LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

MANAGING THE CORPORATE BRAND

A STUDY OF THE CORPORATE BRAND MANAGER IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

MSC INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

FREDRIK AUGUSTSSON

MARTIN LARSSON

SUPERVISOR:

MATS URDE

Abstract

Title:	Managing the Corporate Brand: A Study of the Corporate Brand Manager in Theory and Practice
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Authors:	Fredrik Augustsson, Martin Larsson
Advisor:	Mats Urde, Associate Professor
Keywords:	Corporate Brand Management, Corporate Brand Manager, Brand Strategy, Brand Management, Brand Hierarchy
Thesis purpose:	To investigate the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in theory and practice.
Methodology:	Following a social constructionism approach we apply a grounded theory strategy. An exploratory method is used where mainly qualitative research is conducted and appropriately supported by minor quantitative research. The analysis is carried out guided by an iterative process.
Theoretical perspective:	The literature review creates the foundation for the theoretical framework where the two explicit tools that will be used in the analysis are highlighted. We present and describe in detail the Melin and Urde *Categorisation Framework* and the Balmer, Liao, and Wang *Corporate Brand Custodianship model.*
Empirical data:	The empirical data is collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 65 Corporate Brand Managers. Additional quantitative data is also collected during the interview process. In order to receive in-depth information, in many cases vital material regarding corporate business strategies, all the respondents were promised full anonymity.
Conclusion:	We conclude that the role as a Corporate Brand Manager differs according to various Corporate Brand Strategies. We provide a description of the tasks and responsibilities of the Corporate Brand Manager based on certain contexts and present this in our model – The Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation Framework.

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1 Introduction

In studying the managerial and communicative implications of branding, Park et al. (1986) highlight the importance of branding from an image-creation perspective. They argue that the building of brand image can ultimately constitute a source for long-term competitive advantages in that "a well-communicated image should help establish a brand's position, insulate the brand from competition and therefore enhance the brand's market performance" (1986:135). King (1993) can also be seen to pick up on the notion concerning the raised competitive importance of branding, when he declares that the corporate brand[1] will become the main discriminator in guiding customer choice.

The corporate brand should according to Aaker (2004) be considered special in the sense that it "explicitly and unambiguously represents an organization as well as a product" (2004:10). This novelty of the corporate brand, he argues, is founded upon that the brand affects both the internal and external facets of a company's functions, while also being directly involved in the relationship between the company's different brands. It is this brand relationship that will constitute the very essence of the present study, as an investigation is performed into the managerial aspects of corporate brands, in other words, Corporate Brand Management.

Kernstock and Brexendorf define Corporate Brand Management in the following way.

> [T]he process of creating and maintaining a favourable reputation of the company and its constituent elements by sending signals to stakeholders using the corporate brand which is based on the identity of the firm.
>
> Kernstock and Brexendorf (2009:390)

We are thus provided with the view that Corporate Brand Management, while involving the relationship between the company's brands, encompasses the company's internal and external aspects with a focus on communicating successfully with relevant audiences.

The managerial perspective of branding has been studied from a historical point-of-view by Low and Fullerton (1994), who traced the field of brand

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[1] In his article, King (1993) refers to the company brand, which is considered by the authors as synonymous with the corporate brand term employed in this study.

management as far back as to the 1870s. Understanding that brands are complex and can be hard to manage, they sought to "identify developments and factors affecting the major changes in the ways firms have managed their brands over time" (1994:173). Based on their findings, they conclude that there exists no permanent form of brand management as the field is under constant reconstitution and development.

In echoing the eclectic nature of the field, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) consider that the classic brand manager has previously tended to operate within a rather stable business environment with largely simple brand structures containing a limited number of brands. Yet, they find that over time the context in which brand managers find themselves has grown increasingly more complex. Park et al. (1986) touch upon this when they considered that the brand is essentially of a multi-conceptual nature, containing different meanings to various groups of stakeholders. The presence of various brand meanings may, moreover, results in that they come into conflict with each other. This notion was formative for when Park et al. (1986) argue that the multi-conceptual nature of brands could from a managerial perspective become difficult to handle.

Muzellec and Lambkin (2009) note that a general interest has developed over the recent years for working with brands in general and brand architecture in particular. Structuring and organising brands according to a type of brand architecture provides, according to Muzellec and Lambkin, a useful diagnostic framework "to help map the often complex collection of brands" owned by the company (2009:40). Yet, they maintain that as it provides essentially a "snapshot of a corporation's brand structure", very little understanding is offered concerning the vertical interaction and relationship between brands within the hierarchy of the company's brand portfolio (2009:40). In their study, Muzellec and Lambkin subsequently seek to examine the relationship between product and corporate brands in order to clarify the role and function of corporate branding within different brand architectures.

Related to this, LaForet and Saunders (1994) have studied the potential methods for categorising and describing various brand strategies available to managers. Their focus lay primarily on the corporate perspective of branding and how companies work with their entire brand portfolios. Joachimsthaler and Aaker

(1997) note that brand-building has become a priority to central strategic management, where senior managers "drive the brand building" and "actively make [it] part of their strategic plans" (1997:39). By also affirming the strategic nature of brand management, LaForet and Saunders find that "from being a trademark stamped on goods, branding has become a part of corporate strategy" (1994:65). Nonetheless, they show that while historically a more visible link has arisen between corporate identity and different brands, very little is still known about how to handle this association.

A number of scholars have therefore moved to consider different Corporate Brand Strategies based on the relationship between the corporate brand and product brands. Acknowledged marketing and brand researchers such as Kapferer (2008), Keller et al. (2008) and Balmer & Greyser (2010) provide their own respective Corporate Brand Strategy categorisation methods. The development of these methods is in many ways an expression for the general raised interest in Corporate Brand Management regarding its various managerial and strategic implications. The increased level of attention afforded to the area seems also to be present among business managers. This can be most clearly exemplified by the strategic reorientation regarding Corporate Brand Management at Unilever, one of the world's largest FMCG companies.

> Last week the FMCG company [Unilever] announced it is to begin featuring its corporate logo in British and Irish consumer ads. Although it has previously done so in Asian and Latin American markets, this marks a change in strategy for the UK. The rationale is to create a 'halo effect' across the company's portfolio. According to a Unilever spokesman, people buying one product from the company are likely to buy other of its brands if they are made aware of the link.

> Brownsell (2009:14)

As Unilever has chosen to launch its corporate brand in the communication activities of its product brands, the focus of Corporate Brand Management in general and the duties of the Corporate Brand Manager in particular are likely to change as the Unilever brand now becomes more exposed. The intentional shift to now attach the corporate brand to the products suggests therefore that the relationship between a company's corporate brand and product brands is considered to be important and closely linked to the general business strategy, as posited by Joachimsthaler and Aaker (1997) and LaForet and Saunders (1994).

In conducting our literature review, we consider that much research has focused on brand hierarchy and the categorisation of brands. Moreover, even though brand management as a corporate function has also been considered, we find that the strategic role as Corporate Brand Manager within different Corporate Brand Strategies has been given relatively little attention. The purpose of our research is consequently *to investigate the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in theory and practice*. In doing so, we hope to widen the theoretical and managerial understanding of the field.

Two research questions are formulated, where each refers to a specific area that is considered relevant to explore in order to fulfil the purpose of our study and guide our research process. Throughout our study, we seek to find specific answers to the following:

1. *What is the role of the Corporate Brand Manager?*

2. *Does the role of the Corporate Brand Manager differ according to different Corporate Brand Strategies, and if so, how does it differ?*

Disposition

This study is organised according to a structure we found suitable in relation to our research purpose. In chapter two we present our theoretical framework and the tools we use in the analysis. The third chapter outlines and describes our methodological process, research philosophy, and research strategy. In the fourth chapter, a summary is given regarding our empirical findings, while the associated graphical tables and lists of data are found in the appendix. The next chapter contains the analysis, wherein our findings are connected with the theoretical framework. This establishes the foundations for our conclusions and contributions, which form the sixth and final chapter. In this closing section, we outline our suggestions for future research in relation to the findings and limitations of our work.

2 Literature review

In this chapter we present our literature review, which consists of two sections, the background and the theoretical framework. Firstly, we describe key elements regarding Corporate Brand Strategies and the role as a Corporate Brand Manager in order to motivate and outline the explicit theoretical tools we will use in the analysis chapter. Secondly, we present in detail the Urde and Melin Categorisation Framework followed by the Brand Custodianship Model by Balmer, Liao, and Wang.

2.1 Background

Much as the product or service brand carries some particular meaning that goes beyond the functional characteristics of the product, the corporate brand similarly takes its foundations from the physical aspects of the company, but serves as well as a representation of that which is not tangible. Several definitions of the concept appear in the rather voluminous field of literature, where the central aspects advanced by researchers have generally focused on usage and utility. Notably, definitions revolve around its symbolic value (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Kapferer, 2008), a hub of corporate culture (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Schultz and de Chernatony, 2002), a covenant between the organisation and its stakeholders (Balmer and Greyser, 2010), a tool for reputation and profile management (Kapferer, 2008), a utility in corporate communications (Uggla, 2006; Balmer, 2010), a summation of internal and external corporate values (Urde, 2003 and 2009), and a bridge between corporate vision, culture, and image (Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

The corporate brand has received increasing attention over the last two and a half decades, and has moved from the shelves of scholars to the boardrooms of executive management. By reviewing academic journals, Balmer (2010) declares it a "hot topic" among policymakers, corporate marketers and branding consultants, who have steadily been according it importance due to its utility, economic value, and strategic weight.

In his seminal article, King (1993) wrote that increased technological innovation and changing customer demographics would result in fewer competitive advantages. Consumers' purchasing choices would depend less on an evaluation of functional benefits, as they would instead turn to regard the company behind the

products, its employees and their skills, attitudes, and behaviour (1993: 46). The building of lasting bonds with customer groups and higher profit margins, he proposes, would have to be found through brand-building, where the corporate brand becomes the main discriminator upon which consumer choice will be based.

Echoing this notion, Hatch and Schultz (2003) write that successful differentiation within more competitive environments could only be found through positioning the whole corporation instead of single products. Key elements of such strategies would be the values and culture of the corporation. Tracing the development even further, Balmer (2010) declares that emotional attachment to the corporate brand is emerging as a key institutional asset, which will provide companies with significant competitive advantages. He therefore affirms that corporate brands have become a widely accepted term that is being found in contemporary scholarly articles, consultants' reports, as well as the speeches and statements by CEOs.

This progression offers two main insights: (1) Corporate branding is a separate and distinct activity from traditional product branding; (2) The corporate brand has become an accepted strategic management area. We now turn to briefly explore the central tenants of each insight.

2.1.1 Corporate Branding as a Separate and Distinct Branding Activity

Traditionally, branding has been the domain of marketing departments, where it has been steered towards the management of product and service brands. Definitions have therefore tended to centre on the brand's ability to transfer some characteristic to a given product that consumers may come to perceive valuable and attractive (Kotler and Keller, 2009). According to de Chernatony (2002), the brand concept is independent of context and conceptual presuppositions do therefore not differ. Rather, it is the *implementation* that differentiates corporate brands from product brands.

Multiple Stakeholders

Compared to product brands, which mainly focus on end-consumers, the corporate brand needs to attend to a much larger group of stakeholders (Xiu and Boggs, 2006). Among these are employees, shareholders, governmental agencies, retailers,

customers, the media, wider society, as well as consumers (King, 1993). Consequently, whereas the product brand is specific and communicates with a carefully selected target group, the corporate brand is *holistic* and represents and communicates the entire company (Mukherjee and Balmer, 2008).

Incorporation of Internal and External Dimensions

The product brand focuses on the physical product, whereas the corporate brand links the internal and external aspects of a company's activities. Urde (2009) argues that "a corporate brand cannot be stronger externally than it is internally" and "the values rooted in the organisation need to resonate with the values perceived and appreciated by the customers over time, and vice versa" (2009: 616). He identifies three main groups of values that the corporate brand incorporates:

(1) The common values of the organisation	*e.g. habits, norms* Assist in answering who we are as an organisation (2009).
(2) The values that sum up the brand itself	*i.e. The brand-essence* Describe the brand's innermost core (2003).
(3) The values as experienced by customers	The utilities – emotional and/or practical – that customers receive from a particular brand (2009).

Corporate Brand and Corporate Identity

As a representation of the entire company, the corporate brand is also a reflection of the corporate identity. Yet, this is not to say that the two are the same, but rather that the two are linked and corporate identity necessarily precedes the corporate brand (Balmer and Greyser, 2010). Whereas the corporate identity is considered a summation of the tangible and intangible elements of the corporate entity, the corporate brand is the result of a conscious decision by senior management to distil the identity into "clearly defined branding propositions" (Balmer, 2001a:281). Consequently, the link between the corporate brand and corporate identity is that the former builds upon the latter, such that the elements of corporate identity need to be in alignment with the proposition of the corporate brand (Balmer and Greyser, 2010).

Strategic Benefits

The strategic benefits of corporate brands can be said to be similar to those of product and service brands. Yet, the crucial point of difference in this case is the extent at which these benefits operate. Balmer (2010) explains that the corporate brand may help to generate consumer preference for the company's products, inspire pride among its employees, and create support among business partners who seek to build valuable alliances with the company. It can thus be seen to operate as a *currency* of good will. Moreover, in utilising codes, signs, and symbols, it may also function as a *language*, whereby it denotes certain meanings among specific groups and communicates messages to the market. By virtue of this, stakeholders become able to understand what the brand is and what it is not, i.e. its identity, whereby it becomes a *navigational tool* that may guide users through the myriad of brands. (2010:182-83).

Multidimensional Concept

While branding, as noted by de Chernatony (2002) above, is independent of context, it is clear that the holistic nature of the corporate brand results in that it encompasses several more corporate functions than individual product brands. Transferring well-known marketing concepts from the product- to the corporate-level results in higher levels of complexity (Balmer, 2001a), given that developing strategies for corporate brand-building requires several cross-organisational functions (Uggla, 2006). The management of corporate brands therefore takes on a multidimensional character, where the corporate brand and product brand can be seen to differ both in their strategic focus and implementation (Balmer, 1995).

2.1.2 Corporate Brands and Strategic Brand Management

Acting as a symbol for the entire company, the corporate brand captures the organisation's values, its identity, and indeed its culture. As a consequence, "corporate brands are marshalled by individuals and groups to define who they are – and who they are not" (Balmer, 2010: 181). It is therefore clear that the management of corporate brands can turn out to be a momentous task, as it encompasses both internal and external facets of the company. Corporate Brand Management Strategies are founded upon the particular corporate brand structure that has been chosen by

the company. A corporate brand structure refers here to how the branded product(s) are ordered within the company and their relationship to the corporate brand. The various structures used by companies are known under the general term *brand hierarchy*, which captures and displays these branding relationships and is a practical means to portray a company's branding strategy (Keller et al., 2002). The company needs thus to choose the appropriate hierarchy to organise its brands in relation to the particular business model followed.

Brand Architecture & Brand Hierarchy

Kapferer (2008) notes that companies have hidden behind their brands based on the fear of being affected by the potential brand failures. As a consequence, many companies have tried to separate their corporate brand from their product brands. However, he further notes that this tendency has gradually shifted towards companies taking the names of their famous brands to a greater extent than before. Kapferer explains that this is partly due to the public's desire to identify the "actors behind the brand", to which companies have had to oblige (2008:388).

The resulting raised interest for corporate branding and Corporate Brand Management as noted by Kapferer has precipitated a need to organise the brands within companies' portfolios. This is known as Brand Architecture, which according to Balmer and Greyser (2010) "refers to the relationship among corporate, company (subsidiary), and product brands" where "[s]uch relationships embrace products and services, or a mixture of the two across the hierarchy of brands" (2010:248). The hierarchy of brands is addressed by Keller et al. (2008), who declare it as "a means of summarizing the branding strategy by displaying the number and nature of common and distinctive brand elements across the firm's products, revealing the explicit ordering of brand elements" (2008:519). Brand elements refer here to the "visual or verbal information that serves to identify and differentiate a product", where the most common are names, logos, symbols, characters, packaging and slogans (2008:36).

The brand hierarchy is used, specifically, to order branded products *in relation* to the corporate brand in different levels. Keller et al. (2002) provide the example of the Toyota Camry XLE, which firstly displays the corporate name (Toyota), the separate product type (Camry) and finally the particular version of the car (XLE).

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Marketing campaigns and activities need then to be developed in such a way that they can support each level in the chosen brand hierarchy (Keller et al., 2008).

Balmer and Greyser (2010) note that the branding environment of today forces managers to take a new perspective on branding within organisations. This is echoed by Keller et al. (2008), who also note that this environment compels brand architects to design suitable brand hierarchies. In order to establish suitable brand hierarchies and deal with the relations between corporate and product brands, Kapferer (2008) advances some key questions that need to be addressed by managers: (1) Should new products use a descriptive name or the corporate name?; (2) How many brand levels should be adopted?; (3) Should there be only one brand name within the company?; (4) How much visibility should be given to the corporate name, group name and the company name itself? (2008:347-48).

To understand these various dimensions of brand architecture and to deal with them from a strategic and manageable position, scholars have proposed categorising brands according to certain criteria or parameters. When discussing the issue regarding different branding categories and the levels of brand hierarchy, Keller et al. (2008) argue that a company has a wide range of strategies to choose from based on their specific situation. They also point out that there is no common strategy that can (or should) be adopted by all companies or for all their respective brands. They provide a way of categorising brands based on their hierarchical position according to two parameters: (1) The number of brands, and (2) The number of products (2008:519). Their model is named the Brand-Product Matrix, from which four different brand categories can be derived, each with their respective strategic approach. These are called the *Corporate (or Company) Brand*, the *Family Brand*, the *Individual Brand*, and the *Modifier Brand* (2008:519).

Balmer and Greyser (2010) also offer their categorisation, where the parameters build upon the certain relationship between the particular brand and the corporation. They label the resulting brand categories as the *Familial*, *Shared*, *Surrogate*, *Multiplex*, *Federal*, and *Avant-garde* categories (2010:249). An additional way of categorisation brands is proposed by Kapferer (2008). In his version, brands are distinguished according to the decided levels of brands within the hierarchy, the linkages with other brands, and the visibility and role of the corporate brand. The allocation of them into their respective brand category is based on two parameters:

(1) Indicator of origin, and (2) Product differentiation and personalization. The resulting categories are then labelled as *Corporate Master Brand*, *Maker's Brand*, *Umbrella Brand*, *Source Brand*, *Endorsing Brand*, *Range Brand*, and *Product Brand* (2008:352).

