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A TYPOLOGY OF BRAND ORIENTATION

A CASE STUDY OF CORPORATE BRAND MANAGEMENT

MSc INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND BRAND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

- Title:** A Typology of Brand Orientation
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- Key words:** Brand Orientation, CBIM Framework, Strategic Orientation, Market Orientation, Strategic Brand Management
- Thesis purpose:** The purpose and the main focus of this study is to give empirical examples as well as to contribute to a typology showing ways in which organizations can be brand oriented.
- Methodology:** Following a social constructionist approach the study takes a mainly qualitative form concerning a comparative case study of four contrasting cases. In addition to the qualitative study, a smaller quantitative method is undertaken. Furthermore, the research is mainly deductive but is combined with an inductive structure in the end of the research process. The data is collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, but adds a structured interview part as well.
- Theoretical foundation:** The literature review creates the foundation for the theoretical framework as well as the following discussion and analysis. Especially Urde's (2013) CBIM Framework is presented and described in detail, as it is seen as the appropriate model for analysis and for making a suitable contribution to the field.
- Empirical foundation:** The empirical data is based upon semi-structured as well as structured interviews with 4 corporate brand organizations concerning two businesses- to business companies and two business- to-consumer companies. The respondents are Communications managers as well as corporate brand managers.
- Conclusion:** The study firstly concludes that a brand oriented mindset can be manifested through the CBIM framework. Secondly, the study finds nuances in the brand orientation strategy, namely Internal brand consciousness and Internal brand commitment. These are the two ways that the brand oriented mindset can differ between organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade brands have made a significant impression in the business world. From being solely a logo, the brand has become a critical tool for growing the business profitability and performance. There is therefore an increased need for highlighting the interrelationship between the business strategy and the brand strategy (Kapferer, 2012). According to Kapferer (2012:1) *“It is time to think of the brand as a great shared idea supported by viable business model”*. The brand and the business models are thus intimately intertwined, branding decisions are determined by the business model and vice versa. Top managers as well as researcher have confirmed that brand can provide a long-lasting competitive advantage and, as the goal of business strategy is to build a sustainable advantage over competition, brands have become crucial (Kapferer, 2012). *“Even neurosciences tells us that we do not drive a car but a brand of a car, not drink a cola but a Coke or Pepsi”* (Kapferer, 2012:7) In the present day every organization wants to have a brand and be managed as brands. Branding has thus become a strategic issue in all sectors (Kapferer, 2012).

When discussing companies or organizations strategic issues and intentions, market orientation has long been a classical paradigm in marketing. Companies adapt their strategy and mindset according to the individual consumer’s wants and needs, and thus have an outside-in, image-driven approach. In the early 1990s however, when discussing the importance of making the brand the basis of the organization’s processes as well as to connect it to business strategy, the term brand orientation was introduced. Compared to a marketing driven approach, the brand is here seen as a resource and a strategic hub of the company, thus the brand is made super-ordinate to the needs and wants of the consumers. The brand orientation research is however still in its infancy. It is a striving and relatively young paradigm (Urde, et al., 2011; Gromark & Melin, 2011). There is therefore a need to conceptualize and operationalize brand orientation further. Specifically the literature is lacking examples in which ways organizations can be brand oriented and how this can be manifested in the organizations (Wong & Merilees, 2007). This is the key theoretical concern of our research.

RELEVANCE OF STUDY

As the literature on brand orientation lacks examples of ways in which organizations can be brand oriented the main focus of this study will be to accentuate that organizations can be brand oriented in different ways and provide a basic framework, a typology, for working with these different brand orientation strategies theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the contribution aims to be beneficial for future research in the area of brand orientation, strategic brand management as well as to competitive advantage and organizations future profitability. Additionally, practically, the practitioners of this theory, thus the brand oriented organizations, will receive guidelines for how to work efficiently with the complexity of brands in an ever changing environment and how to achieve profitability with brand orientation as the foundation. The purpose and the main focus of this paper is thus to give empirical examples, contribute to a typology showing ways in which organizations can be brand oriented and make it practical for researchers and organizations to use. Based upon this purpose the following research questions have been formulated:

- How can a brand oriented mindset be manifested in a corporate brand organization?
- How can a brand oriented mindset differ between corporate brand organizations?

DISPOSITION

This study will be structured in a way that suits the thesis' purpose and methodology. This means that the first chapter will outline, in order, strategic orientation, market orientation, strategic brand management and brand orientation. The following chapter, chapter two, concerns the thesis' methodology where research philosophy, research method, research design, and research critics are discussed. Chapter three is further made up by the empirical findings, analyzed through the brand orientation definitions as well as the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework (Urde, 2013 FC). The associated graphical tables and lists of data are found in the appendix. The empirical findings establish the foundations for our result and discussion chapter. In the closing section of the thesis, theoretical and managerial contributions, limitations and future research proposal are outlined.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to examine the research questions empirically we need to provide a solid theoretical background of the brand orientation paradigm. We will firstly investigate strategic orientation as a phenomenon followed by the market orientation paradigm as well as discussing brand identity, brand image, brand positioning and strategic brand management in order to continue with brand orientation and its characteristics more thoroughly.

STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

The firm's strategic orientation is the backbone of what is guiding, influencing and constituting organizations marketing priorities, aims, strategies and corporate performance (Noble et al., 2002). They are implemented by the firm to create proper behaviors for the superior performance of the business (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997) and to navigate the organizations within the marketplace both with customers and competitors. However it is not always the explicit choice of management when making strategic decisions. According to Mintzberg (1989) it can include the pattern of decisions or the results of organizational learning. This issue is brought up by Urde (1999) as a relevant factor to note. However, strategic orientations have been considered in both marketing and strategic management literature (Noble et al., 2002). There are several viable strategic orientations, market orientation, product orientation, selling orientation, and more recently brand orientation. Other studies of so-called strategic orientations have been including the tendency of firms to be opportunity seeking or problem avoiding, to maintain an external versus internal orientation, or to pursue differentiation-based or cost-based strategies (Wright et al., 1995). However, research in marketing has focused almost exclusively on the maintaining and the consequences of being market oriented. Market orientation, more deeply explained and examined below, is considered as a classical concept and a central notion of marketing. It is seen as a cornerstone of marketing thought, containing some of the truly fundamental principles of the discipline (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Borch, 1957; McKitterick, 1957; Noble et al., 2002). Urde et al., (2011) further claim that market orientation might be called the marketing foundation. Nevertheless this does not mean that alternative orientations are not practicable, potentially lucrative business approaches and legitimate guiding models for business success (Noble et al., 2002).

MARKET ORIENTATION-THE CUSTOMER IS KING

It appears to be no agreement as to who originally coined the phrase market orientation (Deng & Dart, 1994). Nevertheless, market orientation, often called the marketing concept or the market concept, has characterized marketing thinking since the early 1960s when several authors including Levitt (1960) and Drucker (1954) argued for firms being customer-satisfying in order to be competitive. This idea was later understood as “hearing the voice of the customer” and a firm’s willingness to recognize, to understand, and to adjust the marketing mix elements to satisfy customers’ needs and desires in order to survive (Reid et al., 2005). By Ruekert (1992) the concept is defined as “the degree to which the business unit obtains and uses information from customers, develops a strategy which will meet customer needs, and implements that strategy by being responsive to customers' needs and wants" (Ruekert, 1992:228).

Since the rise of market orientation customers have thus been considered to be the primary focus. However through the years a broader perspective and a wider definition has been embraced with organizational variables in mind. This especially by the main proponents and most influential writers in this area, Shapiro (2001), Naerver & Slater (1990) and Kohli & Jaworski (1993) (Urde et al., 2011). The proponents mentioned all sees marketing orientation as much more than a strategy for getting close to the customer. Shapiro (2001) even claims aiming at getting close to the customer is meaningless as consumers have varying and conflicting desires. For Shapiro market orientation is not to which extent the firm is customer driven but based on three other characteristics that touch all aspects of the company. Firstly a company can only be market oriented if the whole company completely understands its market and the people who decide whether to buy its products and services. The understanding has to infiltrate and permeate to every corporate function in order to succeed. Secondly in order to be market oriented, strategic and tactical decisions must be made inter functionally and interdivisional in order to avoid conflicting objectives. Finally Shapiro (2001) states decisions and functions must make well-coordinated decisions and execute them with a sense commitment in order to meet the organizations goals.

