

# Building a positive consumer perception towards the exclusive partnership program Heinz Selection

AN EXPLORATIVE ANALYSIS OF HEINZ SELECTION FROM THE CONSUMERS PERSPECTIVE

SRIKANTHAN,SUVERNIYA S.

## Title page

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Name of Author: Suverniya Srikanthan

Student Number: 3398641

Cohort: 2017

Class Code: IB4B2

Lecturer's Name: Peter Hatzfeld / Marieke Brinkman

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## Executive Summary

The KraftHeinz Company is the fifth largest food and beverage company worldwide. The brand portfolio consists of Heinz, Bull's Eye and Kraft, focusing on sauces and condiments. The business-to-business operations are served by the KraftHeinz Foodservice (KHF) division, supporting business that provide meals to consumers outside of their home, including restaurants, hotels, and ships.

Amidst the significant challenges the foodservice industry is facing, driven by COVID-19 measures, the restaurant industry in particular took a huge hit. On the basis of these developments, KHF introduced the partnership program Heinz Selection, which is planned to be implemented in 2022 in Germany. The aim of the program is to endorse independent burger houses and ultimately drive consumers interest to the selected restaurants. However, the problem KHF faces is that there are no insights on how consumers perceive the concept of HNZ Selection. With the success of the program depending on consumers acceptance and positive perception, the aim of this project is therefore to explore the potential attractiveness of HNZ Selection from the consumers perspective and examine key drivers that influence a positive perception.

The main findings of the conducted focus group sessions show that participants are overall perceiving the idea of HNZ Selection positively. High expectations are identified when it comes to the selection of the restaurants with participants seeking to establish a fit between Heinz and the burger restaurants and their own standards. Furthermore, participants are displaying a clear desire for transparent information on the restaurants selection process across the marketing assets and are further highly attracted towards special activations and experiences that differentiate HNZ Selection restaurants. Lastly, participants are associating taste and quality perceptions with HNZ Selection but are hesitant to view it as a mark of quality due to the lack of knowledge and experience. Derived from these findings, eight different factors are outlined from which brand fit, transparency and differentiation are weighted as high important drivers for driving a positive consumer perception towards HNZ Selection.

Based on the above-mentioned outcomes, the following recommendations are given in three phases, structured according to importance and urgency. KraftHeinz Foodservice should primarily focus on selecting the most promising restaurant partners as they build the foundation of the program. In alignment with the factors brand fit and differentiation, an in-depth definition of selection criteria is suggested combined with a scorecard. Next, it is highly recommended to cooperate with respected food influencers when it comes to launching the selected restaurants to add trust and credibility to the HNZ Selection mark. Furthermore, it is strongly advised, to update the online marketing assets and add relevant information concerning why and how the restaurants have been selected, in alignment with the key factor transparency. Lastly, to increase the appeal and recognizability towards HNZ Selection, unique activations through food delivery apps as well as exciting dine-in experiences should be taken into consideration. Overall, the identified key factors outline a in important base of insights to drive the role of consumers across HNZ Selection.

## Preface

This graduation assignment serves as the final output of the GM05 Module for the International Business study course at the Fontys International Business School in Venlo, the Netherlands. For the final semester, a thesis needs to be written in alignment with the graduation internship. I have spent the last five months as a brand activation intern at KraftHeinz, in particular in the foodservice department.

The primary audience who this report is addressed to is my university supervisor Mr. Hatzfeld, and Mrs. Brinkman. Furthermore, KraftHeinz Foodservice is also invited to read the report, in particular my company supervisor Josephine Jung.

My deepest gratitude goes out to everyone who has contributed to this research. First of all, I would like to thank my university supervisor Mr. Hatzfeld for his continuous support and guidance throughout the last months. I was always able to reach out to him when needed, which helped me to stay motivated and focused. Secondly, I would also like to thank my second assessor Mrs. Brinkman. Her feedback helped me to critically reflect on my decisions and approach, which helped me to move in the right direction early on. Lastly, I would also like to thank my company supervisor Josephine Jung who was always open to questions and supported me whenever needed.

Suvernija Srikanthan



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**List of Abbreviations**

HNZ Selection  
B2B  
B2C  
BOH  
FOH  
KHC  
KHF  
RQ

Heinz Selection  
Business to business  
Business to consumer  
Back of house  
Front of house  
KraftHeinz Company  
KraftHeinz Foodservice  
Research Question

## Glossary

Stimuli	“[...] any materials or items used to prompt respondents in a market research setting” (Djsresearch, n.d.)
Foodservice	“[...] includes the businesses, institutions, and companies which prepare meals outside the home” (USDA Economic Research Service, 2021)

## 1. Introduction

Uncertain times are creating unique challenges all over the world. Since the COVID-19 outbreak began at the end of 2019, the restaurant industry has suffered significant sale losses (Statista, 2021). With the German government imposing varying levels of social distancing measures, consumers were forced to dine out less and adjust to the new normal. These measures impacted in particular restaurants that traditionally depended on dine-in traffic who either had to quickly adapt their menus and services or shut down completely. Consequently, independent restaurants suffered a huge hit with a sharp sales decline of 28% in 2020 (Euromonitor, 2021).

Having these rapid developments in mind, KraftHeinz Foodservice (KHF) introduced the exclusive partnership program HNZ Selection. The core idea is built on endorsing independent burger restaurants and ultimately driving consumers interest to the selected restaurants for them to enjoy and love (KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021). However, the problem KHF faces at the moment is that they have no insights on how consumer actually perceive the concept of HNZ Selection. This presents a significant gap because the success of this program depends on consumers acceptance and positive perception towards the HNZ Selection concept. To address this problem, the following main research question has been formulated: *“What are key factors KraftHeinz Foodservice needs to consider to build a positive perception towards the exclusive partnership program HNZ Selection in Germany?”*

The goal of this research project at hand is therefore to explore the potential attractiveness of HNZ Selection from the consumers perspective and ultimately examine key drivers that positively influence this process. This will enable KHF to get a better understanding of how consumers perceive HNZ Selection as an innovative partnership program and further help to effectively allocate their attention to the relevant success factors, ensuring ideally a win-win-win situation for KHF, burger restaurants and consumers.

In the following, the structure of the research project will be laid out. First, a description on the company KraftHeinz will be given, followed by the project plan, which explains the research problem, aim and approach. Secondly the theoretical framework will be explained, which serves the purpose of guiding the research activities. Therefore, the consumer-based brand equity model as well as an adjusted version of the Input-Process-Output model is taken. Next, the research methodology will be laid out. This is followed by an outline of the consumer’s current perception towards Heinz and an examination of success factors for a positive co-branding evaluation. Afterwards, the results of the conducted focus group sessions will be described and analyzed, ultimately deriving the perceived strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, the findings are concluded, recommendations are formulated, and a critical appraisal closes the thesis. Finally, the key findings will be concluded and an answer to the research question will be given, creating the basis for the implementation of the answer in form of recommendations.

## 2. Company Description

The KraftHeinz Company (KHC), also known as KraftHeinz, is an American food company that was formed by the merger between Kraft Foods and Heinz in 2015. Co-headquartered in Chicago and Pittsburgh, KraftHeinz is the fifth-largest food and beverage company worldwide. The German headquarter of KraftHeinz is located in Düsseldorf and comprises of 90 employees, focusing on marketing and sales operations for Germany, Austria and Swiss. The core brand portfolio consists of Heinz, Bull's Eye & Kraft, focusing mainly on condiments and sauces (see Appendix A). Driven by the mission "*Let's make life delicious*", KraftHeinz is dedicated in providing great taste for all eating occasions (The KraftHeinz Company, 2021).

KraftHeinz generated around EUR 107 mio in 2020, by which roughly 80% was accumulated by business to consumers operations (B2C) through traditional retail and the remaining 20% by business to business (B2B) operations through foodservice. In this project context, the latter will be more clearly defined. The B2B industry is catered by the division KraftHeinz Foodservice, serving the catering sector, and supporting businesses that provide meals to consumers outside of their home. Looking at the structure of foodservice customers at KraftHeinz, they are divided by wholesalers, distributors, and channel customers such as restaurants, hotels, ships, and theme parks that are directly delivered to (see Appendix B). In accordance with the customer structure, the foodservice department is divided by key account management, who specifically support the wholesalers and the respective channel managers (see Appendix C) (The KraftHeinz Company, 2021).

Considering the market performance of KraftHeinz Foodservice in 2021, the company was able to sustain their position as the number one brand manufacturer in the German sauce market with a market share of 14 percent. Across the market, KraftHeinz Foodservice is further leading the ketchup and delicatessen sauces category and further takes on the second largest market share within the mayonnaise and dressing category (Geomarketing, 2021). The key difference to traditional food retailing is that the foodservice product portfolio presents sauces in different formats for back of house, primarily used in the kitchen to prepare the meals, and front of house purposes that are placed visibly to the consumer.

### 3. Project Description

*This chapter serves as the outline of the research assignment. It presents a clear definition of the research problem at hand, the aim of the project as well as the approach that will be taken to address the problem.*

#### 3.1. Problem Definition

##### Impact of COVID-19

COVID 19 had a direct and severe impact on the consumer foodservice industry since the beginning of March 2020 with the German government imposing varying levels of restrictions on dining-in restaurants (Euromonitor, 2021). Whilst delivery and takeaway remained options for consumers, restaurants that traditionally depended on dine-in traffic were forced to either quickly adapt their menus and services or shut down completely. As a consequence, independent restaurants suffered the most with a sharp sales decline of 28% in 2020. In contrast, restaurant chains that prior invested in modernization and digitalization efforts were able to quickly react to the changing environment and report comparatively a better performance (Euromonitor, 2021).

##### Heinz Selection

Considering these rapid developments, KraftHeinz Foodservice International introduced the exclusive partnership program Heinz Selection in 2020. The core idea of the program is to support and endorse independent restaurants that are dedicated in making the best burgers in town and simultaneously get consumers to visit and enjoy them. The choice for burgers as the connecting host food is driven by the fact that they present the leading food occasion and are coherent with the American origins of Heinz. Currently, the Heinz Selection platform connects over 30 local burger restaurants across Brazil and Italy and is planned to further expand in Germany in 2022 (KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021).

Figure 1: HNZ Selection Pyramid



*Note: Retrieved from Trade Deck Heinz Selection by KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021*

To understand the specific problem KraftHeinz Foodservice Germany faces, it is essential to break down the dynamics of the partnership program. The pyramid displayed as Figure 1 visualizes the goals and interrelations of the three key parties Heinz, the burger restaurant partners and the consumers. Starting with Heinz, the aim is to position HNZ Selection as a quality mark in the minds of the consumers by carefully selecting the best independent burger restaurants to partner with and in turn reassuring consumers on their high quality. This drives the key objective of the exclusive partnership to increase footfall in the restaurants, meaning to attract more consumers online and offline, ultimately driving sales. To achieve this, HNZ Selection offers the restaurant partners benefits as exclusive merchandising, media spending, online visibility, as well as possibilities to co-brand.

### **Problem requiring investigation**

Naturally, the ideal outcome for HNZ Selection is a win-win-win situation for all three parties. However, the key objective and benefits of the partnership program can only be successful if the consumer accepts and perceives the exclusive partnership as positive and beneficial. Among the number of restaurants to choose from, the HNZ Selection branded restaurants should therefore stand out and ideally attract the consumers. In this context, the perception process is the most sensible and influential stage because here the consumer forms their impression and consequently decide whether they want to actively follow their purchase intention or not (Stankevich, 2017). Thus, if the consumer does not perceive the partnership positively, it may result in a failed offering and damage brand associations, putting the success of HNZ Selection at direct risk. Therefore, the gap that needs to be addressed prior to the implementation of HNZ Selection in Germany is twofold (1) explore how consumers actually perceive and evaluate the concept of the partnership program, (2) examine the key drivers that positively influence this process. This is highly urgent and substantial, because KraftHeinz Foodservice Germany currently has no specific insights or research validation from the consumer perspective towards this program and further plans to start the acquisition of partners in the second quarter of next year. Therefore, to address this gap, the following problem question has been defined:

***“What are key factors KraftHeinz Foodservice needs to consider for building a positive perception towards the exclusive partnership program HNZ Selection in Germany?”***

### **3.2. Research aim**

The aim of this research project is to explore the potential attractiveness of HNZ Selection from a consumers perspective and examine key drivers that positively influence this process. Key insights and implications will be presented to the sales and marketing managers of the KraftHeinz Foodservice team in Germany within Q1 of 2022, driving a stronger focus on the role of consumers and provide potential suggestions in regard to successfully implementing the examined key factors in Germany. By achieving the project aim, KraftHeinz Foodservice will be better able to understand how consumers perceive Heinz Selection as an innovative partnership program and further help to effectively allocate their attention to the relevant success factors, ensuring ideally a win-win-win situation for all three parties. The geographical scope is limited to Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany as this presents the first test and learn area the channel managers will focus on to acquire the burger restaurants.

### 3.3. Research approach

Based on the overall problem question, the following research questions arise to clarify the information gaps:

#### **1. What is the current perception consumers have towards the parent brand Heinz?**

The first research question serves as a starting point for the following investigations because it examines the associations and perceptions consumers currently have towards the parent brand Heinz. It is necessary to get a clear picture of these relations because HNZ Selection builds on the transfer of positive associations from Heinz as a global brand towards the local restaurant partners. Thus, understanding how consumers actually perceive the sauce brand first is crucial to outline subsequently the perceptual connections to HNZ Selection. Internal secondary data will be used to answer this research question. More specifically, the annually created IPSOS brand value report will be taken as a basis that were originally developed for the retail department.

#### **2. What are the main factors influencing consumer perception towards co-branding partnerships?**

The second research question builds the theoretical input for the subsequent research activity by looking at various factors that have played a key role in influencing consumer perception or evaluation, specifically towards co-branding. The insights help to better unravel the connecting variables between co-branding and consumer perception and enable a thorough assessment of existing research. Therefore, a review of co-branding case studies, compilations and scientific articles will be taken, with a special focus on the HORECA industry. The goal is to synthesize and categorize the most prominent set of factors that have driven a positive consumer response.

#### **3. What is the response of the selected consumers towards the marketing elements of HNZ Selection?**

##### **3.1. What is the response towards the product element?**

##### **3.2. What is the response towards the price and place element?**

##### **3.3. What is the response towards the promotion element?**

##### **3.4. What is the response towards the positioning element?**

On the basis of the prior identified factors, the third research question explores how the target consumers actually view the concept of HNZ Selection by exposing them to the available marketing assets. The aim of this research activity is to get a better understanding of the consumers response and ultimately evaluate the attractiveness of the co-branding program from their perspective. Therefore the consumers will be exposed to the different marketing elements to get a clear view of their perceptions. These insights present a qualitative base to build the solution for the MRQ. This will be explored through the means of primary research in the form of a focus group considering the exclusiveness of the pilot project.

#### **4. What are improvement areas to consider for driving a positive perception towards HNZ Selection?**

The last research question aims to close the research gap by combining the gathered data from the previous research activities and builds upon outlining the key improvement areas and the connecting key drivers that need to be aligned in order to drive a positive consumer perception of the partnership program. This enables a shift of HNZ Selection to a more consumer-driven program and presents a crucial base for successfully rolling out the program, achieving a win-win-win situation for all three parties.

### 3.4. Scope and Limitations

This research serves the purpose of presenting the final deliverable to the GM05 graduation research assignment module. With the research project being of explorative nature, the scope and limitations of this project plan need to be taken into consideration moving forward.

Primarily, HNZ Selection presents a new concept that has not been implemented yet in Germany. Therefore, there is no existing data or insights from the consumers perspective towards HNZ Selection. It has to be noted that the program has been executed locally in Brazil and Italy but is being handled through external sales agencies. No clear insights from the consumers perspective are available. Furthermore, due to the cultural differences between the countries and the geographical scope being on Germany, specifically Nordrhein Westfalen, the comparison to German consumers is limited.

Furthermore, with the focus of the project put on consumer perception, external or non-commercial factors are not separately examined. The focus of this project lies within the response of the consumers towards specific marketing elements or stimuli. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the external environment lies out of scope. Furthermore, research project does not specifically look at driving purchase intention towards HNZ Selection. A step before that presents the key focus, in particular how consumers perceive and specifically interpret the program. If a positive perception is achieved, it could potentially lead to a purchase decision. However, this does not mark the focus point of this project.

Lastly, the guidelines of Fontys International Business School present a limitation on the timeframe of the graduation project to three months which therefore limits the extent to how much in-depth information on the chosen topic can be presented.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

*This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that will guide and structure the research project in view of the defined problem question. First, key terms and concepts will be defined and related to each other to ensure a better understanding of the research matter moving forward. Second, models that potentially support the research activities will be described, critically compared, and eventually selected.*

##### 4.1. Definition of key terms

In the following, the key terms will be defined and an appropriate definition for the research project will be derived.

##### 4.1.1. Co-Branding

In marketing literature, the term co-branding, also interchangeably referred to as brand alliance, has drawn different definitions concerning its characteristics. Looking at the broader definitions, co-branding is described as a strategy in which two or more independent brands are intentionally combined and presented jointly to the consumer (include Chiambaretto) (Sunil, Thomas, Srinivasan, & Fukawa, 2008). Kapferer as well as other authors support this approach and further categorize it as any pairing of brands in a collaborative marketing effort, including advertisements, products, services, public linkages, or distribution outlets (Leuthesser, Kohl, & Suri, 2003).

In contrast, other scholars defined co-branding in narrower terms and emphasized the creation of a new product as an essential criterion. According to Washburn, co-branding is defined as the combination of two brands to form a separate and unique product (Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2000). Similarly, Helmig elaborates that co-branding is defined as “a long-term brand alliance strategy in which one product is branded and identified simultaneously by two brands” (Helmig, Huber, & Leeflang, 2008).

Comparing the characteristics of the various definitions to the partnership program Heinz Selection, the broader nature of co-branding is more fitting to the concept. The two main arguments supporting this choice is the fact that the partnership program is primarily viewed as a collaborative marketing effort to endorse the partner brands and not necessarily to launch a new co-branded product. The second point is that the dynamics of the program do not classify Heinz Selection as a classic co-branding partnership because various participants are involved and further utilize the assets of the program differently, thus not resulting in the standard outcome of co-branding. Considering the characteristics of HNZ Selection, the following definition has been determined by joining the key concepts of the broader definitions to create a common understanding: *Co-branding is a strategic alliance that involves the pairing and joint presentation of two or more independent brands to the consumer in a collaborative marketing context*

##### 4.1.2. Types of Co-branding

To further classify the nature of the brand partnership within Heinz Selection, different categorizations that emerged over the past years are taken into consideration. The two most common types of co-branding are distinguished on the basis of their value chain linkage (Helmig, Huber, & Leeflang, 2008). The term vertical co-branding, also referred to as ingredient co-branding, describes the partnership between firms that are positioned at different levels of the value chain such as a manufacturer and supplier relationship (Sunil, Thomas, Srinivasan, & Fukawa, 2008). In contrast, horizontal co-branding, also referred to as composite co-branding, characterizes the nature of the partnership on equal levels of the value chain and thus contribute similar or complementary resources (Chiambaretto, 2017). Comparing these variations to the co-branding relationships within Heinz Selection, it clearly fits into the category of

ingredient co-branding considering that Heinz as a sauces brand naturally acts as a brand partner and supplier for the burger houses in this context.