As noted, several ways for categorising brands, brand relations and Brand Strategies abound, where all offer their own structure and build upon their respective creator's philosophy and theoretical approach. Melin (2008) describes that the brand has traditionally been treated as a competitive tool, where much attention has been given towards the notion of "one product, one brand". Product brands have thus generally been obliged to compete individually, which brings Melin to proclaim that the question regarding how a company can develop a holistic brand structure remains. Melin and Urde (1991) present their own framework for categorising different Corporate Brand Strategies based on the relationship between the *motherbrand* and the *daughterbrand(s)*. As an analogy for the bond between a mother and her daughter, the two terms refer to a hierarchical relationship of a company's brands. Based on the variation of strength in the bond between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands, their framework then depicts four typical categories known as the *Mother Brand*, *Mother-Daughter Brand*, *Daughter-Mother Brand*, and *Individual Brand* (1991:38). In using this framework, Melin (2008) then introduces that each category can also be characterised by a specific combination of the two parameters (1) Flexibility and (2) Cost efficiency (2008:108). He thus evolves upon the framework by Melin and Urde by declaring that these parameters are decisive when characterising the four categories. The categorisation framework proposed by Melin and Urde (1991) combined with the parameters presented by Melin (2008) will be used as a central theoretical tool in this study, which will be expanded upon and argued for during the next section.

On the basis of any chosen brand architecture, the practitioner generally faces a number of different managerial issues. The next section shall explicate the tasks set before corporate brand managers as evolved by scholars and theorists.

The Role of the Corporate Brand Manager
Reiterating what was said by de Chernatony (2002), branding is independent of context and as such, corporate brands and product brands do not differ conceptually.

It is, however, the *implementation* of branding that differentiates them. We therefore turn to look at what has been stated about the areas of responsibility of the Corporate Brand Manager.

Corporate Brand Management is said to belong to the upper-management level of the company, as it needs to be dealt with in unison with the overarching corporate strategy (Balmer, 2001b; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; de Chernatony, 2002). All personnel are involved in the implementation of these strategies, as the corporate brand reflects and communicates the entire company (Mukherjee and Balmer, 2008; Kapferer, 2008). Consequently, as the Corporate Brand Manager needs to be attentive to employee sentiments and perceptions, it falls within their horizon to also handle issues of *internal* brand-building.

Moreover, whereas brand-building in relation to product brands is dependent upon the product life cycle of the particular product, the activities related to the corporate brand flows over a much longer time frame (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). The activities of the Corporate Brand Manager need also involve several different skills and talents, as well as incorporating the functions of several company departments. Balmer (2010) notes for instance that mangers are required to source the competencies from human resource management, corporate communications, marketing, and sales, while also featuring several organisational tasks.

In general, Corporate Brand Management is seen to involve communicating and building strong corporate brands. Yet, another crucial task addressed by the manager is the role as custodian of the existing brand. Therefore, apart from efforts concerned with bolstering brands, managers need to be attentive to adapting and maintaining the values, mission, and vision of the corporate brand (Balmer, Liao, and Wang, 2010). While the internal dimensions of management have been emphasised, the custodian must also ensure that the brand promise is reflected in the activities of employees. To accomplish this, the manager needs adequate leadership qualities, as to be able to ascertain that strategies are understood and adhered to. Additionally, Balmer, Liao, and Wang consider that it is within the manager's responsibilities to make certain that ample resources are allocated to the corporate brand.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In the pursuit of fulfilling the purpose of our study, specific theoretical tools have been selected that will become deployed during the analysis of the empirical data. To describe and categorise various Corporate Brand Strategies, the framework for categorisation introduced by Melin and Urde (1991) combined with the parameters by (2008) will be used. The works by Balmer (2001a and 2001b), Hatch and Schultz (2003) and Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) are later drawn upon to illustrate the tasks and areas of responsibilities of Corporate Brand Managers.

2.2.1 The Corporate Brand Strategy Categorisation Framework

When trying to determine the strategic role of a company's brands, it is important to "build a brand hierarchy defining how a company's brands are related to each other" (Melin, 2008:106). Doing so provides the means for understanding which brands should be prioritised as well as allowing for efficient organisation of the brand portfolio according to each brand's respective function. In such a hierarchy, Melin argues that the name of the company often takes a central place, and this becomes transformed into a strategic brand, i.e. the corporate brand. Consequently, the other brands within the portfolio become grouped under the corporate brand and the task then falls to managers to decide upon the appropriate Brand Strategy to be pursued.

When deciding upon suitable Brand Strategies, Melin argues that certain criteria need to be fulfilled. A successful Brand Strategy, he declares, should (1) Be simple and logical, (2) Be effective in its contribution to the accumulation of investments made in brand-building communications, and (3) Create conditions to develop a well-functioning brand management-system. (2008:262).

Melin also declares that for any choice on strategy, companies are required to decide between *cost efficiency* and *flexibility*. The company is thus obliged to choose its Brand Strategy both according to the criteria above and based upon its requirements regarding each of these parameters. As introduced by Melin and Urde (1991) in their categorisation framework, four general Corporate Brand Strategies are offered based on the variations of strength in the relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrand(s). As mentioned before, these are the *Mother Brand*, *Mother-Daughter Brand*, *Daughter-Mother Brand*, and *Individual Brand Strategies*.

Having participated in the formulation of these categories, Urde (2003) has demonstrated that the terms motherbrand and daughterbrand can be used synonymously with the terms "corporate brand" and "product brand" (2003:1029). We therefore note that the two pairs of terms can be seen to refer to the same brands within a company's brand hierarchy. We find the mother-daughter relationship a more useful bifurcation that more clearly represents how the two levels of brands are connected in the Melin and Urde (1991) categorisation framework. For this reason, the terms motherbrand and daughterbrand, and the relation between them, will be used consistently throughout this study.

In using the categorisation advanced by Melin and Urde (1991), Melin (2008) describes the four Corporate Brand Strategies according to the taxonomy between cost efficiency and flexibility. He formulates a continuum, where the *Mother Brand* and *Individual Brand* Strategies are found at opposite ends, based on that the former allows for very low levels of flexibility but high cost efficiency while the latter offers the opposite. The *Mother-Daughter Brand* and *Daughter-Mother Brand Strategies* are then placed in between these two extremes, and provide in turn variations of the two parameters. This is presented graphically below.
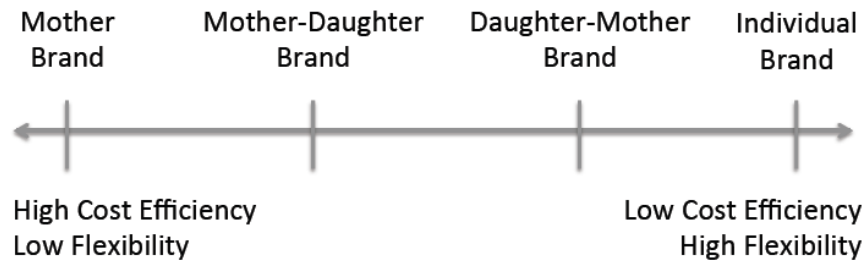
Image taken from Melin, 2008:108

Nevertheless, Melin reaffirms that all of these strategies offer their own respective advantages and disadvantages, which makes them more or less suitable depending on the specific context in which they are to be employed. Deducing first which strategic approach has been followed by the individual company therefore becomes key in the process of categorisation.

The combination between the Melin and Urde (1991) categorisation framework and the Melin (2008) parameters has been chosen as a central theoretical tool for this study.[2] This choice is based upon the following reasons: (1) It offers the ability of clear and concise categorisation of Corporate Brand Strategies, (2) The labelling of the different categories indicates coherently the communicative relationship between the motherbrand and daughterbrand(s), (3) The simplicity of categorising according to the two parameters may facilitate the analytical process of data. In the following sections the *Mother Brand Strategy*, *Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy*, *Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy*, and *Individual Brand Strategy* will be explained in detail.

Mother Brand Strategy

Melin postulates that "[w]hat defines a motherbrand strategy is that a company's full range of products is marketed under one single brand" (2008:109). The notions contained under the Mother Brand Strategy have been described according to similar labels such as the Familial and Shared Brand Architectures (Balmer and Greyser, 2010), the Family Brand Strategy (Keller et al. 2008), and the Umbrella Brand Strategy (Kapferer, 2008). In relating the Mother Brand Strategy to his two parameters, Melin highlights that it is characterized specifically by a high level of cost

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[2] The Melin and Urde (1991) framework for categorising different Corporate Brand Strategies with the addition of the Melin (2008) parameters will henceforth within this study be referred to as simply the *Categorisation Framework*.

effectiveness but a low level of flexibility. The advantages of high cost effectiveness, Melin writes, are that fewer resources are required when communicating with the market, given that there is only *one single brand* that needs to be communicated. As a result, all products within the company's product range may benefit from various marketing activities.

Applying a Mother Brand Strategy makes it easier to introduce new products within the company portfolio through so called brand extension (Kapferer, 2008). Melin points out, however, that the major disadvantage with the strategy rests on that all communication is made through one single brand, which means that the resulting gains in brand awareness for all products is based on their one common denominator – "the Mother Brand". Consequently, he states that the low levels of flexibility experienced within the Mother Brand Strategy makes it quite hard to individualise separate products. Moreover, as the Mother Brand Strategy brings the corporate brand and the product closer together, negative publicity regarding the product may risk spilling-over onto the company and its other products. This is a central risk within the Mother Brand Strategy, but is nevertheless a natural consequence due to the strong one-company-one-brand relationship (Melin, 2008:109).

Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy
The characteristics of this strategy are that "single products or ranges of products can be launched under one daughterbrand" which may thereby "provide some degree of independence in relation to the motherbrand" (Melin, 2008:109). This notion is captured by other approaches similar to the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, such as the Multiplex Strategy (Balmer and Greyser, 2010), the Modifier Brand Strategy (Keller et al., 2008), and the Range Brand Strategy (Kapferer, 2008). What differentiates this strategy from the Mother Brand Strategy is, according to Melin (2008), primarily the independence of the daughterbrand. Important to note, however, is that this independence exists within a certain motherbrand framework. In other words, daughterbrands are allowed to stand alone as long as the motherbrand guides the process. Melin posits that within a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, the motherbrand takes the role of a "driver" or a "guide" towards the

daughterbrand(s), and thereby leads the way and points-out the direction (2008:110).

Similar to the Mother Brand Strategy, the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy also has certain advantages and disadvantages. Although not as cost efficient as the Mother Brand Strategy, it is still characterized by rather high cost effectiveness but at the same time being somewhat more flexible. Melin notes that it is easier to establish and communicate separate daughterbrands that can benefit from the strong motherbrand, as demonstrated by examples such as the SAS EuroBonus and Opel Astra. The disadvantages of the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy come, meanwhile, in the shape of confusion. Since daughterbrands are allowed a level of independence, consumers may in some cases become mislead and confused by that two brands (the motherbrand and the daughterbrand) are connected to the same product. Melin provides the vivid example of 3M when they launched the 3M Scotch Tape in the USA. As consumers were unsure about what denoted the brand as opposed to the product, they came to believe that Scotch was the product name. Therefore, the strategy might at times cause confusion as to what is the actual brand and what is the actual product. The Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy is furthermore said to be the most common one of all the four strategies in the Categorisation Framework (2008:110).

Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Characteristic for the strategy is "the central position of the daughterbrand where the motherbrand in general takes a supporting position working as a so called guarantee seal" (Melin, 2008:110). Approaches taking on characteristics similar to that of the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy are the Surrogate Brand Strategy (Balmer and Greyser, 2010), and the Endorsing Brand Strategy (Kapferer, 2008). Melin (2008) affirms, however, that the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy comes with a rather high level of flexibility compared to the previous two Corporate Brand Strategies of the *Categorisation Framework*, as it allows for the introduction of several daughterbrands each with its respective unique position. What binds them all together is still the motherbrand, yet now the motherbrand appears in the background while the daughterbrand exists in the frontline of communications. Moreover, Melin states that since both the motherbrand and the daughterbrand(s)

are communicated simultaneously, this strategy can be seen as rather cost efficient, though not to the same degree as the Mother Brand and the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategies. However, he also points-out that in order for this strategy to be successful, the motherbrand and the daughterbrands respective position must *not be too* distinct from each other. There must be a visible connection but still not as strong as within the Mother-Daughter Brand strategy. As an example, Melin highlights Volkswagen and its strong daughterbrands Golf, Jetta, Polo and Passat. These kinds of strong daughterbrands have the potential of being more popular than the motherbrand itself, as exemplified by the quote below.

> In some cases the products that are launched through daughterbrands are characterized by their cutting edge profile. These extremely famous daughter brands can be denoted 'silver bullets' and are represented by for example Walkman (Sony) and Viper (Dodge).
>
> Melin (2008:111)

Individual Brand Strategy

The trademarks of an Individual Brand Strategy are "that each product is marketed through separate brands *without any connection* at all to the motherbrand" (Melin, 2008:111, our emphasis). The Product Brand Strategy, as formulated by Kapferer (2008), appears to agree with this, as it "involves the assignment of a particular name to one and only one product" (2008:356), whereas Keller et al. (2008) also label the corresponding approach the Individual Brand Strategy. While the Individual Brand strategy in Melin's account offers low levels of cost efficiency, very high levels of flexibility are granted, which have been utilised by companies applying so-called "multi-branding strategies" (2008:111). Multi-branding is described by Melin as characterized by a wide range of brands within a certain product category in order to maximise the company's share of the market. Moreover, as vast amounts of resources are demanded by the strategy, it is characterised by low levels of cost efficiency, which largely makes it sustainable to large international companies. Notable examples of companies following this strategy are Mars, Procter & Gamble, and until recently Unilever, where the Individual Brand strategy has allowed them to increase their sales through market segmentation. Furthermore, the high level of flexibility and the possibility to individualise brands are, according to Melin, seen as the major advantages of this strategy.

Although the Individual Brand Strategy opens up for having many brands within the same company, the fact that it is very resource demanding is according to Melin the strongest argument against it. This has tended to lead many companies to instead focus on a few strong individual brands, also known as their "Power Brands" (2008:112). Unilever has, for instance, chosen to downsize its more than 1 600 brands to its 400 strongest (Deighton, 2008:2).

2.2.2 The Corporate Brand – A Distinct Field of Management

In trying to capture what actually defines the role of the Corporate Brand Manager, we deem it relevant to use two specific areas as representations for what we are looking to study. These are (1) The characteristics for the context in which the manager operates and (2) His or her specific tasks and responsibilities.

Managerial Context of the Corporate Brand Manager

The previous section gives the immediate impression that the practice of Corporate Brand Management is quite distinct from that of Product Brand Management. Hatch and Schultz (2003) along with Balmer (2001b) have each introduced lists that summarises the key differences between the two. For reasons of clarity, their views are combined here in the table below.

Characteristic	Product Brands	Corporate Brands
Managed by [1]	Middle Manager	CEO
Attention focused on [2]	The Product	The Company
Responsibility [1]	Middle Manager	All personnel
Importance to company [1]	Functional	Strategic
Cognate Discipline(s) [1]	Marketing	Strategy/Multidisciplinary
Communications Mix [1]	Marketing Communications	Total Corporate Communications
Delivered by [2]	Marketing	Whole Company
Time Horizon [2]	Short (life of product)	Long (life of company)
Focus [1]	Mainly customer	Multiple internal and external stakeholder groups and networks
Values [1]	Mainly contrived	Those of founders + mix of corporate + other sub-cultures

[1] Balmer (2001b)
[2] Hatch and Schultz (2003)

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Based on the lucid points of difference, we see that the distinguishing characteristics of Corporate Brand Management are the following. Many scholars agree that the CEO is the person carrying the ultimate responsibility for the Corporate Brand Management function at the company [Balmer, 2001b; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; de Chernatony 2002; Balmer, Liao, and Wang, 2010]. The handling of the corporate brand is seen as of such central *strategic importance* that it requires the attention of executive management. This can be explained by that the attention of the branding process is focused on the *company* as opposed to individual products (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

In line with this, the management of the corporate brand is said to require organisation-wide support from across several functional units, which involves that the manager has to draw upon a broad range of skills and talents. The efforts required therefore "significantly overextends the expertise of the typical marketing department" and managers need to be able to source from outside this domain (Hatch and Schultz, 2003: 1045). Added to this, as "a corporate brand cannot be stronger externally than it is internally" (Urde, 2009: 616), managers need to build the corporate brand internally among employees, as these are an important stakeholder group. Similarly, attention should also be given to employee-branding, where individuals' skills and competencies should be considered as well as their suitability in representing the corporate brand (King, 1993). This would subsequently be in line with ensuring that the future of the company is safe-guarded.

Managing the corporate branding process furthermore necessitates an integration of both internal and external communication (Urde, 2009), whereby the brand becomes communicated across multiple channels and through several contact surfaces (Balmer, 2001b). This company-wide communication effort is also known as *total corporate communication*, where communications therefore extend beyond that of traditional marketing, i.e. the 4 P's, as *all personnel* becomes involved in the exposure and image of the company (Balmer, 2001b). Thus, communication can be seen as delivered by the *whole company* instead of the marketing department (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

The Corporate Brand Manager is also said to be concerned with the task of branding over a much longer time horizon compared to the product brand. This is in part due to that the corporate brand may symbolise the company's heritage and

values (Balmer, Greyser, and Urde, 2007), and in that case, is intimately connected to the company's identity (Balmer and Greyser, 2010). Mainly, however, it is explained by that the corporate brand may be infused with the founders' values and vision of the future, (Balmer, 2001b). These are usually of a longer temporal nature than the values and promises of individual product brands, which are generally contingent upon the comparatively shorter product life cycle (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

The list above is meant to serve as a rhetorical device, whereby the reader is provided with a forthright illustration of the distinctiveness concerning the management of corporate brands. In juxtaposing the two types of brand management, the combination of the views of Balmer (2001b) and Hatch and Schultz (2003) clarifies the key elements that distinguishes Corporate Brand Management and identifies, moreover, the areas of concern to Corporate Brand Managers in general. Having thus recognised Corporate Brand Management as a distinctive area of management, the far-right column will be used exclusively in the ensuing analysis.

