern ways to represent the brand. In some instances, a contemporary representation requires adjustments beyond changing the spokesperson and the advertising as well as changes in other elements of the marketing mix.

According to Keller (2003), laddering involves "deepening the meaning of the brand to tap into core brand values or other, more abstractive considerations" (p. 148). Tybout and Sternthal (2005) describe laddering as a shift from focusing on the brand to focusing on the customer. Emphasis is given to how the target customer feels as a result of using the brand, i.e. the target customer's goals and values. This works better for brands that are able to develop an emotional attachment with their customers because at the top of the ladder the focus is on the person rather than the brand. Laddering thus involves a progression from attributes to benefits to more abstract values or motivations. In doing so, a brand may distinguish itself from competitors even if other brands eventually achieve attribute parity.

1.3.2 Leveraging strategies

Another approach of sustaining a brand's position is leveraging in which a positioning is used to extend the brand equity to new products (Tybout & Sternthal, 2005). These new products may broaden the brand's frame of reference or demonstrate the relevance of the brand's point of difference in a new category. When broadening the frame of reference, it is important not to undermine customers' initial motivation for buying the brand's products. Brand leveraging is an important form of new product introduction because it provides consumers with a sense of familiarity by carrying positive brand characteristics and attitudes into a new product category (Kotler *et al*, 2005; Tybout & Sternthal, 2005). The greatest risk involved in brand leveraging, it is important to maintain a consistent level of quality within the brand across category lines. Likewise, it is as important to leverage a brand only into new categories that are related to the original product. Trying to sell too many diverse products will dilute the brand name and yield poor results.

2 Methodology

In line with this study's main objective of exploring the positioning of the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland, the research methodology was developed to identify and explore customers' behaviour, attitudes, motivations, and processes related to the brand and the selective skin care market.

2.1 Research objectives

The main objective of the research was to explore Finnish women's attitude towards selective beauty brands, especially Biotherm and its competitors. The most important field of research was to find out how consumers categorize brands within the market group, i.e. selective skin care market in Finland, and how they focus on the most competitive ones. Other objectives were to understand what features the target market values, what benefits the target consumers are looking, and what differentiates Biotherm in a way that will increase the number of people who buy it.

2.2 Research method

A brand is instanced in people's heads, rather than only being the concrete manifestation that we see on the shelf. The complexity of contemporary products, in terms of how they sit in the market, and how they relate to each other and to potential or actual segments in the market, is extremely difficult to capture using quantitative research, simply because quantitative research looks at one bit of it at a time (Callingham, 2004; Hague *et al*, 2004; LePla & Parker, 2002). Therefore, qualitative research is more suitable for aspects of brand work than quantitative research.

Qualitative research takes the whole person as its starting point and aims to understand how that person works in terms of his or her relationship with brands and markets. It is easy to assimilate and comprehend and it gives a simple picture that is rich in detail through which much greater and more profound understanding can be achieved (Kotler *et al*, 2005; Callingham, 2004; Hague *et al*, 2004). Hence, qualitative research tells a story about people in a way that quantitative research does not. LePla and Parker (2002) state the most effective positioning research digs deeply into customers' motivations. Therefore, a qualitative research method was chosen.

2.2.1 Focus group

The focus group is a qualitative research technique used to collect data through group interaction on a topic. It was chosen as a research method because it actively involves

people, provides in-depth qualitative data and helps the researcher understand what is going on (Kaden, 2006; Hague *et al*, 2004). Focus groups deliver qualitative data that is rich in words and descriptions, rather than numbers. According to Hague *et al* (2004), the findings from focus groups enable us to obtain a deep understanding of behaviour, motivations, and attitudes. Although they are based on small samples, the insights that come from the group interaction almost always enable to understand the real issues though a quantitative research might be needed to measure their importance.

Focus groups are an excellent means of gathering information regarding the acceptability or reactions to marketing campaigns or specific advertisements and consumer perceptions as well as uncovering issues related to customer motivations, branding, and complex attitudinal structures. The main advantage of using focus groups is the fact that the respondents naturally interact and are influenced by others (Callingham, 2004; Hague *et al*, 2004; Krueger, 1988). Group discussion produces data and insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting; listening to others' verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas and experiences in participants. This is also known as the group effect where group members engage in "a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 182). The moderator can also interact directly with the group which allows clarification and follow-up questions. Focus groups can also discover non-verbal responses, identify subtle nuances and obtain deeper levels of meaning because respondents are able to use their own words. All these are crucial in making important connections. Furthermore, focus groups are a flexible research method that can be used with wide range of topics, individuals and settings. The results are easy to understand and more accessible for further analysis than complex statistical analyses of survey data (Krueger, 1988).

The biggest potential problem of focus groups is the bias that can occur from the small number of respondents, the interaction with each other and the subject of discussion (Callingham, 2004; Hague *et al*, 2004; Kaden, 2006). Besides, the moderator may knowingly or unknowingly bias results by providing cues about what types of responses are desirable. Another complaint about focus groups is that consumers may not be totally honest or willing to share their thoughts and opinions in front of other people. Both problems can be avoided if the moderator is carefully trained and knowledgeable about

group dynamics. It should be taken into account that focus groups do not offer valid information about how things have changed over time or information that can apply generally to other groups of people (Krueger, 1988). Although the interaction and brainstorming effect is mostly seen as the advantage of focus groups, it can also create difficulties such as chaotic data that is hard to analyse as well as diminished control over the group.

2.2.2 Planning and recruitment

The two most important ingredients for successful focus groups are the recruitment of the correct participants and a skilled moderator. First of all, careful screening at the recruitment stage ensures that people with the right characteristics are recruited. Focus group participants need to have a degree of homogeneity (Kaden, 2006; Callingham, 2004). This similarity is the basis for recruitment, and indeed, specific requirements are usually necessary for attendance at the group.