#### 4.1.3. Consumer Perception

The next important term to define, presenting the foundation of the research project, is the concept of consumer perception. Starting with the term perception, it is in general defined as a process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting stimuli to create meaning of the world (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 2010). Solomon and his co-authors further elaborate the process by including the five senses vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch as key enablers to receive the stimuli (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006). In accordance with these definitions, Kotler strongly highlights the subjective nature of perception and includes the term individual as a primary focus in this set of process (Source input).

Looking at the term from a marketing perspective, perception is representative to how consumers process and give meaning to information inputs provided to them and thus shows a direct linkage to consumer behavior (McNeal, 2007). Scholars define consumer perception as the way consumers view, feel, or think about a company, and its products and/or services (Limbongan, Saerang, & Mekel, 2014). Similarly, another definition displays consumer perception as a “marketing concept that encompasses a customer’s impression, awareness, or consciousness about a company or its offerings” (LaMarco, 2018). While perception in general defines the way how individuals interpret the world around them, consumer perception specifically focuses on how consumers interpret (marketing stimuli) information inputs related to a specific product and/ or brand. Moving forward, the following definition is derived as most fitting: *“Consumer perception is a process that encompasses the consumer’s selection, organization, and interpretation of information input from a brand or company”*.

#### 4.2. Research-related models

In this sub-chapter, models that are potentially relevant to guide the research activities will be introduced and critically evaluated.

##### 4.2.1. RQ1

Referring to the research approach, the first research question aims to assess the current perception and associations German consumers have towards the parent brand Heinz. Considering the dynamics of co-branding, specifically in the context of HNZ Selection, it is necessary to separately understand the emotional as well as functional connection consumers have with Heinz first, before transferring it to the program. Thus, a theoretical framework is needed to synthesize the findings of the internal brand reports to draw an accurate picture of the current brand perception, building a clear starting point for the following research activities. With the goal of the respective research question in mind, the following criteria have been defined for the selection of a suitable framework.

- TF provides a clear guidance to assess and synthesize brand perception and associations
- TF puts the perspective and insights of the consumer at the core of its components
- TF supports completeness of the research activity by drawing a cohesive picture of the current perception
- TF is adaptable to the available data and easy to apply

The following frameworks have been chosen as potentially fitting:

1. *Brand Equity Pyramid*. The Brand Equity Pyramid, introduced in 1993 by marketing professor Kevin Lane Keller in his textbook Strategic Brand Management, proposes a conceptual model of brand equity from the perspective of the consumer. The widely accepted model set the starting point for brand equity as well

as co-branding research. Keller proposes four key questions that directly relate to how consumers perceive a brand and their attitude towards it. The four building blocks are defined in the following from base to top, (1) Brand Identity – Who are you? (2) Brand Meaning – What are you? (3) Brand Response – What about you? (4) Relationships – What about you and me? (Appendix D.) (Keller, 1993).

2. *Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model (CBBE)*. The CBBE Model, created in 2001 by Yoo and Donthu, presents a three-dimensional model to measure CBBE on the basis of Aaker and Keller's conceptualizations. This type of brand equity focuses on assessing consumer-based perceptions by taking a cognitive approach in contrast to a firm-based perspective that focuses on creating financial-based brand equity (Farjam & Hongyi, 2015). The CBBE Model consists of the following dimensions, (1) perceived quality – the extent to which a brand is known or expected to provide good quality products, (2) brand loyalty – the extent to which consumers are committed and willing to stick a brand, (3) brand awareness – the extent to which a brand is recognized by consumers, (3) brand associations – the set of mental associations consumers have about a brand (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Evaluating both frameworks in the context of the first research question, similarities and differences appear. The key similarity is that both models aim to assess consumer-based brand equity, thus putting the perspective of the consumer at their core. Furthermore, Keller's Brand Equity Pyramid as well as the CBBE model provide an overall guidance to structure and evaluate findings related to consumer-based perceptions. However, looking at the applicability as well as feasibility of the models in connection to the currently available findings, differences appear. While the CBBE model provides a multidimensional approach that is more flexible in terms of its structure, the brand equity pyramid proposes a rather rigid step by step framework for which correlating answers need to be provided from base to top. Considering the fact, that the first research question assesses consumer perception against given internal data and not newly created data, the CBBE model presents a more suitable choice to measure the current power of Heinz due to its practical and more holistic approach.

#### 4.2.2. RQ2-4

RQ2-4 display interrelated research activities that exploratively try to address how target consumers respond to the marketing stimuli of HNZ Selection and eventually examine drivers that positively influence this process. Given the highly subjective and dynamic nature of this research project, it is necessary to theoretically substantiate and focus the different research phases to achieve a consistent outcome. Therefore, a theoretical framework is required to provide structured guidance and support in convincingly interpret the findings to arrive at a solution to the defined problem question.

The following criteria have been defined to find a suitable framework:

- TF presents a simple and logical structure that can be applied to the required research activities
- TF is originated from the field of consumer behavior, ideally relating to consumer perception
- TF support completeness of research project
- TF visualizes the relations and interconnections of each activity, presenting a clear overview

The following frameworks have been chosen as potentially fitting:

1. *Perceptual Process Model*. The perceptual process model, introduced in 2006 in the book "Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective", visualizes the sequence of stages a consumer goes through from the first exposure to stimuli to its final interpretation into meaning. The model aims to provide a simplified overview of the perceptual process. The process begins when the consumer's sensory receptors come in

contact with external stimuli that triggers an immediate response in the form of a sensation. This is followed by the attention phase, where the consumer selects and organizes certain stimuli to pay attention to within the pool of different inputs. Lastly, the consumer interprets their meaning on the basis of existing knowledge and experience, ultimately resulting in a perceptual response in the form of attitude, opinion, impression etc. (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard, & Hogg, 2006).

2. *Input-Process-Output Model*. The input-process-output model, developed by Schiffman, Kanuk and their co-authors in 2010, consists of three interrelated stages, mapping the key factors and dynamics that lead the decision-making process of consumers. The model is used to understand and provide focus on the journey a consumer goes through from the first initial contact to marketing stimuli to the final purchase decision. The input stage encompasses of two major sources of information input that trigger consumer's recognition of a product, consisting of commercial marketing efforts and noncommercial influences. These influences start the processing stage which focusses on how consumers make decisions, including both cognitive and behavioral factors, eventually leading to the output stage that accounts the ultimate response of a consumer to act on the purchase intention or not (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 2010).

Putting both models in direct comparison, the suitability to structure and focus the research activities can be evaluated. While both models focus on visualizing a consumer-related process, one of the key differences are the respective outcomes. The input-process-output model looks at the consumer decision making process as a whole with the purchase decision presenting the ultimate response, whereas the PPM focuses completely on the distinct stages leading to the formation of a perception. At first sight, the PPM presents a more suitable fit as the scope of the project is fully based on perception building. However, looking more specifically at the stages of the PPM, a lack of consumer-driven input becomes apparent. The model visualizes the general process of perception and is not aligned to the prior defined concept of *consumer perception*. Therefore, it presents a gap in its completeness to support the required research activities.

Overall, viewing both models individually, they do not fully meet the necessary requirements to guide and focus the research activities on their own due to the mismatch of outcomes. However, each of them deliver separate strong points in terms of structure, content, and applicability, presenting the combination of both models as an ideal framework. Therefore, to cater to the specific needs of this research project, a newly adjusted input-process-output model is developed, which will be explained in the following:

Figure 2: Input-Process-Output Framework



Note: Own illustration, Adapted from Input-Process-Output model by Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010

In alignment with RQ2-4, this newly adjusted framework that is visualized in Figure 2 is consistent with the defined key concept of consumer perception and provides three clear stages to guide the scope of each research activity. Starting with RQ2, the process stage presents the connecting block to lead this activity, because it specifically looks at how consumers select and evaluate the information input, they are exposed to. In addition, for the process stage to be complete the outcome from RQ2 needs to be added in order to effectively guide the next activity. For RQ3, in which the focus group is conducted, all three stages play an important role. The input stage comprises of the marketing stimuli that brings the consumer in first contact with the concept of HNZ Selection. The marketing stimuli are structured in accordance with the four traditional marketing mix elements. Each of the elements are defined as the following:

1. Product refers to a good or service that a company offers to customers, ideally fulfilling the needs and wants of the target consumer (Isoraite, 2016). In terms of HNZ Selection, product presents the overall concept and features of the program. Due to the fact that it is not a typical product, this element presents a broader functionality.

2. Price & Place are joined together due to their close relation. Traditionally, price presents the cost consumers pay for a product, linking the real and perceived value (Isoraite, 2016). Since HNZ Selection does not present a concrete product or service, price presents the price segment consumers imagine the burger restaurants to be at. This is followed by the element place, which describes the distribution channels, where the products are sold or distributed. Here again, the partner burger restaurants mark the “distribution channel” of HNZ Selection.

3. Promotion outlines the advertising and marketing of the product to the consumer including advertising, public relations, and sales promotions (CFI, n.d.). For HNZ Selection, the element promotion includes all available marketing material, either offline or online, to attract consumers to the HNZ Selection restaurants.

4. Positioning is added to the input stage, which is not traditionally included in the marketing mix. It presents a crucial element to explore the perceptions of the participants towards the positioning of HNZ Selection as a branding and the perceived value added to it.

These elements are followed by the process stage that is based on the prior added factors from RQ2 concerning what influences consumer perception towards co-branding and ultimately measuring consumers perception in the output phase. Based on the outcome of the different stages, RQ4 traces back to the input stage and evaluates the key areas where improvements can be made to achieve a positive output/ research objective.

## 5. Research Methodology

*In this chapter, the research methodology of this project will be defined. The before defined method and models will be expanded with the respective data collection methods per research question. This chapter will examine which research approach will be used per research question and present the specific means used to answer them.*

### 5.1. RQ1

The first research question is be guided by the three-dimensional CBBE model from Yoo and Donthu. The specific aim is to get a clear picture of the associations and perceptions consumers currently have towards Heinz and point out its key equity drivers. To examine the different dimensions, **internal secondary research** presented the most suitable data collection method. Required insights can be easily derived from internal brand reports that are exclusively accessible to the KraftHeinz retail department. Considering the qualitative scope of this research activity, the brand deep dive report from IPSOS, a multinational market research firm, presented a valid foundation.

The reason for choosing this report is that it composes of multiple measures that are consistent to the dimensions of the CBBE model, exploring how strong Heinz is positioned in the minds of the consumers. Moreover, the report is based on various interviews that have been conducted in Germany with a sample size of 466. Lastly, the report is carried out to the international quality standard for market research (ISO 20252) further increasing the validity of the consumer insights. All these arguments strongly support the choice of this data collection method. Alternatively, it is possible to approach this research activity through primary research, however, considering the limited resources for this research project at hand and the direct availability of the IPSOS report, this option was not further assessed.

### 5.2. RQ2

The second research activity aims at investigating the factors that play a key role in impacting consumer perception towards co-branding. In this context, the **Process** stage of the newly adjusted framework served as a guidance to derive the necessary outcome. To identify and assess these key drivers, **external secondary research** presented a suitable way to gather data. Driving successful co-branding arrangements has been attracting remarkable research attention over the past decades, providing a decent pool of resources to investigate (Kottemann & Decker, 2017). More specifically, scientific literature in terms of case studies, research articles and reports relating to the consumers perspective towards co-branding partnerships are of relevance. Further, considering the research context of HNZ Selection, an additional focus was set on examining brand alliances within the HORECA industry.

Given the variety of sources that are available, it was essential to establish certain criteria beforehand to guide the information searching process. This allows to carefully evaluate the quality and usefulness of sources in regard to the research objective to provide a comprehensive and generalizable set of findings. These findings will then build the theoretical base for the subsequent primary research activity. Therefore, the CRAAP test presents a simple, but effective evaluation method, which was designed by the Meriam Library California State University (Blakeslee, 2010). In the following the key questions leading the criteria will be presented:

### 5.3. RQ3

The third research question seeks to gain a better understanding of how the target consumers perceive and interpret at first-hand the concept of HNZ Selection. To guide this process, all three dimensions of the **input-process-output** framework are applied. Before diving deeper into the connection of the framework

to the methodology, the selection process for the respective research approach and the data collection method are laid out.

### **Research approach**

The first decision at hand is what source of information will be gathered. As the research activity is specifically tailored to examine consumer insights towards HNZ Selection, **primary research** presents the most fitting way to gather new information. The arguments supporting this choice is that there are no insights currently towards how German consumers perceive HNZ Selection and further the program has not been implemented yet to retrieve existing sources.

The next decision looks at how the research question will be best approached, in a quantitative or qualitative way. Therefore, three key criteria have been taken into consideration. Primarily, looking at the research purpose, the aim is to discover how the target consumers respond to the concept of HNZ Selection and develop a better understanding of their perspective. Therefore, exploratory research best describes the nature of this research activity. Next, the outcome of this research question focuses on consumer perception, which is a subjective and dynamic process. Connecting to the more process-oriented results, the output stage of the selected framework clearly puts the emphasis on gathering qualitative insights in the form of thoughts, feelings, and opinions. In contrast, quantitative research methods such as surveys and experiments emphasize on objective measurements by collecting and analyzing numerical data, which does not align with the purpose and goal of this research activity. Lastly, considering the sample size, smaller samples are more fitting to generate the desired outcome, because the focus is set on individual responses and does not require larger samples to generalize and test findings (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016, S. 426). Additionally, the exclusiveness of the HNZ Selection concept does not enable a wide distribution of the material to various respondents. On the basis of these arguments, a **qualitative research approach** is selected as most suitable.

The last decision to make is how the qualitative data will be collected. The qualitative data collection methods differ mainly between one-to-one interviews and one-to-many interviews. Considering the scope of this research activity, one to many interviews in the form of **focus groups** are selected as fitting. The motivation behind this decision is that the presence of several participants enable to generate multiple perspectives at once towards the concept of HNZ Selection and further the group dynamics present a powerful characteristic to encourage natural interactions and conversations that is not otherwise given in a one-to-one interview setting (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016, S. 481). Although, group interviews do not allow to go into great depth or detail about individual responses as the one-to-one interviews, the benefits of group interactions is evaluated as more valuable to achieve the desired outcome. Lastly, the focus group will be conducted **virtually** to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and allow participants to feel comfortable from their home. Microsoft Teams is chosen as an appropriate communication tool as it does not restrict meeting time such as Zoom Video Communications and enables sharing of stimulus material online.

### **Target group**

To ensure the right group dynamics, purposive sampling is utilized (McCombes, 2021). It enables the researcher to determine the qualifying criteria each participant must meet to be considered for the data collection method at hand. The limitation that needs to be considered is that this method relies on the subjective judgement of the researcher (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). To reduce the ambiguity of this sampling method, the criteria were defined in alignment with senior brand manager of Heinz Sabine Huttman. The process behind defining the criteria can be found in Appendix E. It was crucial to put the

focus demographically on younger consumers as they present the largest age group for eating out or order takeaway more often than older generations (Statista Survey, 2017). Furthermore, as HNZ Selection will be introduced in Nordrhein Westfalen first due to the closeness of the channel team to the region, another important criteria to consider was the geographical base. Next to these characteristics, further criteria were aligned to ensure a personal fit to the dynamics of the HNZ Selection program. In the following, the selection criteria are presented:

- Young female or male restaurant consumers, aged 18-35
- Based in NRW
- Enjoys eating out or ordering takeaway occasionally
- Preference for burgers
- Values localness and regionality

Concerning the sample size of the focus group, the ideal number of participants are discussed to be from five to twelve (Lazar & Hochheiser, 2017). Taking into consideration that the focus group will be conducted online, a limited number of participants ensures the opportunity for everyone to comfortably express their opinion, remain engaged, and reduce tensivity on the research moderator. Therefore, the sample size for this focus group is determined to be five. Furthermore, it is recommended to not rely on a single focus group session, but to conduct at least two to three to ensure completeness (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2016). Taking the limited time scope into account for preparing, conducting, and analyzing the sessions, two focus group are found to be sufficient.

### **Distribution**

Considering the selective criteria of the target group, a short survey was created to screen and acquire the right participants (see Appendix F). To distribute this survey, social media presented the most natural and convenient way to reach participants as the focus group will be also conducted online. Here the point of contact to share the link to the participation survey presented local burger restaurants as the best option. The authenticity and follower reach of the burger restaurants are clear benefits that cannot be reached by sharing the survey across personal accounts. Furthermore, Instagram was chosen as the appropriate platform to contact the burger houses as the selected target group is most present there and also enables the restaurants to easily share the link to the survey on their story (NapoleonCat, 2021). Twelve pre-selected local burger restaurants from Köln and Düsseldorf were contacted concerning the focus group, from which the following three burger houses responded positively (1) Menzburger Köln, (2) Lion's Burger, (3) RnBeef Düsseldorf (see Appendix G). These burger houses were provided with a tailored story template to grab the attention from potential participants and direct them to the survey link, in which more clear information on the purpose and goal of the focus group was given (see Appendix H). To maximize responses, participants were informed that a monetary incentive of 15€ will be given per selected respondent. In total, 23 individuals were open to participate in the focus group but only 14 of those fit the selection criteria. Considering the fact that the sample size was limited to two focus group sessions with each of five participants, age and gender were determined as the division criteria to evaluate and structure the group composition. This allows people to feel more comfortable when talking to each other by sharing similar demographics.

### **Focus group composition & Analysis**

The focus group has been conducted in a **semi-structured way** in which the researcher acts as a moderator. To ensure a guided discussion a topic guide with a set of predefined questions is used. The

concrete themes of the topic guide will be introduced in chapter 4, as it is built on the theoretical input of the second research question. The structure of the focus group is displayed in the following. Prior to the focus group session, each participant has been informed about the recording and their consent has been obtained. The session started with an introduction of the moderator and explanation of the purpose of the discussion. Next, to drive open conversations general guidelines have been outlined. With the start of the question stimulus material has been used, comprising of existing online and offline marketing material, to gather their responses towards it (see Appendix O). At the end of both focus group sessions, a summary template has been filled out, which includes general notes of the reactions or main discussion points, common responses, and also noteworthy individual responses. Due to the importance of nonverbal and verbal dynamics within a focus group, the template builds a structured base to analyze and evaluate the findings. The key approach taken here is a qualitative content analysis which aims to systematically interpret textual data through categorization and identifying patterns (Mayring, 2014). Therefore, the answers of both sessions have been combined, broken down and categorized accordingly.

#### 5.4. RQ4

The fourth research activity combines the findings of the prior research activities and builds upon outlining the key improvement areas and the connecting factors to reach the research objective. Therefore, within this research activity, no new type of data has been collected. The main focus was to structure and evaluate prior results and derive relevant results. As the identified factors are not all equally important to drive a positive perception, a weighting of the drivers has been required. Given the subjectivity and richness of the qualitative focus group results, the use of a weighted scoring model has been avoided. As an alternative, the HNZ Selection pyramid has been taken with all three parties and an evaluation approach has been created. Based on the derived results and the outlined improvement areas, the identified factors have been evaluated from +++ - high important, ++ - medium important, + - low important. The limitation of this approach is that the judgement of the researcher is included, but due to the high need of an evaluation and the build knowledge of this research context, this way of weighting presented the best option.

## 6. Current perception

*This chapter aims to outline the current associations and perceptions consumers, in particular the age group 18-44, have towards Heinz. Therefore, the IPSOS brand deep dive report is taken as a base in alignment with the three dimensions (1) perceived quality, (2) brand loyalty and (3) brand awareness and associations of the consumer-based brand equity model. Limitation*

The first dimension looks at the elements brand awareness and brand associations. In terms of brand awareness, referring to the extent to which the respondents are recognizing the brand Heinz, IPSOS captured two levels of awareness. To the question “Which brands of Tomato Ketchup are you aware of?”, 66% of the respondents mentioned Heinz top-of-mind and when they were afterwards provided with a list of brands to choose from, 97% of the respondents recognized Heinz. The results show that Heinz presents a high level of total awareness among German consumers and further leads as a well-known ketchup brand in contrast to its competitors (Ipsos, 2021).