Tasks and Responsibilities of Corporate Brand Managers
While a number of studies were found to advice on the tasks and responsibilities of Corporate Brand Managers [Kernstock and Brexendorf, 2009; Kay, 2006; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2008; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Whelan et al., 2010] two models in particular stood out as potentially suitable to the present study. These were the Brand Stewardship (Balmer, Greyser, and Urde, 2007) and the Corporate Brand Custodianship (Balmer, Liao, and Wang, 2010) models.

Balmer, Greyser, and Urde (2007) postulate the idea of Brand Stewardship in relation to their study of heritage brands. The model is meant as a tool, by which a company may nurture, extract, and protect the value from the heritage contained within its corporate brand (2007:9,14). In going about this, managers utilising the Brand Stewardship model focus on its five essential elements, *Track Record*, *Longevity*, *Core Values*, *Use of Symbols*, and *History important to Identity* (2007:9). By this token, their model then introduces a number of actions, which are then proposed to companies with a heritage brand (2007:15).

The Brand Stewardship model summarises the key managerial areas of importance to Corporate Brand Managers, which can add interesting dimensions to the Corporate Brand Strategies followed by companies. Yet, while insightful, the

model focuses mainly on the management of corporate brands with a heritage, which we consider to be a too narrow perspective with respect to our research purpose. As we have set ourselves the task to investigate the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in theory and practice, a wider conception of the tasks and responsibilities could potentially be more suitable.

In their study on the management of institutional brands, Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) formulate a model for what they call Corporate Brand Custodianship. They envision the corporate brand manager as the *custodian* of the company's brand, and subsequently argue that central tasks involve brand-building *as well as* brand-stewardship. The model (found on page 29) affirms the eclectic nature of the Corporate Brand Management field and postulates *nine core activities* that senior managers are required to follow in order to maintain relevancy of the corporate brand. Below follows a description and a graphical representation of the activities.

(1) **Adapting** – Corporate brands need to be responsive, which makes it necessary for corporate brand managers to *pay attention to changes* in the business environment and adapt accordingly (2010: 86). In practice, this would suggest adapting the corporate brand promise to arising circumstances.

(2) **Communicating** – Managers need to communicate with stakeholders located both *outside* (customers, society, media, etc.) and *inside* (employees, shareholders, etc.) the company and monitor the flow of outward- and inward-bound communications (2010: 87). This would mean ensuring that the corporate brand is expressed coherently and consistently.

(3) **Embracing** – Activities should take other groups apart from customers into consideration. Managers should ensure that the brand promise *remains meaningful* to all stakeholders (2010: 87), which would imply that their varying values and preferences are respected.

(4) **Endorsing** – Managers should be attentive to the *benefits of allying* with other strong brands and the mutual advantages found through endorsements, which might help strengthen the corporate brand as well as the

daughterbrands (2010: 87). This could as well apply to endorsements within the company's own brand architecture.

(5) **Investing** – Adequate *financial resources* are necessary to support and strengthen the corporate brand long-term. This entails providing ample budgets for communication, brand-building, and maintenance of the corporate brand architecture (2010: 88).

(6) **Leading** – In order to ensure company-wide support for and adherence to the brand, the Corporate Brand Manager needs *sufficient leadership skills and qualities.* This is to ensure that the strategic direction is clearly understood, implemented, and followed (2010: 88).

(7) **Maintaining** – Managers play a critical part in the *preserving and nurturing* of corporate brand values. They need to make certain that the values are followed and adhered to in the daily operations of the company (2010: 88). Concerning retail companies, managers could for instance implement customer service training.

(8) **Reflecting** – Company operations should be *run according* to the corporate brand *promise, vision*, and *mission* (2010: 88). This could mean ensuring high levels of quality are kept through customer surveys and brand audits.

(9) **Supporting** – Senior managers should ascertain that both *commitment* and support for the brand promise exists *throughout the organisation*. Custodianship of the corporate brand means, essentially, that all personnel are involved in branding activities (2010: 88).
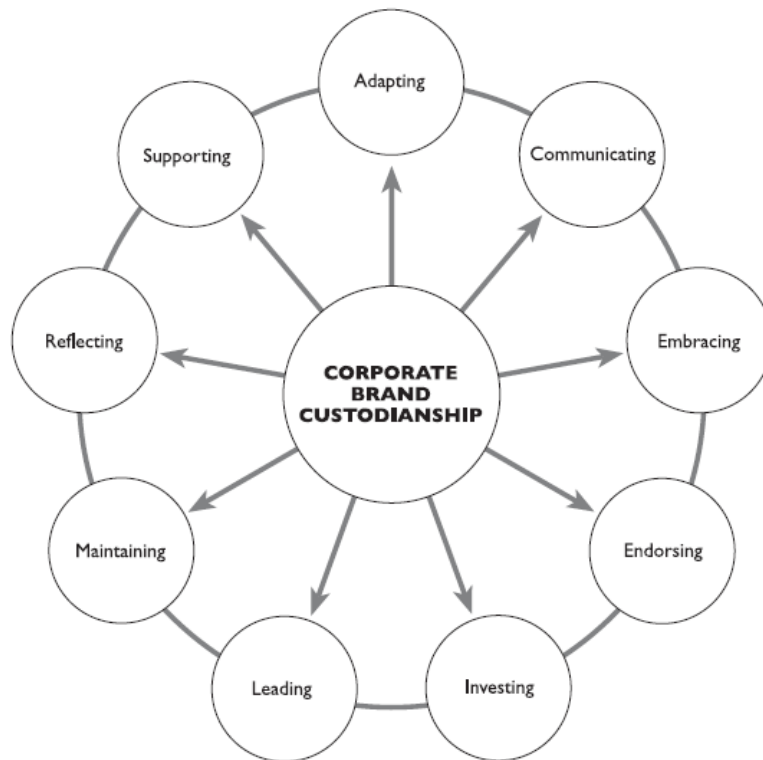
Image taken from Balmer, Liao & Wang, 2010:86

The Corporate Brand Custodianship model can be seen to capture the key Corporate Brand Management areas internal brand-building, value-management, and total corporate communication. Moreover, it advances the idea that managers need also be concerned with readily available financial resources, brand endorsement, adaption of brand promise to context, and managerial leadership. As these aspects are held forward as central to the task of assuring that the corporate brand is kept strong and relevant, we thus consider it appropriate as a tool in relation to our research purpose.

3 Methodology

This chapter describes our methodological research approach and strategy. We start by discussing our research philosophy and relation towards knowledge and how this has helped us in our methodological reasoning. Then we present our methods for data collection, respondent selection criteria, interviewing and data analysis. We also provide a detailed description of our questionnaire and how it was constructed.

3.1 Research Philosophy

According to Lundahl and Skärvad (1999), all scientific research is carried out within a frame of certain given rules. These rules are meant to guide the research process and stem from choices made by the researcher, e.g. choosing what will and will not be observed (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Studying the role of the Corporate Brand Manager and Corporate Brand Management as an expertise with various applications and different strategies, we outline a specific research approach that will aid us in identifying and justifying our methodological choices. To describe our relationship towards knowledge – how we use and define it, as well as how we interact with social entities – demands a certain ontological and epistemological framework.

Bryman and Bell (2011) identify ontology as concerned with the nature of social entities. They continue by describing the fundamental ontological difference regarding social entities: "whether social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors" (2011:20). These two ways of relating to social entities are respectively referred to as *objectivism* and *constructionism* (2011:20). We would like to define our area of research – Corporate Brand Management – as a social phenomenon, continually shaped and reshaped primarily by social actors – Corporate Brand Managers. In other words, Corporate Brand Management is not to be considered a natural science, but rather a socially created conceptual framework suitable for specific organisational structures and business strategies. Stating this, we have chosen to adopt a *constructivist position* and we rely on this to guide the process of our research.

Epistemology is generally defined "as the science regarding the origin of knowledge, its validity, methods and specific nature" (Svenning, 2000:25). Moreover "an epistemological issue concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in discipline" (Bryman and Bell, 2011:15). Based on the research purpose of this study, we consider that our epistemological approach is closely related to a social constructionist perspective. Easterby Smith et al. (2008) state that social constructionism "stems from the view that reality is not objective and exterior, but is socially constructed and given meaning by people" (2008:59). Moreover, they point at certain definitional characteristics of social constructionism: (1) Human interests are the main drivers of science, (2) Explanations aim to increase general understanding of the situation, and (3) Research progresses through gathering rich data from which ideas are included.

Additionally, Easterby Smith et al. (2008) describe some important methodological implications of social constructionism. They explain that the techniques used are often conversation-based, the analysis focuses on sense-making, and the outcome seeks to understand the phenomenon (2008:63). We consider that this, along with the definitional characteristics outlined above, to correlate well with our research philosophy and methodological reasoning.

3.2 Research Strategy

Regarding our chosen research strategy, we would like to stress that the elements and specific methods are not entirely homogeneously employed. Based on the complex and to some extent abstract nature of our research, we find it necessary to apply a certain mixture of suitable methods.

The inductive method involves "drawing generalizable inferences based on observation" (Bryman and Bell, 2011:13). We therefore position our research as being of a mostly inductive nature, as we seek to draw conclusions from the empirical findings (Lundahl and Skärvad, 1999). However, when approaching our area of research, we consider that initial theoretical understanding and prior research are important. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), this is a natural element of inductive studies, where researchers often need to use relevant prior theoretical knowledge in order to analyse the collected data, generalise the result, and thereafter generate new theory.

When developing a research strategy, the epistemological stance will as stated guide the process. Easterby Smith et al. (2008:93) argue that "constructionist research designs start from the assumption that there is no absolute truth, and the job of the researcher should be to establish how various claims for truth and reality become constructed every day". This is well in line with our research and methodological approach. While the truth might differ according to various interpretations of it (as created by independent social entities), it brings us closer to the issue regarding the potential subjects of study, e.g. interview participants.

To fulfil the purpose of this study, we have determined that the research process requires some kind of thoroughly conducted interaction with Corporate Brand Managers. This interaction demands, however, a reflection to be made regarding the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the study. In positivist research, i.e. objectivism, the researcher is considered to assume an objective stance towards the subject (Lundahl and Skärvad, 1999). Yet, in conducting constructionist research, the researcher might find it difficult to stay objective. A possible solution is presented by Easterby Smith et al. (2008:934) meaning that the subjects of the study can be seen as "partners in the research process". Guided by this notion, we as researchers aim to take a flexible and open-minded approach in the interaction with the research subjects. Moreover, since we are interested in the interpretation of a particular phenomenon by a certain social group, a strategy or method that is "sensitive to how participants interpret their social world may be the direction to choose" (Bryman and Bell, 2011:35). The research methods we find most suitable for our study will be described in detail in section 3.3.

At this point, we would like to state that we have chosen *Grounded Theory* as the conceptual framework for our research process and methodological choices. Grounded Theory was first introduced by Glaser and Strauss and is defined as "a specific methodology on how to get from systematically collecting data to producing a multivariate conceptual theory" (Glaser, 1999:836). In addition, Bryman and Bell (2011:576) also define grounded theory as a "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process", a method where there is a close relationship between data collection, analysis and theory. It is important to note that grounded theory "should not be used as a justification for doing some vaguely qualitative research without any clear view of where it is

supposed to lead" (Easterby Smith et al., 2008:101). What drives us to integrate a grounded theory approach in our research process is the comparative technique characterising the approach, which involves looking at a certain issue or problem in different settings and situations (Easterby Smith et al., 2008). Our research has clear comparative influences and will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

Another important factor when it comes to our choice for using grounded theory is the outcome of such a process. Bryman and Bell (2011) describe the outcome as derived from categorising the data and findings through constant comparison. We consider categorising both a suitable and manageable method for our research, and for this reasons it will be used as a central analytical tool. We would, however, like to point out that while grounded theory is employed, theory-testing will not be the emphasis of our study. Following an inductive process, our aim is rather to shift focus from testing theory towards generating new theory. This described by Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) as a common feature of the grounded theory approach. Finally, we would like to highlight that the usage of grounded theory in our research process is done based on the involvement of the so-called "agreed features", as defined by Easterby Smith et al. (2008:101). They declare that these features dictate that grounded theory must fit the substantive area, be understandable and useable by actors, and be sufficiently complex to account for variation.

3.3 Research Method

To fulfil our research purpose, we have chosen to conduct research of an exploratory nature, motivated by that it may aid us as researchers to "gain new insights" (Jaeger and Halliday, 1998:64). Malhotra (2010) states that exploratory research is characterised by the unstructured gathering of qualitative data in the pursuit to gain an understanding for the particular area of study. We find this to fall well in line with our stated research purpose to explore the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in both theory and practice.

The data will naturally come from empirical research, however, the overall problem with empirical research is how to translate research questions and theory into tangible measuring instruments, such as surveys and observation protocols (Svenning, 2000). Easterby Smith et al. (2008) argue that while data can be analysed in many ways, the researcher must make methodological choices in consistency with

the research philosophy. Guided by our common sense and that our research area is complex and abstract, we find it necessary to not lock ourselves to a specific strategy regarding collecting and analysing data. Rather, we want to create a suitable mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, since we see it as unwise to separate our qualitative from our quantitative findings. This way of reasoning is addressed by Bryman and Bell (2011:693), who propose that the researcher could "try to think of the quantitative and the qualitative findings thematically across the two sets of results, so that the findings are presented in terms of substantive issues rather than in terms of different methods". We aim to follow this approach as we present and analyse our data based on its ability to strengthen and deepen our findings.

Nevertheless, we determine that most of our research is conducted following a largely qualitative framework. Bryman and Bell (2011) state that a qualitative strategy is necessarily of an inductive nature and may thus work in symbiosis with an inductive approach. Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) also describe the connection between qualitative methods and induction as well as their close and suitable relationship towards grounded theory. They propose that when conducting qualitative research, the researcher aims at understanding individuals' interpretation of themselves, their surroundings, and respective contexts (1999). Thus, in following our interpretation of the phenomenon to be investigated as socially constructed and influenced by individuals within certain contexts, we find a qualitative research method appropriate for our study.

3.4 Data Collection

It is argued that "[b]efore adopting any method of data collection, it always helps to be clear about the overall objectives of the research" (Easterby Smith et al., 2008:142). Regularly when it comes to investigating certain given topics, using interviews for collecting data is not only a suitable, but often also a necessary technique (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). This is moreover addressed by Svenning (2000), who argues that when it comes to interviews, they are not only an important part of qualitative research, but also that there are many different interview methods that can be applied. Additionally, Svenning underscores the importance of the researcher being creative and adaptive during the interview, and doing so often causes the data collection process to become more flexible and nuanced.

Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2011) describe qualitative interviewing as taking much more interest in the respondents' point of view, increasing the flexibility of the process, and creating a wider approach towards the research question. In line with our research philosophy and methods, following the research purpose of this study we deem that conducting qualitative interviews will serve as our method for collecting data. Not only will this method of data collection call for interaction with Corporate Brand Managers, but it will hopefully also widen our understanding of the different strategies of Corporate Brand Management. Since we aim to generate a rich and deep description of our research area, the data collection process will consist of a majority of qualitative interview questions. Yet, it will also include a selection of suitable quantitative questions to be used in symbiosis with the qualitative questions, which is supported by our research philosophy and strategy.

When designing the interview process, the first issue to be addressed by the researcher is the degree of interview structure (Easterby Smith et al., 2008). The two major types of qualitative (non-standardised) interviews – semi-structured and unstructured – are described by Bryman and Bell (2011). They state that the main difference is the somewhat predetermined questions found within semi-structured interviews compared to the absence of such questions in their unstructured counterparts. We determine that a semi-structured interview format will be suitable for our study, given that it allows the respondents to elaborate on their answers and the interviewer to ask follow-up questions (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). Following our philosophical stance, there are deeper and underlying dimensions affecting our research, hence we want to provide the respondents the possibility to answer relatively freely. This is addressed by (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999), who affirm that non-standardised interviews, i.e. semi-structured or unstructured, are often used in order to investigate individual opinions regarding certain underlying dimensions, and hence appear commonly within qualitative research.

In order to generate a deep understanding and collect as detailed information as possible from the respondents, we intend on using the *Laddering Technique*. Laddering is described by Easterby Smith et al. (2008:146) as when the researcher asks follow-up "why" type questions, e.g. "why did you use that strategy?". Moreover, they maintain that it may function as a valuable tool when conducting qualitative research, seeing as laddering will help the respondent to move from statements of

fact and descriptive accounts towards underlying values and motives of respondents (2008:146). Laddering can thus be found as a useful approach, which is further supported by Malhotra (2010), who considers that it may generate more *useful* information when employed in this kind of interviews.

3.5 Respondent Selection Criteria

Having decided upon the method for data collection, the next step is to define the criteria for selecting the interview respondents. Regarding our area of research, a necessary step is to identify and interact with individuals working with Corporate Brand Management. We also need to restrict our study due to natural reasons, such as the time frame and limited research budget. These are the restrictions and respondent selection criteria we find suitable in order to conduct the study: (1) The respondents must be working with Corporate Brand Management, (2) The respondents must be employees at medium- to large-sized companies, and (3) The companies must be situated in Sweden. We intend to use the restrictions during the collection of data as follows. Regarding the first criterion, each respondent will be asked at the beginning of the interview whether he or she is working within Corporate Brand Management. Concerning company size, this will be determined based on the number of employees at the particular company. According to the European Commission, medium-sized companies employ between 50 – 250 individuals, while large-sized companies employ above 250 (European Commission, 2012). Based on this, we decide to mainly contact respondents at companies that employ at least 200 individuals. This, along with information concerning if the company operates in Sweden will be collected separately by us before contacting respondents.

Based on these criteria, it might be hard to get in contact with the respondents, as they are most likely positioned at a upper-managerial level and might therefore have limited time to participate. These features must consequently be taken into account when designing and conducting the interviews. We will describe this process in detail in the next section of this chapter.

Due to that our personal business networks are rather limited, in order for us to find suitable respondents we will use a non-probability sampling method. We find the snowball sampling method both suitable and manageable based on our

restrictions and selection criteria. Easterby Smith et al., (2008:218) state that "snowball sampling starts with someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in a study who is then asked to name others who would also be eligible". Using this method could work in our favour to quickly and effectively locate and come in contact with suitable respondents. Moreover, snowball sampling is described by Bryman and Bell (2011) to be a commonly used method when conducting qualitative research, which is further supported by our research philosophy and strategy. In order to locate the first respondents, we will however rely on our supervisor's personal contacts, which is also a common trait within snowball sampling (Easterby Smith et al., 2008).