The key criteria that identified the individuals suitable for the study in question was set prior to the recruitment process. The focus was on 30 to 50 year old women and the aim was to recruit around 6 to 9 respondents due to the fact that the group needs to be small enough to allow everyone the opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide group interaction and diversity of experience. Larger groups inhibit discussion as some delegates shy from venturing opinions, while smaller groups may be limited in their pool of ideas (Kaden, 2006; Callingham, 2004). Other recruitment criteria included two issues concerning the respondents' familiarity with selective skin care products and brands. The aim was to recruit consumers who regularly use selective skin care products and use or had tried especially anti-aging products of selective brands.

The role of the moderator is crucial to the success of the focus group. The match between the moderator and the group participants has been the subject of much research on how the credibility of the moderator is viewed by the group participants and how much this affects the group dynamics (Kaden, 2006; Hague *et al*, 2004). The key point is that the moderator needs to be accepted by the respondents and has to have the ability to create a 'safe' environment where respondents feel comfortable and confident to freely express their own

viewpoint. It is important to create empathy with the members, relaxing them and generating a lively discussion.

The research objectives formed the basis of planning the focus group session. An extensive question sequence (See Appendix 1) was constructed to reveal the respondents' perceptions, attitudes and motivations towards the Biotherm brand and uncover the fundamentals constituting its position in the selective skin care market in Finland.

2.3 Conducting the research

2.3.1 Implementation

The recruitment process took place at Stockmann, the biggest department store in Helsinki, and was conducted by Biotherm salespersons at the selective cosmetics department. The potential respondents who met the recruitment criteria were told about the focus group and complete a registration form if they were interested in participating in the session. The respondents were promised an incentive to encourage their attendance. Originally eight respondents were recruited and confirmed but two of them were no-shows. The focus group therefore consisted of six women, of whom three were over 40 years old, two over 30 years old and one 24-year-old student. Before recruiting, the respondents were screened and their willingness to participate in a focus group was assured. By screening the respondents, it was ensured that the opinions of recruited respondents represented the target market (Kaden, 2006).

The focus group was held at Scandic Simonkenttä Hotel in the centre of Helsinki. The venue was chosen because it is easily accessible, located in a well-known area and offered good facilities to conduct a focus group. The room was small and intimate which was seen as appropriate environment for the proceedings and helped in creating easy and relaxed atmosphere.

The group took 90 minutes to administer. The session was tape-recorded because there was little chance of the moderator taking notes as she was busy keeping an eye contact with the group. A brief introduction section explained the proceedings of the session, including the

usage of the tape-recorder, and let the respondents introduce themselves and share their experience with the subject. Managing the group dynamics was not regarded as difficult although there were slow thinkers and indifferent participants. The skills of the moderator were used to open and direct the discussion so that everyone was included and all of the points of the debate were fully aired.

2.3.2 Discussion guide

The group moderator's role was to steer the discussion through a range of topics listed in the discussion guide (See Appendix 2). The discussion guide was developed prior to the group session and based on the question sequence constructed in the planning phase. Some topics needed more unfolding than others but there was also influence created by the spontaneity of the group itself. In addition, the moderator acted as a catalyst to provoke responses and introduce ideas. Working from the discussion guide, the researcher moved the discussion from the broad to the particular. Members of the group were continuously encouraged to express their viewpoints and challenge the views of other group members. In this way all the issues were attempted to unfold, supported by a discussion which gave a deeper understanding of the subject being researched.

The questions were designed to be non-threatening and conversational in nature; they used the vernacular of the respondents and were easy to understand. Group members were kept interested and stimulated by visual materials and a group activity. When discussing about advertising, several print adverts from different brands were shown to respondents (See Appendices 3-19). Furthermore, when discussing skin care brands in general, the respondents were given a group task to perform. They were given a bunch of magazines from which they had to collect suitable pictures, whatever they liked, to form a collage of the image they had of a certain brand.

Activities like these are recommended while conducting a focus group because some issues are often difficult to express in words (Hague *et al*, 2004, p. 58). A group work activity helps the respondents to form more coherent picture of the brand but does not dampen down one's own opinions and images of the brand because the subject was discussed after the activity. In addition, other projective techniques were used, such as creating fantasy

(Hague *et al*, 2004, p. 59). The respondents were asked to imagine which three beauty products they would take with them to a deserted island. Besides, personification was used by asking questions such as if this brand was a person, what it would be like, how it would behave and what it would look like.

2.3.3 Feedback

The session was satisfactory and represented well the Biotherm customers although the two no-shows were slightly a shame. Group dynamism was fairly difficult to reach and the respondents were not very talkative or enthusiastic to create constructive discussion although volunteered for the discussion group session. Apparently, the respondents were afraid of making mistakes in front of others and avoided mentioning particular brands they preferred or had used. Good preparation of material, including the question sequence and the discussion guide, as well as the use of projective techniques and a group activity was critical in succeeding conducting the focus group session and revealing the respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards topics discussed. The gift was not perceived as rewarding by the respondents as was anticipated (Armani Mania fragrance, 30 ml, worth of 49,00 €).

As explored earlier, focus groups are used to identify and explore behaviour, attitudes and processes. The research method in this case was used as a stand-alone method – the focus group was the sole data collection method and it served as the principal source of primary data. It was regarded as a good way to stay tuned with the target market but the results should not be considered as accurate and suitable to base strategic decisions upon. Careful and systematic analysis of the discussion provided clues and insights as to how the Biotherm brand is perceived by the group but it is difficult to develop cohesive theories about any one target.