Next, to understand the key drivers that impact the brand associations towards Heinz, the respondents were provided with a list of statements to select the ones that apply from their perspective. The following associations were selected the most among the age group 18-44:

1. Worth paying more for (136)
2. Is the best tasting (128)
3. Has a unique taste (125)
4. A taste I know and love (122)
5. A brand my family loves (116)

The results show that taste, family love and worth paying more for are clear drivers of strengths perceived by the younger consumers. In connection to taste, the respondents connected distinctive words such as best tasting, unique taste, and love, outlining its significance for driving the brand image of Heinz. When looking further at the statements that did not have a high impact on the respondents, the results show that Heinz is not strongly perceived as an exciting or caring brand. Here, the lack of engagement to the younger consumers, presents a potential weakness to further take into consideration.

The second-dimension perceived quality outlines the consumers judgement towards the overall product (yoo). The closest indicator that has been explored in the report to this dimension is perceived performance, where respondents were asked to rate different sauce brands in terms of their expectations from terrible to perfect. The results display that Heinz is perceived to be the leading brand across the sauce category with a mean of 8.1, compared to the global food norm of 7.6. When looking closer at the results of the two age groups, respondents aged 45-66 perceive a slightly stronger brand performance at 8.3 (Ipsos, 2021).

The third dimension looks at brand loyalty, in particular the extent to which consumers are willing to stick and commit to a brand. The IPSOS report presents insights towards the frequency of purchasing as well as the emotional closeness to Heinz. As the research question aims to understand the attitudinal equity towards Heinz, the latter is taken into consideration. To the question “How close do you feel to each brand”, the results present a mean of 7.2, performing under the global food norm of 7.6. Similarly, to the prior dimension, respondents aged 45-66 display comparatively a higher value of 7.4. Comparing the

values of perceived performance and brand closeness among the two age groups, the results show that respondents aged 45-66 perceive a slightly stronger emotional connection and desire to Heinz, presenting a relevant insight moving forward (Ipsos, 2021).

Overall, Heinz maintains high brand awareness and strong affinity with German consumers. The emotional connection and brand perception of Heinz is comparatively stronger in the minds of older consumers (45-66) than younger consumers (18-44). Current associations among younger consumers are primarily driven by taste superiority, family love and worth paying more for. A weaker positioning is outlined in terms of excitement and intimacy.

## 7. Success Factors

This chapter entails a detailed examination of success factors that have been positively related to influencing consumer perception towards co-branding. The potentially relevant factors are presented within three main categories. Based on empirical evidence, the factors will be related to each other to understand their relative importance. This chapter completes the theoretical input for the theoretical framework and builds the basis for the following research activity.

**Figure 3:**

*Success Factors Pyramid*



*Note: Own illustration, Adapted from Heinz Selection Trade deck by KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021*

To facilitate the understanding of the upcoming factors and substantiate their significance to co-branding, the three main categories have been applied to the HNZ Selection Pyramid, highlighted as Figure 3. It shows clearly that all three categories present factors that are perceived by the consumer and secondly highlights upon different touchpoints across the pyramid that relate to the overall evaluation of the co-branding. A more detailed outline of the different sources can be found in the Appendix I.

### Individual Brand Characteristics

**Table 1:**

*Individual Brand Characteristics*

INDIVIDUAL BRAND CHARACTERISTICS	SOURCE	RELATIVE IMPORTANCE
<b>BRAND ATTITUDE</b>	Baumgarth (2004), Simmers and Biswas (2004), Mazodier and Merunka (2014), Ahn et al. (2009), James et al. (2006)	High

<b>BRAND EQUITY</b>	Arnett et al. (2010), Ma et al. (2018), Washburn et al. (2000), Tasci and Guillet (2011)	High
<b>BRAND FAMILIARITY</b>	Moon and Sprott (2016), Dickinson and Barker (2007), Tasci and Guillet (2011)	Medium

*Note: Sources adapted from Turan (2021)*

Brand characteristics refers to the set of factors that relate to all associations, attitudes, and beliefs consumers have formed about the individual brands prior to the alliance. As seen at table 1 these factors have been found to positively affect information processing and the overall evaluation of co-branding (Turan, 2021). To further support the findings, researchers have connected the dynamics of brand characteristics to the information integration theory. The theory underlines that when consumers are exposed to co-branding, they interpret and evaluate the new information by integrating it into their existing perceptions of the partner brands (Simmers & Biswas, Brand alliance dependency and exclusivity: An empirical investigation, 2004).

More specifically, brand attitude relates to the favorable or unfavorable evaluation or feeling consumers have about the individual brands. Consumers' prior attitudes towards each brand have been found to affect and modify the attitude towards co-branding. Thus, having a favorable attitude towards the brands positively influences the evaluation of the co-branded offering (James, Lyman, & Foreman, 2006).

The second factor is consumer-based brand equity, referring to the value of a brand driven by consumer perceived brand attributes such as brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). A more detailed explanation of this factor can be found in Chapter 2.2.1. The impact of one or two aspects of consumer-based brand equity on co-branding evaluation have been considerably examined in co-branding literature (Tasci & Guillet, 2011). Specifically in ingredient branding, studies indicate a spillover effect towards the perceived value of co-branded offerings when high equity brands partner with low equity brands (Simmers & Biswas, Brand alliance dependency and exclusivity: An empirical investigation, 2004).

The last factor to consider within this category is brand familiarity which presents the past experience and knowledge consumers have about a brand (Turan, 2021). Researchers are however not in clear agreement on the direct link to co-branding evaluations, as some confirm a positive relation while others indicate that high brand familiarity is not a sufficient driver (Tasci & Guillet, 2011).

### Relational Characteristics

**Table 2:**

*Relational Characteristics*

<b>RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRANDS</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>RELATIVE IMPORTANCE</b>
<b>BRAND IMAGE FIT</b>	Baumgarth (2004), Riley, Charlton (2016), Moon and	High

	Sprott (2016), Tasci and Guillet (2011)	
<b>PRODUCT CATEGORY FIT</b>	Yu et al (2017), Singh et al (2014), Ahn et al. (2019), Baumgarth (2004)	High/ Medium

*Note: Sources adapted from Turan (2021)*

Relational characteristics refers to the set of factors that look at the compatibility of the partner brands. The concept of fit, mainly named as perceived fit, attracted extensive research in brand alliance literature due to its key role in the evaluation of co-brandings (Turan, 2021). As seen on table 2, perceived fit presents an important factor category. The assessment of fit is theoretically based on the categorization theory. It describes that consumers simplify and group new information into mental categories and thus the more related or associated the attributes of the partner brands are, the easier it is for them to integrate and transfer their prior perceptions to the co-branded offering (Baumgarth, 2004).

Perceived fit outlines two main levels of compatibility in co-branding. Brand image fit presents the extent to which consumers perceptions and associations about partnering brands are congruent. Due to its broad terminology, a few scholars adopted a more specific interpretation by pointing out sub-dimensions in terms of brand personality, functional and emotional associations (Riley & Charlton, 2016). In comparison, product fit refers to how well consumers perceive the two product categories to be matching (Turan, 2021). Although researchers are in agreement concerning the significance of both factors on co-branding evaluations, some empirical studies suggest brand image fit to be of higher weighting considering its direct impact on the transfer of associations (Moon & Sprott, 2016).

### Characteristics of Co-Branded Offering

**Table 3:**

*Characteristics of Co-Branding*

<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF CO-BRANDED OFFERING</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>	<b>RELATIVE IMPORTANCE</b>
<b>PERCEIVED QUALITY</b>	Ashton et al. (2008), Rodrigue and Biswas (2004), Baumgarth (2004)	High
<b>CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION</b>	Baumgarth (2004), Ashton et al. (2008)	Medium

*Note: Sources adapted from Turan (2021)*

This category refers to the set of factors that relate to the evaluation of the co-branded offering as a whole, serving as assessment drivers (Turan, 2021). On the basis of the prior two categories, this theme builds upon them and presents the final interpretation of the offering. This specific category is not commonly classified in co-branding literature, but presented relevant factors independently, that needed to be included to ensure completeness.

Perceived quality is defined as consumers perception of the overall quality or image of a product or service based on informational cues. While intrinsic cues refer to physical characteristics of the offering, external cues relate to price, packaging, promotion, service environment etc. (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 2010). Specifically, within the restaurant industry, quality perceptions are determined to be of high influence (Tasci & Guillet, 2011).

Consistent communication presents another influential factor that has been proven to affect the perception of co-branded offerings (Ashton, Scott, & Breakey, 2008). Baumgarth in particular pointed out the importance of the content of co-branding advertising as success factors due to their impact on driving the concept of fit (Baumgarth, 2004).

### Evaluation of Factors

The ranking of the factors is predominantly based on the findings of the meta-analysis on co-branding by Turan. She aggregated all relevant empirical studies and empirically tested the relative importance of the factors that lead to a positive evaluation of co-branding, presenting generalizable results that are significant to every type of co-branding strategy and business (Turan, 2021).

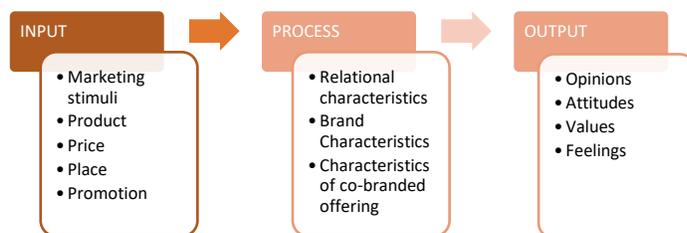
According to the meta-analysis, the correlation between the relational characteristics and co-branding evaluation is notably more important than the correlation of individual brand characteristics. Thus, if a fit is not perceived by the consumer between the partner brands, it is less likely that prior perceptions will be transferred to the co-branded offering. Within this ranking, she further indicates the relative importance of the selected individual factors to drive a positive perception towards co-branding. Therefore, brand image fit presents the highest correlation, followed by product category fit and eventually brand equity, encompassing all individual brand characteristics (Turan, 2021).

To complete the evaluation, the newly adjusted category consisting of the characteristics of the co-branded offering is placed as the final set of factors. As pointed out prior, Turan did not specifically consider this category in her meta-analysis and thus there is no empirically tested evidence to contrast the relative importance to the other categories. However, due to its significance for the theoretical base to evaluate the overall co-branding offering, it is included.

Connecting these insights to the theoretical framework, the process stage is completed and presented in the following as Figure 4:

**Figure 4:**

*Completed Input-Process-Output Framework*



*Note: Own illustration, Adapted from Input- Process- Output Framework by Schiffman & Kanuk,*

## 8. Main Analysis

The following main chapter includes the analysis of the gathered primary data through the conduction of focus groups. The results of the focus group and the evaluation of these results will be displayed in accordance with the marketing mix elements. Following, the focus group results, the improvement areas will be outlined, and key drivers identified.

### 8.1. Focus group results

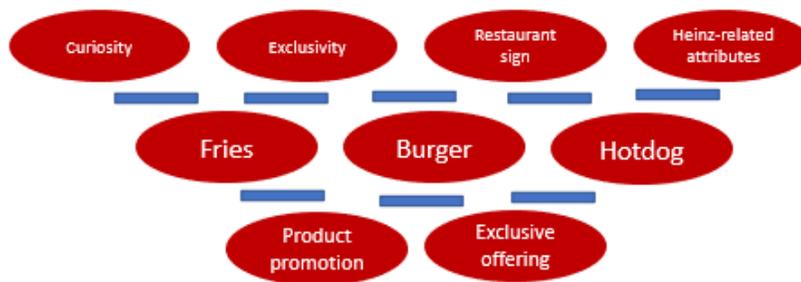
The questions and structure of the focus group is displayed in the topic guide (see Appendix K). The themes of the questions are all related to the factors that have been identified prior for the process stage. To get a clearer overview of the composition of the focus group, a table outlining the different participants can be found at Appendix J. Other names have been used for the individual participants to maintain confidentiality. The results of the conducted focus groups have been divided into four different segments in line with the input phase of the implemented framework (see Appendix M). A structured overview of the categorization and analysis of the results can be found at Appendix R.

#### Product

The first marketing element product presents the results in which the consumer is first exposed to the logo and concept of HNZ Selection. The results are mainly differentiated between what their response to the product element is without providing prior context in comparison to the response with context. The results to the first three questions have been visualized and categorized as a funnel in Figure 5 because the questions gradually lead the participants from their first impression to the logo to their perceived idea of what HNZ Selection could be about.

**Figure 5:**

*Funnel approach*



*Note: Own illustration, Primary research, 2021*

When the participants were exposed to the logo and were asked to share their first impressions, two types of responses become apparent. Primarily, the participants mentioned familiar attributes connected to Heinz such as the brand name and font, the keystone in the middle as well as the traditional red color. This was followed by responses characterizing the more unfamiliar attributes in terms of the round shape and the inclusion of the term “selection”, which a few participants interpreted as new, exclusive, and curious to explore more about. These results indicate that participants are recognizing the salient attributes of Heinz on the logo and are displaying further efforts to understand the extension of the unfamiliar attributes.

The next question directs the participants to where they would expect to see the HNZ Selection logo. The most common answer was identified as burger restaurants (8x), followed by fries shops (5x) and lastly hot dog shops (2x). The primary observation here is that the responses of both focus groups are all related to food places, more specifically within the fast-food category. When asking for the motives behind choosing these particular food places, the key driver that is mentioned is the suitability of Heinz Sauces to these types of host foods. The results can be further connected to the categorization theory, which implies that consumers tend to match mental categories that are highly related to each other (Baumgarth, 2004). Therefore, on the basis of these responses, a general product fit is assumed between Heinz as a complementary ingredient brand and burger houses as the connecting host food. A main drawback that must be considered within this analysis is that the participants are already positively affiliated to burgers as this was one of the selection criteria for the focus group. However, the participants were not aware of the connection to Heinz prior to the session in order to gather in the moment responses.

The third question looks at how consumers interpret what HNZ Selection could be about solely based on the logo and the prior answers. To capture the essence of the perceived ideas, the responses have been grouped into two main categories. Most responses are connected to product promotion (7x) in which the participants associated HNZ Selection as a brand sign for the restaurants to show that they visibly use and place Heinz Sauces. The next set of responses are relating HNZ Selection to more exclusive offerings (3x) in terms of special menus, selling exclusive sauces or having branded merchandise. The results connect to the factor brand characteristics in which the participants retrieve what they know of Heinz and are trying to match it accordingly to HNZ Selection and the restaurant environment. In this context the product sauces are at the forefront of their mind.

After the participants have gone through the different levels of associations, they were introduced to the overall idea and concept behind HNZ Selection. While explaining the concept, the immediate nonverbal reactions of both focus group sessions have been perceived as positive and welcoming. Key aspects that stood out in the responses were the collaborative dynamics of HNZ Selection as well as the selected focus on smaller burger houses. When drawing the comparison to the prior expectations, the following response captures the core associations well: “At first, I thought HNZ Selection was about promoting the Heinz sauces in the restaurants, but actually it is the other way around [...]” (Tanja, Focus Group 1, 11.12.2021). Although, most participants assumed a different type of partnership in the beginning, the post-reactions to the overall concept indicate a positive first impression.

The results show that the participants are able to recognize the known attributes from Heinz to the new HNZ Selection logo but are displaying difficulties to derive meaning of the branding as a whole. Moreover, a categorical fit between Heinz and the Burger restaurants is assumed driven by the compatibility of both product categories. Moving further to the concept idea, a disparity between the initial expectations of the participants towards HNZ Selection and the actual concept is demonstrated. Considering that HNZ Selection is not a tangible product but is rather broad in its functionality, the necessity to balance differing perceptions presents an important starting point.

### Promotion

The element promotion presents the responses of the participants towards the available marketing material that will be used to communicate the partnership program to the consumers. According to the marketing mix, promotion aims to persuade and inform the consumer on the product or service and thus plays a key part in building a positive perception towards HNZ Selection (CFI, n.d.) In the following, the

results are split into offline and online marketing to distinctively understand how the material is perceived by the participants.

### *Offline*

When the participants were introduced to the in-store and takeaway merchandise, they were asked to share their first impressions and feelings. Guided by the factor of perceived quality, the focus was set on exploring the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the material from the consumers perspective. Due to the differing responses, the results have been visualized as a word cloud. Frequent words that have been mentioned were minimalistic, simple, and high-quality. These characteristics have been perceived by some as positive and by others not as positive. The participants that liked the minimalistic design highlighted that it strengthens the exclusiveness and quality aspect of HNZ Selection because it is not overwhelmingly branded. In contrast, a few participants found it too simple and described that the immediate recognizability to Heinz is not directly given. The results indicate that a certain balance between the degree of exclusivity and recognizability evolves in the participants mind.

Looking closer at the key incentives that stood out to the participants, the takeaway material appealed the most to the participants. Specifically, the fries and burger paper were described as trendy and high-quality. The messaging “amazing taste alert” was further pointed out as positive as it was connected with feelings of excitement and anticipation for the food. In terms of the aspects that were perceived as not so appealing, some participants mentioned the fries box as well as the sauce holder. The reasoning behind these choices were mainly referred to the size and positioning of the logo because from their point of view it took over the focus of the merchandising. Within these results, it must be considered that the participants formed their impression solely on the visual aspect and were not able to judge the quality of the incentives by physically touching or seeing it.

When interpreting these associations, the frequent mentioning of the word high-quality positively correlates to the dynamics of HNZ Selection in terms of signaling quality assurance, which can be seen at Figure 6. Looking further to the expectations Heinz has regarding the type of emotions the merchandising should create a difference in associations can be seen. While the participants perceive the material as minimalistic, simple, and exclusive, the expectations of Heinz are related to emotions like bold, fun, and recognizable. On the basis of the received answers, a disparity of expectations can be outlined between both parties.

**Figure 6:**

*Word Cloud*



*Note: Own illustration, Primary research, 2021*

### *Online*

In terms of the online marketing material, the participants were introduced to the social media assets and the global website of HNZ Selection. Overall, the social media assets attracted the most responses as they referred to it to be a relevant medium when choosing burger restaurants. What specifically stood out were the high-quality burger pictures with the Heinz Sauces and the special activation of drawing your own burger. In particular, the reactions to the special activation were perceived as enthusiastic as they continued to refer to the asset as fun, different and cool. Both of these assets indicate that participants are valuing authentic and differentiating content that increases the attractiveness towards the HNZ Selection partners. A crucial question that came up during the discussion is “What are actually the criteria after which the HNZ Selection restaurants are chosen? From what I have been seeing that type of information is not really communicated [...]” (Alex, Focus Group 2, 11.12.2021). This question initiated further discussions within the first focus group, implying that the messaging across the shown assets and the website are displaying some gaps of information the participants are eager to explore. These responses strengthen the importance of the consistency communication factor within co-branding, outlining that the consumer needs to be sufficiently informed on the role and benefits of both parties (Turan, 2021).

Overall, the offline marketing material received mixed responses in terms of the appearance and distinctiveness. The received responses further present a tradeoff in expectations between Heinz and the participants. The online marketing material attracted overall positive responses, specifically towards the special activations that presented a differentiating factor. However, a need for additional information on the selection process is outlined, implying that the promotional material are not sufficiently informing the participants towards the partnership. According to Isoraite, the key role of the promotional elements are based on disseminating relevant information to the consumer to influence purchase decisions (Isoraite, 2016). Therefore, this presents an important barrier to fill.