When conducting the interviews, there is an important ethical consideration that needs to be addressed. Given that our research aims to cover a strategic perspective of Corporate Brand Management and the role of the Corporate Brand Manager, there might be an issue regarding the respondents' willingness to divulge (potentially) sensitive information concerning both themselves and their respective company. As it is important that the researchers avoid the risk of in any way harming the respondents (Bryman and Bell, 2011), they should make sure not to publish any sensitive information that could be damaging to the respondent's person or interests (Easterby Smith et al., 2008). For this reason, we will offer the respondents full anonymity and consequently no names of the respondents or their respective companies will be published in this study. In addition, we believe that the element of anonymity will benefit our process, as it might increase the respondents' willingness to take part in the interview.

3.6 Designing and Conducting the Interviews

As mentioned, respondents will most likely have a limited amount of time to take part in the interviews. On the basis of this, we have chosen to design the interview in such a way that it will take no longer than approximately 10 – 15 minutes to complete, while still covering the key areas of interests and being open enough to allow laddering and being of a semi-structure. The interview questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

When deciding how to carry out the interviews, we were again compelled to take into account the respondents' corporate position, limitation of time, and

possible difficulty to come in contact with. Consequently, we find that conducting the interviews by telephone may be a suitable option. The usage of telephone interviews is addressed by Lundahl & Skärvad (1999), who consider that interviews arranged in this way are time effective and might cajole the respondents into an immediate answer whether they want to take part or not. Choosing telephone interviews as a method for conducting the interviews is further supported by Easterby Smith et al. (2008), who state that in telephone interviews "managers feel less committed because they do not have an obligation to host the researcher at the sitting". Moreover, Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that telephone interviews is a relatively cheap way of conducting qualitative research as well as the fact that the respondents will often be more likely to answer sensitive questions when the interviewer is not physically present. The latter point we see as an opportunity to collect vital and important data and the fact that it is described as a relatively cheap way of conducting qualitative research makes it even more suitable given our limited budget. Furthermore, we consider that using telephone interviews is well in line with our research strategy and will provide us with a sufficient amount of appropriate data.

Before the interview phase began we conducted a pilot study with three initial respondents. Our aim was to test the questions, obtain constructive feed-back, and if needed, perform any necessary changes. The importance and usage of a pilot study is addressed by Easterby Smith et al. (2008), who declare that it can be useful for receiving initial input as well as testing the method as such. Bryman and Bell (2011) echo this notion, in that it can help the researcher to detect questions that are hard for the respondent to understand and, moreover, determine the best logical ordering of the questions.

3.6.1 The Interview Questionnaire

The interview questions were all chosen for specific reasons and are divided according to three parts: (1) Company and respondent-related information, (2) Chosen Corporate Brand strategy and motives for these, and (3) The role, background, and responsibilities of the Corporate Brand Manager. The first part cover interview questions 1 – 6, the second part questions 7 – 11 and the third part questions 12 – 15. Following our research strategy and methodological reasoning –

where we describe the combination of qualitative and quantitative data – the first part of the interview concerns the collection of quantitative data and the last two parts mostly the collection of qualitative data. Also, at the beginning of each interview, we will inform the respondents about who we are, our research purpose, and importantly, the element of anonymity.

Interview questions 1 – 6

The first part of the interview is meant to provide quantifiable data related to information about the company and the respondent.

The first question *"Are you working with Corporate Brand Management?"* is used in order to determine if the respondent is suitable for the study in accordance with our respondent selection criteria. The second interview question deals with the respondent's title, *"Do you officially have the title Corporate Brand Manager?"* aiming to investigate the broad usage of this specific title (if at all). If the respondent answers NO to this question, the third question *"If no, what is your official title?"* is then asked. This question is posed in order to identify the specific role and title of the person working with Corporate Brand Management. The fourth question, *"How many years have you been working with Corporate Brand Management?"* aim to cover the respondent's background and knowledge within the area of Corporate Brand Management. The fifth question, *"What is the title of your closest superior?"* is used to locate the hierarchical placement of the Corporate Brand Management function within the organisation. The sixth question *"Are you a member of the company's chief executive management team?"* is asked in order to identify the organisational and strategic importance afforded to Corporate Brand Management at the company.

Interview questions 7 – 11

The second part of the interview is intended to determine and specify each company's Corporate Brand strategy and the relation between different brands within the company. Certain questions in this section (questions 7 – 10) are used to help identify and categorise each company according to the four Corporate Brand Strategy categories described in the *Categorisation Framework* depicted in chapter 2. For this reason, they will not be presented in detail within the Empirical Findings

chapter. In contrast, the final question (question 11) will be presented in detail, as it concerns information relevant to the substantive analysis.

The seventh question, *"Does your company have more than one brand? If so, how many do you have?"* aims primarily at identifying those companies following a Mother Brand Strategy. In order to determine Mother-Daughter and Individual Brand Strategies, the questions *"Regarding your Corporate Brand Strategy, would you say that your motherbrand characterises the profile of your other daughterbrands?"* and *"Regarding your Corporate Brand Strategy, would you say that each of your daughterbrands have unique and separate strategies?"* are posed to the respondent. The tenth question in this section is used for identifying Daughter-Mother strategies, *"Regarding your market communications, are there any connection between your motherbrand and daughterbrands?".* Following these questions, the more open-answered question eleven is posed, "*What are the motives behind your specific Corporate Brand Strategy*". This question is asked in order to let the respondents motivate and describe their specific strategy and to provide us with further information that will aid us in defining the appropriate Corporate Brand Strategy category.

Interview questions 12 – 15

The last part of the interview consists of questions related to the role, background, and responsibilities of a Corporate Brand Manager within the company.

The twelfth question, *"During your career, what positions or titles have you held within branding?"* is meant to generate an insight into the previous experience and professional background of the Corporate Brand Manager. The thirteenth question, *"Give a brief description of your present tasks related to Corporate Brand Management"* aims at covering what specific tasks and responsibilities the Corporate Brand Managers is currently working with. The fourteenth question *"What would you say are the greatest challenges you as a Corporate Brand Manager face at your company?"* aims at identifying and describing both the threats and obstacles related to working with Corporate Brand Management in practice. The final question, *"What is your opinion regarding the future of Corporate Brand Management at your company?"* is asked in order to explore the future importance and meaning of Corporate Brand Management at the respondent's particular company.

3.7 Data Analysis

As stated by Easterby Smith et al. (2008:172), "[t]here are many ways in which data can be analysed. What researchers need to bear in mind is that most methods of analysis can be used for a wide variety of data." Following our research philosophy, a qualitative analysis makes it possible to perform a deep analysis of the data and as a consequence open up for new research areas as well as providing new approaches to known phenomena (Svenning, 2000). When using semi-structured interviews with mostly open-answered questions, the first step when analysing the data is to *code* the material in order to create groups for sorting the answers and create an overview of the material (Lundahl and Skärvad, 1999). After coding and sorting the material into groups, we will be able to analyse our data and at the same time draw parallels to and develop conclusions from our theoretical framework. The different models of categorisation have been demonstrated as a commonly-used method for understanding the strategic perspective of Corporate Brand Management. In following this generally accepted modus operandi, the *Categorisation Framework* introduced specifically in the Theoretical Framework section will be used as a way to differentiate and sort between companies with different Corporate Brand Strategies. Having done this, we intend to analyse the respondents' answers *within each strategy category*.

In qualitative research, gathering data, coding, and analysis are conducted parallel to each other (Svenning, 2000). This is also highlighted by Easterby Smith et al. (2008), who propose that when following a social constructionist perspective, the researcher should try to avoid distinguishing between data collection and analysis. Moreover, since our research strategy springs from the grounded theory approach, we find it suitable to apply a grounded analysis strategy. Easterby Smith et al. (2008) points out that the grounded analysis focus on holistic associations, is faithful to views of the respondents, and takes into consideration the understanding of context and time. The connection between grounded theory, grounded analysis, and categorisation, as noted Easterby Smith et al. (2008) note, is a natural feature within qualitative analysis. Bryman and Bell (2011:573) state also that research marked by an inductive approach generating qualitative data is usually iterative, where the researcher often needs to go "back and forth between theory and data" in the analysis process. As this appears to agree with our research philosophy and strategy,

we thus find it appropriate to follow an iterative process where the analysis of data is carried out by connecting it to the theoretical framework. Furthermore, by relating empirical data to the theoretical framework, our analysis is thereby provided with a level of flexibility and adaptability, which further strengthens the suitability of the iterative process.

3.8 Primary and Secondary Sources

Our ambition during our research process was to collect mostly primary data, which is defined as information collected directly by the researchers themselves (Easterby Smith et al., 2008). Conducting our literature review and building our theoretical framework involved a gathering of research material through a majority of primary sources, where mainly journal articles were consulted (Princeton, 2012). The tools used for gathering this material were Summon (the Lund University electronic database) and additional academic databases, such as Emerald, Harvard Business Review, and JSTOR. Other sources were textbooks, which were chosen based on their strong relevancy to the research area and topic and their association with relevant and renowned authors. While some textbooks can be deemed secondary sources in that they interpret and analyse primary sources (Princeton, 2012), we consider our choices to be adequate for the study based on that they have been published by the academic press. The literature review was based on specific key words, which were used in the databases specified above. The key words used were: '*corporate brand management*', '*corporate branding*', '*corporate identity*', '*corporate values*', '*corporate brand identity*', '*corporate brand values*', and *'brand management'*. Finally, the interviews aimed at providing in-depth information in direct connection to the purpose and research area of this study.

4 Empirical findings

In this chapter, we present the empirical findings from our interviews concerning both the qualitative and the quantitative data we have gathered. We start with a brief description of the data gathering process and continue with the motives for chosen Corporate Brand Strategy, main tasks of the Corporate Brand Managers, most significant challenges, and finally, the future development of Corporate Brand Management. Each respective section has associating tables and graphical summaries found in the appendix.

4.1 Data Gathering Process

The data was gathered through semi-structured telephone interviews with 65 respondents conducted over a time period of two and a half weeks. The respondents belonged mainly to the upper- and middle management levels of the 65 companies participating in the study. The snowballing method used for the study resulted in a selection of respondents and their respective companies that corresponded very well with our respondent selection criteria. As the process of recommendation thus provided us with eligible respondents, the use of the snowballing method was considered successful. However, after having identified suitable respondents for our interviews, it was found that the ability to secure responses from individuals was contingent upon their time and perception of required effort to participate. For these reasons, a number of respondents had to be contacted several times before a final interview could be carried out. After having done so, we found that all the recommended respondents were willing to participate, which therefore resulted in no non-responses.

As stated in the Methodology chapter, the questions put together for the interview process were intended to capture the three main areas: (1) Company and respondent-related information, (2) Chosen Corporate Brand Strategy and motives for these, and (3) The role, background, and responsibilities of the Corporate Brand Manager. The presentation of findings will largely follow this structure. Also outlined in the Methodology chapter, the answers to the qualitative questions have been coded and grouped under general statements representing the various categories of

responses. These general statements are then presented according to the descending order of the number of associated responses.

4.2 Companies and Respondent Related Information

The tables associated with the data regarding the companies and respondents can be found in Appendix B. Regarding the size of the companies, the average number of company employees is 6 681. The majority of companies employ between 1 000 to 10 000 individuals, while a few companies (15%) were found to employ more than 10 000.

Concerning the respondents, almost three quarters are members of the chief executive management. In the table displaying the respondents' closest superior, we see that the vast majority – two thirds – of respondents report directly to the company CEO or President, while almost one in six respondents report to the Communications Director. Very few – one in fifteen – report to the Market Director.

The present professional titles of respondents were grouped into general categories. Half of the respondents are associated with Corporate Communications, while a third have titles that are similar to Market Director. One in five respondents have titles related to Brand Director, but only one in twenty use the title Corporate Brand Manager. It was found that the responsibilities of Corporate Brand Management appear under a plethora of different and unique professional titles. After interviewing 65 companies, a total of 40 different titles were discovered.

A majority of respondents have between 10 – 19 years of experience from dealing with Corporate Brand Management. The remaining respondents group evenly under the other two categories 0 – 9 years and 20+ years. Respondents have on average worked with Corporate Brand Management in some capacity for 14 years.

A categorisation of the respondents' previous professional titles was done. We see that a majority of respondents have previously worked as Market Director, while nearly as many have served as Communications Director. A quarter of respondents were found to have been CEO at least once during their professional career. Project Manager has also been the background for about one out of five respondents, while Sales Director seems to have been the least common profession. Finally, a great variety of previous titles was found, where 48 unique titles could be identified.

4.3 Corporate Brand Strategies

During interviews, data was gathered that would help to separate the companies into the four categories of the *Categorisation Framework*. As a first step, this categorisation was carried out based on the respondents' answers to questions 7 – 10 and was then further validated by the in-depth answers to question 11 regarding the motives to the specific Corporate Brand strategy followed by the company. The associated tables containing this data can be found in Appendix C.

We first present information regarding the underlying *motive* for the chosen Corporate Brand Strategy (questions 11), followed by the *tasks* performed by respondents (question 13), the major *challenges* facing managers (question 14), and finally the *future* of Corporate Brand Management at the respondent's company (question 15).

4.3.1 Motives for the Chosen Corporate Brand Strategy

Respondents were asked to explain the motives for why one particular Corporate Brand strategy had been chosen. Tables are found in Appendix C:1.

Motives for the Mother Brand Strategy

The most common motive for following this strategy is that it provides clarity, unity, and simplicity when communicating with external actors. It was moreover stated that managing one brand as opposed to several is much more cost-efficient and provides for more positive synergic effects.

Motives for the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Creating a united profile for the company is the most common motive, while utilising the possibility for daughterbrands to draw strengths from being associated with a strong motherbrand is a close second. The strategy is moreover motivated by that a strong brand signals clarity, unity, and simplicity to the recipient of communications. A few also stated that cost efficiency was important.

Motives for the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

A majority of the respondents declare that the strategy would allow the promotion of the motherbrand in the long-run. Many also state that it would allow the

daughterbrands to use the motherbrand as an endorser or a seal of quality and more than half found that an association would increase the strength of the daughterbrands.

Motives for the Individual Brand Strategy

A majority of respondents declare that the strategy was chosen due to that the company had many individually strong daughterbrands. Almost as strong a motive was that an association with the motherbrand would only cause confusion among customers and, hence, add no additional value to the communication. Half of the respondents also state that they chose the strategy because their daughterbrands had been tailored to fit specific markets and that it subsequently would be more cost-efficient to keep the daughterbrands and the motherbrand separated.

4.3.2 Main Tasks of the Corporate Brand Managers

Respondents were asked to describe their main tasks related to Corporate Brand Management. Tables can be found in Appendix C:2.

Main tasks within the Mother Brand Strategy

Respondents are found to be mainly preoccupied with the responsibility for the holistic brand strategy. Many dedicate a major part of their time on internal brand-building activities. A rather large group works with formulating the brand platform and more than half also stated that they lead the implementation of external brand communications strategies.

Main tasks within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

A majority of respondents declare that internal brand-building largely characterises their work, while many also state that balancing the relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands is of central concern. Furthermore, an important task is handling the holistic brand strategy as well as working with the brand platform.

Main Tasks within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Close to all respondents report that balancing the relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands is of central importance. A priority is notably also given to adjusting this relationship based on the market context. Two thirds of the respondents state that integrating new daughterbrands into the company is a main task. About half consider also that working with the brand platform, internal brand-building, and handling the holistic brand strategy influenced their daily work.

Main Tasks within the Individual Brand Strategy

Three quarters of respondents within this Corporate Brand Strategy focus on ensuring that the daughterbrands follow defined Brand Strategies. A large group focus also on balancing the relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. Roughly half find cementing that strategies are understood and supported internally is of major importance to their work.

4.3.3 Most Significant Challenges to Corporate Brand Management

Respondents were asked to describe the most significant challenges they encounter during their work with Corporate Brand Management. Tables can be found in Appendix C:3.

Most Significant Challenges within the Mother Brand Strategy

Respondents from this strategy find it difficult to gain an understanding and appreciation internally concerning corporate branding-related issues. A few respondents also find it a challenge to increase the amount of resources dedicated to brand-related activities.

Most Significant Challenges within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Half of the respondents consider it a challenge to strengthen the connection between the motherbrand and customer expectations. Many express the difficulties in creating an understanding and appreciation for branding-related issues within the company. About a third of respondents state that demonstrating the profitability of Corporate Brand Management is a major challenge in their work.

Most Significant Challenges within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Respondents from this strategy find it a major challenge to ensure that brands are communicated correctly to the market. Half also deem it difficult to improve the understanding at the chief executive level for Corporate Brand Management and the value of brands and branding, while almost as many find challenges in making the company more brand-oriented.

Most Significant Challenges within the Individual Brand Strategy

In this strategy, respondents consider internal brand-building the major challenge, as well as finding the right association between the motherbrand and daughterbrands on the one hand, and between various daughterbrands on the other. A number of respondents also express the difficulty of improving the understanding for the value of brands and branding within the executive level.

4.3.4 The Future Development of Corporate Brand Management

Respondents were asked about their view concerning the future of the Corporate Brand Management field at their respective companies. Tables can be found in Appendix C:4.

The Future Development within the Mother Brand Strategy

Most respondents within the Mother Brand Strategy consider that Corporate Brand Management will become more important. Almost half also find that the field will become more clearly integrated into the company's business strategy.

The Future Development within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

A clear majority of respondents finds that Corporate Brand Management will become a more important strategic area, while half consider that it will become a more central issue for chief executive management. As many respondents find also that the motherbrand will be an important driving force for the corporation and a number consider that the field of Corporate Brand Management will become more integrated into the company's business strategy. Some also declare that it will be a significant foundation for finding long-term competitive advantage.

The Future Development within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

A majority of respondents in the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy also consider that Corporate Brand Management will become a more important strategic area, and three quarters argue for that it will become more integrated into the company's business strategy. More than half declare that it will become a more central agenda item for chief executive management. Interestingly, a third of respondents mention that the motherbrand will become a more important driving force to the company in the future.