To gain more precise results the group discussion should be conducted several times with similar types of participants to identify trends and patterns in perceptions (Kaden, 2006; Krueger, 1988). Therefore, one focus group can only give a rogue answer. Even two is on the light side as there could be differences between the two groups that would raise doubts as to which was correct. To obtain a better feel and counter the possibility of a biased

response, it is advisable to conduct three or four groups. In addition, Kaden (2006) emphasizes that it is prudent to conduct more than one group in more than one geographic location. Attitudes and perceptions often differ both geographically and due to the group dynamics, it would have been wise to consider different marketing. However, this was not possible due to the time and cost factors but is taken into account when analysing the findings from the focus group session.

3 Findings

3.1 Perceptions of beauty

The respondents found it difficult to define beauty. Beauty and beautiful things and images were described with words such as harmony, balance of mind and nature, white and purity, simplicity and elegant shapes. Beautiful places were almost unambiguously located in nature: lakeside, Northern snowy landscape in Lapland, white beach and turquoise seashore. Water was regarded as the most peaceful element, as well as sunshine, brightness and light. The opposite, unpleasant things and places were described as dirty, noisy, ugly and stuffy. Envy, anger and greed were discussed as being the most unpleasant emotions. Also obesity, slovenliness and showing-off were off-putting according to participants.

Demarcating beauty was seen as impossible. The respondents agreed that beauty can be bound to a certain culture, time, place and people, because everyone has their own perception about beauty and what they perceive as beautiful due to their culture, nationality, age, and personal likes/dislikes. However, they could not think of any criteria or reason how or why beauty could be demarcated.

3.2 Perceptions of cosmetic brands

3.2.1 Perceptions of cosmetic brands in general

In general, selective beauty brands were easily distinguished from other beauty brands. Selective cosmetics was regarded as more expensive, more innovative, fancier and better in

quality than other cosmetics which were regarded as mass market products that are aimed to attract larger target groups mainly with more affordable pricing. In addition, the majority of group agreed that packaging, texture, fragrance, effect and sufficiency of products are better in case of selective brands' products. However, two respondents did not see any obvious differences between selective and mass market beauty products but stated that both selective and cheap brands can possess good products that are the same in quality.

Finding the right product and trusting the product promises were the most common things that inflict difficulties while purchasing cosmetics of any kind. All respondents had at least once bought a cosmetic product that did not suite for them after all or was a big disappointment. Professional sales persons were seen as good assistance in situations like that and the majority of the respondents told they often ask and entrust sales persons' recommendations.

To get the respondents more actively involved in the discussion related to beauty brands they were given a group task which consisted of collecting pictures or any visual elements from magazines and forming a collage that portrayed their mental impression of the following beauty brands: *Biotherm, Clarins, Clinique, Helena Rubinstein* and *Lancôme*. The group activity began rather timidly, mainly because the brand images as a subject of the task seemed to be too difficult and indefinite for the respondents to illustrate. The task was therefore depicted in a new way which was more comprehensive for the respondents: the moderator asked the respondents to form a collage of the world of five different types of women, each of the women representing one of the brands at issue.

A Biotherm woman (See Picture 1) was described as a fresh and athletic single who lives in a city centre, has a pet and is 20 to 35 years old. She values the nature and environment and prefers beauty products that are environment-friendly and do not harm the nature or animals in any way. Her presence was described as breezy, fresh, relaxed and healthy.

A Clarins woman (See Picture 2) was regarded older than a Biotherm woman, around 30 to 45 years, and defined by words as mother, independent, youthful and balanced. Although the Clarins woman has a family, she is still able to focus on her own well-being and looks.

Picture 1. Biotherm collage.

Picture 2. Clarins collage.

Clinique was the most neutral brand of all five and the respondents did not quite succeed in capturing the world of a Clinique woman (See Picture 3). Her average age was however placed somewhere between Biotherm and Clarins women and she was seen appreciating a healthy lifestyle a lot.

Picture 3. Clinique collage.

Helena Rubinstein was probably the most unknown brand for the respondents but they managed to form a distinctive collage of it by using elegant, classic and decorous pictures (See Picture 4). A Helena Rubinstein woman was regarded as a 35 to 50 years old mature woman who has classy and demanding taste. She wears lots of precious jewellery and pays a lot of attention to her clothing and make-up and her hobbies include art exhibitions, theatre and cooking.

A Lancôme woman was considered to be a 35-year-old, or older, ambitious career woman (See Picture 5). The brand was the most known for the respondents and immediately identified as luxurious and French.

Picture 4. Helena Rubinstein collage.

Picture 5. Lancôme collage.

3.2.2 Perceptions of the Biotherm brand and image

The Biotherm logo has a wave shape design which was shown to the respondents who felt it symbolised purity, simplicity, water and freshness. In addition, adjectives the respondents used describing the figure were reliable, fresh, moisturising, pure, environment-friendly. None of the respondents connected the wave to Biotherm.

Picture 6. Biotherm logo.

When continuing the discussion to Biotherm brand and image, the respondents agreed that Biotherm's image is young and fresh and the brand as a whole is more down-to-earth and therefore also more credible than other selective beauty brands. Biotherm was compared to Vichy, a French pharmacy skin brand, and to Clinique, Biotherm's main competitor. Biotherm was identified as the skin care line for sensitive and problem skin where as Clinique was seen as the leader in cleansing sector.