### Price & Place

The elements price and place have been combined because they are closely related to each other in the context of HNZ Selection. Applying both elements to HNZ Selection, the burger restaurants present the “distribution channel” of the partnership program and simultaneously reflect the price segment.

To get an understanding of the participants perception of brand fit, they were shown three pre-selected burger houses from the area Düsseldorf and Cologne to choose from (see Appendix O). Restaurant A “Grindhouse Burgers” received in total seven votes, Restaurant C “Lion’s Burger” in total three votes and lastly Restaurant B “Karl Hermanns” received zero votes. When looking closer at the reasonings for the respective choices, a certain type of pattern can be outlined. Restaurant A and C were both associated with similar words like down to earth, welcoming, and modern, whereas Restaurant B was perceived to be too elegant and pricey for HNZ Selection. These associations imply that the participants are trying to match the associations they have of Heinz towards the burger restaurants. Based on these responses, the participants further referred to the pricing level they perceive the restaurants being at, positioning HNZ Selection restaurants predominantly in the middle price segment. In this context, the limitation has to be considered that the participants formed their evaluation on the basis of the logo, a burger picture, and an ambience picture of the restaurants.

Next to brand image fit, participants also referred to other aspects they found important when it came to burger restaurants. Three participants specifically outlined that having plant-based options in the burger restaurants are a key factor they look out for, mentioning Burger King as an example for pushing this direction. Next to this factor, the responses further highlighted regionality, transparency and commitment

to more sustainable approaches as attractive characteristics. These responses show that participants are looking for more than a tasty burger and seem to expect the same kind of values to be reflected in the HNZ Selection restaurants.

The responses show that the participants are seeking to establish a type of fit between Heinz and the burger restaurants. Matching personalities between both parties and an aligning price segment seem to evoke positive responses. Furthermore, the changing lifestyle and values of the target consumer are expected to be reflected across the HNZ Selection restaurants.

### Positioning

The positioning element comprises of the results relating to the associations the branding HNZ Selection creates in the participants mind and the perceived value of the partnership program. Positioning is not part of the traditional marketing mix but presents an important factor to explore the final perceptions of the participants towards the partnership program. To understand the different layers to the participants perception process, the following three categories are established: Overall opinion, Quality Mark, and Perceived risks.

Looking at the responses towards the overall opinion on HNZ Selection, a certain pattern appears. On the one side, participants are positively mentioning the benefits the program has for the burger restaurants. Specifically, the core idea of the program to support and endorse smaller restaurants seem to positively influence the view on HNZ Selection, relating to the unprecedented times of COVID 19. However, when portraying the answers towards the consumers side, the results are not as clear. The lack of consumer-related associations indicate that the participants are viewing HNZ Selection primarily as a beneficial program for the restaurants, before transferring it to their needs and wants.

To get more specific insights towards the positioning of HNZ Selection, the participants were asked to share their thoughts on the statement “HNZ Selection gives me the quality assurance that the restaurant must be good”. Mixed responses were given to this statement. On the one hand, the participants expressed that the inclusion of Heinz builds a certain type of credibility because “[...] a well-known brand like Heinz would not randomly start endorsing a restaurant” (Thuy, 11.12.2021, Fokusgruppe 2). In line with the signal theory, these responses indicate that the high brand equity of Heinz is signaling quality aspects to some extent towards the participants (Baumgarth, 2004). However, some found it difficult to link HNZ Selection as a stamp of approval for burgers because they perceive Heinz as a sauce brand first. The hesitancy in answers is also related to the fact that participants wanted to see the type of restaurants that were chosen and the connecting selection process before forming their opinion. The results outline that the participants do connect quality associations to the parent brand Heinz but are not naturally transferring these associations to HNZ Selection. In this context, the selection of restaurants play a key role in the transfer of quality perceptions.

The selection of restaurants is also connected to the main risks the participants are perceiving. Based on the exclusiveness and trust that is communicated towards the HNZ Selection restaurants, the level of expectations are outlined to be higher. Therefore, the key risk that the participants are perceiving is that the restaurants might not meet their expectations, which could lead to distrust and disappointment.

Overall, HNZ Selection is viewed as a positive concept for smaller burger restaurants. Looking closer at the positioning of HNZ Selection in the minds of the participants a connection to quality and taste associations is outlined. However, the transfer of these associations to the burger restaurants presents some barriers that are mainly referred back to the selection of restaurants.

## 8.2. Improvement areas

The aim of this sub-chapter is to outline the key improvement areas and the connecting factors that need to be aligned in order to drive a positive consumer perception towards the partnership program. Therefore, on the basis of the gathered data from the previous research activities, the relevant improvement areas will be defined related, and evaluated in the end in terms of importance to the research objective.

### Definition of improvement areas:

Based on the results of the meta-analysis and the focus group, the following improvement areas have been identified and aligned to the input stage as shown in Figure 7:

**Figure 7:**

*Improvement areas*



*Note: Own illustration, Primary research, 2021*

The first three factors are empirically substantiated by the meta-analysis and are further explored in the focus group:

Brand Fit is defined as the extent to which consumers perceptions and associations about Heinz and the partnering burger restaurants are congruent (Riley & Charlton, 2016). The results of the meta-analysis have shown the importance of brand fit in connection to driving a positive perception towards co-branding (Turan, 2021). This factor was also strongly reflected in the responses of the place and positioning element to facilitate the transfer of associations across both parties. Participants were seeking to establish some type of fit between Heinz and the burger restaurants in terms of personality, image, and price. Connecting the responses to the selection expectations of Heinz, a lack of alignment towards brand fit is identified. Currently, Heinz is putting their focus on choosing restaurants that are independent and loved by

consumers in terms of online ratings. However, with the rising expectations of the participants and thus the consumer, the selection process presents a clear improvement area to fill.

This is followed by the factor product fit, which presents the extent to which the product categories of the partnering brands are matching (Turan, 2021). The meta-analysis findings outlined product fit as a relatively important factor to ease the transfer of prior perceptions towards co-branding. When exploring the relevance of this factor on the focus groups, the results revealed in general that the participants perceived Heinz as a sauces brand cooperating with burger restaurants to be fitting. However, moving further from the category level to a product associations level, the participants were showing difficulties to transfer them from Heinz to HNZ Selection.

Perceived quality is defined as consumers perception of the overall quality or image of a product (Schiffmann & Kanuk, 2010). This factor was primarily observed as influential when the participants referred to the appearance and distinctiveness of the merchandising and logo within the promotion element. The mixed responses outline the subjectivity of this factor, but at the same time highlights its relevance to build a positive perception towards HNZ Selection. The gap that has been identified here is that the expectations Heinz has towards the reactions the merchandise should create and the actual perception participants have, are not fully aligned. Therefore, the factor perceived quality in relation to the merchandising marks another improvement area.

Lastly, the factor consistent communication was also identified as a positive factor comprising of the messaging of fit and the concept to the consumers (Baumgarth, 2004). The focus group results have shown that participants do not only expect a fit in terms of the selected restaurants, but also desire the communication of the product and brand fit across the promotional elements. This factor links to the positioning of HNZ Selection as a quality mark and presents a potential improvement area to consider. The necessity of consistent communication is built on driving the transfer of associations from Heinz to the HNZ Selection restaurants.

The remaining factors have been derived from the responses of the focus group:

Transparency was identified as an important factor to create a positive perception towards HNZ Selection. In particular, transparency outlines the consumers desire to know how and why the burger restaurants were chosen to be a part of the partnership program. The participants repeatedly referred to the importance of transparency when it came to viewing HNZ Selection as an exclusive mark of quality. Here, the lack of information on the selection criteria and process behind HNZ Selection presents a barrier for the consumers to transfer the quality perceptions towards the burger restaurants. Equally to brand fit, transparency builds on the selection criteria, specifically on the open communication of these elements to the consumer. Transparency is also found to be closely connected to building trust and credibility, showcasing its central importance for HNZ Selection (Alangari, Holzman, & Mengyang, 2021).

Differentiation presents another factor that was derived from the focus group results, in particular across the product, promotion, and positioning elements. Participants mainly referred to differentiation in the context of the qualities and characteristics of HNZ Selection restaurants that make them stand out to burger chains and other local burger restaurants. Here, the alignment of the restaurants to the rising expectations of consumers presents an important area to consider. Especially in times of COVID 19, responding to the changing behavior and trends of consumers play a key role in accentuating HNZ Selection restaurants.

Dining Experience outlines the sum of feelings and/ or impressions consumers experience when eating at a burger restaurant. This was mentioned in the promotion and positioning element when participants referred to having a great experience at HNZ Selection restaurants as a key factor for perceiving the program positively. The focus group results also revealed a connection between experience and special activations that would include a positive differentiating factor. (The gap appearing here is that the expectations of Heinz to transfer taste and quality associations are revealed to be not completely sufficient to attract the attention of consumers.)

Perceived price was further revealed as an important factor when looking at the perceptual responses the participants had towards HNZ Selection. This factor was specifically revealed across the price and place element. In this context, perceived price presents the price that is codified by the consumers (Li, 2016). The results of the focus group have shown that the participants perceived HNZ Selection restaurants to be in a certain price segment, leading to concepts such as viewing the restaurants as “cheap” or “expensive”. The results are built on subjective perceptions but do reveal a common pattern in the middle price segment that needs to be aligned to the selection of restaurants.

**Evaluation of factors:**

After having identified the gaps and connecting factors that have been related to driving a positive perception towards HNZ Selection, it is necessary to evaluate their relative importance as not all factors are equally relevant for achieving the research objective. Therefore, the factors will be applied to the HNZ Selection pyramid, as displayed in Figure 8, and provided with a weighting from +++= High, ++= Medium, += Low. Here the evaluation of the factors are based on the gathered results and the subjective judgement of the researcher at hand.

**Figure 8:**

*Evaluation pyramid*



*Note: Own illustration, Adapted from Trade Deck Heinz Selection by KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021*

Brand Fit is evaluated as high importance because its significance to consumer perception is supported both empirically through the meta-analysis and qualitatively through the focus group. The key driver here is that the more the partner restaurants are congruent to Heinz in the consumers mind, the easier it is for them to transfer quality perceptions to the HNZ Selection program (Turan, 2021). In accordance with the concept of perceived fit, the selection of burger restaurants therefore present the foundation of HNZ Selection. The lack of alignment of brand fit to the current selection criteria, highlights the high importance of this factor.

Transparency is assessed as high importance in comparison to the other factors given its relevance across all three levels of the pyramid. The prior paragraph outlined the significance transparency has for the participants to view HNZ Selection positively, reflected on the promotion and positioning element. It is seen as a connecting link to drive authenticity and trust towards the partnership program, therefore demonstrating a direct relation to the research objective. The weighting of this factor is further driven by the fact that the current efforts of Heinz are not matching to the needs of the consumer, highlighting an immediate gap to fill.

The factor differentiation is also rated as high importance due to its impact on appealing to the selective attention of the consumer towards HNZ Selection. The base of the partnership program, as prior mentioned, is built on the selection of the restaurants. Next to the factor brand fit, the focus group results revealed that an alignment to the changing consumer preferences and needs are desired to increase the attractiveness of HNZ Selection. Therefore, differentiation displays a highly relevant driver to catch the attention of consumers and provide added value.

The factor product fit is weighted as medium importance because the emerging gap in terms of the categorical fit is not as large as it is compared to brand fit. Here, the expectations of Heinz to perceive both product categories as fitting presents a general alignment to the actual perceptions of the participants. Furthermore, the secondary importance of this factor is strengthened by the findings of the meta-analysis, outlining that brand fit is of higher influence to perceive brand partnerships as fitting than product fit (Turan, 2021). The key driver of this factor is that both categories are not only perceived to be fitting but also recognized as a complementary branding.

Perceived quality is ranked as medium importance because it does not directly drive the selection of burger restaurants but serves the purpose of increasing their attractiveness through branded incentives. Therefore, the relevance of this factor is viewed as secondary because the consumer will be exposed to the merchandising only after having chosen or considered the respective restaurants. Nevertheless, the mixed responses to the merchandising display the disparity between the expectations of Heinz and the participants, marking its relative importance to consider.

This is followed by the factor experience, which has been rated as medium important. The weighting is similarly based on the reasoning of the prior factor that it does not immediately influence the core selection of burger restaurants but highlights the added value consumers may receive post-selection. Therefore, experience presents an additional level of engagement to the consumer next to viewing HNZ Selection as a mark of quality. Therefore, the significance of this factor is driven by emerging gap between the expected transfer of taste and quality perceptions and the need for introducing experience as additional proposition.

Consistent Communication is ranked as medium important because for this factor to be established, drivers such as brand fit and transparency need to be established prior. The success of this factor is

therefore dependent on the output of the selection of restaurants and thus the key drivers that have been ranked as high importance. According to Baumgarth, the relevance of this factor is related to driving the fit between the co-branding (Baumgarth, 2004). Due to its significance in linking consumers to the selected restaurants across two different levels of the pyramid, this factor is considered to be moderately important.

Lastly, the factor perceived price is evaluated as low important because the improvement area does not present comparatively a large gap. Comparing the results of the focus group to the expectations of Heinz, perceived price outlines a relatively flexible way to match both requirements to the selection process. Perceived price can be further linked as part of the factor brand fit due to the overlapping associations between both drivers.

### 8.3. Implications on research questions

Research question 4: What are improvement areas to consider in order to build a positive perception towards HNZ Selection?

- The product element does not display immediate improvement areas. The subliminal gap that appears is related to aligning the product fit associations from Heinz and the burger restaurants in the consumers mind.
- The price and place elements present the biggest improvement area because the selection of the restaurants mark the core of the HNZ Selection program. The lack of alignment between the current selection efforts and the expectations of the participants highlight its urgency for change. Consequently, the connecting factors brand fit and differentiation are evaluated as high important to address the identified improvement area.
- The promotion element displays several disparities. The lack of information concerning the selection criteria and process across the marketing material present a significant gap. Thus, transparency concludes a high important factor to consider for driving trust and credibility towards HNZ Selection. Furthermore, the existing merchandising displays another field for improvement in terms of appearance and recognizability, connecting to the medium important factor of perceived quality.
- The positioning element outlines close connections to the promotion element. The main improvement points are related to signaling and transferring quality perceptions and benefits towards HNZ Selection and consequently the partner restaurants. Therefore, the factors experience, and consistent communication are derived as medium important to close the gap

## 9. Conclusion

*In this chapter, all conclusions from each research question are drawn and evaluated to ultimately answer the main research question: “What are key factors KraftHeinz Foodservice needs to consider to build a positive perception towards HNZ Selection?”. This chapter forms the base for deriving the recommendations to implement the selected factors.*

Based on the findings of the IPSOS brand deep dive, Heinz currently maintains a high level of brand awareness and affinity with German consumers. The positioning of Heinz shows slight differences between younger consumers aged 18-44 to older consumers aged 45-66, with the latter outlining comparatively a higher level of closeness and desire. The current associations of younger consumers towards Heinz are primarily driven by taste superiority, family love and worth paying more for. Nevertheless, weaker perceptions are outlined in regard to the emotional connection to Heinz, associating a lack of excitement and engagement to the brand.

Assessing the general impact of prior perceptions of individual brands towards co-branding, the factor brand equity is empirically proven to positively affect consumer perception. However, on the basis of the meta-analysis findings, the concept of perceived fit is found to be of higher influence to perceive co-branding positively than individual brand characteristics. Drawing on these key insights, it can be concluded that the more the partner brands are perceived to be fitting, the easier is for consumers to transfer prior perceptions to the co-branded offerings.

In guidance with the identified factors and the marketing elements, two focus group sessions were led to explore the actual perceptions towards HNZ Selection. The key findings show that participants are overall responding positively to the product element, in particular to the concept of HNZ Selection and are perceiving a categorical fit between Heinz and the burger restaurants. The responses towards the price and place element however demonstrate that the participants exhibit high expectations when it comes to the partner restaurants, characterized by the factors brand fit, perceived price and differentiation. The urgency for improving this element is driven by the lack of alignment between the current selection efforts and the expectations of the participants. Next, drawing on the key insights towards the promotion element, the offline marketing material received predominantly positive responses in terms of appearance, but do present some misbalance between the expectations of Heinz and the actual perception of consumers. Moreover, the messaging across the online assets were found to be not sufficiently informing towards the restaurant selection, displaying a barrier for driving trust towards HNZ Selection. Lastly, the positioning element displays a connection to taste and quality perceptions with HNZ Selection but are hesitant when it comes to viewing the branding as a mark of quality due to the newness of the program and lack of knowledge.

Deriving from the prior research activities, a set of eight factors have been identified as important for building a positive perception towards HNZ Selection. Based on the focus group results and the urgency of the outlined improvement gaps in contrast to achieving the research objective, the following three drivers have been evaluated as high important. Brand fit, differentiation and transparency all address the selection and open communication of the partner restaurants to consumers, presenting a main barrier for viewing HNZ Selection positively. These are followed by medium important factors consisting of perceived quality, experience, and consistent communication that are all related to the promotion of the selected restaurants to the consumers and positioning HNZ Selection as a quality mark. Lastly, perceived price evaluated as low important due to the given match of the restaurants. Overall, the evaluated factors present key drivers ranked by importance to consider for building a positive perception .

## 10. Recommendations

*Based on the research results obtained throughout the report, the following chapter presents recommendations structured in three different phases to implement the identified key factors. In particular the focus is set on the high important factors, to ultimately drive a positive perception towards HNZ Selection in Germany.*

### *(1) Selection*

The immediate improvement area to address was outlined as the selection phase of the partner restaurants. The current selection criteria from KraftHeinz Foodservice focuses on acquiring restaurants that are independent or have small local chains and have a strong TripAdvisor rating (>4). However, as these requirements are identified to be not sufficient to meet the growing expectations of the consumers and further lack focus on the key factor brand fit, an updated set of selection criteria are introduced to rate and select the most promising partner burger houses. In the following, the KPIs for the HNZ Selection restaurants are defined and evaluated:

1. Independents or small local chains (<4 restaurants)
2. High social media following (>1000)
3. Strong TripAdvisor rating (>4) across food and service
4. Strong Google rating (>4) across food and service
5. Good engagement rate (+2%)
6. In alignment with Heinz brand personality: discerning, down to earth, welcoming, confident, witty

In addition to the already defined criteria, KraftHeinz Foodservice should consider both Google rating and social media base when selecting potential partners. Both have been mentioned as relevant indicators when choosing new burger restaurants. Furthermore, to implement the factor brand fit, an alignment between the brand personality of Heinz and the personality of the potential partner restaurants should be established. Partners that do not reflect the above-mentioned characteristics are advised to be avoided because if consumers do not perceive the restaurants as compatible to Heinz, the transfer of prior associations is at great risk. As some restaurants present a higher rating than others, KraftHeinz Foodservice should make use of the newly created HNZ Selection Scorecard to base their selection decisions (see Appendix P). The higher the scoring of the restaurants, the stronger the base for selecting and acquiring HNZ Selection partners. The weighting of the criteria is derived from the key outcomes of this project in contrast to the key objective of HNZ Selection. It is further recommended to focus the selection process on one or two well-known cities first such as Düsseldorf and Cologne to attract high reach and avoid fragmented spreading that could potentially harm the exclusiveness of the program. If the pilot project proves to be accepted and perceived well by consumers, an expansion to other big cities such as Berlin, Hamburg and München is advised.