Naerver & Slater (1990) writes similar statement but divide market orientation into three cultural components in order to reflect the values and attitudes of the organization in the process of providing superior customer value; customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination as well as two decision criteria; long-term focus and

profitability. Hence, understanding the consumer value chain properly as well as how it evolves overtime, the capability of the competitors both current and potential in the environment and how all parts of the organization must accept responsibility for servicing the market, makes the business reach a long time perspective as well as secure future profitability (Naerver & Slater, 1990).

As for Kohli and Jaworski (1990) the authors also divide market orientation into similar manner as Shapiro (2001) and Naerver & Slater (1990), but in a more behavioral approach defining the market orientation in terms of organizational behaviors; firstly in the organization-wide generation of market intelligence, secondly to dissemination of the intelligence across departments and finally the organization-wide responsiveness to it. To sum up the authors Shapiro (2001), Naerver & Slater (1990) and Kohli & Jaworski (1993) all agree that the organization needs to work together with the strategy inter-functionally and inter-divisionally for marketing orientation to receive its true colors. Market orientation is therefore reflected in the values, beliefs, activities, and behaviors in the organization; hence the corporate culture understanding of the organizational functioning. When done correctly they can track and respond to customers' needs and preferences which will lead to greater customer loyalty and satisfaction, organizational commitment of employees and improved business performances (Kohli& Jaworski, 1993; Naerver & Slater, 1990; Shapiro 1988; Reid et al., 2005; Carrillat, Jamarillo & Locander, 2004).

It is important to highlight that in the subject of marketing, the debate about the sources of competitiveness still is in its infancy (Urde, 2011). The existing literature have not yet achieved clarity of the market orientation definition as well as whether the source of the competitive advantage of the firm mainly can be found in its industry or within the firm itself. According to Deng & Dart (1994) there is therefore a challenge in making the definition of market orientation more standardized and uniformed in order to effectively measure market orientation empirically. Deng and Dart (1994) suggest measuring market orientation according to Naerver & Slater (1990) definition but adding profit orientation. Urde (2011) mention typical performance metrics to be customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, or customer lifetime value.

MARKET ORIENTATION –THE CRITICISM

It seems clear that using a market oriented framework can help most firms achieve higher levels of marketplace success. However, the marketing discipline ignores several other

possible strategic orientations that influence the interactions between the firm and its markets (Noble et al., 2002). For example, the research of market orientation doesn't highlight brand in a significant manner in the process of strategic orientation (Noble et al., 2002; Urde et al., 2011). Brand are treated in a relatively superficial and general fashion and described as one of many resources within the firm. The priority of the brand in the organization is low and will most likely become the unconditional response to the wants and needs of the customers. Hence, the brand will be adapted and designed to purely satisfy the customers. For many researchers this is considered to be a problem as the consumers demand may devitalize the brand as a strategic resource (Urde et al., 2011). Urde (2011) argues of the need to approach brands as a strategic recourse, mentioning the direction brand orientation. As the brand orientation framework has its roots in the traditional brand definition (Urde, 2009, 2011; Bridson & Evans, 2004) there is a necessity for explaining the research development of brand, give an introduction to the study's interest and perspective on brands and brand management.

THE CONCEPT OF BRANDS

Over the past decade brand development and management have been among the primary focal points of the marketing discipline (Noble et al., 2002; Low & Fullerton, 1994; Wong & Merrilees, 2007; Tilley, 1999; Urde, 1994). A brand, as defined by Kapferer (2012:12), is: *"a name that symbolizes a long-term engagement, crusade or commitment to a unique set of values, embedded into products, services and behaviors, which make the organization, person or product stand apart or stand out"*. The definition focuses on what the brand symbolizes, rather than just being a name of a product, as has been the notion in earlier marketing research (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer's definition is largely concurrent with the authors view on the role of brands in organizations and will be used as a backdrop in the rest of this study. Further on the domain as well as the classification, highlight brand image, identity and positioning as important facets of the current research which the authors will explain more thoroughly below.

BRAND IDENTITY-THE KEY TO THE HEART OF THE BRAND

"Corporate brand identity is what helps an organization, or part of it, feel that it truly exist and that it is a coherent and unique being, with a history and a place of its own, different from others." (Kapferer, 2012:150)

In contemporary brand management literature, brand identity is viewed as the core of a brand; what the brand stands for the core values, mission, vision and the promise to the firm's stakeholders. It is the sender's side in the communication spectrum. (Kapferer, 2012; Balmer,

2012; Urde, 2013; Coleman et al., 2011). Kapferer (2012) has developed the Brand identity prism which broke ground in the literature through the shift from 'image' to 'identity', or from the receiver to the sender (Urde, 2013 FC). The model derives from the concept that brands have the gift to speech and that the brands only can exist successfully if they communicate. In the model, Kapferer argues that a brand's identity has six facets, namely physique, personality, culture, self-image, reflection and relationship (Kapferer, 2012). However, this model has not been unchallenged. Urde (2013 FC) argues that the Brand identity prism is predominantly suited for product brands rather than corporate brands. Coleman et al., (2011) argue that there are no comprehensive models for B2B brand identity and regards Kapferer's model as customer centric. This is a sign of the model not being completely over-arching. Since this study is undertaken on corporate brands exclusively, Urde's framework is more suited in relation to this study's purpose and research proposal and will therefore be returned to later in this chapter.

BRAND IMAGE-THE VIEW IN THE MIRROR

Brand image, as opposed to brand identity is focused on the receiver side in the communication spectrum. Research focus on the external view of stakeholders upon a brand, how they decode and perceive the messages communicated with them. The brand image is thus both the result and the interpretation of the brand's meaning, aim and self-image, hence the brand identity. In the brand management view the brand image is therefore lead by the brand identity; brand identity is thus the prevailing concept. However due to the fact that companies can be unaware of their identity they can choose to imitate competitors image or the image that is most appealing to the public and the publics' expectation. Brand then outplay their differences and look average (Kapferer, 2012; Fill, 2009). With a strictly image-driven approach it is thus not possible to have a brand oriented mindset, where brands are viewed and treated as strategic resources. Urde et al., (2011) argues that image driven research can be described as outside-in-driven approach whereas identity driven research is inside-out driven by its nature (Urde, 2013; Urde et al., 2011) As this study is primarily interested in the inside-out spectrum, focusing on the identity-driven aspects and a brand oriented mindset, brand image is given little room in the study from this point onwards. However it is the author's responsibility to remind the readers that obviously brand should not cut themselves of the public and market evolution, identity and image should exist in synergy with each other.

BRAND POSITIONING-PLANTING THE BRAND IN THE CONSUMERS MINDS

The third highly important aspect within the brand management spectrum is positioning. This refers to the way in which a brand distinguishes itself from other products, brands and competitors operating within the same sphere. The positioning purpose is to be appealing for the consumers and to become part in the customer selection process (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) discuss four key questions to be asked when forming the brand positioning; for whom, why, when and against whom? The answer to these questions creates the distinctive characteristics that constitute the consumer's selection process. For this reason brand positioning and the answers to the questions mentioned above must be based on customer insight, their choices and their basis of comparisons relevant to the specific market in order for the brand to succeed. Thus, the brand and the product will only be considered if it is clearly part of the consumer's brand selection process.

However brand positioning does not deliver the brand message to the consumer but rather the outward expression of the brand's inner substance, the identity. Identity is the source of brand positioning and brand positioning exploits the brand identity facets, making the facets visual, verbal and appealing to the public. Brand identity thus provides the framework for brand position and brand positioning focus more on the product itself. Brand positioning is unstable; competition oriented and may change through time. Identity however is stable, long lasting and tied to the brand roots. The connection between identity and positioning enables brand to change over time while still remaining itself (Kapferer, 2012).

As noted from the brand theory highlighted, identity, image and positioning are mutually dependent. They are thus of equally importance but the researchers manage them differently. The discussion is bouncing between which of these three columns that are the paramount step for the firms strategic orientation. When answering image or positioning the researcher takes a market oriented stand, when deciding upon identity the view goes coherent with strategic brand management and brand orientation, which will now be illuminated.

STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

The discussion in the strategic brand management literature is circulating around how to manage brands for profit and to what extension brands are important to the business strategy. Brands are here recognized as part of a company's capital and should be exploited in a way that they produce added value for the firm in question (Kapferer, 2012; Urde, 2012; Gromark & Melin, 2010). In the value adding process strategic intention, brand identity, brand image, brand positioning and brand communication mentioned above, are viewed as important pillars. These pillars are therefore highlighted in the strategic brand management model made by Urde (2012), presented below.

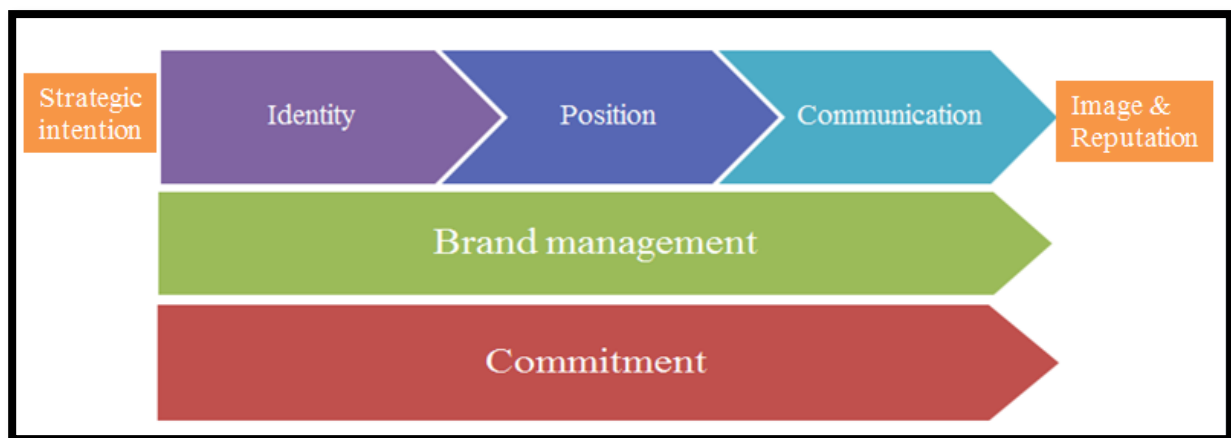


Figure 1, The Strategic Brand Management process, Urde (2012)

This model is constructed with the aim to categorize and guide the brand management process, i.e. how to handle questions that relates to brands, their meaning, structure and communication. As with our theoretical framework the model starts with the organizations strategic intention. The strategic intention of the firms is crucial to outline in order manage the strategic process of brand. The strategic intention is followed by the three upper dimensions, identity, position and communication which, according to Urde (2012) are the three corner stones of the strategic brand management process. In this model, one need to consider each of the three steps in order to build a strong brand long-term. This means that the foundation of the brand management process is brand identity. The next step is the position process where the brand is positioned in the minds of the consumers. Finally, communication is necessary to be able to communicate the meaning of the brand to various stakeholders and customers. The communication procedure is finally visible in the image the stakeholders and customers perceive and the reputation they create. Hence, the image and reputation will tell if the strategic brand management process is thoroughly worked and correlates with the brand identity (Urde, 2012). The two bottom dimensions in the brand management model are of equally importance. The brand management cannot be partial involved but completely

involved in the brand process. The same goes for internal commitment since the organization needs to feel part of the brand process in order represent the brand in the best manner for the public, be able to build strong brand performance and create a competitive advantage (Urde, 2012).

BRAND ORIENTATION- THE BRAND IS KING

The literature have long been highlighting that strong brand performance can create sustainable competitive advantage for an organization (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; King, 1991). King (1991) argues that brand-building is crucial in order to build a stable, long-term demand, add the values that will entice customers and consumers, build and hold decent margins, provide a firm base for expansion into product improvements, protect the company against the growing power of intermediaries and finally transform an organization from a faceless bureaucracy to a company that is attractive to work for or deal with. Additionally to this fact it has recently been recognized that brand orientation is a precondition for brand building and sustainable competitive advantage. (King, 1991; Baumgarth, 2010; Macrae & Uncles, 1997; Napoli, 2006; Simoes & Dibb, 2001; Tilley, 1999; Urde, 1999, 2011; Wong & Merrilees, 2005, 2008; Bridson & Evans 2004; Santos-Vijande et al., 2013; Ewing & Napoli 2004). There is now an overarching support that strategic management of brands is of critical responsibility for the organization's senior management as it forms the strategic direction of the firm. The senior management should act like the brand custodians and ensure commitment to the brand's values by all members of the organization. The step towards a new paradigm in the field of marketing implies that organizations should move from a brand strategy to a brand-based strategy (De Chernatony, 2000; Mosmans, 1996; Urde, 1994, 1999; Capon et al., 2001; Hankinson, 2012).

Brand orientation was originally defined by Urde (1994, 1999) and his definition of the brand oriented view is as follows; "Brand orientation is an approach in which the processes of the organization revolve around the creation, development and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands" (Urde 1999:117) Another definition forming the brand oriented construct, proposed by Bridson & Evans (2004) is: "*...as the degree to which the organization values brands and its practices are oriented towards building brand capabilities. Such capabilities include using the retail brand as a mark of distinction, a means of satisfying consumer's functional purchase needs, a source of value adding and a symbolic reflection of consumers*" (Bridson & Evans 2004: 404).

In these definitions the critique of market orientation as the sole paradigm in marketing is revealed, as brands not are included to a large extent in the market paradigm. (Urde 1999; Wong & Merrilees 2007, Bridson & Evans, 2004; Hankinson 2012; Mulyanegara 2011). Whereas the focus in market orientation is on the customer, competitors and the coordination of the organizations efforts to respond to customer's needs - the focus of brand orientation is on the brand as a strategic resource and as a long term competitive advantage. In the article by Urde et al., (2011), brand orientation can be said to be an inside-out approach whereas market orientation is viewed as an outside-in approach. In relation to branding, brand orientation is identity-driven since it is the brands core values that are in the center of the strategic process. Conversely, market orientation, is image-driven (Urde et al., 2011). Thus, the development of successful brands is not solitary based upon the marketing mix but also around the organization and the brand's core values, vision and mission (Macrae & Uncles, 1997; Tilley, 1999; Urde, 1994; Wong & Merrilees, 2007). The brand orientation concept makes brands an inseparable part of an organizations value proposition (Doyle, 1989; Mosmans, 1996). At its core, brand orientation is a way of thinking - by having and prioritizing the brands as strategic resources, it is possible for organizations to utilize and combine all its strategic resources to create a strong brand identity which can be communicated and hopefully conceived by stakeholders as unique and positive (Urde, 1999). When an organization is actively seeking to put brand management as an integral part of the strategic process, a brand oriented mindset can be said to exist within the organization.

BRAND ORIENTATION AND MARKET ORIENTATION IN SYMBIOSIS

Urde et al., (2011) developed the "egg-model" which is an interesting theoretical framework to discuss in the light of the bridging of market orientation and brand orientation. It is divided into three parts, namely customers (external), the brand and its core values, and the organization (internal). Urde et al., (2011) argue that when an organization is taking an inside-out approach, where the departure is taken from within the organization - it can be said to be brand oriented. In this approach, brand identity is crucial. On the other hand, when an organization moves in the opposite direction, outside-in, a market oriented approach can be said to exist. Here, brand image is the dominant departure point (Urde et al., 2011). This model can be said to show the basis of how brand orientation and market orientation relates to each other. Even though the framework for brand orientation is presented as a response to the market oriented paradigm brand orientation is not an alternative per se to market orientation, but rather an expanded or specialized version of it, it is "market orientation plus" (Urde, 1999;

Baumgarth, 2010; Hankinson, 2001; Bridson & Evans, 2004). Brand orientation and market orientation does not exist in a vacuum as two polarized nodes on a continuum but rather co-exist and blend together to achieve synergies between the both strategic orientations (Urde et al., 2011). Thus it is a necessity to underline that brand orientation is a specific type of market orientation which is distinguished by the priority of the brand in the organizations strategy as well as that the brand strategy is relevant for the consumer but still constant and consistent regardless change in the market (Baumgarth, 2010)

LINKING BRAND ORIENTATION TO BRAND PERFORMANCE

The proponents of brand orientation imply a link between the paradigm and brand performance. As seen by the authors the literature contains few studies of this matter. Nevertheless those that exist prove the positive relationship between these two (Hankinson, 2012). For instance, Wong and Merrilees (2007, 2008) found brand orientation affecting brand performance in terms of awareness, loyalty, image and reputation as well as making the firms achieve higher percentage of their strategic objective. Additionally, Napoli (2006) found brand oriented companies to serve their stakeholders better and better reaching long- and short term objectives. As seen, brand orientation affect market performance as it increases awareness and attained desired customers and market shares. However, according to Baumgarth (2010), the economic performance can only be affected indirectly as it defines the financial outcome of the actions made. Nevertheless, Gromark & Melin (2010) performed an exhaustive study on brand orientation's impact on financial performance in Sweden's 500 largest firms. The results were that the most brand oriented firms are twice as profitable as the least brand oriented firms.