The Future Development within the Individual Brand Strategy

In this strategy, a majority of respondents find that Corporate Brand Management will become a more important strategic area. Almost half state that more individual brands will come to be grouped under fewer, larger daughterbrands, while a third deems that greater focus will come to be placed on internal branding. Finally, a quarter of respondents announce that the motherbrand will gain raised future importance.

5 Analysis

In the analysis chapter, we analyse the empirical findings based on our theoretical framework. In following the iterative process of data analysis, we move back and forth between theory and data, during which we also highlight noteworthy findings by using direct quotes from certain respondents. As full anonymity was guaranteed to the respondent, names have consequently been omitted.

5.1 The Process of Analysis

In this section, we analyse our findings in relation to our theoretical framework. The analysis is mainly built up around the qualitative questions from the interviews, but includes also a general analysis regarding the quantitative data that was collected during the interview phase. Although our analysis is based on the material presented in the Empirical Findings chapter and its associated tables found in the Appendix, the discussion centres upon the most frequent responses. Thereby, the reader will notice that certain less frequent statements featuring in the tables will not be analysed, since they are considered not representative for the category to which they refer.

We start by analysing the motives that underpin the choice of a particular Corporate Brand Management Strategy, which will aid us in verifying that the categorisation of companies has been carried out correctly. We would like to reiterate that placing the companies into different categories according to the *Categorisation Framework* serves as a necessary prerequisite for being able to connect and analyse the role and tasks of the Corporate Brand Manager for each specific category. Having then analysed the motives, we therefore move on to discuss the role of the Corporate Brand Manager, based on the respondents' account for the tasks and responsibilities, professional title and background, executive management membership, and challenges. Finishing of our analysis is a section where we discuss and reflect on the future of Corporate Brand Management and how it may potentially affect the role of the Corporate Brand Manager. Here, we also highlight the indications for a possible trend that we have noted regarding the rising importance of the motherbrand.

In order to strengthen the analysis, the iterative approach allows us to use specific quotes continuously throughout the process as well as draw parallels to our

theoretical framework. Here we would again like to point out that all the respondents were assured full anonymity, hence no quotes will be attributed to specific individuals but rather to the category that the respondent represents.

5.2 Corporate Brand Strategies and the Categorisation Framework

In the introduction we presented that as different Corporate Brand Strategies abound, the mapping and description of the role of the Corporate Brand Manager must necessarily take these into account. In order to investigate whether the role of the manager differs according to the specific Corporate Brand Strategy followed by the company, the mapping and descriptive process would necessitate some form of categorisation of strategies.

We introduced in the Methodology chapter that the *Categorisation Framework* was to be used as the theoretical tool for categorising the various Corporate Brand Strategies chosen by the surveyed companies. For this purpose, specific questions were formulated intended to aid in the swift identification of the specific Corporate Brand Strategy. Yet, the potential risk involved in such an approach is the misfortunate misallocation of companies into categories that do not correctly reflect their respective strategy. To minimise this risk, an additional, supportive question was formulated that was meant to deduce the *motives for their chosen strategy* and by such means *validate* that the categorisation had been correctly carried out. This section seeks to (1) Analyse the motives expressed by the respondents according to the specific Corporate Brand Strategy category they belong to, as identified during the interview process, and through this (2) Validate that the categorisation process was correctly done.

5.2.1 Motives for the Mother Brand Strategy

Looking at the motives for the companies employing a Mother Brand Strategy, there is an agreement on that the strategy provides *clarity, unity and simplicity* in the external communication activities. This point was clearly illustrated by one respondent stating:

> Having everything under the same roof is of uttermost importance to us. All our services and products need to be connected to one single brand. Our road to success comes from signalling clarity and unity to the market and our customers.
>
> (Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

The benefits of clarity, unity and simplicity are here shown to refer to a company's market communication, where the company needs only to communicate one brand. This is highlighted by Melin (2008), who argues that products within the same company may benefit from this, as marketing activities focused on expressing the motherbrand require less resources compared to communicating each individual brand on its own. This one-brand approach therefore provides significant levels of cost efficiency, which more than half of the respondents considered a strong argument for why they choose to follow a Mother Brand Strategy. A typical answer illustrating the importance of cost efficiency was:

> Working with separate daughterbrands demands great investments, both internal and external, and we cannot support this. Having a motherbrand strategy is based mainly on lowering costs and draw benefits from that process.
>
> (Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

Moreover, some respondents also stated that the Mother Brand Strategy generated synergic effects. Although not as strongly promoted as the motives given above, this argument could still relate to a management perspective where the brand-building process is rendered more effective when marketing efforts are being focused around one single brand. Again, this can be related to the cost efficiency of the strategy as illustrated by Melin (2008). Interestingly, none of the respondents' answers were found to relate to the issue of low flexibility that characterises the Mother Brand Strategy. This could be explained by the fact that none of the respondents stated that they had experienced negative effects in relation to their chosen strategy and that flexibility was not expressed as a necessary component in their respective Corporate Brand strategy.

5.2.2 Motives for the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

The comparatively higher level of flexibility within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, as described by Melin (2008), was premiered as an important motivation

for choosing the strategy. The benefits from that daughterbrands were allowed some independence in relation to the motherbrand is advanced by most and is summarised by one respondent:

> We believe in a strong motherbrand, yet it is extremely important to us that our daughterbrands are allowed independence and flexibility when necessary.

<div align="right">(Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

The fact that many Mother-Daughter Brand companies also considered unity, clarity and simplicity as important motivations for the strategy appears natural given that this strategy, like the Mother Brand Strategy, also places the motherbrand in a central position concerning communication. Still, a majority of the respondents stated that the *main* reason for working with a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy was to create a unified profile internally. This is clearly illustrated by one respondent's answer:

> We are trying to create more clarity so that we can make our internal organisation more effective in order to cooperate better and improve the understanding of our mutual strategy.

<div align="right">(Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

Melin (2008) is of the opinion that within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, the motherbrand acts as a guide to the daughterbrand(s) by pointing-out the general strategic direction. The benefits provided by such a framework are according to Melin also characteristic of this strategy. The respondents' answers seem to correlate well with this statement, as a majority stated that their daughterbrands clearly benefit from a strong motherbrand, or rather, the strategic framework of a strong motherbrand. This point was further reiterated by one of the respondents:

> Our strategy is based on a strong motherbrand where its values must be visible through all our daughterbrands. We can see a clear advantage having our daughterbrands "riding" on our motherbrand and benefit from a joint framework.

<div align="right">(Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

Cost efficiency appears to have been a less important reason for choosing the strategy. Given that only a minority – roughly one third – of respondents stated that cost efficiency had guided their choice, this seems to reflect that Melin (2008) considers the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy to be less cost efficient than the Mother Brand Strategy. Consequently, we may assume that respondents in general chose a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy not based on the cost efficiency it provides but rather for other reasons, such as those given above.

5.2.3 Motives for the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Melin (2008) states that the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy is built on the unity between the motherbrand and the respective daughterbrands. However, what distinguishes this strategy from the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy is that the visibly strong bond between the motherbrand and the daughterbrand is loosened. The former is thus placed in the background so as to grant higher levels of flexibility and visibility to the latter. Based on the possibility for a much higher level of daughterbrand flexibility, the motherbrand takes a supportive role in communications by functioning more as a *seal of quality*. The respondents' motivations for working with this strategy appear to be well aligned with this description. Nearly all respondents stated, in various ways, that the connection between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands was very important.

> For us it is important to launch our daughterbrands separately since they all have distinct and unique personalities. However, what creates strength for us as a company is the motherbrand (or corporate brand) signalling our corporate quality through our daughterbrands. You can say that the motherbrand works like an endorser.
>
> (Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

It was found that a common motive for applying a Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy was to increase the strength of each separate daughterbrand through association with the motherbrand. This being said, a connection can be drawn with Melin (2008), who argues that within this strategy there *must* be a visible link between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. A citation from one of the respondents describes this connection very well:

Success for our strategy lies in the connection between our brands. It can be described as simple as saying that our motherbrand wouldn't survive without our daughterbrands and vice versa.

(Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

Regarding the aspect of cost efficiency, this was not a factor to which the respondents placed much attention when motivating their choice of strategy. Only one in all respondents stated that trying to increase the cost efficiency was a leading factor. Thus, by repeating that Melin (2008) declares the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy to be less cost efficient than the former two strategies, the veritable absence of cost efficiency as a motive suggests that this factor was not deemed important in the respondents' strategy choice.

Finally, we would like to point the reader's attention to one interesting find. Eleven out of the twelve companies identified within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy category stated that one main motive was to promote *their motherbrand* in the long run. Melin does not mention anything related to this notion, although he points-out that in some instances daughterbrands might become more popular that the motherbrand. The motivation we highlight could therefore relate to Melin in the way that respondents consider that their daughterbrands have become "too strong" in relation to their motherbrand, and subsequently seek to increase the strength of the motherbrand through their daughterbrands.

5.2.4 Motives for the Individual Brand Strategy

A majority of respondents stated that the most important motive for implementing an Individual Brand Strategy was that the company had a large number of strong, well-functioning daughterbrands. Moreover, the maintenance of several strong daughterbrands was explained as a way to increase the company's market share and cover separate segments. According to Melin (2008), this is characteristic for an Individual Brand Strategy, as the high level of flexibility and the multi-branding effect related to the strategy allows the company the possibility to maximise its share of the market. A respondent echoing this notion stated the following:

> Our choice of strategy depends on our business situation with many separate segments and different customer needs. We don't see communicating our motherbrand as increasing our profits since our daughterbrands are extremely strong and well-known.
>
> (Individual Brand Strategy respondent)

Although not stated by Melin (2008) as characteristics for this strategy, a majority of respondents answered that connecting the daughterbrands with the motherbrand in their market communications would only cause confusion among customers. This might be associated with the high level of flexibility, as this strategy is not intended to communicate the motherbrand but rather focuses instead explicitly on transmitting strong, individual daughterbrands. Additionally, in relation to Melin's description of the low cost efficiency associated with the Individual Brand Strategy, we are however able to note a discrepancy with the respondents' expressed motives. While Melin states that it is expensive to maintain separate marketing mixes and brand platforms for each daughterbrand, half of the respondents stated that it is deemed *more* cost efficient to keep their daughterbrands separated from the motherbrand.

> We are of the opinion that we have extremely well-handled daughterbrands and trying to merge them with our motherbrand would both incur large costs and organisational problems. Yes, it might cost more to handle many separate brands but at the same time this strategy is what works for our company and our business.
>
> (Individual Brand Strategy respondent)

We interpret this as based on the high (perceived) costs involved with merging and organising the identities of the respective daughterbrands into one unitary motherbrand. Although this might not be exactly what Melin (2008) means by low cost efficiency concerning the strategy, respondents still offer clear and reasonable cost-related arguments for having this strategy instead of others.

5.3 The Role of the Corporate Brand Manager

In this section, we discuss the role of the Corporate Brand Manager. This is carried out with a focus on their executive management membership, present titles, professional background, central tasks and areas of responsibility, as well as challenges. By looking at the information provided by respondents from each

Corporate Brand Strategy category, key similarities and differences are identified and analysed through the use of the theoretical tools regarding the management of corporate brands presented in the Theoretical Framework. Central aspects shared by managers in all Corporate Brand Strategy categories are initially discussed in relation to the points offered mainly by Balmer (2001b) and Hatch and Schultz (2003), with the support of additional scholars. Subsequent subsections then seek to identify the aspects that separate and, hence, characterise the categories according to the *nine core activities* in the Corporate Brand Custodianship model by Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010).

5.3.1 Corporate Brand Managers in General

Characteristics

The findings show that almost three quarters of respondents are members of the chief executive management level. This appears to confirm the view that the general task of Corporate Brand Management is of such strategic importance that it is owned by central strategic management (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). As two thirds of respondent are also found to report *directly* to the CEO or President, this supports that he or she is indeed the main Corporate Brand Manager of the company as suggested by Balmer (2001b).

Another interesting find was that the second most common closest superior is the Director of Communications and not Marketing. In addition, half of the respondents reported that their present professional title was related to Corporate Communications compared to only a third who had titles related to Marketing. These insights could suggest that the management of the corporate brand is considered *mainly* a communications issue rather than a marketing one, which is supported by Balmer and Greyser (2010) who find that the focus of the Corporate Brand Manager is on *total corporate communication* rather than traditional marketing communications. While the most common professional background was however that of Market Director (two fifths of the respondents), only one in ten respondents had previously worked as Sales Director. Communications Director as a professional background was, nevertheless, found to be a very close second. This leads us to judge that while Corporate Brand Management apparently is, and should probably rightly be, deemed a communications issue, experiences in marketing may be a necessary

prerequisite for the job. Added to the point made about professional titles, it was surprising to find that only one in twenty respondents are officially called Corporate Brand Manager, which suggest that the title is largely *not* used in practice.

The points made above will be further addressed in the final section of this chapter, where general reflections regarding the subject area and findings are given.

Tasks and responsibilities

Almost all respondents declare that they are *responsible for the holistic brand strategy* at their respective companies. One respondent stated for instance that he is required to make sure that "activities and processes are infused with the brand" by ensuring that "general company activities and the brand are synchronised". More specifically, however, many describe their duties as overseeing and managing a wide spectrum of issues considered to relate to both the corporate brand and daughterbrands. This seems to correspond with the views of Hatch and Schultz (2003), who consider that the role and function of the Corporate Brand Managers is essentially multidisciplinary, as the manager is responsible for great many diverse and intricate tasks. Interestingly, one respondent chose to describe her role in the following way:

> I am essentially the brand police here at the company, as I have to continuously ensure that the brand is used correctly and that people know and understand what our brand is all about.
>
> (Corporate Brand Manager respondent)

Keeping check of how and in what manner the corporate brand is being used is thus found to be one of the tasks of the Corporate Brand Manager. Further illustrating the multidisciplinary role of the Corporate Brand Manager, another respondent explained how he had to take charge of the refurbishment of the company central headquarters "because it is considered a central brand issue". Another manager informed us that one of his responsibilities regarded "ensuring that retail store environment [of the company's customers] corresponds to and reflects the identity and values of our brand". In sum, as we are given the view that managing the corporate brand can not be said to concern just one task, it is indeed a multifaceted engagement where managers are required to police and handle a plethora of responsibilities that can all be said to relate to the corporate brand.

Having said this, *internal branding* was however found to stand-out as a core activity for Corporate Brand Managers in general. Balmer and Greyser (2010) along with Hatch and Schultz (2003) advance the view that the brand is communicated across multiple channels, which requires that the internal and external dimensions of the company are integrated. This was echoed by a number of respondents who explained that they have to "take great care ensuring that the brand is understood by all employees" in order to make sure that "the brand is 'lived' within the company". Urde (2009) also states that for a corporate brand to be strong externally it must first be made strong internally. This might explain the importance given by one manager to promote brand orientation within the organisation, whereby he works tirelessly to "position our brand clearly within all departments of the company". Also in line with Urde, many respondents reported their ambition to have "all employees acting as the ambassadors for [the corporate brand]", which in their view is achieved by dedicating great care to internal branding.

Associated with internal branding is Balmer (2001b) who talks about managers being mainly concerned with *total corporate communications*. Hatch and Schultz (2003) explain that this term means that *the whole company* is engaged in delivering the external communications. As such, managers must ensure that the brand is first anchored internally before moving to communicate it externally. The following illustrates this point:

> I develop the brand strategy, explain it internally, and then oversee that it is communicated externally through all our marketing engagements.
>
> (Corporate Brand Manager respondent)

This suggests that communication is delivered by the entire company and that all personnel share the responsibility for the corporate brand. Moreover, it indicates that as Corporate Brand Managers are engaged in total corporate communications, internal brand-building is both a necessary and sequential step in this process.

In light of this, it seems fitting that Corporate Brand Managers were also found to be heavily concerned with *external brand communications strategies*. Managers declared in general that they "handle mass-media contacts", deal with Investor Relations, develop "strategies regarding how social media platforms should be used", and "explain to consumers why they should choose [the corporate brand]". This is

very much in line with the previous point made by Hatch and Schultz (2003) that the attention of managers is focused on communicating *the company* as opposed to products, which shows a clear divergence from the scope of Product Brand Managers. Moreover, the equal attention afforded to both internal and external brand-building and communication corroborates well with the view that the two are necessarily integrated within Corporate Brand Management (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

Finally, it is relevant to note that managers from all Corporate Brand Strategy Categories held forth that they work with the formulation and development of the *corporate brand platform*. This area of responsibility, while associated with the communicative responsibilities, demonstrates the *depth* of tasks that managers are concerned with. Given that Product Brand Managers focus on developing a specific product brand before moving to communicate it to the market, Corporate Brand Managers are in contrast shown here to be involved with developing the essential components for the *entire* corporate brand. Based on the idea proposed by Balmer, Greyser, and Urde (2007) that the corporate brand symbolises the company's heritage and identity, the tasks of Corporate Brand Managers is thus presented as a much more all-encompassing endeavour involving several cross-corporate functions compared to their Product Brand counter-parts. This was also demonstrated by one respondent who considers her work as largely based on "finding our identity in our brand". Handling the corporate brand platform therefore positions the Corporate Brand Managers *at the very centre* of key strategic decision-making, which is supported by the finding that the responsibility of the corporate brand rests with executive management.

Main challenges
When respondents from all categories were asked about the principal challenges they face during their work with Corporate Brand Management at their respective companies, a majority stated that issues related to internal branding were the most contentious.

> It is crucial that our company operates as one united organisation, and this is achieved by letting the corporate brand set the direction. Doing so, however, depends upon making all employees and co-workers understand and value what our brand stands for and that's not that easy.

> (Corporate Brand Management respondent)

Given that the corporate brand encompasses the entire organisation, its strength relies upon that all members find it meaningful. As the quote demonstrates, this may not be an easy task and requires the temperance of diverse (and sometimes conflicting) attitudes and preferences among a large group of internal stakeholders. It is therefore no surprise that Corporate Brand Managers in general state that internal brand-building is both a central component of and a significant challenge to their duties.