### *(2) Launch*

After having selected and acquired the partner restaurants, the next recommendation focuses on primarily creating local awareness towards the HNZ Selection mark and the partner restaurants. The focus group results have shown that participants presented difficulties to correctly interpret the dynamics of HNZ Selection and further were hesitant to connect the branding as a mark of quality for the best burger restaurants in town. Therefore, to address this gap it is recommended to implement marketing activities that are built around the key factors transparency and differentiation.

To establish a trusting and credible first contact to HNZ Selection, KraftHeinz Foodservice is advised to cooperate with carefully selected food bloggers/ influencers to promote the first set of chosen restaurants.

Next to presenting a clear preference for burgers and locality, KPIs such as follower count and engagement should be taken into consideration. The chosen food influencers will be exclusively invited to go on the “Heinz Selection Route” to visit each of the selected restaurants and share their experience on social media. By transparently sharing their HNZ Selection experience with their followers and ideally validate the good taste and quality of the restaurants, the quality reassurance dynamic of HNZ Selection can be strengthened. KraftHeinz Foodservice can further expand the applicability of the “Heinz Selection Route” and encourage also consumers to try the different restaurants, either in-store or at home. To motivate the consumers to complete the route, additional wins in terms of a free burger voucher or HNZ Selection merchandise can be provided. The “Heinz Selection Route” combines both exclusiveness and newness of the program to launch the selected restaurants.

To further implement the factor of transparency and build credibility around HNZ Selection, KraftHeinz Foodservice is highly advised to update their online marketing material, in particular the social media assets and the global website that are used to inform the consumers on the partnership of the selected restaurants. Addressing the concerns of the participants in the focus group sessions, it is essential that the motivation behind choosing the restaurants is clearly communicated. Therefore, it is recommended to define next to internal selection criteria, also external selection criteria which are separately communicated to the consumers. Here, the focus is set on the preferences of the consumers that have been mentioned by the participants and point out key motives to choose the restaurants. The criteria to consider and communicate are largely related to food transparency in terms of knowing where the ingredients from the burger houses come from and also communicate other distinctive benefits such as plant-based options, sustainable practices, and locality. With the growing trend towards plant-based diets and healthier living, endorsing restaurants that are in line with the changing consumer preferences presents a key requirement to meet the needs of the target consumers. This further sets the HNZ Selection restaurants apart from chains and adds authenticity as well as credibility to the HNZ Selection branding.

### *(3) Activation*

The next set of recommendations are structured into two waves and present activation ideas to increase the attractiveness and recognizability of the HNZ Selection restaurants to consumers. This phase addresses the identified improvement by implementing the factors such as consistent communication and experience.

The first wave focuses on the takeaway and delivery activations, taking into consideration the growing dependence on food delivery amidst changing restrictions. Apart from the merchandising, KraftHeinz Foodservice should strongly consider cooperating with food delivery apps such as Lieferando, Wolt Delivery and Deliveroo to exploit the advantage of being directly shown to the consumers when looking for tasty and high-quality burgers. In this context, the HNZ Selection logo can be positioned as a stamp of approval next to the selected burger restaurants (see Appendix Q). If a positive experience is connected to HNZ Selection, an increase in the acceptance of the logo can be achieved.

The second wave focuses on driving a positive consumer perception with exciting experiences to increase attractiveness and engagement. For these activations, it is recommended that KraftHeinz Foodservice focuses predominantly on the restaurants with the highest scores on the HNZ Selection Scorecard as they present comparatively the biggest reach and return. Under the assumption that the circumstances allow the burger restaurants to host in-store events, a potential activation could be a “Build your own burger” night. Here, consumers are invited to create their own burger by providing them with a table with burger buns, meat, plant-based alternatives, salad etc. One of the unique selling points of this event can be new Heinz sauces that have not been launched yet for the consumer to taste and try. This combines both newness and exclusive experience for the consumers to attract.

## 11. Critical Appraisal

The following chapter serves the purpose of critically reflecting the approach and the overall outcome of the research project. The limitations that have been faced throughout the study will be addressed.

This research project primarily focuses on exploring the perceptions and associations of consumers towards the partnership program HNZ Selection. However, the main difficulty here is that the newness and exclusiveness of the project presented restrictions that shaped the research outcome. The primary challenge is that because the program has not been launched yet in Germany, the spreading of the marketing material to a larger sample outlined an obstacle. Furthermore, this research project presents the first study that addresses the consumer perspective towards HNZ Selection. Therefore, there are no existing HNZ Selection studies or data that could strengthen the findings or base the outcome on.

Next, the conducted focus groups were connected to some limitations. Primarily, it has to be outlined that the results are not representative for the target population. This is driven by the small sample size of ten people and the fact that the explored perceptions are a subjective process in the consumer's mind and therefore varies from participant to participant. The findings of the focus group can therefore only be understood as potential patterns for the target group. Furthermore, the validity of the focus group results are potentially influenced by the moderator. Due to the inexperience of the moderator to lead focus groups, moderator bias needs to be taken into consideration which could have unknowingly influenced the views of the participants.

Another factor that has possibly influenced the outcome of this project are the restrictions that are in place due to the ongoing pandemic. The social restrictions caused the focus groups to be conducted online through MS Teams and further recruit the participants through social media. The main advantage an in-person focus group would have brought is that the merchandising of HNZ Selection could have been presented to the participants to touch and see in order to form deeper judgements and experience an authentic group setting. Nevertheless, the comfort of being at home brought a safe factor that increased the comfortability and ease for the participants.

With the limitations in mind, the research project presents a relevant base for KraftHeinz Foodservice to understand the attractiveness of the program from the consumers perspective and actively drive the role of the consumer across HNZ Selection. The value of gaining real consumer feedback highlights the necessity of this explorative study. On the basis of these factors, KraftHeinz Foodservice is encouraged to follow up with quantitative measurements such as a survey to explore consumers perception and experience of HNZ Selection restaurant after its implementation. This would provide interesting insights, adding value to the current findings and further help to identify the longitudinal effects of success factors over a certain period of time. Another interesting topic to follow up on is to explore the synergies for consumers when being exposed to Heinz sauces and the branding in a restaurant and how this impacts purchasing behavior at the supermarket. It would allow KraftHeinz Foodservice to use this concept to position the branding more effectively and get better returns.

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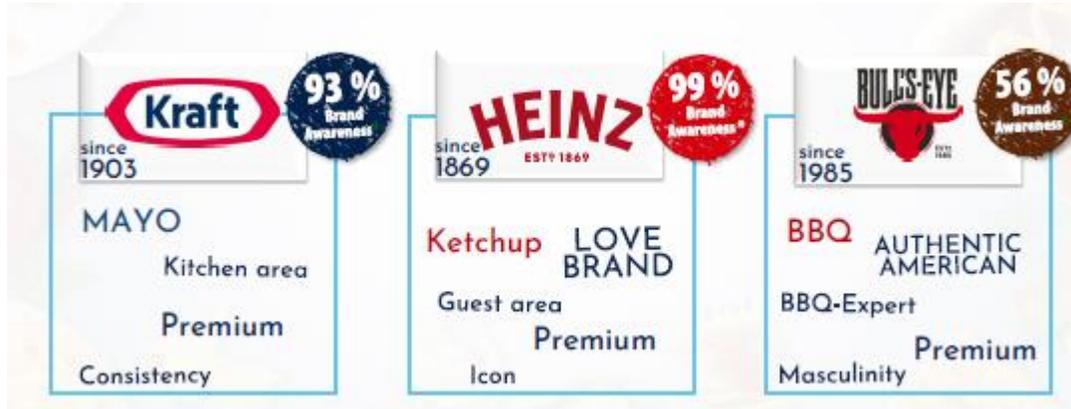
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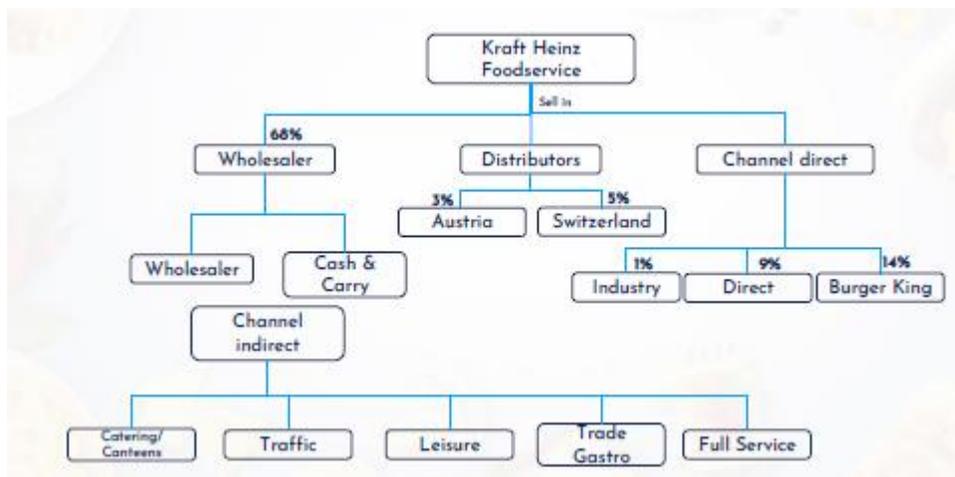
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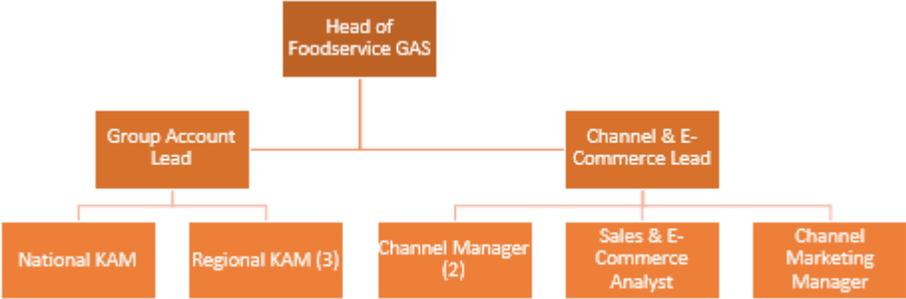
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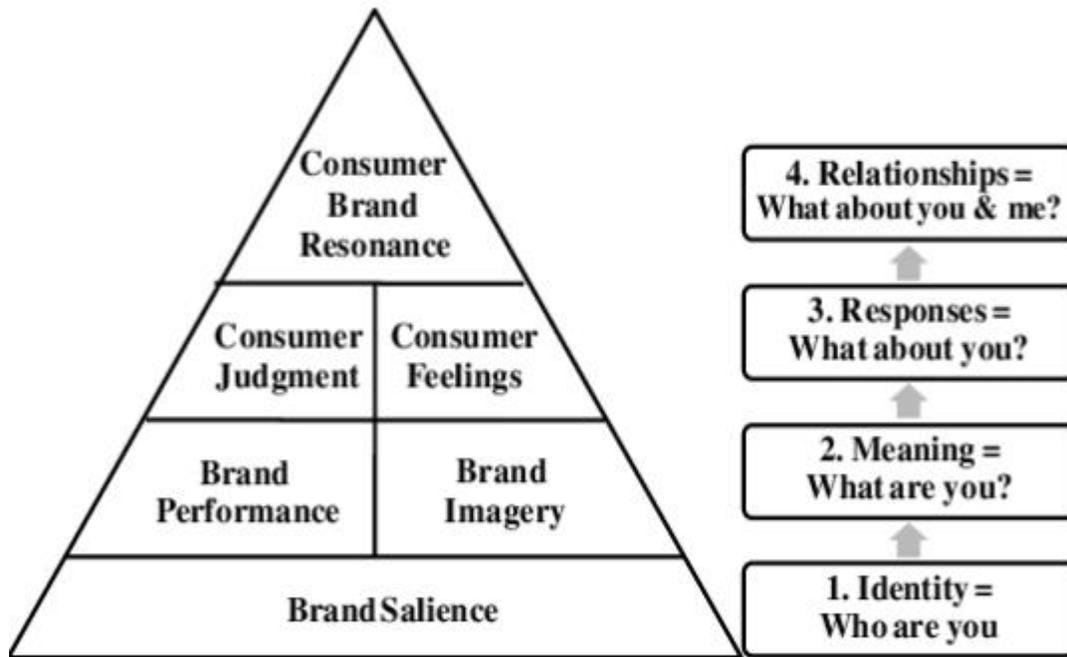
Note: Retrieved from Marketing Playbook by KraftHeinz Company, 2021



*Note: Retrieved from Marketing Playbook by KraftHeinz Company, 2021*



*Note: Own illustration, Information Retrieved from Marketing Playbook by KraftHeinz Company,2021*



*Note: Retrieved from Researchgate by Korbku Jantarolika, 2021*

### 1. Identifying primary target group of Heinz

- Mothers aged 25-55 with children aged 4-16
- Brand conscious; Wants only the best for her family (Marketing Playbook)

### 2. Reviewing the product portfolio and key focus areas of Heinz

- Classic range from condiments to new innovations such as vegan mayo and streetfood range
- Key focus for 2021: Attract and engage with younger consumers aged 18-44 to ensure Heinz remains their first choice (Ipsos)

### 3. Selecting Heinz Streetfood range as a suitable base to build the selection criteria

- Heinz Streetfood range: Burger Sauce, Veggie Burger Sauce, Salsa Sauce, Basil Tomato Sauce
- Female shoppers aged 18-35
- Enjoys exploring food trends and create exciting dining experiences
- Urban area (Marketing Playbook)

### 4. Aligning criteria to the scope and applicability of Heinz Selection

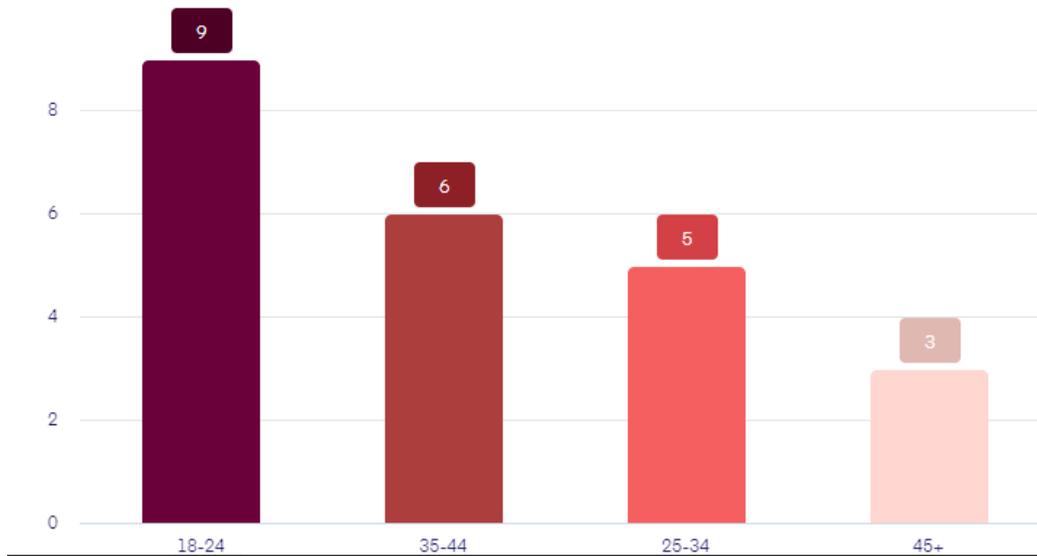
- Gender is not viewed as an exclusion criterion to increase diversity among respondents
- Focus is not on shoppers but on restaurant consumers
- Geographically based in NRW (first focus area for HNZ Selection)
- Preference for burgers required
- Focus on local and independent burger houses

### 5. Defining final set of criteria for the focus group

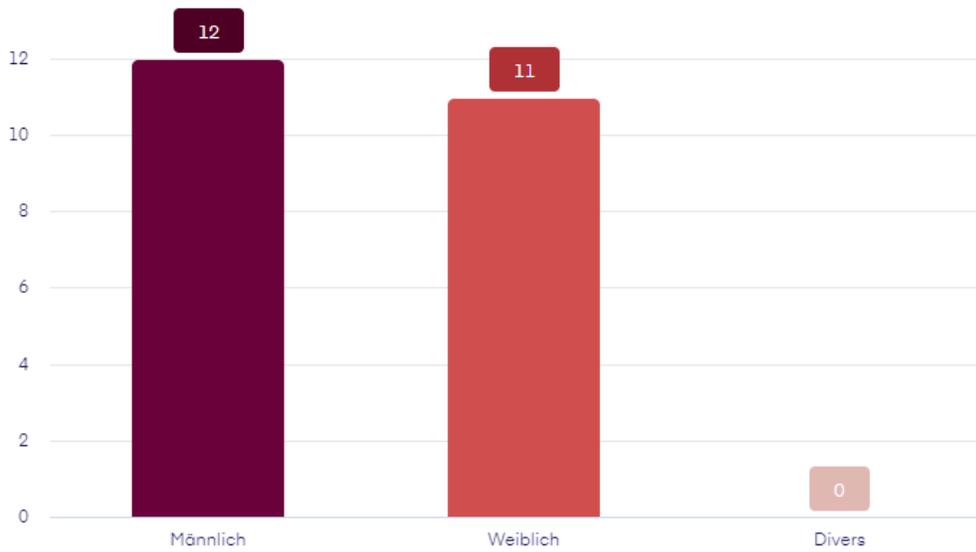
- Young female or male restaurant consumers, aged 18-35
- Based in NRW (Urban Area)
- Enjoys eating out or ordering takeaway occasionally
- Preference for burgers
- Values localness and regionality

*Note: Own illustration, 2021*

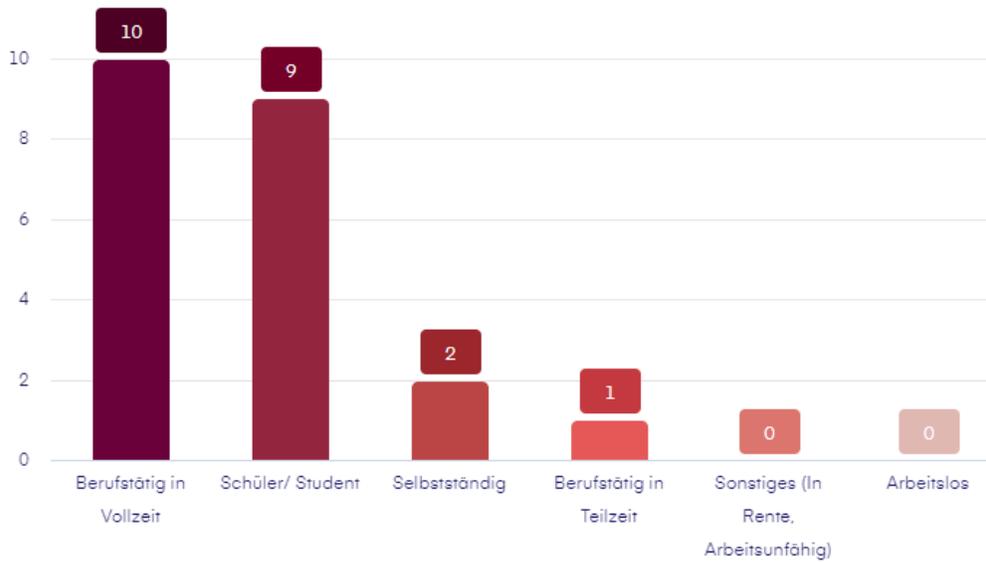
### 1. Wie alt bist du?