BRAND ORIENTATION IN PRACTICE

The brand orientation literature has primarily focused on conceptual development (Simoes & Dibb, 2001; Urde, 1999) and case studies (Macrae, 1999; Urde, 1994; Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Merrilees & Wong's (2007) and Hankinson (2012) criticize the limitation of empirical work in the field of brand orientation. The limited empirical testing on brand orientation is to our knowledge correct; the brand oriented approach in brand management is not as empirically tested as other fields in marketing. It is a relatively young academic field of interest but the empirical testing is increasing.

BUILDING A BRAND ORIENTATION FRAMEWORK

As mentioned earlier brand orientation has gain increased attention the last decade in the area of marketing research and a significant amount of studies have focused on the development of brand orientation framework (Urde, 1999; Baumgarth; Bridson and Evans, 2004; Hankinson, 2001a; Wong and Merrilees, 2005)

SIMILARITIES IN MODELS

What is noticeable in the above mentioned researchers frameworks is that they all agree on the importance of internal implementation of the branding concept and brand orientation within the company. The relevance of the staff in the implementation of branding strategy is increasingly important as the most effective drivers are neither the product nor the message, but the personal communication and interaction skills of those who present it to the customer. In order for the firms to create a brand oriented strategy the organization must live, think and breathe the brands values, norms and artifacts. The authors argue that the whole company, rather than a single department, has a responsibility for the brand image. They underline the need of solid coordination of the firms department around the development and the process of the brand and its core values in order for the brand to successfully be communicated to its stakeholders. The management and the brand culture facilitate this coordination as they play a crucial role for the brand orientation to reach its true light. They hold the ability to bridge the gap between the brands identity perceived within the organization and the brand image observed outside it. Therefore a consistent and accurately understanding of the brand values, attitudes and norms within the organization is crucial for the consistency of the value customer perceive as well as a crucial success factor in the business context. A positive market effect depends on the internal culture translation into concrete actions. (Baumgarth, 2010; Wong & Merrilees, 2007; Hankinson, 2012; Urde, 2011, 2012).

DIFFERENCES IN MODELS

Merrilees and Wong (2007), Baumgarth (2004), Bridson & Evans (2004) as well as Hankinson (2012) provide the following differences in the research within the field of brand orientation: Hankinson (2012) argues about the necessity of brand reality, extending the creation and communication of brand image to include brand delivery; that the brand associations embodied with the brand correlates with the customer experience. He further reaches his vote on partnership with organizations sharing similar norms, values and beliefs. This can give a more effective response to branding. Bridson & Evans (2004) discuss brand orientation in terms of the organizations orientation toward building brand capabilities. This

implies using “brand as a mark of distinction, a means of satisfying consumer’s functional purchase needs, a source of value adding and a symbolic reflection of consumers” (Bridson & Evans, 2004:404). Baumgarth’s models tries to contribute to the brand orientation theory further by identifying the ways by which management establishes brand orientation, which the other models have ignored (Hankinson, 2012). Baumgarth (2010) has created a brand-orientation model based upon business-to-business firms. However, the model is applicable to any organization in which internal branding is important. The framework is similar to the existing market orientation model of Homburg and Pflesser (2000) but instead of focusing on the customers’ needs it focuses on the corporate brand. Baumgarth’s framework distinguishes separate layers of brand-orientation. In the construct, it is argued that brand orientation works in three steps - namely in an organizations culture (values, norms, artifacts), in its behavior and in its corporate performance. As such, its culture affect behavior and behavior affect performance. Hence, these three aspects of an organizations reality are inseparable and closely knitted together (Baumgarth, 2010). Urde’s framework (Urde, 2013 FC), as we explain more thoroughly below, is on the same track as Baumgarth (2010) in the sense that both argue that brands need a corporate culture to function at its best and that they do have a personality, or behavior. This is interesting to note, since they take two different departures in their theoretical thinking. Urde (2013 FC) is interested in bridging market orientation and brand orientation and Baumgarth (2010) solely focus on brand orientation. This need not be inseparable, but is an interesting note since both name a few critical issues for brand management in two different theoretical settings.

CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY MATRIX

As we have shown, there is much focus in the theory on similarities and differences in the brand oriented constructs as well as between brand orientation and market orientation. However, as we discussed previously in this theoretical review - market orientation and brand orientation do not exist in a vacuum. For this reason, the only model to our knowledge that aims to bridge this fundamental divide between the different strategic orientations and provides a more over-arching context to marketing theory is Urde (2013 FC) which will be discussed further below. Urde (2013 FC) presents a framework for brand identity which, according to the author, is more suited for corporate brands than Kapferer’s (2012). The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix, which is the outcome of the study - serves to integrate the two paradigms of market orientation and brand orientation. It consists of nine elements that are all interconnected, the content of one element ‘echoes’ that of the others and together form

a structured entity, see Appendix 1. The entity creates three categories divided into internal, external and finally internal-external.

INTERNAL

The first category, internal, encompasses brand identity from a 'sender' perspective and the values and realities of organization. The three elements here are 'mission and vision', 'culture' and 'competencies'. By starting off with mission this element explain the existence of the corporation, its engagement and motivation not financial related. Vision further extends mission by defining where the brand is heading and the inspiration the brand has to move forward. As mission and vision are easy for the organization to mix up and to be seen as of identical meanings they are placed together in one element. The next element in this category is to be named culture. The culture in this sense is the reflection of the organizations attitudes, values and believes, how the organization work and behave. Many models underestimate the significance of the culture in the organization as a source of identity and the foundation for a corporate brand. Moving on, the internal category is also mentioning competences as an internal element. This defines the organizations capabilities, the distinct knowledge and ways of work the organization maintain that differs from the competition.

EXTERNAL

The second category, the external part, influencing image and reputation to a great extent, is focused on brand identity from a 'receiver' perspective. The elements in this category are 'value proposition', 'relationships' and 'position'. Value proposition is a combination of appealing argument to customers with the purpose of them making a coherent purchase decision with the brand in mind. The relationship element highlights the importance of a good solid connection to the companies' stakeholders. The positioned, as mentioned in the brand chapter, signifies how management wants the corporate brand identity to be positioned in the market, and in the hearts and minds of the consumers.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

The third and final category encompasses three elements that are both internal and external. These are 'personality', 'expression' and 'brand core' (Urde, 2013 FC). The elements, personality and expression, bridge the internal and the external components of the corporate brand identity. When discussing the function of personality element, it defines the combination of characteristics that form the corporate character. It differs from product brand as it is more dependent on the personality of the employees representing the corporation. The expression element on the other hand underlines a combination of tangible and intangible features, tone of voice, design, graphic style,

logotype and other forms of the corporate communication and expression. Finally the brand core element and its core values leading up to a brand promise is what the corporate structure entity mentioned is based upon. The core is thus the heart and center of CBIM, as such, the core reflects all elements, and every element reflects the core. The brand core importance is further mentioned by Urde (2013) *“It is communicated externally and has a guiding role internally for the organization’s ‘living the brand’ initiatives.[...]The importance of a brand core is its capacity to give focus, guidance and coordination in the management of brands. ”*

When continuing the discussion about the matrix it is further a more elaborate matrix than Kapferer (2012) puts forward. It includes competencies as a strategic tool, and does not place such strong emphasis on self-image and reflection as Kapferer’s prism model, which for this reason can be argued to be more suited for product brands than corporate brands (Urde, 2013 FC). As noted, it also serves as a bridge between market and brand orientation, which is new to the brand management field. The previously presented models have been focused on brand orientation or market orientation in a more isolated fashion. Hence, it is a balanced approach to how an organization can work with its corporate identity, and serves to clarify the quite disparate picture painted by researchers on both the market orientation and brand orientation side of continuum. As the author puts it: *“Lastly, the newly proposed matrix integrates the market orientation and brand orientation paradigms. The process of defining of a corporate brand identity can take either an “outside-in” (market oriented) or “inside-out” (brand oriented) perspective.”* (Urde, 2013 FC:21). As much of all the brand oriented constructs presented in the literature hovers around brand identity as a key element, this model is relevant to include in the construct overview of this paper.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter will focus on presenting and discussing our methodological approach and chosen research method for making coherent and trustworthy result as well as a valuable contribution to the field of marketing. We will start by discussing our research philosophy, research design and research method. The chapter will then continue with the chosen method for data collection, respondent selection criteria and a detailed description how the interviews are formed. Following is the data analysis construction described the importance of methodological awareness and finally our intended impact in the field of marketing in general and brand orientation in particular.