3.3 Findings related to the marketing mix elements

3.3.1 Product and price

The main differences the respondents could allocate between various cosmetic products were scent, texture and price. This question divided the group in half: the other half distinguished selective cosmetic products from mass market products and could give examples from both whereas the other group did not see any major differences between cosmetic products in general. The main subjects of disagreement were pricing, advertising and effectiveness of selective cosmetic products. The group divided cosmetic products to three contrast pair categories: cheap and expensive products, products of either good or poor quality, scented and fragrance-free products. When continuing discussion about the difference between various products the respondents came up with more subject matters, such as ingredients, production methods, research methods, vivisection, packaging and friendliness to environment. Important issues when choosing a new beauty product (for

instance a day cream) were the effectiveness, sufficiency, product facts (labelling), friends' and sales persons' recommendations, quality and price.

The respondents were asked to imagine which three beauty products they would take with them to a deserted island. All respondents would take a cleanser and a moisture cream but the third item was not that unanimous. The options included tooth paste, suntan lotion, soap, lip salve, and mascara. The main products the respondents use daily were cleanser, moisturizer, foundation and mascara. The respondents were reluctant to name any brands but along the discussion the following brand names were mentioned: *Givenchy, Clinique, Lancôme, Biotherm, Body Shop* and pharmacy products.

3.3.2 Point-of-sale and salespersons

When purchasing cosmetic products, the respondents preferred customer service instead of self-service. Sales persons in department stores were regarded as professionally skilled and willing to be of service. Supplementary service was defined as more personalised guidance, beauty tips and sharing information on new products, offers and comparable products. Sales persons were considered to be the best tool to get customers purchase products but also free gifts and samples were seen as useful method of sales promotion. The respondents valued gifts that are of good quality and free travel-size products and recognised that these tools often affect their purchase decision.

According to the group, price and brand loyalty is often the most important thing affecting the purchase decision. The respondents acknowledged they tend to stick on products they had tried and felt satisfied with and therefore did not feel necessary to try any other products. Both customer service and samples were seen as positive and powerful measures of interacting with customers. Positive experiences at the point-of-sale, such as friendly sales persons, the availability of products, additional gifts and trial-size products, increased the respondents loyalty towards a brand. The group disagreed on the effectiveness of brochures, some of the respondents felt brochures were totally useless but some ascribed them as informative method to increase customers' knowledge of products.

3.3.3 Promotion

Advertisements regarded as extremely impressive were make-up ads, fragrance ads and ads that have a well-known model or celebrity in it. Expressions such as 'the best', 'revolutionary', 'face lifting effect', and other superlatives used in advertising annoyed the respondents, especially if claims were proven to be groundless. Usage of percentages as a means of justifying product promises and advertisement claims were seen as a useful way of gaining credibility. However, the respondents insisted it should be mentioned on which statistics or research the figures are based on. Otherwise the percentages were seen as unconvincing.

Next, the respondents were shown advertisements of several beauty brands, including Biotherm, Clarins, Clinique, Dior, Estee Lauder, Kanebo, Lancôme, Lumene and Nivea (See Appendices 3-19). Dior, Estee Lauder and Lancôme evoked the strongest feelings: the ads were regarded as too artificial and retouched. As contrast, Lumene was seen as the most down-to-earth brand: the respondents identified themselves to the women pictured in the ads and agreed the ads were the most successful in terms of the amount of information and how the ad presented the product. The majority of the respondents would have purchased the Lumene beauty product according to the ads they saw. Clinique and Clarins evoked only neutral feelings: the respondents were of one mind that Clarins ads were trivial and boring whereas Clinique ads concentrated strongly on the product and its appearance. This was not appealing to the group hence they could not relate to the product package. Nivea was familiar to the respondents who felt the ads were ordinary and easily connected to mass market beauty products. Biotherm evoked mainly positive feelings: according to the respondents, the ads were fresh and healthy looking which made the products look both desirable and approachable.

Instead of brochures, the group agreed on the importance of the information on the product, i.e. labelling and packaging. Clear instructions of the contents and ingredients of product as well as purpose of use are extremely important, both in selecting the right product and comparing the wide selection of different brands' products.

3.4 Discovering consumers' future needs and expectations

High quality, functionality, simplicity and re-usable materials were the main expectations the group insisted that beauty brands focus in the future. According to the respondents, the main criteria of how a brand could retain its customers and strengthen their loyalty, is to be able to deliver on its product promises. Body care was seen as an effective way to gain more customers and awareness because the respondents could not identify any selective brand that would be a clear leader in body care.

Finally, the group brainstormed on ideas of how Biotherm brand can differentiate from competitors and maintain its existing customers while gaining new ones. The group agreed that Biotherm should definitely focus on its core competencies, i.e. skin care made of quality ingredients. The brand should also stick to its fresh and youthful image while strengthening customers' awareness of Biotherm products that are developed for special needs. According to the respondents, Biotherm do not come first to their mind when thinking of selective beauty brands. The brand is regarded more of a semi-selective which was seen as a good thing hence the brand and its products are more approachable.

4 Discussion and Analysis

The overall objective of this study was to identify the position of the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland to better serve the needs of the customers. As the findings from the focus group revealed, the Biotherm brand has managed to distinguish itself from the competition and create a unique perception in the customers' minds.

4.1 Current positioning of the Biotherm brand

4.1.1 Target market

As discovered earlier, positioning the brand in the market begins by identifying the positioning fundamentals. To compete successfully in today's volatile and competitive

business markets, mass marketing is no longer a viable option for most companies. Niche markets must be attached because they exhibit unique needs and wants. By identifying the target market the brand is allowed to reach consumers that have similar needs or characteristics and therefore likely to exhibit similar purchase behaviour. This is also the foundation of other positioning actions because it guides the brand to design responsive products to meet the needs of the target market, attain competitive edge, gauge the perceptions' of current and potential customers and develop effective promotional campaigns.