Another challenge that was shared by most respondents was the difficulties in making the executive level aware of the value of Corporate Brand Management. Although this notion was not rated as highly in the Mother Brand Strategy category, this might mean that the motherbrand already has an elevated position and consequently is not considered a challenge. Some respondents found that this was related to the challenge of increasing the allocation of resource to the Corporate Brand Management activities. This is most certainly connected to the challenge of internal brand-building, but highlights also the crucial aspect of gaining the support from strategic leadership. It was stated that the CEO must ultimately be "the owner of the corporate brand", which suggests that he or she must be ready and able to take charge of how the brand shall feature in the strategic operations of the company. It was also expressed that without the support from the leaders, the corporate brand loses its significance and value as a competitive tool. This means possibly that operations would as a result not be deliberately aligned with corporate values, which subsequently limits the company's ability to express one coherent image to the public.

Having considered the key similarities in the work of the managers interviewed, we are provided with a picture for what may characterise Corporate Brand Management in general. We notice that the function can be generally typified as a movement between the organisational and product brand level, whereby responsibilities take on the character of both strategic and tactical. We now turn to

discuss what differentiates them, and through this, seek to find what may characterise the role of the Corporate Brand Manager for each of the different Corporate Brand Strategy Categories.

5.3.2 Corporate Brand Managers within the Mother Brand Strategy

Among the nine core activities offered by Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010), the role and function of Corporate Brand Managers within the Mother Brand Strategy category seem mainly characterised by *supporting* and *reflecting*, but also by *leading*.

According to Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010), *supporting* involves that the manager seeks to ascertain that both commitment and support for the brand promise exist throughout the organisation. This is related to internal brand-building, which more than three quarters of respondents stated as a main task within their work. The following response by one Corporate Brand Manager from the category indicates this:

> One of my central responsibilities is strengthening our motherbrand's standing within the company. This means improving the understanding [for the brand] among employees, so that both values and identity may come to lead their work.

> (Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

A key motivation for choosing the strategy was said to be able to create clarity, unity, and simplicity in communications. Given that the Mother Brand Strategy employs only one brand in all its external communication, it appears crucial that managers are focused on bolstering company-wide understanding for what the brand is and stands for, so as to ensure that total corporate communications are carried out coherently and cogently. Furthermore, to be able to have "employees acting as ambassadors for the [corporate] brand" their support for and commitment to the brand is a necessary prerequisite. Strengthening the corporate brand's standing within the organisation seems therefore a reasonable and important approach within the Mother Brand Strategy.

Reflecting is according to Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) when company operations reflect and are run according to the corporate brand promise, vision, and mission. This is interpreted as when activities are guided by the identity of the corporate brand, which can also be related to the work with brand platforms as

expressed by more than half of the respondents. A typical response mentioning this is given below:

> It is crucial that [the motherbrand] is correctly perceived by consumer groups. We therefore make sure that sales activities are carried out within the framework of the brand profile by letting our values set the direction for our processes.
>
> (Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

Clearly, it is the behaviour of the company that is decisive for how it is to be perceived by its surroundings. As the sales function is one channel by which certain stakeholder groups become aware of and interact with the company, it is an important contact surface as the quote demonstrates. Given that the strategy focuses all communications to the motherbrand, managers must work with the brand platform to ensure that the corporate values are aligned with it. This would facilitate that activities are then carried out in the spirit of the motherbrand, which would thereby aid in the creation of a unitary corporate profile in the minds of consumers. Again, this confirms the view by Hatch and Schultz (2003) that the whole company communicates the brand.

The activity of *leading* can also be said to largely summarise the function of Corporate Brand Manager within this strategy. As described Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010), *leading* entails that the manager is required to possess sufficient leadership skills in order to ensure that the corporate brand strategy is clearly understood, implemented, and followed. To ascertain that adequate support and commitment exists within the company and to inspire adherence to the brand promise, it becomes evident that the manager needs to be able to engage and enthuse co-workers. This may be confirmed by that *supporting* seems to generally characterise the work of managers, who therefore need sufficient rhetorical skills in order to explain why operations must reflect the corporate brand values.

It seems therefore reasonable that as *supporting* chiefly demarcates the activities of Corporate Brand Managers within the Mother Brand Strategy, the central challenge facing them is to build an understanding and appreciation for corporate branding-related issues within the company. This was shown to be the most significant obstacle to managers, which seemingly also captures the challenges involved in ensuring that operations are being run according to the brand promise.

In the process of ensuring this, managers are required to build a support base within the company so as to enable that employees are working with the brand values in mind. Consequently, this challenge also demonstrates the necessity for relevant leadership skills when explaining why the corporate brand is important.

5.3.3 Corporate Brand Managers within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

The role of Corporate Brand Managers working within a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy can be mainly characterised by *embracing*, but also *maintaining* and *reflecting*.

Embracing signifies according Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) that the manager takes other groups apart from customers into account concerning the corporate brand promise, by ensuring that this promise remains meaningful to all stakeholders. This might also be connected to internal brand-building, which almost three quarters of respondents found significant. The following response appears to confirm this:

> One key issue I have to work with is to strengthen the feeling of belonging within the organisation. This is why attitudes among our daughterbrands towards [the motherbrand] has to be improved.

> (Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)

Moreover, the fact that this approach was found to be characteristic for the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy seems closely related to the organisation of a comparatively larger group of brands. A larger number of daughterbrands would reasonably involve a larger group of stakeholders and hence more actors and more preferences to take into account.

Given the presence of daughterbrands, managers need to be able to ascertain that values of the motherbrand are adhered to. As stated by the respondent, this might be accomplished by improving the standing of the motherbrand among the company's constituents. It was found that a majority of respondents motivated their choice of the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy by that it would provide for a more unified internal profile. The efforts to improve the standing of the motherbrand could thus be seen as closely linked to internal brand-building and as a way to establish internal cohesion within the company. Put differently, the motherbrand

could be used as a common denominator for the employees working with the various daughterbrands.

This could reasonably apply to companies who have grown by merger and acquisition, where new brands and their subsequent organisations are required to be brought into the company. In this process, caution needs to be given to ensure that the existing corporate brand promise remains relevant to the new stakeholders. One way of doing this was pointed-out by a number of respondents who stated that the motherbrand was being used for identifying new target groups for the daughterbrands. This would relate to the point made by Melin (2008) that the motherbrand is within the Mother Brand Strategy used as a guide for drawing up the strategic direction for the company.

Several respondents stated that they work with finding a balance between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. This relates to *embracing* but can also be connected with both *maintaining* and *reflecting*. The following response sheds some light:

> We need to nurture and take care of the motherbrand in order to ensure that it both signals the uniqueness and the unity in our brand strategy. As it is very important how the brand is perceived, it all comes down to finding the proper balance between our daughterbrands and our motherbrand so that neither contradicts the other.
>
> (Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)

In seeking to establish stronger internal cohesion among stakeholders, managers need also to ensure that corporate brand values are preserved and nurtured, i.e. *maintained*, in order for the organisation to move in the same direction. Meanwhile, some resilience might exist among the daughterbrands to fully embrace the identity of the motherbrand. As the success of creating a unified profile of the company would rest on that company operations *reflect* the corporate brand's identity, employees must first feel that the corporate brand promise is relevant to them. Consequently, managers must find the proper balance between the company's various brands by ensuring that the preferences of central management and daughterbrand managers are considered. Doing so would help build a foundation for that company operations become conducted according to these values, making the corporate brand into the guide for the strategic framework.

In addition to this, the two foremost challenges pointed-out by respondents were to strengthen the connection between the motherbrand and customer expectations and building an understanding and appreciation for corporate branding-related issues within the company. Given that *embracing* also involves managers ascertaining that the brand stays relevant to customers and consumers, the balancing between brands must also involve the assurance that the daughterbrands represent and bolster the motherbrand. This, again, relates to building the brand internally, as employees are a crucial point-of-contact to customers and hence are responsible for properly representing the company externally. Another challenge voiced by some respondents was demonstrating the profitability of Corporate Brand Management, which seems to build upon the point made about customer expectations. If the corporate brand is to be employed as a useful strategic and profitable competitive tool to the daughterbrands in general and the company in particular, it must foremost be seen as valuable to the target audience.

5.3.4 Corporate Brand Managers within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

The role of the Corporate Brand Manager within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy can be characterised as mainly *endorsing* and *reflecting*, but also as *adapting*.

The activity of *endorsing* is described by Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) as when the manager seeks to draw benefits from the overt associations with other strong brands, such as the motherbrand. Almost all respondents reported that similar to managers within a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, they also work with balancing the relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. However, the main difference is that for this particular strategy the motherbrand plays a much less visible communicative role and is only loosely connected to the daughterbrands, which are subsequently allowed more flexibility and independence. Balancing, in this context, carries therefore quite a different meaning as the motherbrand takes a backseat role in relation to the daughterbrands. This can be connected with the 'endorser-effect', as described by respondents, which implies that managers capitalise on the advantages found in associating the daughterbrands with the (at times stronger) motherbrand. A typical response is given:

> In general, the aim is to position the daughterbrands as ambassadors for the whole company, whereby the values of the motherbrand become transmitted to the market.
>
> <div align="right">(Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

The quote above indicates that the daughterbrands are made visible and speak on behalf of the motherbrand, which thereby communicates indirectly to the market. In relation to the motives given for choosing this particular Corporate Brand Strategy, a majority of respondents referred to that the motherbrand may operate as an endorser or a seal of quality for the daughterbrands. As these brands use the motherbrand in their communications and thereby *reflect* the values of the motherbrand, this association may provide them with certain benefits. In other words, they may use this association to piggy-back on a strong motherbrand.

It seems therefore reasonable that in order for the motherbrand to be able to act as an endorser, the daughterbrands need to unambiguously reflect its values in some manner. Consequently, as suggested by the quote above, for the daughterbrands to be able to speak on behalf of the motherbrand, the association between them needs to take on the aspects of *reflecting*. This is to say that the operations of the daughterbrands need to represent the promise, vision, and mission of the motherbrand in order for the association to be successful.

The Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy entails also that as the daughterbrands may involve products from different categories, the motherbrand may as a consequence be used in a variety of market contexts. This can be directly related to the point made by a majority of respondents that they need to adjust the relationship between the motherbrand and daughterbrands. As a result, the motherbrand might have to be *adapted* to fit well with the different market contexts in which the daughterbrands are being deployed. Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010) define *adapting* as being responsive to the changes in the business environment and hence being able to adapt the motherbrand accordingly. In the words of one respondent:

> In order to be sure that the motherbrand stays modern and relevant, it is necessary to continuously update it. We need to pay attention to how it is being received by employees as well as our target costumers so that we know that we got it right in different markets.
>
> <div align="right">(Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

This shows that managers are making sure that the motherbrand's identity and its image are aligned and communicated in the way intended. It indicates also that a cross-over exists between *adapting* and *reflecting*, which is to be expected. If a mismatch is found to exist between the motherbrand and the perceptions of it, managers are required to adapt either the brand itself or its communication and corporate behaviour so as to reach a better fit. This also applies to when new daughterbrands are introduced into the organisation, as their respective values need also to fit the values of the motherbrand. This view was advanced by three quarters of the respondents, where one typical response is given below:

> When or if we obtain new brands, it is important that these are integrated into our existing business strategy. Similarly, when some of our brands are found irrelevant or to not work well with the others, these have to be phased-out so as to give room for the new and stronger ones.

> (Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

This suggests that *adapting* and *reflecting* apply to both the motherbrand (to fit different contexts) and daughterbrands (to fit the overall business strategy). Daughterbrands that for business environmental reasons are no longer up to scratch are gradually removed or replaced by stronger ones, which indicates an adaption of the brand hierarchy itself.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the most prominent challenge voiced by the respondents is communicating correctly with the market. A typical response it provided below:

> The qualities that [our motherbrand] signals need to be maintained. We need to really live up to our promises in the eyes of our customers and make sure that people associate us with the things we want.

> (Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

Customers need to be understood and their preferences taken into account when devising communication efforts so as to ensure the delivery of the desired image. The manager consequently faces the challenge of using the motherbrand in accordance with how it may strengthen the value proposition of the daughterbrands (*endorsing*), while also making sure to stay true to the corporate identity (*reflecting*) and adjusting efforts according to context and preferences (*adapting*). As this would

certainly be a topic for strategic decision-making, chief executive management needs to naturally be involved in this process. Interestingly, however, respondents state that another major challenge is explaining to senior managers the importance of these issues. This might suggest that executive managers are locked in the mentality that the rather loose bond between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands characterising this Corporate Brand Strategy necessarily involves that the daughterbrands are left to their own devices when communicating to the market.

5.3.5 Corporate Brand Managers within the Individual Brand Strategy

In the case of Individual Brand Strategy, the role and function of Corporate Brand Managers is characterised mainly by *maintaining* and *adapting*, but also by *embracing*.

Management within organisations following an Individual Brand Strategy can be generally described as decentralised, given that the (potentially) many daughterbrands each follow their own brand identity and communication mix. As a consequence, the manager needs to take a much larger group of stakeholders into account, seeing as the daughterbrands may be addressing different audiences. The brand strategy should for these reasons be considered fundamentally different from the other strategies, in that the motherbrand is here intentionally kept *apart* from the external communication of the daughterbrands.

As a consequence, the Corporate Brand Manager focuses mainly on that each daughterbrand follows its own formulated strategies, which indicates that activities are generally characterised by *maintaining*. This was highlighted by three quarters of the respondents. A typical response is provided below:

> My job can be said to revolve around making sure that our [daughter-]brands are kept strong. This is done by safe-guarding that each brand follows its own guidelines and that promises are fulfilled.
>
> (Individual Brand Strategy respondent)

The statement suggests that the Corporate Brand Manager is chiefly concerned with preserving and nurturing the values and identity of the respective daughterbrands, as opposed to the motherbrand. This seems to correspond with the respondents' explanation that they have chosen the strategy precisely because it allows them to

build separate brands based on their own specific strategic goals. It therefore seems reasonable that managers focus their efforts mainly on managing and maintaining the independent daughterbrands. In this way, the tasks facing the Corporate Brand Manager within a Mother Brand Strategy might be somewhat similar to that of managers within an Individual Brand Strategy. More than half of the respondents from the latter strategy category express that they need to cement that strategies are understood and supported internally. This indicates that *supporting* is a feature that managers from both strategy categories have in common. Yet, the crucial difference is that in the case of an Individual Brand Strategy, the manager is does so for *each* respective daughterbrand.

When discussing this strategy, it becomes necessary to distinguish between the separate ambitions guiding the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. One respondent announced that "[O]ur motherbrand is only meant for other companies, not for consumers", which implies that the motherbrand is mainly used and communicated within business relationships. This suggests further that branding within the Individual Brand Strategy can be separated into two dimensions – one concerning business-to-business, and the other concerning business-to-consumer.

> Our [daughter-]brands are specifically directed towards consumers. […] We don't use [our motherbrand] for other reasons than to sell to other businesses.
>
> (Individual Brand Strategy respondent)

It appears therefore natural that the function of the Corporate Brand Manager is also characterised by *adapting*, given that he or she alternates between communicating with different groups of stakeholders. On the one hand, the daughterbrand is used towards its respective consumers, the media, and suppliers, while the motherbrand is, on the other hand, used towards shareholders, employees, and society in general. This leads to that the activities of the manager need to be adapted according to context.

The balancing between different contexts of communication with various groups of stakeholders might be related to that a majority of respondents described that a central task is to find the correct balance between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands. As communication appears to differ fundamentally between the two cases, the manager needs to understand when to emphasise the values of the

motherbrand on the one hand, and the daughterbrands on the other. Related to the communication of the motherbrand, some respondents stated that employee-branding is an important part of their work, where the values of the motherbrand are of primary concern. In contrast to this, other respondents emphasise the management of the communication specifically concerning the daughterbrands. This demonstrates that the tasks of the Corporate Brand Manager require certain amounts of *adaptation* and balancing. We therefore note that the manager needs to communicate the motherbrand in order to convey the identity of the employer, as well as the specific daughterbrand in order to convey its particular values.

Embracing also comes into play in the midst of controlling that the daughterbrands and motherbrand are following their respective brand promise, vision, and mission. The values and preferences of all stakeholders need to be respected, which is no small task given that there might be stakeholders that are specific to individual daughterbrands. Moreover, considering that the motherbrand is predominantly used in relation to other companies, the brand must still be able to reflect some values that are considered shared by all daughterbrands. In order to show some structure in the company's overall business strategy, some level of coherency in the choice of business areas that its daughterbrands are operating in needs to be demonstrated. This is important, given that business relationship might otherwise be difficult to establish if there appears to be no consistent market approach.

This sheds some light over the fact that a majority of respondents explain that internal brand-building is the most significant challenge to their work. While following an Individual Brand Strategy, managers need still to unite the company in the eyes of key stakeholders. This might, however, be difficult given that the daughterbrands are following their own separate strategies. Moreover, ensuring that the employees under the daughterbrands adhere to and understand their respective brand identities could potentially be a daunting task, given that the manager needs to be aware of a great number of factors, one of which being the end-consumer. Stemming from this is therefore the second-most important challenge, which is finding the right association between the motherbrand and daughterbrands, as well as between individual daughterbrands. Stakeholders need to be able to understand

who (or the identity of) the company is, and part of this impression is naturally its collection of brands. One respondent offers the following description:

> It is difficult to create unity among so many brands […] While we want to keep ourselves separated from our daughterbrands, the main challenge is to ensure that our innovations become associated with the company [i.e. motherbrand] and that these are then connected with our brands.

<div align="right">(Individual Brand Strategy respondent)</div>

This suggests that although the daughterbrands are communicated separately, activities at corporate level still need to be made visible in their communications. An example would be if the company would engage in CSR-related activities, which each of its daughterbrands must abide to. We therefore see that while the theoretical presuppositions explicate that the motherbrand and the daughterbrands should be kept apart, a subtle relationship still becomes necessary. Establishing this association is a delicate task and is inherently plagued by its own obstacles.

5.4 The Future of Corporate Brand Management

Following our research strategy demonstrating the exploratory approach of the study, this section of the analysis focuses on the respondents' thoughts regarding the future development of Corporate Brand Management.

An initial reflection is that a number of issues seem to be shared by all the four strategy categories. There seem to be wide agreement on the statement that Corporate Brand Management would in the future become more important from a strategic perspective. All respondents, regardless of strategy category, gave this as the *main* future outcome for Corporate Brand Management. Another general statement made by the respondents was that Corporate Brand Management issues would come to take a more central place on the agenda of top-level management. These two insights have a number of interesting implications.