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

ONTOLOGY

To describe our relationship to the research philosophy and how we practiced it in this paper, it is necessary to begin with a discussion on ontology; how we view the world we wish to study. Ontology can be divided into two main paradigms, positivism and social constructionism. As a positivistic researcher, one views the world as something objective and tangible that is possible to study in an objective fashion. Traditionally, this is the approach taken by quantitative researchers and stems from natural sciences where a researcher views phenomenon in what they see as an objective fashion (Daymon & Holloway 2011; Bryman & Bell 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). To distance from the positivistic view of the world, constructionism arose. According to this part of the spectrum there are multiple realities within a society and these realities are socially constructed. (Daymon & Holloway 2011; Bryman & Bell 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

We are aiming at a convergence and generate new insights into the theory of brand orientation. Hence, a positivistic approach to our research project, mentioned by Easterby-Smith et al., (2012), Daymon & Holloway (2011) and Bryman & Bell (2011) is neither possible nor wanted. The method is interpretative, and grounded in reality which is not objective but socially constructed and given meaning by people. We therefore base our research on social constructionism. We build our assumptions through cased based research and the development of hypothesis. The ontological approach is therefore based upon that facts depend on the view point of the observer and the existence of many truths. Social

constructionism is a way of gathering data that is natural rather than artificial (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The viewpoint makes it easier to understand the management and the employees' thoughts when interviewing, to adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge and contribute with the evolution of new theory in the field of brand orientation.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is discussing knowledge and what should be accepted as knowledge. As Bryman and Bell (2011:15) puts it: "*A particularly central issue in this context is the question of whether or not the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences.*" In relation to our study, which seek to find different ways organizations can be brand oriented; our epistemological standpoint, as mentioned above, is closely related to social constructionism since knowledge is created by social realities, both by us and by the studied organization. We cannot claim to find an objective truth through our research since it is our interpretations of the studied social entity that navigates the research as well as the contribution to the field.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

MIXED METHOD

More often than not, constructionist research approaches are within the qualitative domain. However, in order to fulfill this study's purpose, it is appropriate to deploy a smaller quantitative method to gain a basic understanding of the social phenomena that is to be studied. For this reason, a mixed method is used in this thesis to a small extent, with the emphasis on a qualitative research method. Overall, the study finds itself within the constructionist domain.

In recent years there has been a growing interest of a mixed research method, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study. Researchers suggest that the boundaries between them are more fluent than many think. Further on, they suggest that a combination can facilitate the aim of the research as it can increase the validity, generalizability and the potential theoretical contribution (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Easterby-Smith (2012) argues that mixed methods can be highly advantageous through an increase in credibility, combine confirmatory, exploratory research and uncovering more dimensions in the research. Therefore, in addition to the qualitative method we will use in this paper, a quantitative part will be conducted first, serving grounds for the qualitative method later on. The quantitative research will select the cases through structured interviews by stating if they

are brand oriented or not. The authors have a prior view that the cases are brand oriented and the quantitative approach will make this subjectivity less relevant (Easterby-Smith et al., 2011). As Bryman and Bell states (2011:635) “One of the chief ways in which quantitative research can prepare the ground of qualitative research is through the selection of people to be interviewed or companies to be selected as case studies”. Hence, even though the quantitative method is placed before the qualitative, the qualitative approach dominates the research and is the main data collection approach and is spent significantly more time and resources upon, see figure 2. The case studies are after the quantitative selection process explored using a qualitative research strategy in order to investigate internal sources of knowledge and expertise within the organization. Whereas the quantitative research brings out the static picture of social life, qualitative research is more processual. The mixed method provides a better understanding of the phenomenon brand orientation, it enhances our confidence in our own and other findings and improve our chances of access to settings to which we might otherwise be excluded (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

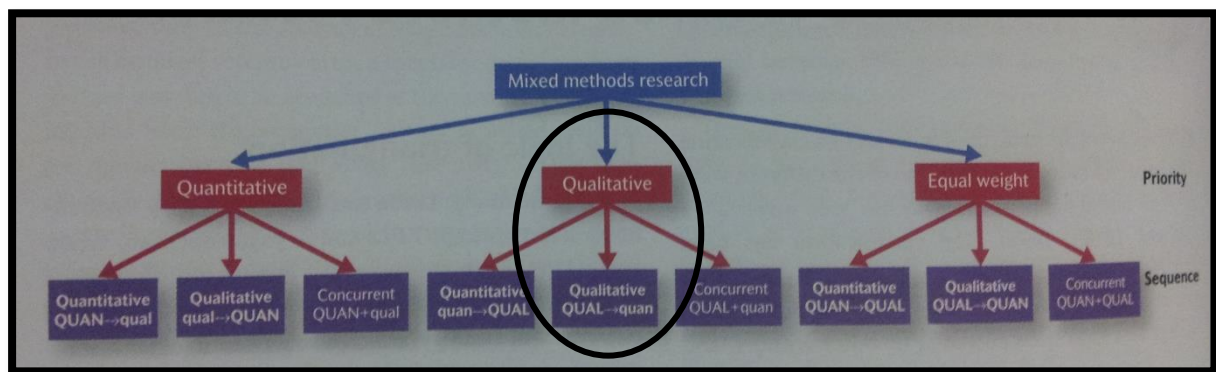


Figure 2, Classifying mixed methods research in terms of priority and sequence (Bryman & Bell, 2011:632)

The mixed method can be identified by three distinct designs: handmaid, partnership and compensatory research. In handmaid designs one method serves the need for the other, and one method dominates the other. In partnership design both methods are equally important in the research and thus equally dominated. Finally, compensatory designs combine both research methods where each is used to make up for the weakness of the other. Typically qualitative research is seen as weak on generalization and quantitative research is weak at explaining why the observed results are obtained. As the research starts with a quantitative study but is extensively dominated by the qualitative study, which also make up the result later on, the design is handmaid. Nevertheless, the research method is also colored by the compensatory design as we combined them because of the weaknesses displayed by them separately.

As stated earlier, in terms of research philosophy and the presence of mixed methods in this paper, the authors view does not change. We regard the studied cases as a result of social construction and that the strategic approaches chosen are indeed a social entity which we seek to understand. The presence of a quantitative structured interview does not alter this, but rather enhance the understanding of their strategic approaches. The data provides a backdrop to the reasoning of the respondents. In this way, it does reflect in the final results of the thesis, but not in an incompatible way.

QUALITATIVE METHOD

As this study seeks to find nuances in the social reality of the studied organizations as well as to enter a company internally and truly understand the strategic aims that lay inside the organization, qualitative research is the dominant method for gaining wider knowledge and deeper understanding of the subject (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative method is, according to Bryman and Bell (2011) and Daymon and Holloway (2011) a way to explore complexity and diversity to gain in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon, which a strategic orientation indeed can be said to be. It is possible to explore processes in a more grounded fashion in comparison to mainly quantitative studies, which is why a mainly qualitative method suits this studies purpose well since we seek different ways in which organizations work with brand orientation.