According to the focus group findings, Biotherm is considered as targeting slightly different target market than indicated in its product range. The main revelation of the focus group was that Biotherm's target consumers are regarded younger than anticipated. Although Biotherm's image is fresh, energetic and fun, it should not exclude consumers who have the need for anti-aging products. The brand should hence communicate its technology-based skin care solutions in a modern way to assert its knowledge in the field of anti-aging to attract also middle-aged consumers.

Positioning the brand is inextricably linked with market segmentation. It is not possible to position the brand in the market without selecting the target segments correctly. To be able to reach also the anti-aging segment Biotherm should consider dividing its target market into two segments: *freshness* and *effectiveness*. The first segment consists of young consumers who value fresh and simple solutions in their skin care. The second segment is the anti-aging segment which includes consumers who are worried of the signs of aging. By dividing the target market into two segments the brand is able to improve its competitive position and serve better the needs of the target market. This eventually contributes to enhanced brand image and more precise position in the market. Therefore, Biotherm's aim is to target demanding women of all ages who lead healthy, balanced and natural lifestyles.

4.1.2 Frame of reference

Although selective market brand share figures are difficult to come by, industry sources suggest that Biotherm is particularly notable for its skin care offering (L'Oréal, 2009).

However, the focus group findings reveal that Biotherm is not regarded as selective as anticipated in Finland. Although the brand is easily differentiated from the mass market brands, it is not necessarily crystal clear to the target market whether the brand is *semi-selective* or *selective*. Therefore, Biotherm should enhance its frame of reference to attract its demanding target market.

Luxury brands are generally considered to be the high-end brands in terms of quality and price. The challenge is to develop a deep set on meanings or associations to reach the desirable perception of the brand in the minds of the target consumers. Luxury is more and more becoming a kind of bulk commodity but the central feeling that luxury brands arouse has remained – namely desirousness – which creates a field of excitement that can get consumers to act and to establish a preference for a brand (Biesalski, 2009). This preference is the result of an additional benefit that a luxury brand transports, such as thrill, experience, perfection, personality, aesthetics and innovation (Biesalski, 2009; Keller, 2003). Despite the current economical situation luxury skin care products are still in demand as women refuse to pull back in down cycles; "women save on the things they have to buy in order to spend on the things they want to buy" (Edwards, 2008).

To create a coherent, upscale image, Biotherm has to be consistent in pricing, packaging, distribution and its marketing communications in Finland. Otherwise it will not succeed in serving the target market's goals that relate to benefits gained from consuming luxury products. With the force of a strong research department behind it, the innovations are going to keep coming, particularly in a continuously evolving and competitive area like skin care (Biotherm, 2009). With the brand's ability to apply these innovations across its many product lines its hold on the market is likely to continue to grow.

4.1.3 Competition

As the findings from the focus group revealed, consumers aspire the most natural and purest ingredients possible in order to avoid a negative impact on their health. Biotherm has the response to these expectations with the first dermobiotic skin care line that is 100% natural, pure and active to stimulate and protect the vital mechanisms of the skin (Aubert, 2009; Biotherm, 2009; L'Oréal Luxury Products, 2009). Biotherm brand is the only skin

care brand that obtains the ingredient that activates the natural cellular defences from the inside for radiantly young-looking skin on the outside. In the selective skin care market in Finland, this holistic vision of beauty and skin care has not gotten through to the target market. Therefore, more emphasis should be put on communicating the effectiveness of the brand's key ingredient that is an attribute that cannot be copied by competitors. The ingredient also supports evidence for claims related to both the frame of reference as well as points of difference.

By strengthening the target market's knowledge about the Biotherm brand's origin and key attribute, the brand is able to gain significant ground on its main competitors, Clinique and Clarins. Differentiating a brand in terms of functional benefits is attractive because of their concreteness whereas emotional benefits shift the emphasis from the brand and its functions to the user and the feelings to be gained by using the brand. The dermobiotic is not only an effective ingredient but a philosophy of the Biotherm brand that places the brand at the very core of the fundamental shift in lifestyle and behaviour. It links beauty to health and nutrition and therefore takes into account the target market's quest for total well-being. By offering both functional and emotional benefits based on the values and goals of the target market Biotherm is able to promote itself as being part of the highly lucrative trend towards naturalness, good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

Besides healthy issues, the focus group findings revealed the consumers' increasing concern over environment. Thermal plankton is an inexhaustible resource that can be infinitely renewed without harming nature (Aubert, 2009; Biotherm, 2009). This should also be communicated to the target market by stating that Biotherm is a high-performance, ecologically responsible skin care brand of tomorrow that projects itself into the era of sustainable skin care. Besides, Biotherm products are packaged in glass containers and wrapped on pasteboard boxes, both environment-friendly materials.

4.2 Sustaining the position of the Biotherm brand

Selective skin care products can be regarded as luxury goods that are not marketed on the basis of tangible features or functional benefits but rather on emotional benefits that resonate with consumers, such as feeling empowered and unique. Therefore, the laddering

strategy could be applied to fortify the Biotherm brand in the selective skin care market in Finland. By discovering the target market's core values the brand is able to deepen the meaning of the brand and position the brand by focusing merely on the customer. Laddering enables the brand to create competitive advantage and hence sustain its position in the market. Due to the fact that the Biotherm brand has proven to be able to develop an emotional attachment with its customers, the brand can apply laddering in fortifying its positioning in Finland.

Laddering requires the emotional connection that builds the trust and finally leads to loyalty. Understanding the emotional benefit that women associate with Biotherm allows the brand to position its products in a way that establishes an emotional connection with the user. The focus group findings show that the emotional benefit the target market gains from using selective skin care products is closely related to pampering and self-improvement. This interrelates to the benefits gained from using luxury products.