As demonstrated in the previous section, distinct connections can be found between a certain Corporate Brand Strategy and the role of the Corporate Brand Manager. Based on this, we consider it reasonable that if the field of Corporate Brand Management is expected to change, then the future role of the Corporate Brand Manager is also likely to change. This could in turn potentially involve a widening of

the strategic responsibilities of the Corporate Brand Manager concerning the company's business model as a whole, whereby the manager receives greater influence over organisational issues and advances within the corporate hierarchy.

Moreover, the fact that respondents from all categories also expected that greater attention would be put towards internal brand-building aspects seems to be important concerning the future of Corporate Brand Management. We find that this might to some extent be related to the two former statements above, given that they all seem to refer to the raised holistic importance of Corporate Brand Management within the company. Taken together, they advance the view that Corporate Brand Management will in the future have a more significant effect on the internal dynamics and operations of companies compared to today.

During the process of gathering and analysing the empirical data, we found that one statement regarding the future of Corporate Brand Management appeared in all categories *except* the Mother Brand Strategy. Respondents from the three categories stated that they expected the *motherbrand itself to become considerably more important* in the future. This is particularly interesting, as it seems to suggest a burgeoning trend where increased value is steadily being given to the motherbrand within strategies that traditionally have focused on promoting their daughterbrands in various ways. We would like to address this by starting with the perspectives of the respondents from the Individual Brand Strategy category. As can be seen in the Empirical Findings chapter, a quarter of respondents stated that the motherbrand would become a future driving force for the company and their daughterbrands. A respondent described it as follows:

> Regarding the future we actually see that more focus will be put on visualising our motherbrand in some way related to our daughterbrands. This is not something we had planned a few years ago, but we see a raised importance concerning our corporate brand, or motherbrand if you so like, on the market.
>
> (Individual Brand Strategy respondent)

We consider this as noteworthy, as the very foundations of the Individual Brand Strategy, as stated by Melin (2008), revolve around the independence of each daughterbrand from the motherbrand. As a consequence, we are led to believe that companies following this strategy may choose to make the motherbrand *more*

visible, and subsequently may therefore come to gradually move from a distinct Individual Brand Strategy towards something more in the shape of a Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy.

This possible trend can also be noted at the companies following a Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy, where a third of respondents consider that the motherbrand will become more dominant in the future. The following response appears to indicate this:

> In the future, Corporate Brand Management will definitely become a more essential part at the company. By thinking strategically in the long-run, we work more with our motherbrand by trying to tie it closer to our daughterbrands compared to today.
>
> (Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy respondent)

Based on Melin's argument that the motherbrand is not the dominant factor in this strategy, we find the respondents' answers remarkable, as they also seem to indicate the strengthened role of the motherbrand. This leads us, moreover, to propose that more companies employing the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy may instead come to shift towards an approach resembling that of a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy.

Finally, there are signs suggesting that the motherbrand is also becoming more visible in the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy category. According to Melin (2008), the motherbrand does indeed play an important and prominent role within the strategy, but our findings indicate that this role is becoming *even more* accentuated. Half of the respondents expressed that the motherbrand would in the future become more dominate than in the present. Additionally, a few respondents even described that they are trying to cut their range of daughterbrands as much as possible, based on that they seek ultimately to work only with one strong motherbrand. In illustrating this process, one of the respondents stated:

> Actually, we are at the moment focusing on downsizing our range of brands. We try to connect as much awareness as possible to our motherbrand. The most important issue is that our customers can identify themselves with every part of our company where we see our motherbrand as the governing element.
>
> (Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy respondent)

We consider that the reactions by the respondents' within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy category support our notion of a possible trend. Based on this, we propose that (some) companies following a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy may in the future come to move towards a Mother Brand Strategy instead.

When it comes to the Mother Brand Strategy, there are naturally no respondents who indicate that they want to build a stronger motherbrand in relation to their daughterbrands. They already work with one single motherbrand and do so because they find it the most suitable strategy based on their particular field of business. As this is also the 'highest' brand hierarchical level, or rather the level containing the fewest number of brands according to Melin (2008), we pinpoint this particular strategy the end-point towards which the trend is directed. Having said that, as strategic goals differ between actors, reaching this point is naturally not in the interest of *every* company. Yet, with some exceptions, we see the indications for that moving from one strategy to the other could be a possible future trend within Corporate Brand Management.

6 Conclusions and Contributions

It this final chapter, we draw conclusions from our analysis and present our answers to the research questions. We offer contributions to both scholars and managers, where we also present our model – The Corporate Brand Manger Categorisation Framework – and reflect upon the future of Corporate Brand Management. The chapter closes with the limitations of our study and possible topics for future research.

6.1 Conclusions

We firstly present our key insights concerning the motives for the chosen Corporate Brand Strategy. Secondly, we reconnect with the primary subject of our study regarding the role of the Corporate Brand Manager. Following this, we give our conclusions on the future of Corporate Brand Management. We finish off the section with the answering of our research questions.

6.1.1 Motives for Chosen Corporate Brand Strategy

The *Categorisation Framework* was used as an analytical tool to allocate the companies into different categories in order to characterise the role of the Corporate Brand Manager for each strategy. We have determined that this method was supportive, valid, and suitable for the fulfilment of our research purpose. Our conclusion regarding the specific motives for adopting a certain Corporate Brand Strategy demonstrates first and foremost that depending on various factors, strategies are not the same for all types of companies. We have understood that when it comes to the development of strategic Corporate Brand Management, the particular relationship between the motherbrand and the daughterbrand(s) plays a central role. The interviews provided rich and thorough information, which facilitated the identification of separate motives that corresponded well with the theoretical presupposition of the *Categorisation Framework*.

Mother Brand Strategy

The motive for this strategy was characterised chiefly by clarity, unity and simplicity, which indicated the importance of one strong brand and high cost efficiency. Moreover, we conclude that a common motive for working with this strategy was the

lowered costs and the synergic effects it provides. The low level of flexibility that typifies the strategy was not, however, found to resonate with the motives given by respondents.

Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

The choice for the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy was found to be strongly influenced by the ambition to create a unified company internally. The relative flexibility given to daughterbrands was also considered to be an important factor guiding companies to this strategy. The aspect of cost efficiency was, however, deemed a less important motivation for this strategy compared to the Mother Brand Strategy.

Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Concerning the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy, we conclude that it is indeed characterised by a rather high level of flexibility where the daughterbrands stand strong and mostly independent. The motherbrand takes the role of an endorser or as a seal of quality and cost efficiency is not considered an important or crucial motive for the companies.

Individual Brand Strategy

The Individual Brand Strategy was indeed built on high flexibility and motivated by the pursuit to cover more market shares and let the daughterbrands remain strong on their own. A problem was also put forward concerning the connection between the daughterbrands and the motherbrand, as this was considered to cause confusion among customers. This affirmed the importance of the high level of flexibility providing companies the possibility of stand-alone brands. Although not fully coherent with Melin's (2008) definition of low cost efficiency, we conclude that this aspect nevertheless demarcates the strategy for other reasons.

6.1.2 The Role of the Corporate Brand Manager

Our research has enabled us to offer descriptive accounts for the role of the Corporate Brand Manager for each specific Corporate Brand Strategy category.

Additionally, general traits were also discovered during the analysis that could be seen to characterise the role of Corporate Brand Manager in general.

Corporate Brand Managers in general

Corporate Brand Managers are generally members of the chief executive management level at their respective companies, which demonstrates that key strategic importance is on the whole afforded to Corporate Brand Management. The function is also mainly considered and being treated as a *communicative* rather than a marketing issue, as respondents overall report to the Director of Communications and have both titles and backgrounds associated with the area. Moreover, the formal title of Corporate Brand Manager is *not* widely employed in practice, as personnel have instead a vast variety of titles.

The role of the Corporate Brand Manager is essentially of a multidisciplinary nature, encompassing both very general and often quite specific brand strategic responsibilities. One central task is that of internal brand-building, where managers are involved with integrating the internal and external dimensions of the company. This involves ensuring that the brand promise, mission, vision, and values are understood and followed by employees before moving to communicate the corporate brand to the market. Consequently, the notion that the *entire* company communicates appears firmly entrenched, where the manager works with total corporate communications and is positioned at *the very centre* of key strategic decision-making.

As internal branding was considered a core activity, it is reasonable that the most common challenges faced by managers relate to building internal cohesion and understanding for the corporate brand among employees in general and central strategic management in particular. As such, difficulties that arise refer mainly to balancing diverse attitudes and preferences, as well as increasing resource allocation to Corporate Brand Management activities. These challenges and their derivatives were found to be present in all Corporate Brand Strategy categories.

Corporate Brand Managers within the Corporate Brand Strategy categories

Certain aspects regarding the general role of the Corporate Brand Manager appear to correspond with the depictions provided by Balmer (2001b) and Hatch and Schultz

(2003). However, we find that the specific descriptions of roles extends beyond the accounts of the authors above. As our study shows that each strategy has its own (unique) activities, we conclude that the role of Corporate Brand Manager does differ according to Corporate Brand Strategy.

– Mother Brand Strategy

The Corporate Brand Manager is mainly preoccupied with building commitment and support internally for the corporate brand (*supporting*). Moreover, for the one-brand approach to be successful, the manager focuses on that company-wide operations reflect the corporate brand promise and values (*reflecting*). Internal support is a quintessential component in this, and in order to ascertain it, the manager must ensure that employees adhere to these values. In this process, sufficient leadership skills are required to be able to inspire and lead co-workers towards this end (*leading*). This is especially crucial when confronting the main challenge associated with the strategy to build an understanding and appreciation for the brand within the company.

– Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

The manager seeks to build a more unified external profile by organising and balancing between different daughterbrands. The chief concern is thus to ensure that the overarching corporate brand integrates the values and attitudes of key stakeholders, which is done through keeping the corporate brand meaningful and improving its standing among these groups (*embracing*). A major challenge is to ensure that the motherbrand lives up to customer expectations and stays relevant to target audiences. In addressing this issue, the manager works also to ensure that the corporate brand is reflected in the activities of daughterbrands (*reflecting*), which is especially important for the motherbrand's ability to guide the strategic direction of the company. Unifying and balancing the motherbrand with its various daughterbrands requires therefore that the manager also devotes astute attention to the nurturing and preservation of the corporate brand values from both an internal and external perspective (*maintaining*).

– Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

In this strategy, it was found that the Corporate Brand Manager focuses on building beneficial associations between the motherbrand and the daughterbrands, whereby the former is meant to act as an endorser for and a seal of quality to the latter (*endorsing*). This piggy-backing effect involves that the daughterbrands use the motherbrand in their communication, which consequently requires that the manager safeguards that the daughterbrands adequately reflect the promise and values of the motherbrand (*reflecting*). Nevertheless, as the daughterbrands are employed in potentially different market contexts, the manager must also be attentive to any necessary adaptations regarding how the motherbrand values are to be expressed (*adapting*). This certainly becomes necessary when new daughterbrands are brought into the hierarchy, whereby the manager must ascertain that their profiles are aligned with the corporate brand. The resulting challenge to managers in this strategy is to ensure that corporate communications are carried out correctly and successfully and that central management understands that the above tasks are crucial prerequisites to this.

– Individual Brand Strategy

Following from that the Individual Brand Strategy is fundamentally different from the other three strategies, the role of the manager was found to also be quite different. In this context, the manager focuses on that each daughterbrand follows its respective values and promise, and that these are adequately nurtured and preserved (*maintaining*). The motherbrand and the daughterbrands are used for separate purposes and address different stakeholder groups. For this reason, a central trait of the manager is to be adaptive when moving between building, communicating, and managing the daughterbrands on the one hand, and the motherbrand on the other (*adapting*). Yet, when building business relationships it is necessary that a level of coherency is expressed in the company's operations. As a result, while the daughterbrands may be pursuing their own separate goals, the manager must make sure that the promise, vision, and mission of the corporate brand are able to unite them (*embracing*). The manager thus faces the challenge of internal brand-building within each daughterbrand as well as within the corporation as a whole. The associated challenge to this is then finding the right level of

association between the motherbrand and the individual daughterbrands in order to provide sufficient corporate unity.

6.1.3 The Future of Corporate Brand Management

All the respondents agreed on three major aspects concerning the future of Corporate Brand Management: (1) Corporate Brand Management will become more important from a strategic perspective, (2) Corporate Brand Management will be afforded raised importance within the chief executive management level, and (3) Corporate Brand Management will affect the internal operations and organisation of the company greater than before. While these aspects are certain to affect the future role of the Corporate Brand Manager, we can however, not say exactly in what way this will occur. Yet, we can assume that Corporate Brand Managers will be afforded greater responsibilities, an elevated hierarchical corporate position, and a greater influence over strategic decision-making.

In addition to this, we have also found the indications of a trend regarding the raised importance of the motherbrand. Although not definitive, we may still conclude that this notion resonates within the three Corporate Brand Strategies involving the management of daughterbrands. Moreover, the percentage of respondents confirming the existence of this potential trend grew between categories, i.e. from Individual to Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy. A group of respondents (25%) from the Individual Brand Strategy expressed the future shift towards something resembling that of a Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy, while a larger group of respondents (~33%) from this strategy indicated in turn a move towards a Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy. Rather strong indications were finally given by respondents (50%) from the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, where a movement towards a Mother Brand Strategy was noted.

6.1.4 Answering the Research Questions

At the beginning of the study two research questions were formulated, which each referred to a specific area considered relevant to the fulfilment of the research purpose *to investigate the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in theory and practice*. On the basis of our conclusions presented above, we now turn to answer them specifically.

What is the role of the Corporate Brand Manager?

To ensure that the general corporate strategy is being carried out in practice, the manager needs to move vertically between the lofty corporation-wide strategic perspective and the grounded realities of daily tactical operations. Meanwhile, to ensure that support for the corporate brand exists both among employees and customers, the manager needs also to move horizontally between the internal and external company contexts. Having therefore to move within both the vertical and the horizontal operative spheres of the company, the role of the Corporate Brand Manager is thus both multidimensional and holistic. Leading from this, we moreover note that the role of the Corporate Brand Manager is to be located close to the very heart of the corporation in order to have a firm grasp of key company activities.

Does the role of the Corporate Brand Manager differ according to different Corporate Brand Strategies, and if so, how does it differ?

The answer to the first research question indicates that there are certain characteristics that Corporate Brand Managers have in common regardless of the Brand Strategic context in which they find themselves. Yet, during our analysis, we have found that distinct types of tasks and responsibilities can be identified for managers within each separate category. This made it also possible to create characterisations of the role for each Corporate Brand Strategy, where the difference between categories is based on the particular activities assumed by the manager. We explain the difference regarding the managerial role between strategies by the particular business environment that has driven the choice of strategy. On the basis of these insights, we conclude that the role of the Corporate Brand Manager differs according to the particular Corporate Brand Strategy followed by the company.

6.2 Contributions

Our study results in a number of contributions, which we present in this section. Firstly, we highlight that the study in itself can be considered an important contribution to both scholars and managers, by providing a new perspective on how to study Corporate Brand Management. Secondly, we present our central contributions through our model The Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation

Framework, whereby the role of the Corporate Brand Manager is graphically integrated for each Corporate Brand Strategy. Finally, we introduce the Ladder of Motherbrand Hierarchy, which depicts our observation that the motherbrand appears to be afforded rising importance within Corporate Brand Management.

6.2.1 A Study of Corporate Brand Managers in Theory and Practice

Our study has sought to widen the understanding concerning the tasks and responsibilities of Corporate Brand Managers in theory and practice by categorising the role of managers according to specific Corporate Brand Strategies. In doing so, the two perspectives of studying the area – the manager vis-à-vis the field of practice – are combined, which in itself poses a level of originality that would make the study in its entirety a valid contribution to the area of study. The merger of the two perspectives can moreover provide instructive insights to scholars seeking to continue this exploration, as they might go about to replicate our study within specific industries (e.g. services or retail), a certain business sector (e.g. B2B), or another national context (e.g. the UK). In integrating the manager and the field of practice, our study might also be inspirational to workshop leaders seeking to explore the relationship between strategic direction and tactical implementation within the context of Corporate Brand Management. This may then also be valuable to the business manager, who, by imitating our methodological procedure, might conduct a critical inquiry into the soundness and practical execution of his or her company's Corporate Brand Strategy.

After having carried out interviews with a substantial group of Corporate Brand Managers, lists containing their unique present and previous professional titles were compiled, which are found in Appendix B:2. These provide us mainly with two important insights: (1) Based on the names of present professional titles, we see that the Corporate Brand Management function is located mainly within the Communications Department, and (2) The list of previous professional titles reveals that while Communications seems a relevant background for managers, experiences in Marketing appear to be of central significance to the work.

We believe that managers may use these insights when evaluating the status of the company's Corporate Brand Management activities. If found relevant, they may judge whether the fact that many companies consider the Corporate Brand

Management function essentially a communications issue has bearing on the operations of the particular company, and then adapt accordingly. Furthermore, when seeking to recruit new Corporate Brand Managers, a reflection could also be made as to whether a background in Marketing *and* Communications could potentially be the ideal combination of skills to look for. In this way, the insights from our study could potentially benefit corporate leaders when determining the necessary further training of their Corporate Brand Managers.

6.2.2 The Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation Framework

Our study has resulted in novel insights into how Corporate Brand Strategies affect the role of Corporate Brand Managers, where the latter was indeed found to differ according to the former. Through this, we are able to construct an adaptation of the original *Categorisation Framework* by inserting the specific tasks and responsibilities characterising the role of Corporate Brand Managers within each Corporate Brand Strategy category.

Mother Brand	Mother-Daughter Brand
Chief characteristics: **Supporting Reflecting**	*Chief characteristics:* **Embracing**
Supporting characteristics: **Leading**	*Supporting characteristics:* **Maintaining, Reflecting**
Daughter-Mother Brand	**Individual Brand**
Chief characteristics: **Endorsing Reflecting**	*Chief characteristics:* **Maintaining Adapting**
Supporting characteristics: **Adapting**	*Supporting characteristics:* **Embracing**

The Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation Framework,
Augustsson & Larsson, 2012

We choose to label this adaptation the Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation Framework. For each category, *chief* characteristics typify the particular role of the

Corporate Brand Manager, while the *supporting* characteristics help to demonstrate additional important aspects that influence the work.