Our study will further be combined with deductive theory as we, on the basis of what is known in the field of brand orientation, deduces hypothesis that drive our process of gathering data. Deduction is the process of testing theory with empirical results. According to Bryman & Bell (2011) deduction encompasses the process as the following: theory to observations / findings. This approach to research gives the researcher the opportunity to test theory with empirical results, and then revise theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Induction is a way of generating theory through the empirical findings and according to Bryman and Bell (2011) moves in the opposite direction from deduction in the following way: observations / findings to theory. This thesis will primarily deploy a deductive approach, but it is not entirely homogenously deployed. In the last step of the process the study will take an inductive approach since this is the aim of this study. The authors aim is to contribute with new findings to brand orientation, with clear examples on how brand orientation strategy can differ between organizations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our intention is in the end to create a typology for further research. For this reason, a completely deductive approach to the research is not

desired. There is a need for an inductive reasoning when generating new theory, and the thesis will move in that direction towards the end of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

CASE STUDY

When a researcher aims to analyze a specific phenomenon in its setting, understand it through the people involved as well as noting different influences in communication, case study is a well suited research method (Daymon & Holloway 2011). This is true for us, since we seek to analyze brand orientation in its setting - the organizations and the people within them. It is evidently true that exponents of the case study design often favor qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, because this method is viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detail examination of a case. However case studies are frequently employed in both quantitative and qualitative research, therefore our strategy of having a mixed method, combining the two, is still appropriate for a case study design (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

MULTIPLE- CASE STUDY

When the number of cases examined exceeds on the case study becomes either a cross-sectional or a multiple- case study, depending on the research strategy chosen. We have chosen four cases for our study. As the research strategy include four cases and is somewhat mixed, the quantitative domain will fit in the cross-sectional study and the qualitative domain will take the form of a multiple-case study. Because the qualitative strategy dominates the research we are further investing the multiple-case study design. The multiple- case study aim to demonstrate the importance of our particular research questions, illustrate brand orientation and the difference within the phenomenon and improving its theory building (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) claims this study to be a springboard for theoretical reflections regarding contrasting findings. Bryman and Bell (2011) further states that multiple-study comparison may itself suggest concepts that are relevant to an emerging theory. We see case studies as a means of refining existing brand orientation theory rather than building entirely new explanatory framework. As mentioned earlier we form our research deductively but aim to create a typology, hence a concept relevant to brand orientation, making the research inductive in the end.

INSTRUMENTAL & IDIOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY

Since we look at specific cases in order to understand a broader issue, explore the brand orientation phenomenon and develop general principles for the theory of brand orientation the research will be an instrumental case study. However, as we aim to elucidate the different strategies held within the brand orientation spectrum, the unique features of the cases will also be colored by an idiographic approach (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

When studying differentiation we are aiming at having a comparative case study, comparing four meaningfully contrasting cases through more or less identical methods (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011). By conducting a comparative case study, it is possible for us to gain insight in how different companies in different business areas work with strategic orientations and is hopefully the basis for a typology within the field of brand orientation. This will be discussed more in-depth below.

We are selecting cases based upon the definitions of brand orientation made by Urde, 2011; Merrilees & Wong, 2008; Hankinson, 2009; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Baumgarth, 2010 which is further confirmed by the structured interviews. As the market is not completely black and white, companies can have a combination of brand- and market orientation. We are therefore aiming at companies significantly proving to be more brand oriented than market oriented. Moreover we will try to choose brand oriented companies where their internal strategies seems to differ from each other the most. As with most qualitative research, the aim is thus to include as much diversity as possible in the selection of the cases, in order to be able to generalize the research results given. We therefore decide on four companies from four different industries and backgrounds, two business-to-business and two business-to-consumer organizations. Furthermore all organizations in the study have a success in building strong brand performance in their respective industries which indicates the use of a brand oriented strategy. The organizations are also chosen based on the criteria that they not already are analyzed in a wider extend by previous researchers. Earlier analysis could harm our own thoughts as it can guide and decrease our ability to see the cases from different angles. However, as we use structured interviews this problem decreases. Finally, we select organizations sited in a highly competitive environment as this means that their strategy is essential for the firm's survival. We believe that selecting cases through these criteria's, as well as use structured interviews will obtain cases were learning would be the greatest. Furthermore choosing comparative case study facilitates our understanding of brand

orientation and the differences that lie within this paradigm. The study thus encourage us to see what is unique as well of what is common across cases and how to make theoretical reflections on the findings (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011)

THE CASES REPRESENTED

B2B Alfa Laval, Sweden

Alfa Laval is one of the largest brands within the technology industry, worldwide (alfalaval.com). Hence, the company has a strong track record of delivering quality solutions to their customers. In 2001, they started a journey from a product-centered approach to a more customer-focused approach in their overall business strategy (alfalaval.com). How this has affected the brand is very interesting for this thesis.

B2C, Symsam

Symsam is one of the largest optician chains in Sweden. The firm utilizes their staff to a great extent as deliverers of their brand, due to their quality and service pledge (symsam.se). This is highly interesting to study from a brand orientation perspective. The competition in the company's environment is getting fiercer and more consumers move to the digital market, which make this case even more interesting to take on.

B2C, Thule, Thule Group, Sweden

Thule is a market leading brand within the leisure and outdoor activity industry. Thule made a strategic change for their brand in 2010 when they wanted their brand to be one of lifestyle instead of solely products (thule.com). Furthermore, the company states that their most important assets are their brands, which is a signal that they work with their brands in an interesting way in the light of this thesis.

B2B, Toyota Material Handling, (TMH) Sweden

Toyota Material Handling distributes both the BT and Toyota brands. The brands have in combination more than 100 years of experience in counterbalanced forklift trucks and BT warehouse equipment, supported by services and added value solutions. The cooperation is well-known as well as admired for the core-values "the Toyota way" that have permeated the whole industry. The Toyota way makes them brand oriented as they on the grounds of the brand promise make their strategic approach on the market (youtube.com).

DATA COLLECTION

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Our goal in this thesis is to have mainly primary sources, defined as information collected directly by the researchers themselves (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Regarding our literature review and the building of a solid theoretical framework mainly journal articles were consulted. Naturally, when combining a deductive and inductive research strategy, we should be aware of previous work conducted in the general field of research before starting to generate more knowledge in the specific area (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). However it is important to acknowledge that brand orientation is a striving and relatively young paradigm that relies more on contributions to the concept than on explicit references (Louro & Cunha, 2001; Urde, 2011). However, the field is developed to such an extent that definitions are present and can be the basis for making structured interviews. The main author used for theoretical background in the area of brand orientation will be Urde (1999, 2011, 2013) as this author in general coined the term brand orientation but in particular made up a framework of brand identity which is very suited to this thesis purpose. The research will also be based upon other authors that are well-known and well established in the brand management field as well as viewing brand as a strategic asset; Wong & Merrilees (2007), Baumgarth (2010), , Bridson & Evans (2004), Aaker (1991), Chernatony et al (2011), Kapferer 2011), King (1991), Balmer & Greyser (1999), Gromark and Melin (2011), Olin (1978), Itami & Roehl, 1987, Low & Fullerton (1994), Ewing & Napoli (2004) and Hamel & Prahalad (1990, 1989), to mention a few. Regarding understanding the field of market orientation the authors will acknowledge the authors Shapiro (2001), Naerver & Slater (1990) and Kohli & Jaworski (1993) as they are known to be well-recognized proponents in this field. The journals were mostly gathered from LibHub (the Lund University electronic database), Emerald, Harvard Business Review, and JSTOR.

Concerning the empirical framework it will nearly exclusively consist of primary sources from the structured as well as the semi-structured interviews, methods explained more thoroughly below. As the structured and in depth-interviews aims to be the solid framework for our analysis and later contribution, primary sources are not only suitable but necessary. However, due to the nature of our research design with a comparative case study, we do need some secondary sources as a backdrop to present our case companies in terms of history, market position and other such facts. These are gathered through documents that are available publicly.