Another way to strengthen the brand is modern instantiation which in the case of Biotherm is already established at the global level. In December 2008, Biotherm revealed to nurture its positioning globally with a plethora of products and three new spokesmodels (Costello, 2008). The brand has signed Sasha Pivovarova, Mirhe Grimmelmann and Tasha Tilberg to appear in advertising for its main product franchises Aquasource, Age Fitness and Rides Repair, respectively. The aim of the spokesmodels is to freshen up the Biotherm brand image; the three new spokesmodels enable the consumers to identify with the brand and create an association between the product or brand and a particular idea. By doing this, Biotherm aims to strengthen its core brand value: natural beauty and reliability. The strategy relies strongly on advertising and need to be implemented at the global level to sustain the brand's already-established position.

Another approach of sustaining a brand's position is leveraging in which a positioning is used to extend the brand equity to new products to broaden the brand's frame of reference or demonstrate the brand's points of difference in a new category. Biotherm has leveraged its know-how from facial skin care to also body care and sun care. The focus group findings however proved that the consumers are not always aware of the additional products the brands have to offer although in this case the body care and sun care reflect Biotherm's core know-how. As in many issues discussed above, the key to inform the

customers is the marketing communications. Advertising, public relations, promotions and new media represent the most effective tools to communicate what the brand offers to the consumers.

4.3 Positioning statement of the Biotherm brand

Brand positioning decisions take place at the strategic level of the company; in the case of Biotherm, the brand positioning strategies chosen are applied globally with very little adaptation to regional characteristics. The findings of this study suggest what can be done to position the Biotherm brand more precisely in the selective skin care market in Finland. The marketing communications is regarded as the best solution for this. By professional customer-service, samples, free trial-size products, gifts and advertising the brand is able to generate image boost to beat its competitors. By using communications the brand can find a memorable and meaningful way to describe the brand and its benefits to consumers. The positioning statement of the Biotherm brand generated from this study is illustrated below (See Picture 7).

Brand Promise	New-generation skin care that combines naturalness and effectiveness thanks to the *Pure Extract of Thermal Plankton* that works from within to keep skin young.
Mission	To create the first dermobiotic skin care line that functions as a probiotic and works a the very heart of the cells to strengthen natural defences and stimulate vitality.
Target	Demanding women of all ages who lead healthy, balanced and natural lifestyles.
Values	A modern, responsible and honest brand that promotes good health.
Brand Personality	Effective, energetic, fresh, positive.
Reason to believe	*Pure Extract of Thermal Plankton* is the first dermobiotic that is 100% natural, pure and active. It soothes, stimulates, protects and strengthens the skin.
Benefit	Skin that stays young from the inside.

Picture 7. The positioning statement of the Biotherm brand.

5 Conclusions

Carving out a market niche for a brand can be accomplished by searching out unique marketing advantages and seeking new market segments that competitors are not cultivating, or developing new approaches to old problems. The brand positioning should be based on a real competitive advantage, whether it is tangible or not. The objective of this study was to express what the Biotherm brand stands for in the selective skin care market in Finland.

The focus group conducted can be regarded as the first exploratory step in viewing the options around the issue and revealing the factors that are considered as influential. The study managed to create a platform for further study to understand better the conditions that exist in the minds of customers and prospects. The study also showed what seems to be working and what is not. It provides an indication of where opportunities exist and pointed the areas where improvements or changes might be indicated or where unmet wants, needs, wishes and desires might exist.

However, the focus group findings presented in this study are not suitable for basing any strategic decisions upon because of the lack of complete information. It is presumable that the research conducted in this study did not reveal the perceptions of the brand at issue because the customers often refuse to share their perceptions of the company's competitors and may play down competitors' strengths and weaknesses. In addition, conducting only one focus group does not exclude bias. There is also the possibility that the research is conducted with a non-representative sample of the brand's target market. For completing a positioning strategy, an unbiased view from a representative sample of customers is needed.

The findings of this study reveal that Biotherm should strive towards effectiveness, greater originality and a more modern image. The brand should hence communicate more strongly its technology-based skin care solutions to assert its knowledge in the field of anti-aging to attract women of all ages. To be able to reach also the anti-aging segment Biotherm should consider dividing its target market into two segments: *freshness* and *effectiveness.* By doing this the brand is able to improve its competitive position and serve better the needs

of the target market. Although the brand is easily differentiated from the mass market brands, Biotherm should enhance its frame of reference to attract also the most demanding target market. To create a coherent, upscale image, Biotherm has to be consistent in pricing, packaging, distribution and its marketing communications in the skin care market in Finland.

More emphasis should be put on communicating the effectiveness of the brand's key ingredient, *Pure Extract of Thermal Plankton;* an attribute that cannot be copied by competitors. The ingredient also supports evidence for claims related to both the frame of reference as points of difference. Differentiating a brand in terms of functional benefits is attractive because of their concreteness whereas emotional benefits shift the emphasis from the brand and its functions to the user and the feelings to be gained by using the brand. The dermobiotic is not only an effective ingredient but a philosophy of the Biotherm brand that places the brand at the very core of the fundamental shift in lifestyle and behaviour. By offering both functional and emotional benefits based on the values and goals of the target market Biotherm is able to promote itself as being part of the highly lucrative trend towards naturalness, good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

For sustaining a well-established position in the selective skin care market in Finland the laddering strategy could be applied. By discovering the target market's core values the brand is able to deepening the meaning of the brand and position the brand by focusing merely on the customer. Another way to strengthen the brand is modern instantiation which in the case of Biotherm is already established at the global level by modernising its advertising and signing three new spokesmodels to appear in advertising for its main product franchises. The objective is to freshen up the Biotherm brand globally and strengthen its core brand values: natural beauty and reliability. The strategy relies strongly on advertising and need to be implemented at the global level to sustain the brand's already established position.