When reading the figure above, we see that the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in the Mother Brand Strategy is foremost characterised by supporting and reflecting, which respectively refer to strengthening the internal commitment for the motherbrand and ensuring that company operation are run according to its promise, vision, and mission. Leading then also become necessary in fulfilling these responsibilities, which refer to the sufficient leadership skills of managers. In the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy, stating that the Corporate Brand Manager is mainly preoccupied with embracing means that he or she seeks to ascertain that the promise of the motherbrand remains meaningful to all relevant stakeholders. In addition to this, reflecting becomes also a necessary component, as well as maintaining, which denotes the activities related to preserving and nurturing the values of the motherbrand. Corporate Brand Managers in the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy, meanwhile, are focused on both reflecting and endorsing, where the latter represents the work involved in drawing benefits from associating the daughterbrands with the motherbrand. Also relevant in this context is the activity of adapting, which is when managers are responsive to how the communication of the motherbrand might have to be modified according to the changes in the business environment. Finally, the role of the Corporate Brand Manager in the Individual Brand Strategy is to work chiefly with both maintaining and adapting, supported by activities related to embracing.

We believe that our study offers three main theoretical contributions:

1. Through our work, we have *integrated* the *Categorisation Framework* as developed from Melin and Urde (1991) and Melin (2008) with the Corporate Brand Custodianship model by Balmer, Liao, and Wang (2010). In doing so, we have demonstrated that the two models are *valid* in terms how they depict Corporate Brand Management, that they are *useful* for studying how Corporate Brand Management is carried out in practice, and they complement each other. Our study has thereby empirically verified that these models are sound and relevant analytical tools to the study of Corporate Brand Management.

2. On the basis of our substantial analysis, we were able to conclude that the role of the Corporate Brand Manager does indeed differ according to the choice of Corporate Brand Strategy. This novel finding has then brought us to provide the scholarly field with a mapping through the diagram above of the *various typologies of Corporate Brand Managers* according to the different Corporate Brand Strategy categories. We believe that this gives clarity to both researchers as well as managers within the general field of Corporate Brand Management.

3. The Corporate Brand Manager Categorisation Framework can be used as an *analytical framework* for the study of efficient management of the relationship between the motherbrand and daughterbrands. Here, scholars may on the basis of our model focus on specific Corporate Brand Strategy categories when discussing how best to handle the relationship. In this way, they would be able to also potentially develop the characteristics for the role further.

We believe also that our study carries three potentially important managerial contributions:

1. Our model shows that the *choice of Corporate Brand Strategy has crucial implications to the role of the Corporate Brand Manager*. This is important, as it might assist in building an understanding within companies that the tasks, responsibilities, and challenges vary between categories. The choice of strategy should thus be made with a consideration for what it might involve practically, and concerns therefore both chief executive management as well as Corporate Brand Managers themselves.

2. The characteristics concerning the role of the Corporate Brand Manager within each Corporate Brand Strategy category provides managers with an *indication as to where attention should be placed*. Having first identified the category to which the company belongs, the Corporate Brand Manager is able to recognise what main areas of tasks and responsibilities should be addressed.

3. Associated with the previous point, by interpreting the model, important functional areas associated with a particular Corporate Brand Strategy become pointed-out to chief executive management. Based on this knowledge, they are able to *judge early on the appropriate level of resources* that should be made available to the Corporate Brand Manager. In realising, for instance, that major focus lies on internal brand-building, chief executives should ensure that the relevant means are provided.

6.2.3 The Motherbrand Moving Up in the World?

The trend that was described and discussed in the analysis chapter can also be considered an additional theoretical contribution arising from our study. As reflected therein, the trend could potentially mean that the motherbrand is becoming more important within the general practice of Corporate Brand Management. We illustrate this in what we like to call the *Ladder of Motherbrand Hierarchy*. In ordering the four Corporate Brand Strategy categories according to the significance placed on the motherbrand, the Mother Brand Strategy naturally becomes found at the top while the Individual Brand Strategy is located at the bottom. Consequently, as one moves from the bottom-up, the role of the motherbrand within categories becomes stronger.
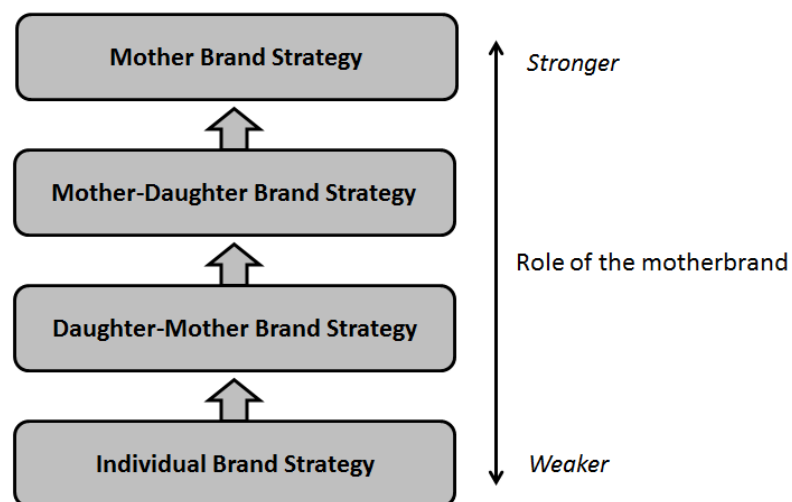
The Ladder of Motherbrand Hierarchy, Augustsson & Larsson, 2012

In sum, the trend we refer to suggests that the motherbrand is becoming more important within the three bottom categories. This is depicted in the figure by the arrows indicating that certain companies express a willingness to "climb the ladder" and so move to a (higher) level where the role of the motherbrand becomes afforded comparatively more strength. Since this was not something we expected to find, we have not been able to investigate the undelaying motives for this trend in any detail. However, we allow ourselves at this point to take a step back and reflect upon this notion on a more general level. We propose that the trend might depend on an almost ubiquitous decrease in competitive advantages, whereby the motherbrand might be seen as very hard to imitate and copy given its unique brand values and brand associations. In the midst of stifling competitive pressures, it might thus be considered a more useful competitive tool compared to before. Added to this, motives might also be cost-related, as companies are finding the management and nurturing of many daughterbrands a quite expensive task. Moreover, increased globalisation and internationalisation might facilitate economies of scale, which allows managers to justify the benefits from a strong motherbrand. Although this discussion cannot be supported empirically, we find the indications of this future trend both fascinating and interesting, where we have only been able to scratch the surface.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

As the study does not differentiate between companies based on neither business sector nor industrial category, our work can be considered limited in the sense that it might overlook the potential differences that exist between, for example, B2B and B2C companies. Possible topics for future research could therefore be to investigate the role of Corporate Brand Managers only within this type of companies or a certain industry.

The decision that respondents would have to belong to companies operating in Sweden was based mainly on the practical manageability of the study. Nevertheless, the fact that only Swedish-based companies were studied might still be considered a limitation. It would be possible to conduct a similar investigation in another national context, which could potentially focus on verifying whether the conclusions of this paper are universally applicable.

Our study offers also some interesting topics for further scholarly research. Although the information regarding previous professional titles paints merely a vague outline for the respondents' background, it could nevertheless be used as a basis for an inquiry into how one becomes a Corporate Brand Manager. Moreover, the list of unique present professional titles highlights where within the corporate hierarchy the Corporate Brand Management function could be found. Having only been partly considered in this study, future research could meanwhile seek to explore the reasons that govern the location of Corporate Brand Management within the organisational structure in relation to other corporate functions.

Finally, our research reveals the indications for a rising trend where the motherbrand is steadily gaining more strength within the various Corporate Brand Strategies. Having depicted this trend in the Ladder of Motherbrand Hierarchy, the lack of strong empirical evidence allows us nevertheless to only offer a few plausible reasons for why this might be happening. We therefore propose that future research could seek to (1) Validate if indeed such a trend exists, and if so, (2) Investigate the actual underlying causes for why this is the case. We thus offer the Ladder of Motherbrand Hierarchy as a possible theoretical point-of-departure, which could then be used for scientific falsification.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews

Part 1: Company and respondent-related information

1. Are you working with Corporate Brand Management?

2. Do you officially have the title Corporate Brand Manager?

3. If no, what is your official title?

4. How many years have you been working with Corporate Brand Management?

5. What is the title of your closest superior?

6. Are you a member of the company's chief executive management team?

Part 2: Chosen Corporate Brand Strategy and motives for these

7. Does your company have more than one brand? If so, how many do you have?

8. Regarding your Corporate Brand Strategy, would you say that your motherbrand characterises the profile of your daughterbrands?

9. Regarding your Corporate Brand Strategy, would you say that each of your daughterbrands have unique and separate strategies?

10. Regarding your market communications, are there any connection between your motherbrand and daughterbrands?

11. What are the motives behind your specific Corporate Brand Strategy?

Part 3: The role, background, and responsibilities of the Corporate Brand Manager

12. During your career, what positions or titles have you held within branding?

13. Give a brief description of your present tasks related to Corporate Brand Management

14. What would you say are the greatest challenges you as a Corporate Brand Manager face at your company?

15. What is your opinion regarding the future of Corporate Brand Management at your company?

Appendix B

Diagrams associated with 4.2 Companies and Respondent Related Information

Number of Employees

Categories	No. of companies	Appr. %
≤ 1 000	26	40
1 000 ≤ 10 000	29	45
10 000 <	10	15
Total	**65**	**100**
Average no. of employees		**6 681**

Member of Chief Executive Management

Response	No. of respondents	Appr. %
YES	47	72
NO	18	28
Total	**65**	**100**

Closest Superior

Title of Superior	No. of respondents	Appr. %
CEO/President	43	66
Communications Director	10	15
Market Director	4	6
Corporate Group President	3	5
Misc.	5	8
Total	**65**	**100**

Categorisation of Present Professional Titles		
Professional Title	*No. of respondents*	*Appr. %*
Corporate Communications	33	51
Market Director	22	34
Brand Director & similar	13	20
Corporate Brand Manager	3	5
Total	**71***	-

* Respondents were able to have more than one title, and hence could belong to more than one category.

List of Unique Present Professional Titles		
Brand & Market Communications Manager	Corporate Communications Director	Senior Manager Marketing and CRM
Brand Consultant	Director Corporate Branding	Senior VP Brand & Marketing
Brand Director	Director Marketing & Communications	Senior VP Communications
Brand strategist	Head of Market Communications	Senior VP Corporate Communications
Business & Brand Developer	Head of Marketing	Senior VP Corporate Communications & Public Affairs
Business Sector Manager	HR & Communications Director	Senior VP Corporate Communications, Sustainability and Investor Relations
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Investor & Public Relations Manager	Senior VP Marketing, Sales & Communications
Chief Communications Officer	Manager Market Communications	Strategic Communication & Marketing Director
Commercial Director	Market Director	Strategic Director
Communications Developer	Market Process Manager	Visual Identity Manager
Communications Director	Marketing & Creative Production Manager	VP Brand Management & Business Intelligence
Corporate Communications Manager	Marketing Managers Brand & Communications	VP Marketing & Communications
Corporate Brand Manager	Mother Brand Director	
Corporate Branding Officer	PR & Communications Director	

Number of Years Working with Corporate Brand Management		
Year Span Category	*No. of respondents*	*Appr. %*
0 - 9 years	15	24
10 - 19 years	34	51
20+ years	16	25
Total	**65**	**100**

Categorisation of Previous Professional Titles		
Previous Title	*No. of respondents*	*Appr. %*
Market Director	26	40
Communications Director	23	35
CEO	16	25
Project Manager	14	22
Product Manager	10	15
Consultant	9	14
Sales Director	8	12

List of Unique Previous Professional Titles

Account Director	Customer Care Manager	Press Secretary
Brand Communications Manager	Director for Advertisement	Producer
Brand Manager	Director Marketing Communications	Product Director
Brand Strategy Director	Environment Director	Product Line Manager
Branding Director	Events Director	Project Manager
Business Developer	Global Event Manager	Public Affairs Chef
CEO	Graphical Stylist	Sales Director
Communications Director	Head of New Media	Senior VP Strategy and Business
Concept Development Director	HR Director	Service Manager
Consultant	Investor Relations Manager	Sponsorship Director
Copywriter	Journalist	Staff Secretary
Corporate Affairs Manager	Key Account Manager	Strategic Planner
Corporate Brand Manager	Market Coordinator	Theater Producer
Corporate Communicator	Market Director	TV-host
Corporate Purchase Director	Nordic Brand Manager	Visual Identity Manager
Creative Manager	PR Director	VP Sales and Marketing

Diagrams associated with 4.3 Corporate Brand Management Strategies

Categorisation of Companies According to Corporate Brand Strategy

Question	Associated Corporate Brand Strategy Category	No. of Companies
7	Mother Brand Strategy	13
8	Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy	20
9	Individual Brand Strategy	20
10	Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy	12

C: 1 – Motives for the Chosen Corporate Brand Strategy

Motives for the Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Motives for chosen strategy	No. of respondents
Mother	**13**	A strong motherbrand signals clarity, unity, and simplicity to the recipient	9
		Managing one brand is much more cost-efficient than managing many brands	8
		A strong MB creates synergic effects	4

Motives for the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Motives for chosen strategy	No. of respondents
Mother-Daughter	**20**	To create a united profile for the company	13
		Daughterbrands find benefits from association with a strong motherbrand	11
		A strong brand signals clarity, unity, and simplicity to the recipient	9
		Cost efficiency	6
		To clear up among various daughterbrands	5
		A strong brand creates synergic effects	5
		To improve internal cooperation	3

Motive for the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Motives for chosen strategy	No. of respondents
Daughter-Mother	**12**	To promote the motherbrand in the long-run	11
		Motherbrand takes a supportive and endorsing role and acts as a seal of quality	10
		To increased the strength of daughterbrands through association with motherbrand	7
		To improve unity through association with motherbrand	3

Motives for the Individual Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Motives for chosen strategy	No. of respondents
Individual	**20**	Company has many strong and well-functioning daughterbrands	15
		Association with motherbrand causes confusion to customers	13
		Daughterbrands are tailored to specific markets segments	10
		Cost efficient to keep daughterbrands independent from motherbrand	10
		Motherbrand adds no value to external communication	6
		Want to let daughterbrands grow on their own	6

C: 2 – Main Tasks of Corporate Brand Managers

Main tasks within the Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Main tasks regarding Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother	**13**	Responsible for holistic brand strategy	10
		Internal brand-building	9
		Work with brand platform	8
		External brand communications strategy	7
		Brand auditing	4
		Using the brand for sales support	3
		Work with the brand's graphic profile	3

Main tasks within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Main tasks regarding Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother-Daughter	20	Internal brand-building	14
		Balancing the relationship between motherbrand and daughterbrands	10
		Responsible for holistic brand strategy	9
		Work with brand platform	9
		External brand communications strategy	6

Main Tasks within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Main tasks regarding Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Daughter-Mother	12	Balancing the relationship between motherbrand and daughterbrands	11
		Adjusting the relationship between motherbrand and daughterbrands based on the market context	9
		Making sure that new daughterbrands are successfully integrated	8
		Work with brand platform	7
		Internal brand-building	6
		Responsible for holistic brand strategy	6

Main Tasks within the Individual Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Main tasks regarding Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Individual	20	Ensuring that every daughterbrand follows defined brand strategies	15
		Balancing the relationship between motherbrand and daughterbrands (e.g. by employee-branding)	13
		Cementing that strategies are understood and supported internally	11
		External brand communications strategy	5
		Using the brand for sales support	4

C: 3 – Most Significant Challenges to Corporate Brand Management

Most Significant Challenges within the Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Most significant challenges to Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother	**13**	Building an understanding and appreciation for corporate branding-related issues within the company	8
		Increasing resource allocation to brand-related activities	3
		Improving the understanding at the executive level for the value of Corporate Brand Management	2
		Strengthening the connection between the MB and customer expectations	2

Most Significant Challenges within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Most significant challenges to Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother-Daughter	**20**	Strengthening the connection between motherbrand and customer expectations	10
		Building an understanding and appreciation for corporate branding-related issues within the company	9
		Demonstrating the profitability of Corporate Brand Management	8
		Rebranding of newly acquired daughterbrands	5
		Making the motherbrand into a driving force for the corporation	4

Most Significant Challenges within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Most significant challenges to Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Daughter-Mother	**12**	Communicating correctly with the market	9
		Improving the understanding at the executive level for the value of brands and branding	6
		Working towards making the company brand-oriented	5
		Building an understanding and appreciation for corporate branding-related issues within the company	4
		To strengthen the motherbrand	4
		Increasing resource allocation to brand-related activities	3

Most Significant Challenges within the Individual Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Most significant challenges to Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Individual	**20**	Internal brand-building	14
		Finding the right association between daughterbrands and motherbrand, and daughterbrands where relevant	12
		Improving the understanding at the executive level for the value of brands and branding	7
		Confronting the tension between profits from short-term sales and value of long-term brand-building	5

C: 4 – The Future Development of Corporate Brand Management

The Future Development within the Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Future of Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother	**13**	Increasingly more important strategic area	8
		Corporate Brand Management becomes more integrated into the company's business strategy	6
		Corporate Brand Management becomes a more central agenda item for executive management	2
		Improved internal understanding for brandings issues	2

The Future Development within the Mother-Daughter Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Future of Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Mother-Daughter	**20**	Increasingly more important strategic area	16
		Corporate Brand Management becomes a more central agenda item for executive management	10
		The motherbrand becomes a more important driving force to our company and our respective daughterbrands	10
		Corporate Brand Management becomes more integrated into the company's business strategy	8
		Corporate Brand Management become a significant foundation for long-term competitive advantage	7
		Improved internal understanding for branding activities	5

The Future Development within the Daughter-Mother Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Future of Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Daughter-Mother	**12**	Increasingly more important strategic area	10
		Corporate Brand Management becomes more integrated into the company's business strategy	8
		Corporate Brand Management becomes a more central agenda item for executive management	7
		The motherbrand becomes a more important driving force to our company and our respective daughterbrands	4
		Greater focus on internal branding	3

The Future Development within the Individual Brand Strategy

Category	No. of Companies	Future of Corporate Brand Management	No. of respondents
Individual	**20**	Increasingly more important strategic area	14
		Individual daughterbrands becoming combined and grouped under fewer larger daughterbrands	9
		Greater focus on internal branding	7
		The motherbrand becomes a more important driving force to our company and our respective daughterbrands	5
		Corporate Brand Management becomes a more central agenda item for executive management	2