INTERVIEWS

We are planning to use both structured as well as semi-structured interviews in order to facilitate analyzes and reduce subjectivity. Thus we are entering the interview with some specific key questions but making the respondents both answer in terms of grading the answer verbally in a number as well as with explaining their answer more thoroughly afterwards in order to get a higher degree of credibility. The structured questionnaire and the semi-structured questionnaire are sent to the respondents in advance in order for the respondents to prepare as well as give valuable input when the interview is set to occur. When interviewing, the authors have chosen to record the interviews. This has been approved by the respondents in advance in order to obtain trust. The recording is important in order to give a detailed, accurate and truthful account of the interview later in the empirical material handling process. Smith et al (2012) notes that respondents could be 'on guard' when being recorded, but the authors argue that it is necessary to be able to give correct explanation of the interview later, give validity to the report and be able to make solid empirical theory.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The purpose of utilizing structured questions as a compliment to the semi-structured ones is to gain hands on, measurable data on how the different companies make strategic decisions in regards to brand management, hence if they are brand oriented or not. Semi- structured interviewing is often regarded to be one of the best methods to use for receiving data. However, not everything we need to know is accessible through the semi-structured interviews, the complexity of the phenomenon can be underestimated. The structured interview can facilitate the process by allowing for standardization of questions and answer and making the grounds of further research within the field of brand orientation. Furthermore, when doing interviews it facilitates extensively if we have a framework to follow. We are more likely to be successful if we are clear at the outset about the exact areas of our interest (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). There is not one sole model utilized in the structured interview process, but all the discussed frameworks presented about brand orientation, seen in Appendix 1, have served as departure for these points. This is due to the reason that the definitions differ as well as are equally accepted in the area of brand orientation. The questions in a structured interview are variously referred to as closed, closed ended and pre-decoded. In this paper, the questions will be formed as closed questions where the respondents are given a limited choice of possible answers. The advantage of this practice is that the potential for interviewer variability is reduced (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).The answers to the questions are furthermore graded from 1, which is low, increasing to 6, which is high. These answers are

partly based upon avoiding the use of negatives. These are variables whose categories can be ranked orderly, however the distances between the categories are not equal across the range. For this reason, the variables are ordinal. Moreover, the answers do not displace a point where the respondents do not need to take a stand, hence be neutral. This is because all of the studied organizations have a brand and must decide how to act upon it. There is therefore no neutral answer and we want to force the respondents to take a stance in the direction they have chosen to take (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Finally the questions take into account the principles outlined by Easterby Smith et al., (2008), each question tries to express only one idea, hence ask one thing at the time, each question further tries to avoid jargon and colloquialism as well as use difficult expressions. The questions are in this matter also not trying to be leading in any way. See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire in its whole and the answers to the questionnaire in Appendix 3. The answers are placed in diagrams as diagrams are among the most frequently used methods of displaying quantitative data as well as diagrams are relatively easy to interpret and understand. Furthermore, we are interpreting the diagrams through descriptive analysis. Thus, we are not aiming at explaining why or how the answers occurred in this chapter but just what the graphs state. This is because questions regarding why, how and when are explained in the semi-structured interviews.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

We determine that a semi-structured interview format will be suitable for the next step taken in our study, given that it allows the respondents to elaborate and explain their answers in the structured interviews as well as allow the interviewer to ask follow-up questions (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). Following our philosophical stance, social constructionism, 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-standardized 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.

The semi-structured interviews are as mentioned a wider and deeper extension of the structured interviews to uncover more information and generate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. They are further based upon the CBIM framework outlined by Urde (2013 FC). The CBIM framework allows us to use the critical incident technique. This means that rather than collecting large amount of data that may not be relevant to the report, the critical incident technique using the CBIM framework offers an opportunity to, as Easterby-Smith et al.,

(2008:139) puts it, "go straight to the heart of the issue and collect information about what is really being investigated". The technique we will use in the semi-structured interviews is the Laddering Technique. Laddering is, as described by Easterby-Smith et al., (2008), a form of interviewing where the researchers ask follow-up "why" type questions to help the respondents to move from statements of fact and descriptive accounts towards underlying values and motives of respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). When using the CBIM framework as well as the laddering technique we will make sure that we cover all the issues concerned in this research. Thus, we have a clear outset about the exact areas that needs to be covered in order for the interview and the interpretation to be as structured as possible (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). See Appendix 4 for the questionnaire in its whole.

However, obtaining qualitative data in a successful manner does not only demand ability to avoid biases by organizing and structuring of the semi-structured interviews by the CBIM framework and laddering. There are also other biases to consider. Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) mentioned six crucial issues to consider. First off is obtaining trust by the respondent in order to get the information we are aiming for. Obtaining trust is difficult in this context as we have not met any respondent before the interview. Nevertheless, we have made significant email correspondence before the interview in order for the respondents to feel informed, prepared and comfortable. We also are well-read about the organizations, which will be appreciated by the respondents. This strategy of obtaining trust will make the next and third crucial issue, being aware of social interaction and getting access, easier to obtain. As Easterby-Smith et al., (2008:139) states "*The qualitative researcher needs to have a good personal engagement to gain trust so that 'good' data can be obtained*" The fourth critical issue, using the appropriate language, is another practical issue. We aim not to use theoretical concepts when conducting the interviews but respect the interviewee's use of language. The fifth critical issue is the location of the interviews. The Interviews are placed at the organization's headquarters. We think this is appropriate in the sense that the respondents then can be comfortable and hence easier articulate. Finally, the last critical issue is to record the interviews. This is brought up in the beginning of the interview chapter as the recording involves both the structured and the semi-structured interview (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

RESPONDENT SELECTION CRITERIA

The interviews will be made with marketing-, branding- and Communications executives of respective organizations. Thus, the informants in the studied organizations are in top management and have in-depth knowledge of the management and organizational reality of

brands. Their knowledge is a means for us to gain insight in how the cases are similar or different in their strategic orientations, hence the informants are used as a way of generating intensive, detailed examinations of the cases (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011) In some of the cases we will interview more than one person, and in others we will conduct deeper interviews with one person. This is due to access issues with the organizations as well as the time limit concerning this report.

DATA ANALYSIS

The process of analyzing the data of the structured as well as semi-structured interviews is highly essential for the contribution of this paper and is discussed by Daymon & Holloway (2011). As our chosen method is interviews, it is necessary to transcribe, organize and code the interview data. Coding is crucial in qualitative analysis and encompasses how a researcher chooses to label ideas and themes discovered repeatedly in the data. There are several ways to do this, such as in vivo-coding and topic coding. In vivo-coding is about using the informants own ideas and expressions as labels in the material. Topic coding, on the other hand, is when the researcher choose own terms or labels to describe what is seen in the material (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). For us, topic coding is the natural choice since our questions hovers around the CBIM (Urde 2013, FC). Bryman and Bell (2011) argue that it is common and very much possible to move back and forth between the empirical material and theory. We will adhere to this and "step back" to reflect on how the empirical material is connected to the theoretical framework and vice versa. This process will be of importance since it will hopefully yield constructive and sound results due to the nature of this reflectiveness. The CBIM framework is used in the coding to categorize the material into nine different categories. It is a comprehensive framework that seeks to bridge market- and brand orientation. Furthermore, many of its dimensions are highly relevant to our purpose and research questions. This is in line with what Bryman & Bell (2011) says about moving "back and forth" between theory and empirical material. The choice of the CBIM theoretical framework to analyze our empirical material was based on how relevant it was to our thesis' purpose. In relation to the purpose, it was the most comprehensive, updated and relevant framework to use to distinguish different nuances of brand orientation in the studied companies.

CREDIBILITY OF RESEARCH

In order to make a valuable contribution in the field of brand orientation a basic prerequisite is to have methodological awareness and critical default. As the main part of this thesis is conducted through qualitative method, this will be the main focus in the discussion of

research credibility. The research credibility of quantitative method will thus be brought up to a much smaller extent.

TIME LIMITATION

Firstly, qualitative research can take up a great deal of time and resources. Easterby-Smith et al., 2012 and Bryman & Bell, 2011 for example suggest that the authors should add cases until they reach theoretical saturation. However, due to the limited time it is hard to conduct such extensive research and we evidently have to limit our scope. We therefore limit our multiple-case study to four companies to conduct research from. However we see four companies, if done thoroughly and fit into the brand orientation framework as enough to make a proper contribution to existing theory of brand orientation. Also, as the structured interviews are used to predetermine if the cases chosen are brand oriented, four cases should be seen as enough. Furthermore due to the time limit there will be an issue of receiving interviews and proper contacts with the companies selected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to bridge this gap we start early to contact companies and make appointments.