Biotherm is not just a nice, easygoing brand; it possess innovation and strives to become a bolder brand by communicating more effectively to the target market. The strength of Biotherm is the authenticity of the brand and the values it has had for over 50 years. It is important that the brand is not reinvented but restaged. In Finland, Biotherm should invest

in the issues revealed in the study to position itself as the new-generation skin care line and as the brand that is leading the way to the skin care of the future.

In today's competitive marketing landscape, where the scarcest resource is the attention of the target market, it is critical to get heard and obtain the ability to move people. Brands are about hearts and minds, feelings and emotions. Increasingly, brands are driven by values. They touch people because they are associated with values with which everyone can identify. Great brands stand for something, something which people believe in and which matters to them. Focusing on the essence what the brand is and generating growth from it Biotherm will be able to contribute enhanced brand image and more precise position in the selective skin care market in Finland.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Focus group question sequence.

INTRODUCTION

OVERALL QUESTIONS ABOUT BEAUTY

What beauty means to you? What is beauty?

If you could be anywhere place else at the moment where would it be? Use your imagination, there are no boundaries. Describe the place.

Where would you like to be at the moment? Use your imagination, without boundaries. Describe the place you would most

Is it possible to demarcate beauty?

What things and shapes are not beautiful? Which things are especially off-putting and opposites of beauty?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO COSMETIC BRANDS

If you had to go to a deserted island and were allowed to take only three beauty care products with you which products would you choose?

Is all cosmetic the same or are there different kinds of cosmetics?

What is the difference between different products and where does it stem from?

What is the difference between brands?

How do daily consumer goods differ from selective goods? What are the main differences?

What is the most difficult thing in cosmetics?

What are the main things that affect your purchase decision when selecting for example a skin care product?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO BIOTHERM BRAND AND IMAGE / BRAND IN GENERAL

How would you describe a Biotherm / Clarins / Clinique / Lancôme / Helena Rubinstein woman? (age, profession, marital status, what kind of car/clothes/home/family/children/hobbies/friends she has, where she travels for a vacation, etc.)

Describe what feelings does this picture arouse?

List three adjectives that describe this figure? Why did you choose these adjectives?

How does Biotherm differ itself from other brands?

ADVERTISING

Without thinking any further which cosmetic advertisement brings to mind first? Why? Do you like it or does it irritate you?

What words annoy you in advertising? How do you feel about product promises?

What do you want to know about a product in its advert? What matters the most?

How do you feel about using percentage in adverts? Is it desirable or not?

SALES PEOPLE AND POINT-OF-SALE

What is a typical cosmetic sales person like?

Think about the ideal store of your choice – what is the sales person like there?

How would you like cosmetic products are sold? Self-service or customer service?

Think about the last time you went to a store to by a skin care product – what was good?

Is there a case when you went to a store to buy a certain skin care product but ended up buying more of them? Why did you buy more than you were about to? Was it because of gift package, patronage discount, gift-with-purchase or professional sales person?

What do you think about gifts that are offered to customers when they purchase a certain amount of products? What kind of gifts do you like? Would some other way be better?

What do you expect from customer service of selective cosmetic brands?

Do you often buy cosmetic and skin care products from the same place? Why/why not? What things make you go back to the same point of sale?

PRODUCTS

How important are labels and product texts? Do you read them? How exactly?

How the product range should be improved? Is there something that is missing in cosmetic products supply?

FINAL QUESTIONS

What do you expect from the cosmetic brand of your choice in the future? How the brand is able to keep you as its customer?

What for instance Biotherm should or should not do in the future?

What advice would you give to Biotherm marketing team who is responsible for the brand – in your opinion, what could be their main tool against competing brands?

Appendix 2. Focus group discussion guideline.

The estimated duration of a total session is approximately 90-120 minutes

INTRO
5 min.

OVERALL DISCUSSION ABOUT BEAUTY

Prompting to a fairly general discussion of the industries in general, shapes, colours, feelings, etc.

15 min.

DISCUSSION ON COSMETIC BRANDS IN GENERAL

Discussion about different brands, how the participants see them being different, what's nice /bad, etc. Group activity.

15 min.

PRECISE BRAND RELATED DISCUSSION

Discussion about the Biotherm brand and image.

15 min.

Allocated time depends on the number of topics wanted to discuss. Main part of the focus group session.

PRODUCT	**PRICE**	**PROMOTION**	**POINT-OF-SALE AND SALES PERSONS**
	Selective / mass-market brands	Advertising Brochures Samples Personal selling Gifts Campaigns	Appearance Uniforms Way of introducing the brand/product
Packaging Colours Texture Material	Influence on purchase decision		Self-service Customer-service

WRAP UP OF THE SESSION
5 min.

The respondents depart with a gift

Appendix 3. Lancôme advertisement: Génifique.

Nuorekkaan ihon salaisuus on geeneissäsi.
Herätä se eloon, pisara pisaralta.

Lancôme-innovaatio:

GÉNIFIQUE
NUOREKKUUTTA AKTIVOIVA TIIVISTE

Nuorekkaan ihon salaisuus kätkeytyy geeneihin.

Geenit tuottavat ihon pinnalla esiintyviä proteineja, jotka ovat ominaisia nuorelle iholle.
Iän myötä niiden määrä vähenee.

GÉNIFIQUE on ensimmäinen ihon nuorekkuutta aktivoiva tiiviste Lancômelta.
Herätä* geenien voima ja tehosta** ihon nuoruusproteiinien tuotantoa.