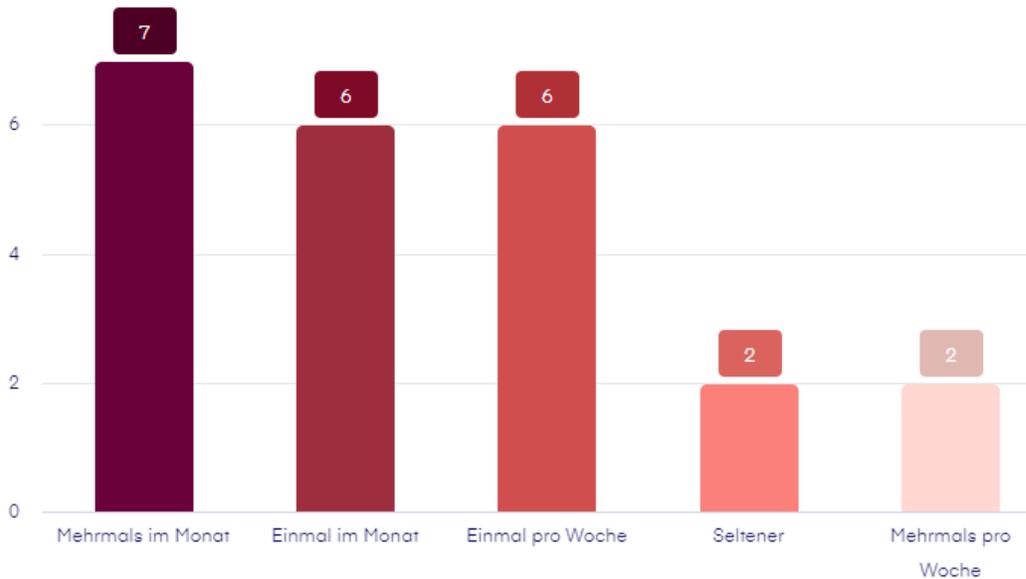
### 2. Was ist dein Geschlecht?



### 3. Was ist dein aktueller Berufsstand?



### 4. Wie oft gehst du auswärts Essen oder bestellst beim Lieferservice?



Note: Retrieved from [my.surveio.com](https://my.surveio.com), 2021

<b>Restaurant</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Tripadvisor</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Marx und Engels</b>	Köln	4,0	No Response
<b>Freddy Schilling</b>	Köln	4,5	No Response
<b>Menzburger Köln</b>	Köln	4,5	Yes
<b>Etmanus Burger</b>	Köln	4,0	No Response
<b>Karlhermanns</b>	Köln	4,5	No Response
<b>einBurgerung</b>	Köln	4,0	No Response
<b>Otto's Burger</b>	Köln	4,5	No Response
<b>Grindhouse Duesseldorf</b>	Düsseldorf	4,0	No Response
<b>Lions Burger</b>	Düsseldorf	4,0	Yes
<b>Bob und Mary</b>	Düsseldorf	4,5	No Response
<b>RnBeef_Düsseldorf</b>	Düsseldorf		Yes
<b>Feuersteinsburger Düsseldorf</b>	Düsseldorf	4,0	No Response

*Note: Own illustration, 2021*



*Note: Retrieved from Menzburgerkoeln Instagram Story, 2021*

Study	Publication	Co-Branding Strategy	Sector	Success Factors
Baumgarth (2004) (Baumgarth, 2004)	Journal of Marketing Communications	Vertical	B2C	1. Brand Fit 2. Brand Attitude 3. Perceived Quality 4. Brand Familiarity
Moon and Sprott (2016) (Moon & Sprott, 2016)	Journal of Business Research	Vertical	B2C	1. Product Fit 2. Brand Fit 3. Brand Familiarity 4. Brand involvement
Rodrigue and Biswas (2004) (Simmers & Biswas, 2004)	Journal of Product and Brand Management	Vertical	B2C	1. Brand attitude 2. Perceived Quality
Helmig et al. (2008) (Helmig, Huber, & Leeflang, 2008)	Journal of Marketing Management	Not specified	Refers to both segments FMCG (Look at conclusion)	1. Brand attitude 2. Product Fit 3. Brand Fit 4. Product Involvement 5. Variety seeking
Mazodier and Merunka (2014) (Mazodier, 2014)	Journal of Business Research	Vertical	Fashion	1. Self-Congruity 2. Need for Uniqueness 3. Variety seeking
Ahn et al(2020) (Ahn, Kim, & Sung, 2019)	International Journal of Advertising	Horizontal	B2C – non service	1. Brand Fit 2. Sensory Fit
Arnett et. Al (2010) (Arnett, Laverie, & Wilcox, 2010)	Journal of Marketing Management	Horizontal	B2B/ B2C	1. Brand equity 2. Brand attitude
Ashton, Scott & Breakey (2008) (Ashton, Scott, & Breakey, 2008)	Conference Paper	Horizontal	Hotel Restaurant	1. Perceived Quality

				2. Perceived Value 3. Brand involvement
Tasci and Guillet (2011) (Tasci & Guillet, 2011)	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Horizontal	Hotel Restaurant	1. Brand Fit 2. Product Fit 3. Brand equity
Riley and Charlton (2015) (Riley & Charlton, 2015)	Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society,	Vertical	B2C	1. Brand Fit
Turan (2021) (Turan, 2021)	International Journal of Consumer Studies	Vertical & Horizontal	B2C & B2B	Meta Analysis of all relevant success factors

**Focus Group 1**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>Tanja – P1</b>	Female	20	Student
<b>Andreas – P2</b>	Male	21	Student
<b>Asvinth – P3</b>	Male	20	Student
<b>Vivien – P4</b>	Female	20	Student
<b>Jackie – P5</b>	Male	20	Student

**Focus Group 2**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>Thuy – P6</b>	Female	30	Full Time
<b>Rathu – P7</b>	Female	25	Student
<b>Marieke – P8</b>	Female	25	Full Time
<b>Charlotte – P9</b>	Female	23	Student
<b>Myo – P10</b>	Male	27	Full Time

*Note: Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021*

FOKUSGRUPPE TOPIC GUIDE

Forschungsziele der Fokusgruppe:

- Wie nehmen die Verbraucher das Konzept von HNZ Selection wahr bzw. wie bewerten sie es?
- Empfinden sie die Partnerschaft mit Burger Restaurants passend?
- Wie reagieren die Verbraucher auf das Marketingmaterial von HNZ Selection?
- Nehmen Sie HNZ Selection als ein Qualitätssiegel wahr?
- Was assoziieren sie mit dem Logo HNZ Selection?

**ERSTER BLOCK (10 Minuten)****Einführung und Zweck der Fokusgruppe:**

- Willkommen und zunächst einmal vielen Dank, dass ihr euch die Zeit genommen habt und an dieser Fokusgruppe teilnimmt.
- Mein Name ist Suverniya, und ich arbeite als Praktikantin bei der Firma Heinz. Der Grund, warum wir heute hier sind, ist, dass ich sehr daran interessiert bin, eure persönlichen Gedanken, Gefühle und Wahrnehmungen zu einem neuen Programm zu erfahren, das wir gerne nächstes Jahr launchen wollen.
- In den nächsten 45 Minuten werde ich euch eine Reihe von Fragen stellen und die Diskussion moderieren.
- Ich möchte euch auch darauf hinweisen, dass diese Fokusgruppe aufgezeichnet wird. Die Identität aller Teilnehmer wird vertraulich behandelt. Die Aufzeichnung dient einzig und allein dem Zweck, die Diskussion erneut zu verfolgen, um die wichtigsten Erkenntnisse zu transkribieren und zusammenzufassen.

**Grundregeln:**

Bevor wir beginnen, möchte ich gerne paar Richtlinien für heute durchgehen:

1. Denkt daran, dass es keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten gibt, sondern nur unterschiedliche Meinungen. Teilt gerne eure Meinung, auch wenn sie von der der anderen abweicht. Mich interessieren positive sowie negative Aspekte.
2. Neben den Fragen werde ich auch exklusives Unternehmensmaterial vorstellen, das noch nicht offiziell auf dem Markt ist. Ich bitte euch daher, diese Informationen vertraulich zu behandeln und nicht an Dritte weiterzugeben.
3. Ich möchte betonen, dass dies eine offene Diskussion ist. Ich möchte, dass ihr euch alle wohlfühlt und frei seid, die Bemerkungen der anderen zu kommentieren. Wenn etwas unklar ist, könnt ihr jederzeit Fragen stellen.
  - Lasst uns jetzt beginnen: Es wäre schön, wenn sich jeder zu Anfang kurz vorstellen könnte
  - Nach der Vorstellung: Könnt ihr in den Chat die ersten drei Wörter aufschreiben, die euch einfallen, wenn ihr an Heinz denkt
  - Versuchen die Einstellung zu Heinz bzw. die Beweggründe für diese Assoziation zu verstehen.

## MAIN BLOCK (40 minutes)

### THEME A: PRODUCT FIT & BRAND FIT

Teile die *erste Folie*, die das HNZ Selection-Logo außen sowie das Restaurantfenster mit dem HNZ Selection-Aufkleber zeigt

- Wir fangen an mit einem kleinen Szenario: Ihr seid gerade in der Stadt unterwegs und sieht dieses Logo außerhalb: Was sind die ersten Gedanken/Gefühle, die euch durch den Kopf gehen?

Wenn sie dieses Logo mit einem Restaurant in Verbindung bringen, folg mit der Frage

- Bei welcher Art von Restaurants könnt ihr euch das Restaurant vorstellen?
- Warum?

Nachdem ersten Eindrücke gesammelt sind, führe die Teilnehmer zur Grundidee von HNZ Selection

- Was glaubt ihr ist die Idee hinter HNZ Selection? Worum könnte es sich handeln?

Teile die *zweite Folie*, um die Konzeptidee von HNZ Selection grob vorzustellen

Einleitung: "HNZ Selection ist ein Partnerschaftsprogramm zwischen den besten Burgerhäusern der Stadt und der beliebten Saucenmarke Heinz. Das Ziel von HNZ Selection ist es, eine Plattform zu schaffen, um unabhängige Burger-Häuser zu unterstützen und zu feiern und euch gleichzeitig die beste Auswahl an Burgers zu bieten. "

- Nachdem ihr von der Grundidee von HNZ Selection gehört haben, was denkt ihr über das Konzept? Entspricht es dem, was ihr ursprünglich erwartet hat?
- Wie bewertet ihr die Partnerschaft zwischen Heinz und Burger-Restaurants?

### THEME B: PERCEIVED FIT

Teilen die *dritte und vierte Folie*, um den Teilnehmern die Offline- und Online-Marketing-Assets zu zeigen

- Was ist euer erster Eindruck?
- Spricht es euch an?
- Was sticht am meisten hervor?
- Was könnten wir verbessern, um es noch ansprechender zu machen?

### THEME C: BRAND FIT

Teilen die *fünfte Folie*, die drei potenzielle Restaurants zeigt, und gewinne ein Bild davon, welche Art von Restaurants die Verbraucher als passend für die HNZ Selection ansehen

- Hier seht ihr eine Auswahl von drei verschiedenen lokalen Burger-Restaurants aus Düsseldorf. Welches dieser Restaurants passt eurer Meinung nach am besten zu HNZ Selection und warum?

### THEME D: PERCEIVED VALUE

Teile die *sechste Folie* und verschaffe einen Eindruck über die finale Evaluation von HNZ Selection - Rankingfrage

- Jetzt, da ihr ein besseres Bild davon habt, worum es sich bei HNZ Selection handelt, wie bewerten ihr das Programm?
- Was sehen ihr als mögliche Risiken? Vorteile?
- Abschließend: Würdet ihr die Bürgerhäuser anders wahrnehmen, wenn sie Teil von HNZ Selection wären? Würde es als Qualitätsmerkmal wahrnehmen?

### **ENDING BLOCK (10 Minuten)**

*Fasse die wichtigsten Punkte zusammen, die genannt wurden.*

*Wenn die Zeit reicht, fordere die Teilnehmer dazu auf, über die Hauptgedanken nachzudenken und frag nach, ob sie zusätzliche Gedanken haben, die sie mitteilen möchten*

- Ist dies eine angemessene Zusammenfassung?
- Haben wir etwas übersehen?
- Dies ist das Ende der Fokusgruppe. Nochmals vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme und den Austausch Ihrer Gedanken.

*Note: Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021*

FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

Research goals of the focus group: (three goals)

- How do consumers perceive/ evaluate the concept of HNZ Selection?  
→how do they refer to it? How do they feel about it?  
→does it meet their needs/ wants
- Do they perceive the partnership to burger houses as fitting?
- How do consumers respond to HNZ Selection marketing material?
- Do they perceive HNZ Selection as a quality mark?
- What do they associate with the logo HNZ Selection?

**FIRST BLOCK (10 minutes)****Introduction and purpose of Focus group:**

- Welcome and first of all thank you all for taking your time and participating in this focus group.
- My name is Suverniya, and I work as an intern for the company Heinz. The reason we are here today is because I am highly interested in getting to know your personal thoughts, feelings, and perception towards a new program we are planning to launch next year.
- Throughout the next 45 minutes I will be asking you a couple of questions and moderating the discussion today.
- I also would like to let you know that this focus group will be video recorded. The identities of all participants will remain confidential. The recording serves the sole purpose of revisiting the discussion to transcribe and summarize key insights.

**Ground rules:**

Before we get started, I would like to go over some guidelines for today's session

1. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just differing opinions. Please feel free to share your perspective even if it differs from the others. I am just as interested in positive aspects as negative aspects.
2. Alongside the questions I will be sharing exclusive company material that is not officially launched yet. Therefore, I ask you to keep this information confidential and not disclose it to any third parties.
3. I would like to stress that this is an open discussion. I want all of you to feel comfortable and free to comment on each other's remarks. If anything is unclear, feel free to ask questions anytime.

- Well, let's get started: It would be great if everyone could introduce themselves shortly
- *After introduction:* Ask to write the first three words that come to mind when they hear Heinz
- *Follow up:* Try to understand their attitude towards Heinz/ motives behind this association

## MAIN BLOCK (40 minutes)

### Theme A: Product Fit & Brand Fit

Share the *first slide* displaying the HNZ Selection Logo outside as well as the restaurant window with HNZ Selection sticker

- Now I would like to describe a scenario to you. You are currently on your way into town and there you come across this logo: What are the first thoughts/ feelings that come across your mind?

*If they connect this logo to a restaurant, follow up with*

- At what type of restaurant do you imagine this logo being at and why?

*After gathering their first impressions, lead the respondents towards their perception of HNZ Selection*

- What do you believe HNZ Selection could be about?

Share the *second slide* to introduce shortly the concept idea of HNZ Selection

Intro: “HNZ Selection is a partnership program between the best burger houses in town and the beloved sauces brand Heinz. The goal of HNZ Selection is to create a platform to support and celebrate independent burger houses and at the same time give you the best selection of houses. “

- After having heard the idea of HNZ Selection, what are your thoughts on this concept? Does it align with what you have initially expected?
- How do you evaluate the partnership between Heinz and Burger restaurants?

### THEME B: Perceived Quality

Share the *third and fourth slide* to expose the participants to offline and online marketing assets

- What is your first impression?
- Does it appeal to you?
- What stands out the most?
- What could we improve to make it more appealing

### THEME C: BRAND FIT

Share the *fifth slide showing* three potential restaurants and get an idea of what type of restaurants consumer see fitting for HNZ Selection

- Here you can see a selection of three different local burger restaurants from Düsseldorf. Judging from your feeling, which of these restaurants do you see most fitting for HNZ Selection and why?

### THEME D: PERCEIVED VALUE

Share the *sixth slide* and gather the overall evaluation of HNZ Selection – ranking question

- Now that you have a better picture of what HNZ Selection is about, how do you evaluate this program?

- What do you perceive as risks? What do you perceive as benefits?
- **Final:** Would you perceive the burger houses differently if they were part of HNZ Selection? Do you perceive it as a quality mark?

**ENDING BLOCK (10 minutes)**

Summing up the main points that were mentioned to ensure clarity.

If there is time, invite participants to reflect on the main ideas and ask if they have additional thoughts to share

- Is this an adequate summary?
- Have we missed anything

This presents the end of the focus group. Thank you again for participating and sharing your thoughts.

*Note: Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021*

<b>Frage 1:</b> Was sind die ersten Gedanken/ Gefühle, die euch durch den Kopf gehen, wenn ihr dieses Logo sieht?
Notizen: Direkte Wiedererkennung von Heinz und vom Keystone
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Einfaches und minimalistisches Design</li> <li>- Mitte vom Logo sieht aus wie das Display einer Heinz Sauce</li> <li>- Rote Farbe erinnert an Heinz</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asvinth: "Zuerst würde ich mich fragen, was Heinz Selection ist, denn mit Heinz verbinde ich Saucen, und das hier scheint etwas Neues zu sein. Ich würde nicht wissen, was es ist, wenn ich nur das Logo sehe.</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 1:</b> Was sind die ersten Gedanken/ Gefühle, die euch durch den Kopf gehen, wenn ihr dieses Logo sieht?
Notizen: Runde Form des Logos ist zentraler Teil der Diskussion.
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimalistisches Logo</li> <li>- Sieht sehr retro und exklusiv aus</li> <li>- Ein Heinz-Laden oder Restaurant</li> <li>- Neugierig mehr zu erfahren</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charlotte: "Um ehrlich zu sein, sieht das Logo sehr schlicht und simpel aus. Die Heinz-Schrift und die rote Farbe kann ich natürlich erkennen, aber die runde Form erinnert mich ein wenig an eine Bahnhofsuhr."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 2:</b> Bei welcher Art von Restaurants könnt ihr euch das Logo vorstellen?
Notes:
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Burger Restaurants (4x)</li> <li>- Pommesbude (2x)</li> <li>- Fast food restaurant (1x)</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jackie: "[...] Zu Ketchup passen halt Pommes und Burger immer gut."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 2: Bei welcher Art von Restaurants könnt ihr euch das Logo vorstellen?</b>
Notes:
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Burger restaurants (4x)</li> <li>- Pommesbuden (3x)</li> <li>- Hot Dog Buden (2x)</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "Ich denke, dass Pommesbuden oder Burger Restaurants am besten passen, weil man oft Ketchup oder andere Saucen damit zusammen isst. Bei McDonalds oder Five Guys bekommt man ja auch immer Heinz Saucen."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 3: Was glaubt ihr ist die Idee hinter HNZ Selection?</b>
Notizen: Einige sind am Zögern und können nicht direkt eine Antwort dazu finden.
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ausgewählte Restaurants mit Heinz-Saucen zum Kauf</li> <li>- Restaurants, die Heinz-Saucen verwenden und dort stellen</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja: "Wenn ich Heinz Selection höre, würde ich vermuten, dass es etwas Exklusives oder limitiertes ist. Vielleicht, dass Restaurants bestimmte Saucen verkaufen, die es nicht im Supermarkt gibt."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 3: Was glaubt ihr ist die Idee hinter HNZ Selection?</b>
Notizen:
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purchase special Heinz sauces at the restaurants</li> <li>- Restaurants that are sponsored by Heinz</li> <li>- Restaurants that use Heinz Sauces in their menu</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charlotte: "Mein erster Eindruck wäre, dass die Restaurants ein separates Regal haben mit exklusiven Heinz-Saucen und man dort auch Heinz Merchandise kaufen kann wie bei Starbucks."</li> <li>- Marieke: "Ich stimme zu... Es muss auf jeden Fall etwas mit Saucen zu tun haben. Ich könnte mir auch vorstellen, dass es in diesen Restaurants spezielle Heinz-Menüs gibt."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 4: Nachdem ihr von der Idee von HNZ Selection gehört habt, was denkt ihr über das Konzept? Entspricht es dem, was ihr ursprünglich erwartet habt?</b>
Notizen: Überraschende Reaktionen auf das Konzept. Haben eine andere Art von Partnerschaft erwartet.
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neue Art von Partnerschaft und Idee, neugierig mehr zu sehen</li> <li>- Nicht was erwartet wurde</li> </ul>

Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:

- Tanja: "Zuerst dachte ich, dass es bei Heinz Selection darum geht, die Heinz Saucen in den Restaurants zu bewerben, aber eigentlich ist es genau andersherum. Die Restaurants zu unterstützen stehen im Mittelpunkt des Konzepts."
- Asvinth: "Ich finde es gut, dass seine große Marke wie Heinz mit kleineren Restaurants zusammenarbeiten möchte. Gerade in der Gastronomie ist es während COVID 19 sehr schwierig, und die zu unterstützen ist natürlich eine gute Sache."