Näkyvästi nuorekkaampi iho vain 7 päivässä***.

Lancôme.com

LANCÔME
PARIS

Käytä joka päivä aamuisin ja iltaisin ennen päivittäistä ihonhoitorutiiniasi.
* Aktiivaineet testattu in vitro. ** Kliininen testi, 24 naista käytti tuotetta 2 kertaa päivässä 2 kuukauden ajan, ihon pintaproteiinien analyysi. *** 34 naista testasi tuotetta, itsearviointi.

Nuoruudella on oma salainen koodinsa.

LANCÔME
PARIS

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Appendix 4. Lancôme advertisement: Rénergie Morpholift R.A.R.E.[TM].

Appendix 5. Dior advertisement: Capture Totale.

Dior

VALO,
KAUNEIN TODISTEENI NUOREKKUUDESTA

CAPTURE TOTALE

Diorin uusi voitto ajasta

Ihon luonnollinen heleys häikäisee ja lumoaa. Iän myötä iho menettää kuulautensa.

Diorin tiedemiehet tunnistivat syyn, joka tekee ihosta elottoman ja harmaan sekä aiheuttaa ihon ikääntymisen: Ihossa olevat proteiinit hapettuvat.

Uudistunut anti-ageing Capture Totale hoitolinja: sen teknologia ehkäisee tehokkaasti ihon proteiinien hapettumista*. Iho ei ole enää eloton ja harmaa, vaan siitä tulee tasaisempi, kiinteämpi ja heleämpi. Linjan uusi tuote Radiance Enhancer palauttaa välittämästi ihon sätelyn.

Naisten kiistaton mielipide: iho näyttää nuoremmalta ja heleämmältä. Kauniimmalta kuin 20-vuotiaana.

Kauniimpi nyt kuin kaksikymppisenä

CAPTURE

*In-vitro test W
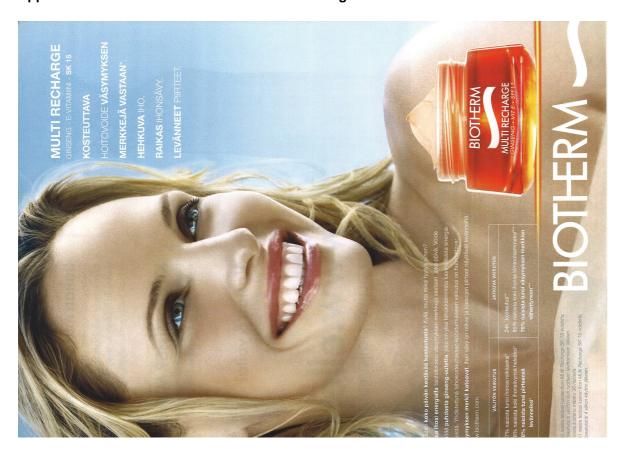
www.dior.com

SHARON STONE. CAPTURE

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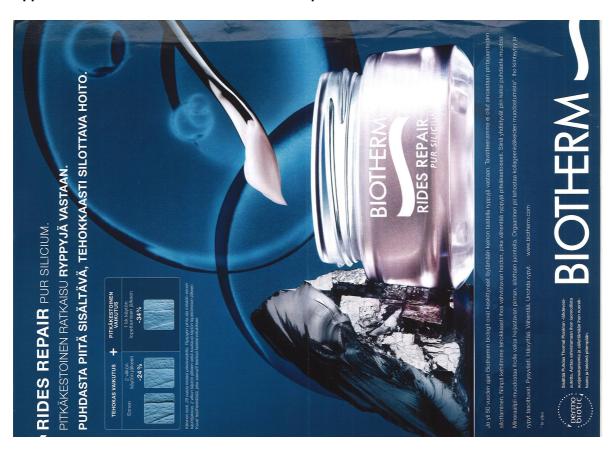**Appendix 6. Biotherm advertisement: Aquasource Biosensitive.**

Appendix 7. Biotherm advertisement: Multi Recharge.

Appendix 8. Biotherm advertisement: Rides Repair.

Appendix 9. Kanebo advertisement: Sensai.

Appendix 10. Estee Lauder advertisement: Time Zone.

Appendix 11. Clinique advertisement: Dramatically Different Moisturising Lotion.

Appendix 12. Clinique advertisement: Superdefense.

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Appendix 13. Clarins advertisement: Hydra-Quench Multi-Climate range.

Appendix 14. Clarins advertisement: High Definition Body Lift.

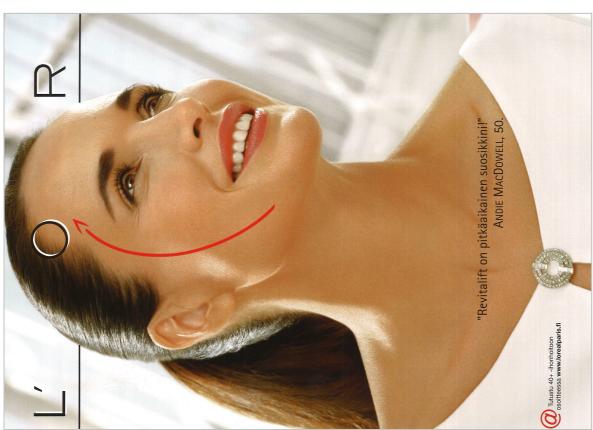**Appendix 15. Lumene advertisement: Excellent Future.**

Appendix 16. Lumene advertisement: Sensitive Touch.

Appendix 17. L'Oréal Paris advertisement: Revitalift.

Appendix 18. Nivea advertisement: Anti-Wrinkle Q10 Plus.

Appendix 19. Nivea advertisement: Expert Lift.