**Frage 4:** Nachdem ihr von der Idee von HNZ Selection gehört habt, was denkt ihr über das Konzept? Entspricht es dem, was ihr ursprünglich erwartet habt?

Notizen: Überraschende und positive Reaktionen. Lokale Restaurants sind Hauptthema.

Generelle Antworten:

- Gefällt die Idee, kleinere Restaurants zu unterstützen
- Wichtiges Konzept während COVID 19

Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:

- Charlotte: "Es macht durchaus Sinn, dass Heinz auf kleinere, lokale Restaurants abzielt. Der Name Heinz Selection sagt ja schon, dass es sich um eine Auswahl bestimmter Restaurants handelt, die ein bestimmtes Kriterium erfüllen müssen. Ich denke, wenn das an größere Ketten wie Hans im Glück oder Peter Pane gehen würde, dann würde das Konzept keinen Sinn machen."
- Myo: "Ja und Nein. Ich dachte, es ginge eher um eine Heinz-Produktplatzierung. Aber ich finde es super, dass Heinz eine Partnerschaft mit lokalen Burger-Restaurants eingehen will."

**Frage 5:** Was ist euer erster Eindruck vom Offline-Marketing Assets?

Notizen: Positive Reaktionen auf die Takeaway Sachen, insbesondere Fries und Burgerpapier.

Generelle Antworten:

- Minimalistisches Design
- Sieht hochwertig und modern aus
- Takeaway ist attraktiver als die Sachen für das Restaurant

Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:

- Tanja: "Die Takeaway Sachen stechen am meisten für mich heraus. Das Retro-Design und der Slogan auf dem Burgerpapier sehen sehr amerikanisch und trendy aus, was ich gerne mag. Ich würde mich freuen, meine Burger so zu bekommen [...]."
- Jackie: "Ich mag auch die Takeaway Sachen lieber. Der Saucenhalter sieht auch ganz nett aus, aber das Logo wirkt wie ein Aufkleber. Das Gleiche gilt für die Take-Away-Box auf der rechten Seite. Das würde für mich keinen hochwertigen Eindruck machen."

**Frage 5:** Was ist dein erster Eindruck vom Offline Marketing Material?

Notes: Gemischte Reaktionen auf das Merchandising. Diskussion über das minimalistische Design – zu simpel oder die richtige Balance

Generelle Antworten:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bevorzugen Takeaway gegenüber den Sachen für das Restaurant</li> <li>- Minimalistisch und exklusiv</li> <li>- Runde Form ist nicht typisch für Heinz</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "Für mich sind die Sachen ein bisschen zu schlicht. Von weitem würde ich das Heinz-Branding nicht erkennen, nur wenn ich näher hinschauen und das Logo sehe."</li> <li>- Rathu: "Ich mag es eigentlich, dass es so minimalistisch ist, weil man sieht, dass es nicht für jedes Restaurant gemacht ist, sondern nur für ausgewählte. Meiner Meinung nach macht es das Merchandising hochwertiger und besonders."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Frage 6: Was ist euer erster Eindruck vom Online Marketing Material?</b></p>
<p>Notes: Social Media Assets stellen den Kern der Eindrücke dar. Enthusiastische Reaktionen auf den Pikachu Burger und den Burger Bilder mit Heinz Saucen im Hintergrund.</p>
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hochwertige und moderne Beiträge</li> <li>- Burger-Bilder sind sehr ansprechend. Machen die Social-Media-Seiten der Burger-Restaurants attraktiver.</li> <li>- Pikachu burger sticht am meisten heraus. Offen für spezielle Aktionen wie "draw your own burger" oder coole Burger-Events im Restaurant.</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vivien: "Ich schaue mir immer die Seiten der sozialen Medien an, bevor ich in ein Restaurant gehe. Wenn ich zum Beispiel den Heinz Selection-Post auf dem Account eines Burger-Restaurants sehe, erregt das am Anfang meine Aufmerksamkeit, weil es etwas Neues ist und ich neugierig wäre, was an diesem Restaurant so besonders ist."</li> <li>- Asvinth: "Ich finde, der Pikachu-Burger sieht echt cool aus. Spezielle Burger wie dieser würden Heinz Selection für mich interessant machen, weil sie Spaßig und anders sind. Das ist etwas, was ich in anderen Burger-Restaurants beispielsweise nicht bekommen kann."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Frage 6: Was ist euer erster Eindruck vom Online Marketing Assets?</b></p>
<p>Notizen: Diskussion über die Transparenz der Social Media Beiträge und der Webseite.</p>
<p>Generelle Antworten:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sieht hochwertig und professionell aus</li> <li>- Pikachu Burger sticht am meisten hervor</li> <li>- Erkennbar, dass die Beiträge von Heinz sind</li> <li>- Website zeigt nicht wirklich das Konzept von Heinz Selection</li> </ul>
<p>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "Was sind eigentlich die Kriterien, nach denen die Heinz Selection Restaurants ausgewählt werden? Soweit ich es gesehen habe, wird diese Information nicht wirklich kommuniziert."</li> <li>- Charlotte: "Interessante Frage, das war mir vorher nicht klar, aber es stimmt. Es wäre für mich wichtig, die Kriterien zu sehen, nach denen Heinz die Restaurants ausgewählt hat. Sonst wirkt es sehr willkürlich und das HNZ Selection Logo würde an Glaubwürdigkeit verlieren. Das wäre das erste, was mir auffallen würde."</li> </ul>

**Frage 7:** Welches dieser Restaurants passt eurer Meinung nach am besten zu Heinz Selection und warum?

Notizen: Einige konnten die Restaurants schnell auswählen, andere waren zögerlicher und schauen sich die Restaurants näher an.

Generelle Antworten:

- A (3x) – rustikal, bodenständig, freundlich, hochwertig
- B (0x) – elegant, zu teuer
- C (2x) – ökologisch, trendy, hipster

Follow up Frage - (Wichtige Faktoren bei der Auswahl von Burger Restaurants):

- Vegane/ vegetarische Optionen
- Hausgemachte Burger und frische Zutaten
- Regionales Fleisch
- Freundlicher Service

Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:

- Andreas: "Ich denke, Restaurant A könnte gut zu Heinz Selection Restaurant passen, weil es hochwertig aussieht, aber gleichzeitig auch einladend und freundlich ist. Ich kann mir auch vorstellen, dass die Burger nicht zu teuer oder zu billig sind, was auch preislich ganz gut zu Heinz passt."
- Vivien: "Ich denke, das Restaurant B passt am besten zu Heinz Selection. Einfach, weil es sehr modern und trendy wirkt und auch eine bodenständige Atmosphäre hat."

**Frage 7:** Welches dieser Restaurants passt eurer Meinung nach am besten zu HNZ Selection und warum?

Notizen: Restaurant A wurde schnell ausgewählt

Generelle Antworten:

- A (4x) – Premium, hohe Qualität, einladend, amerikanisch, mittlere Preisklasse
- B (1x) – elegant, premium, hochpreisig
- C (0x) – sieht aus wie ein Café, zu schlicht

Follow up Frage - (Wichtige Faktoren bei der Auswahl von Burger Restaurants):

- Hohe Bewertung bei Google
- Attraktive social media Seite
- Regionales Fleisch
- Gutes Ambiente
- Pflanzenbasierte Optionen

Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:

- Marieke: "Ich würde Restaurant B sagen, weil es hochwertig und sehr exklusiv aussieht. Da Heinz Selection sich auf ausgewählte Restaurants ausgelegt ist, müssen die Restaurants auch dementsprechend aussehen."

- Charlotte: "Restaurant A auf jeden Fall. Die roten Elemente im Restaurant und das amerikanische Flair passen einfach zu Heinz und es scheint ein einladender Ort zu sein, an dem man mit seinen Freunden chillen und eine gute Zeit haben kann."

<b>Frage 8:</b> Jetzt da ihr ein besseres Bild davon habt, worum es bei Heinz Selection geht, wie findet ihr das Programm persönlich?
Notizen: Meinungen beziehen sich hauptsächlich auf die Vorteile der Restaurants
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attraktives Programm, um die kleineren Restaurants zu unterstützen</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja: "Persönlich finde ich es eine tolle Idee, kleinere Restaurants zu unterstützen, vor allem in diesen Zeiten, in denen die Gastronomie leidet. Viele dieser kleineren Restaurants mussten schließen, und wenn eine bekannte Marke wie Heinz sie unterstützt, ist das wirklich vorteilhaft."</li> <li>- Andreas: "Ich finde es auch gut, dass Heinz eine Partnerschaft mit kleineren Restaurants eingehen möchte. Die Gastronomie hatte in den letzten zwei Jahren wegen COVID 19 es sehr schwierig, und es ist großartig, dass sie in irgendeiner Form unterstützt werden."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 8:</b> Jetzt da ihr ein besseres Bild davon habt, worum es bei Heinz Selection geht, wie findet ihr das Programm persönlich?
Notizen:
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coole Möglichkeit für lokale Restaurants</li> <li>- Aus Neugier mal ausprobieren</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Myo: "Ich finde Heinz Selection ist ein interessantes Programm. Wenn ich neu in einer Stadt bin und kein Stammlokal für Burger habe, würde ich es aus Neugier probieren."</li> <li>- Thuy: "Ich stimme zu. Heinz Selection kann gut für Touristen oder neue Leute in der Stadt sein. Man geht zum Beispiel zu McDonalds, weil man weiß, dass es gut schmeckt. Das Gleiche könnte bei Heinz Selection der Fall sein."</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 9:</b> Was nimmt ihr als Risiko wahr? Was nimmt ihr als Vorteile wahr?
Notizen: /
Generelle Antworten: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risiken: Hohe Erwartungen, die eventuell nicht erfüllt werden können</li> <li>- Vorteile: Kleinere Restaurants werden unterstützt</li> </ul>
Individuelle Antworten und Ideen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja: "Ich sehe klare Vorteile für die Restaurants, aber als Konsument sehe ich nicht wirklich den Grund, warum ich diese Restaurants wählen sollte. Nur zu sehen, dass sie Teil des Programms sind, ist schön, aber ich brauche mehr Informationen, um mich tatsächlich für sie zu entscheiden."</li> </ul>

- Jackie: "Wenn HNZ Selection verspricht, dass die Restaurants die besten der Stadt sind, würde ich hohe Erwartungen haben, und wenn der Burger zum Beispiel nicht schmecken würde, bin ich mir nicht sicher, ob ich HNZ Selection wieder vertrauen würde."

<b>Frage 9:</b> Was nimmt ihr als Risiko wahr? Was nimmt ihr als Vorteile wahr?
Notes: /
<b>Generelle Antworten:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risiken: Mögliche Enttäuschung, wenn es nicht überzeugt</li> <li>- Vorteile: Leckere Burger, coole Aktionen</li> </ul>
<b>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charlotte: "Das Hauptrisiko, das ich sehe, ist, dass die Restaurants aus verschiedenen Gründen wie Service, Essen oder Erfahrung nicht so gut sind wie angegeben. Wenn ich einmal enttäuscht werde, würde ich denken, dass ich dort nicht mehr hingehen muss. Das Schild hätte dann keinen Mehrwert für mich".</li> </ul>

<b>Frage 10:</b> Verbindet ihr eine Art Qualitätszeichen mit Heinz Selection? Würdet ihr die Burger Restaurants anders wahrnehmen?
Notizen: Zögern zu antworten. Schwierig, eine Antwort zu finden, da das Konzept noch nicht implementiert ist.
<b>Generelle Antworten:</b>
<b>Individuelle Antworten:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asvinth: "Um ehrlich zu sein, bin ich mir nicht sicher, ob ich es als Qualitätszeichen wahrnehmen würde, weil ich Heinz in erster Linie als Saucenmarke verbinde. Ich kann den Qualitätsaspekt verstehen, denn Heinz ist hochwertig, aber ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob ich es auch so mit den Restaurants so wahrnehme."</li> <li>- Vivien: "Ich denke, dass es einen Mehrwert für die Restaurants gibt, denn eine bekannte Marke wie Heinz würde nicht einfach so ein Restaurant unterstützen. Es muss sich um ein Restaurant handeln, das etwas Bestimmtes erfüllen muss, um ein Heinz Selection Restaurant zu sein. Deshalb würde ich es vielleicht ausprobieren"</li> <li>- Jackie: "Ich finde es um ehrlich zu sein schwer, jetzt zu sagen. Da müsste ich die Restaurants sehen und die Kriterien, nachdem Heinz ausgewählt hat."</li> </ul>

<b>Question 10:</b> Verbindet ihr eine Art Qualitätszeichen mit Heinz Selection? Würdet ihr die Burger Restaurants anders wahrnehmen?
Notizen: Zögern und Unsicherheit beim Antworten
<b>Generelle Antworten:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keine klaren Antworten möglich</li> </ul>
<b>Individuelle Antworten und Ideen:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "Ich muss sagen, dass ich es nicht direkt mit einem Qualitätszeichen in Verbindung bringe, vielleicht weil ich erst jetzt davon gehört und gesehen habe. Ich glaube, wenn das Programm gelaunched wird und ich die ausgewählten Restaurants sehen kann, und die auch sehr exklusiv scheinen, dann würde ich es vielleicht als eine Art Qualitätszeichen wahrnehmen."</li> </ul>

- Myo: "Das denke ich auch. Ich recherchiere nicht viel darüber, welche Burger-Restaurants ich auswähle. Daher würde das neue Branding mit Heinz Selection mich neugierig machen, das Restaurant auszuwählen."

*Note: Table shows answers summarized from both focus group sessions*

*Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021*

**Question 1:** What are the first thoughts/ feelings that come across your mind when you see the HNZ Selection Logo?

Notes:

Direct recognition of Heinz branding and the keystone.

Common Responses:

- Simple and minimalistic design
- Central part looks like the display of a Heinz Sauce
- Red color reminds of Heinz

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Asvinth: "At first I would ask myself what Heinz Selection is, because with Heinz I connect sauces, and this seems like something new. I could not tell what it is from just seeing the logo."

**Question 1:** What are the first thoughts/ feelings that come across your mind when you see the HNZ Selection Logo?

Notes:

Round shape of the logo presents a main point for discussion.

Common Responses:

- Minimalistic logo
- Looks very retro and exclusive
- A Heinz Store or Restaurant
- Curious to know more about

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Charlotte: "To be honest, the logo looks quite simple and basic. The Heinz font and the red color I can of course recognize, but the round shape reminds me a bit of a station clock."

**Question 2:** At what type of restaurant do you imagine this logo being at?

Notes:

Common Responses:

- Burger restaurants (4x)
- Fries shops (2x)
- Fast food restaurant (1x)

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Jackie: "Ketchup always goes well with burgers and fries."

**Question 2:** At what type of restaurant do you imagine this logo being at?

Notes:

Common Responses:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Burger restaurants (4x)</li> <li>- Fries shops (3x)</li> <li>- Hot dog shops (2x)</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "I think burgers or fries restaurants make the most sense, because that is what you often combine ketchup or other sauces with. I mean you already get Heinz sauces at McDonalds or Five Guys."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 3: What do you believe HNZ Selection is about?</b></p>
<p>Notes: Some are hesitant to answer and are not able to directly find an answer.</p>
<p>Common Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selected restaurants with Heinz Sauces to purchase</li> <li>- Restaurants that use and place Heinz Sauces</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja:" When I hear Heinz Selection I would think it is something exclusive or limited. Maybe the restaurants sells specific sauces there, that you would not get at the supermarket."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 3: What do you believe HNZ Selection is about?</b></p>
<p>Notes:</p>
<p>Common Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purchase special Heinz sauces at the restaurants</li> <li>- Restaurants that are sponsored by Heinz</li> <li>- Restaurants that use Heinz Sauces in their menu</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charlotte: "My first impression would be that the restaurants have a separate shelf with exclusive Heinz sauces, and you can also buy Heinz merchandise there like at Starbucks."</li> <li>- Marieke: "I agree with...It definitely has to be something connected to the sauces. I could also imagine that there are special Heinz menus in those selected restaurants."</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 4: After having heard the idea of HNZ Selection, what are your thoughts on this concept? Does it align with what you have initially expected?</b></p>
<p>Notes: Surprising reactions to HNZ Selection. Seem to have not expected the nature of the partnership.</p>
<p>Common Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not what was expected</li> <li>- New type of partnership and idea, curious to see more</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja: "At first, I thought HNZ Selection was about promoting the Heinz Sauces in the restaurants, but it is actually the other way around. The promotion of the restaurants is at the center of the concept."</li> <li>- Asvinth: "I think it is nice that a big brand like Heinz wants to partner with smaller restaurants. Currently, it is very difficult for the restaurant industry because of COVID 19 and giving them any type of support is a good thing."</li> </ul>

**Question 4:** After having heard the idea of HNZ Selection, what are your thoughts on this concept? Does it align with what you have initially expected?

Notes: Surprising and welcoming reactions. Local restaurants present point for discussion

Common Responses:

- Like idea of supporting smaller restaurants
- Important partnership during COVID-19

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Charlotte: "Makes complete sense that Heinz is targeting smaller, local restaurants. The name Heinz Selection already says that this is a selection of certain restaurants that must meet a certain criterion. I think if this would go to larger chains like Hans im Glück or Peter Pane, then the concept would not make sense."
- Myo: "Yes and No. I thought it was more about a Heinz product placement. But I think it is cool that Heinz wants to partner with local burger restaurants."

**Question 5:** What is your first impression of the offline marketing material?

Notes: Positive reactions to the takeaway material and the messaging, especially fries and burger paper.

Common Responses:

- Minimalistic design
- Looks high-quality and modern
- Takeaway more appealing than in-store merchandising

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Tanja: "The takeaway material stands out the most to me. The retro design and the slogan on the burger paper look very American and trendy, which I like. I would be excited to receive my burgers like this [...]."
- Jackie: "I prefer the takeaway material as well. The sauce holder also looks really nice, but the logo seems like it just stuck on like a sticker. The same for the takeaway box on the right. That would not make a high-quality impression for me."

**Question 5:** What is your first impression of the offline marketing material?

Notes: Mixed reactions to the merchandising. Point of discussion minimalistic design – too simple or the right balance.

Common Responses:

- Prefer takeaway material over in-store merchandising
- Minimalistic and exclusive
- Round design not typical for Heinz

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Thuy: "For me it looks a bit too simple from the design. I would not recognize the Heinz branding from far, just when I look closer and see the logo."

- Rathu: "I actually like that it is minimalistic because you can see that it is not made for every restaurant but only for selected ones. In my opinion, it makes the merchandising more high-quality and special."

<b>Question 6: What is your first impression of the online marketing material?</b>
Notes: Social media assets present the core of the impressions. Enthusiastic reactions towards Pikachu burger and the burger images with Heinz Sauces in the background.
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High quality and modern posts</li> <li>- Burger pictures are very appealing. Increase attractiveness to the social media pages of the burger restaurants.</li> <li>- Pikachu burger catches direct attention. Open for special promotions like draw your own burger or cool burger events at the restaurant.</li> </ul>
Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vivien: "I always look at the social media pages before going to the restaurants. And seeing the Heinz Selection post on the account of a burger restaurant for example, this would get my attention in the beginning because it is something new and I would be curious to know what is so special about this restaurant."</li> <li>- Asvinth: "I think the Pikachu burger looks so cool. Special burgers like that would make Heinz Selection interesting to me, because it is fun and different. This is not something I could get for example at other burger restaurants."</li> </ul>

<b>Question 6: What is your first impression of the online marketing material?</b>
Notes: Discussion over the transparency of the social media assets and the website.
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looks high quality and professional</li> <li>- Pikachu Burger stands out the most</li> <li>- Recognizable that the social media posts are from Heinz</li> <li>- Website does not really show what Heinz Selection is about</li> </ul>
Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thuy: "What are actually the criteria after which the HNZ Selection restaurants are chosen? From what I have been seeing that type of information is not really communicated."</li> <li>- Charlotte: "Interesting question, I did not realize that before but that is true. It would be important for me to see the criteria after which Heinz has selected the restaurants. Else it seems very random and the HNZ Selection logo would lose credibility. That is the first thing that would catch my attention."</li> </ul>

<b>Question 7: Which of these restaurants do you see most fitting for HNZ Selection?</b>
Notes: Some were able to quickly point out the restaurants, others were more hesitant and looked closer at the different restaurants.
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A (3x) – rustic, down to earth, friendly, high quality</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- B (0x) – elegant, too pricey</li> <li>- C (2x) – eco, trendy, hipster</li> </ul> <p>Follow up question - (Key factors when choosing burger restaurants):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegan/ Vegetarian options</li> <li>- Homemade burgers and fresh ingredients</li> <li>- Regional meat</li> <li>- Friendly service</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Andreas: “I think Restaurant A could be a Heinz Selection restaurant because it looks high quality but at the same time has a welcoming and friendly vibe. I can also imagine that the burgers are not too expensive or cheap, which fits right with the pricing of Heinz.”</li> <li>- Vivien: “I actually think Restaurant B fits the most to Heinz Selection. Just because it seems very modern and trendy and has also a down to earth atmosphere.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 7: Which of these restaurants do you see most fitting for HNZ Selection?</b></p>
<p>Notes: Restaurant A was quickly chosen by the participants</p>
<p>Common Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A (4x) – premium, high quality, welcoming, American, middle-price</li> <li>- B (1x) – elegant, premium, high-price</li> <li>- C (0x) – looks like a café, not lively</li> </ul> <p>Follow up question - (Key factors when choosing burger restaurants):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High rating on Google</li> <li>- Attractive social media page</li> <li>- Regional meat</li> <li>- Good ambience</li> <li>- Plant-based options</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marieke: “I would say restaurant B because it looks premium and very exclusive. Because the program focuses on selected restaurants, I think they need to look unique as well.”</li> <li>- Charlotte: “Restaurant A for sure. The red elements in the restaurant and the American vibes just fit to Heinz and it just seems like a welcoming place to stay with your friends and have a good time.”</li> </ul>

<p><b>Question 8: Now that you have a better picture of what HNZ Selection is about, how do you evaluate this program?</b></p>
<p>Notes: Evaluations mainly related to the restaurants</p>
<p>Common Responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attractive program to get the smaller restaurants recognized</li> </ul>
<p>Noteworthy Individual Responses &amp; Ideas:</p>

- Tanja: "Personally, I think it is a cool idea to support the smaller restaurants, especially during these times, where the restaurant industry is suffering. A lot of those smaller restaurant had to close and having a known brand such as Heinz supporting them is really nice."
- Andreas: "I think it is nice that a big brand like Heinz wants to partner with smaller restaurants. Currently, it is very difficult for the restaurant industry because of COVID 19 and giving them any type of support is amazing."

<b>Question 8:</b> Now that you have a better picture of what HNZ Selection is about, how do you evaluate this program?
Notes:
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cool opportunity for local restaurants</li> <li>- Try out of curiosity</li> </ul>
Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Myo: "I find Heinz Selection an interesting program. If I am new in a city and do not have a go-to burger place, I would try it out of curiosity."</li> <li>- Thuy: "I agree. Heinz Selection can be good for tourists or new people in town. For example, you go to McDonalds because you know it tastes good. The same could be the case for Heinz Selection."</li> </ul>

<b>Question 9:</b> What do you perceive as risks? What do you perceive as benefits?
Notes: /
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks: High expectations that cannot be met</li> <li>- Benefits: Smaller restaurants get supported</li> </ul>
Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tanja: "I see clear benefits for the restaurant from what you have shown but as a consumer I am not really seeing the reason why I should choose these selected restaurants. Just seeing that they are part of the program is nice, but I need more information to actually choose it."</li> <li>- Jackie: "If HNZ Selection promises that the restaurants are the best in town, I would have high expectations and when the burger for example does not taste good, I am not sure whether I would trust HNZ Selection again."</li> </ul>

<b>Question 9:</b> What do you perceive as risks? What do you perceive as benefits?
Notes: /
Common Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits: Tasty burgers, exciting experiences</li> <li>- Risks: Not worth the money</li> </ul>
Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charlotte: "The main risk that I am seeing is that the restaurants might not be as good as shown because of different reasons such as the service, food or experience. If I get disappointed once, then I would think that I do not need to go there anymore. The sign would not have an added value for me."</li> </ul>

**Question 10:** Would you perceive burger houses differently if they were part of HNZ Selection? Do you see it as a quality mark?

Notes: Hesitant to answer. Find it difficult to clearly say because have not seen the first restaurants.

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Asvinth: "To be honest, I am not sure whether I would perceive it as a quality mark because I primarily connect Heinz as a sauce brand. I can understand the quality aspect because Heinz is high quality but not sure whether I perceive it that way."
- Vivien: "I do think it adds value to the restaurant because a well-known brand like Heinz would not randomly start endorsing a restaurant. It must be a restaurant that has proven to be of worth to be in HNZ Selection, so therefore I might give it a try."
- Jackie: "At this moment I cannot really say if I would see it as a quality mark. I need to see the restaurants or the criteria after which Heinz selected the restaurants."

**Question 10:** Would you perceive burger houses differently if they were part of HNZ Selection? Do you see it as a quality mark?

Notes:

Common Responses:

Noteworthy Individual Responses & Ideas:

- Thuy: "I have to say I do not see directly connect it to a quality sign, maybe because I have heard and seen of it just now. I believe if the program is launched and I can see the couple of restaurants that were chosen and they seem to be very exclusive, then I do think I would perceive it more as a stamp of approval."
- Myo: "I do think so. I do not do a lot of research on which burger restaurants I choose. Therefore, seeing this new branding with HNZ Selection would add value to the restaurant."

*Note: Table shows answers summarized from both focus group sessions*

*Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021*



Heinz Selection ist eine Partnerschaft zwischen den besten Burger Restaurants in der Stadt & der geliebten Saucen Marke



**LOVED BY BURGER FANS.  
LOVED BY HEINZ.**

Proud Partner of 

### In-store



### Takeaway

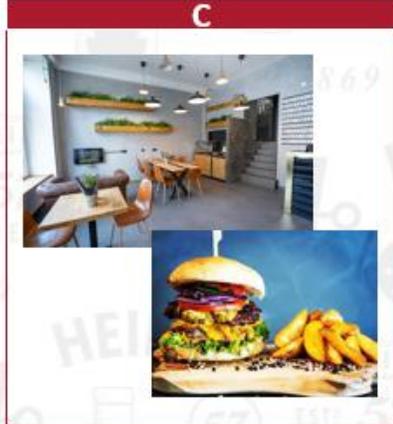
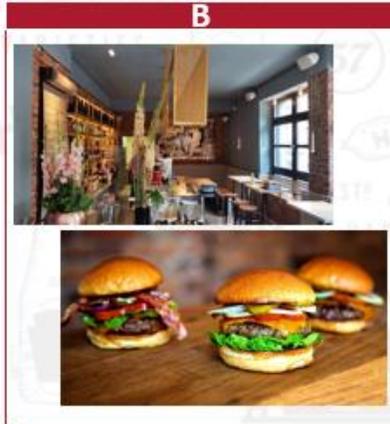
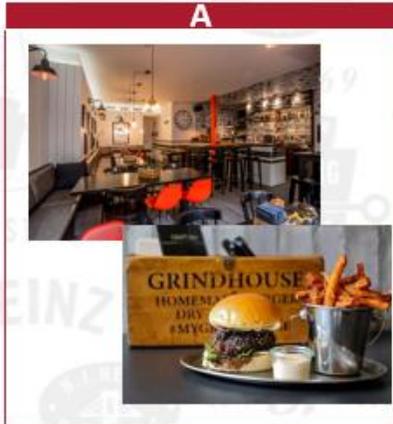


### Social Media



### Globale Webseite





Note: Images retrieved from Heinz Selection Trade Deck by KraftHeinz Foodservice, 2021

Appendix P

HNZ Selection Scorecard

Restaurant Name		Criteria 1 Number of restaurants	Criteria 2 Number of followers on social media (Instagram)
		Select from the list appearing with the arrow on the right of the cell selected. Score will be automatically shown.	Select from the list the applicable range of the restaurant Instagram account followers. Score will appear automatically
<i>Insert name of the restaurant below:</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Instagram account link</i>	
Grindhouse Düsseldorf	Düsseldorf	Grindhouseduesseldorf	
Menzburger Köln	Köln	menzburgerkoeln	
Lions Burger	Düsseldorf	lions.burger	
SELECT NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS		SCORE	SELECT RANGE
2		20	Less than 5K
1		10	Less than 5K
1		10	Less than 5K
		SCORE	SCORE
		20	20
		10	20
		10	20

Criteria 3 Social Media strength (Engagement Rate)	Criteria 4 TripAdvisor score	Criteria 5 Google score
To discover the Average Engagement Rate insert the Instagram profile name on the link below  Score will be automatically shown.	Select from the list to report the score from TripAdvisor website If score is under 4.0 its recommended to be avoided. Score will be automatically shown.	Select from the list to report the score from Google ranking If score is under 4.0 its recommended to be avoided. Score will be automatically shown.
SELECT AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT RATE (%)	SCORE	SELECT SCORE ON TRIPADVISOR
2	60	4
2	60	4,5
1	30	4
SCORE	SCORE	SCORE
60	40	4,5
60	45	4,5
30	40	4,5
SELECT SCORE ON GOOGLE	SCORE	SCORE
4,5	45	45
4,5	45	45
4,5	45	45

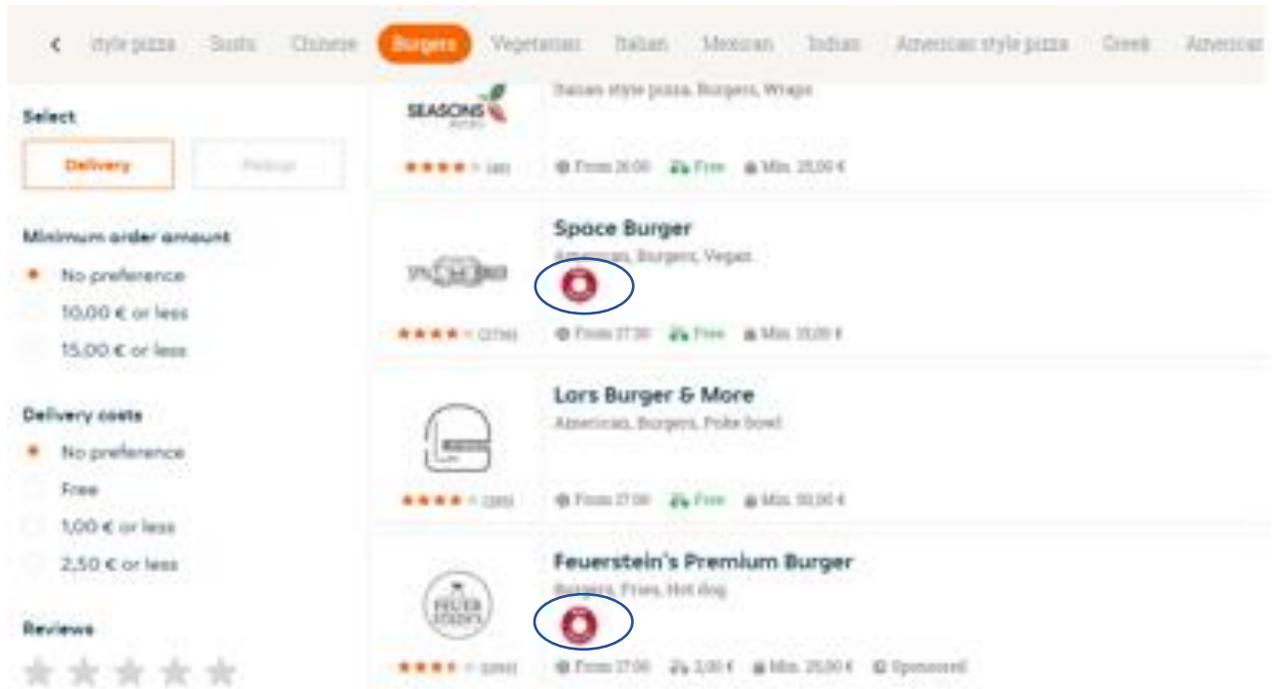
IN	U	n	3
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Criteria 6 Brand Fit	
Look at the online presence and in-store setting to judge personality fit: In alignment with Heinz brand personality: discerning, down to earth, welcoming, confident, witty	
SELECT 1=NOT FITTING to 5=VERY FITTING	SCORE
4	24
2	12
3	18

**Green:** Must  
**Yellow:** to consider  
**Red:** to re-check  
**Black:** to avoid

TOTAL SCORE PER RESTAURANT
209
192
163

Note: Own illustration, 2021



Note: Retrieved from lieferando.de, 2021

Appendix R

Structured Overview

1	Marketing Mix	Goal/ Purpose	Questions	Answers	Categories/ Themes	Interpretation: TF/ Factors	Comments
2	Product	Logo/ Branding: •creates certain feeling? •connection to Heinz?	1. What are the first thoughts that come across your mind when you see this logo?	• Something new from Heinz • Looks very american and retro • A Heinz Store/ Restaurant	• Familiar attributes: HEINZ branding, keystone, red color • Unfamiliar attributes: round shape, "selection"	• Association to Heinz is given due to familiar attributes, but some find it difficult to put it together	Heinz Expectation: bold and iconic, recognizable mark of quality
3		Product Fit • fitting partnership on a categorical level?	2. At what type of restaurant do you imagine this logo being at?	• Burger Restaurants • Fries Shop • Hot dog Shop	• Fast food places	• Product Fit is given: Compatibility between Heinz Sauces and Burgers	
4		Concept perception	3. What do you think HNZ Selection could be about?	• Selected Restaurants with Heinz Sauces • Special Menus/ Sauces available • Sponsored by Heinz	• Product Promotion • Exclusive offering	• drawing on familiar attributes, sauces are on TOM (integration theory)	without any promotional messages, interpret it as a product partnership
5		Concept perception • how do they feel about it? • first impression?	4. What are your thoughts on this concept after its explanation?	• Positive: Focus on local restaurants, Support during COVID • Neutral/ Expected: no specific feelings (present in chains) • Surprised: interpreted HNZ Selection differently	• features/ factors that stood out?	• overall positive response, value partnership between local and global brand	Beneficial for restaurants, not clear on the benefits for consumers ->more than initially expected

Marketing Mix	Goal/ Purpose	Questions	Answers	Categories/ Themes	Interpretation: TF/ Factors	Comments
Price & Place	Explore brand fit - consumers perception of fit based on brand image	1. What type of restaurants do you perceive as fitting for HNZ Selection?	• A (7x down to earth, friendly, high quality, middle price) • B (0x - too pricey, elegant, over the top) • C (2x - eco, trendy, down to earth, looks like a cafe)	• Concept map - HNZ Selection Restaurant ->price, personality, target group		Brand fit subjective (connect to RQ1)
	Brand Fit	2. What factors/ criteria are important for you when selecting restaurants?	• Regional meat • Plant-based options • High rating on google/ tripadvisor • Social media presence • Value sustainability	consumer fit		Personal preferences

Marketing Mix	Goal/ Purpose	Questions	Answers	Categories/ Themes	Interpretation: TF/ Factors	Comments	
Promotion	Perceived Quality • does it appeal to them? • what type of feeling? • perceive as high quality? • connection to Heinz?	1. What is your impression of offline marketing material?	• <b>Positive:</b> minimalistic design, seems exclusive for selected restaurants, typical Heinz red  • <b>Negative:</b> too minimalistic, connect to Heinz when looking closer, could go unnoticed, round shape not appealing	wordcloud		Packaging/ Merchandise (In-store vs takeaway)	Heinz Expectation: Bold, fun, delicious, recognisable, show playful side of Heinz, create anticipation
	Perceived Quality	2. What is your impression of online marketing material?	• <b>Positive:</b> eye-catching, familiar branding of Heinz, curious to find out more about, high quality pictures • <b>Negative:</b> lack of information on why and how the restaurants were selected • Very positive: Special activations, In-Store events, would make HNZ Selection stand out	?		Messaging/ Transparency Clear communication needed Unique experience	Social Media highly attractive medium

Marketing Mix	Goal/Purpose	Questions	Answers	Categories/Themes	Interpretation: TF/ Factors
Positioning	Spillover effect	1. What is your overall opinion on HNZ Selection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I like the idea of pushing local restaurants, especially during COVID 19</li> <li>- Small restaurants: cool opportunity for them to get recognized</li> </ul>		
		2. Would you perceive the burger houses differently if they were part of HNZ Selection?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depends: I would try the HNZ Selection restaurant out of curiosity, but would not give up my go-to burger place</li> <li>- Yes: If I am new in a city, I would give it a go</li> </ul>		Differentiation needed to chains
		3. What are the risks and benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks: not meeting expectations, getting disappointed, not worth the money</li> <li>- Benefits: great burgers, nice experience</li> </ul>		
		4. "HNZ Selection gives me the quality assurance that the restaurant must be good"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I do think it adds value to the restaurant because a well-known brand like Heinz would not randomly start endorsing a restaurant</li> <li>- Not sure whether I would perceive it as a mark of quality, because in my mind I connect Heinz to sauces and not directly as a sign for the best burgers in town</li> <li>- For me I need to see what type of restaurants were selected and whether they are matching my expectations</li> </ul>		quality signal theory →position HNZ Selection as a quality mark

Note: Own illustration, Primary Research, 2021

## Statement of Authenticity

I hereby truthfully and solemnly declare

1. that I myself wrote this report, without the assistance of any third party;
2. that in my report I identified and specified all direct literal quotes from literature and indirect quotes (ideas/indirect quotations) from other authors.

I am fully aware that any violation of this code may result in disadvantageous consequences for me (for example withdrawal of study credits and, in the case of a repeated violation, withdrawal of complete study units). If fraud can be proved, I will be required to bear the costs of investigation into and sourcing of the original document.

Place, date: 1.1.2022

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "S. Srikanthan".