CRITICALITY

Secondly, the analysis of data and interpretation can be very difficult from a relativist ontology perspective. *“What counts for truth can vary from place to place and time to time”* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012:20). Through social constructivism the relativist assumes that different observers may have different viewpoints, thus there is many perspectives on the issue. Compared to positivism this approach makes objectivity and independence from the object harder to sustain and the researcher’s auto-ethnography more easily applied. Auto-ethnography is the subjective experience of the researcher (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to control this subjective phenomenon and make the research as accurate as possible we must take into account our place in the construction of theory, our roles and how we affect the research process and the outcome of it. One way of doing this is to make structured interviews in the beginning of the thesis to decrease subjectivity. It is further noticeable to transcribe, organize and code the interview data in a way that correlates with the method chosen and this is highlighted under data analysis.

However, as the authors are enrolled in a master program where much focus is placed on brand management, they are evidently colored by the viewpoint that branding is significant for an organization as well as the notion that brands are an important strategic asset. Hence, there is a risk for wanting the research to fall into this category. As the research not only want to confirm existing theory but aims to receive answers on how brand orientation can differ

throughout organizations, the authors may develop a tunnel vision, solely looking for information that constitutes the defined hypotheses and answers the research questions effectively. In terms of if the cases are brand oriented or not this problem is covered by making a structured interview. Nevertheless, the problem still remains in the collection of theory as well as in the semi-structured interviews. This brings us to criticality. Both Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) and Bryman & Bell (2011) state the importance to be critical as a researcher and question our taken-for-granted assumptions. It is easy to be blind to the theory one has been given and only see the problem from the view of existing theory and the framing that has been made. It is thus continuously important to look for examples that might disconfirm current beliefs about brand orientation, so called refutability, in order to be stable in our final assumptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) mentions Popper discussing this problem of induction. Popper suggests that instead of looking for confirmatory evidence one should always look for evidence that will disconfirm our hypothesis. The advantage is that it only needs one instance to falsify a theory whereas regardless of the number of confirmations of a theory it will never be conclusively proven. Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) further discuss this being critical subjective, thus recognizing one's own views and experiences while not allowing oneself to be overwhelmed or swept away along by them. Hence, in order to bring relevant contribution to the research area of strategic orientation the authors must be aware of their own earlier knowledge and the importance of an open-mind. This is one of the reasons that the theory of market orientation is placed in this report.

VALIDITY

Thirdly, validity is an important criteria in establishing and accessing the quality of research for the qualitative research. As social scientific design is more interpretative and do not have the rigor as of natural science it is harder to generalize the information we get from our four specific cases (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, by firstly selecting the case studies through certain criteria's as well as by structured interviews, credibility and plausibility can more easily be evaluated. Secondly, by examining and comparing the theoretical framework in different contexts and through different cases the generalizability of the theory can increase. Thirdly, we use several different sources such as interviews, articles and documents in order to substantiate our arguments. We further aim to fill the validity and reliability gap by having a clear design how to collect the data before starting the research. Thus, we have the correlating questions, aim, purpose and process for the structured as well as the semi-structured interviews in every case study. The research

questions must be created in a careful and delicate manner as they should not view the researchers own opinions, lead the organization to answer in a way that will not describe the true strategic intentions of the organizations in question and place the organization in a category that will not hold for future research. This is why the questions are based upon the theoretical framework. Furthermore, in this context it is most important that the questions are created in a “how”- way so the respondent cannot answer in terms of yes or no. When bringing up this problem another difficulty regarding interviews is worth highlighting. As for any interview the respondents want to answer so the interviewers see them in the best light. Hence, the answers one is being provided may not be the true and fair respond that properly describes the organizations strategy. Additionally there may also occur an interview bias if the organization does not want to communicate their strategy for the risk of spreading it to competitors. Therefore we may compare the answers received with secondary data. However, it is important to note that even if the qualitative research not thoroughly can be generalized, it can still illustrate new findings when done correctly. Bryman and Bell (2011) claim that we only need one case to implicate missing parts in an existing paradigm. Even still, we recognize that we have a sufficient number of cases included in the research for taking on solid assumptions. In this limited amount of time four companies is enough for gaining access to the subject and the information that lies within.

RELIABILITY

Fourthly, there is an issue of reliability in our research as the results of the study are hard to repeat and replicate. As mentioned in Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) and further underlined by Bryman & Bell (2011) it is impossible to freeze the social setting of the semi-structured interviews and the circumstances of the multiple-case study of the specific time period. This is due to that researcher take on different role as interviewers, has different approaches when doing interviews, is affected by the researcher previous knowledge and experiences and is situated in different social and cultural settings. To avoid this risk we try to make the method, as implied by Easterby-Smith et al, (2012), as transparent as possible. We thus clarify clearly the process that leads to the selection of the brand orientation cases, the step we take to gain access, insight and information to every specific case and clearly state the question we ask. We explain how the cases will be compared with each other, the arrangement for coding, interpreted and make sense of the data and how this data become transformed into ideas and results. To clearly explain the research process and the theoretical inferences that are made out of the qualitative data is crucial to facilitate for future researchers to do similar observations.

MIXED METHOD

Finally, through the chapter of research credibility we have several times returned to how the quantitative method can compensate the qualitative methods weaknesses. Using mixed method is a way of covering the weakness displayed in the paradigms of qualitative and quantitative methods. As we seek in-depth knowledge and not mainly quantifiable results, mixed methods is useful since it makes the empirical material deeper and more comprehensive. The quantitative method deployed in this thesis does not quantify the results, but serve as a backdrop to the rest of the qualitative study which makes mixed methods a strong part of the research process. However, the mixed method does not come without flaws. We are aware of the argumentation made by Easterby-Smith et al (2012) who argue that mixed methods research can be difficult to replicate and is of little or no use if the questions are asked wrongly. As the questions in the structured interviews and the semi-structured are based upon the theoretical framework, the questions are based on existing knowledge which makes the questions more accurate and possible for other researchers to replicate. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, studies of social phenomena are by default difficult to replicate since they are bound by time, place and an overall social context.

EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK AND ANALYSIS

In this empirical presentation and analysis, there will firstly be a presentation and background of the cases chosen. The empirical framework will then continue with the structured interview results, presented in tables seen in Appendix 3. The tables are based upon the brand oriented models outlined in the theoretical overview. The tables are used to highlight the degree of a brand oriented mindset in the studied organizations. Further on, the structured interviews will be combined with the semi-structured interview to give an extensive approach in the brand oriented stance the cases take. Finally, Urde's (2013 FC) framework CBIM will be the foundation for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Its nine dimensions will serve as the analytic tool to put our empirical findings in relation to brand orientation. CBIM, as mentioned in the theoretical overview, serves as a bridge between market orientation and brand orientation and thus the most appropriate construct to use.

CASES

ALFA LAVAL

Alfa Laval is a global market leader within heat and liquid technology, with headquarters in Lund, Sweden. It was founded in 1883 and focus on three primary fields - heat transfer, separation and fluid handling solutions for customers globally. Their products are in use in a number of different industries - from offshore to food and dairy (alfalaval.com). According to themselves, they are a customer-oriented company that possesses a respectable reputation for their quality products (Communication manager, Alfa Laval, 2013)

Alfa Laval is a strong corporate brand throughout the world. They have a strong track record of delivering quality solutions. Furthermore, they are a business-to-business firm and their outspoken market strategy is to work closely with their customers in order adapt to specific needs. In the organization section at Alfa Laval's homepage, they have customer stories which underline the success of procuring Alfa Laval's products (alfalaval.com) This demonstrates that they are indeed a customer oriented company that does not rest on their laurels, despite their dominance in the market.

SYNSAM

During the year of 1968 several independent optician went together to form an optician chain. This optician chain has continued to expand and increased in size both nationally and internationally and now represents 160 stores in Sweden and a total of 400 stores in the Nordic. The optician chain, which operates under the name of Synsam, has reached the size for it to be considered as the largest optician chain in Sweden. During the 45 years of existence the organization has constantly offered optician service, i.e. eye examination as well as customized and un-customized products in the premium segment improving peoples' eyesight (a concept they call "lab"). Their focuses have further continually been to create products that appear remarkable on the customer wearing it (a concept they call "look") (synsam.se; Communications manager, Synsam, 2013). Even though the company's main aim is to facilitating the life of people with poor eye sight the esthetic of the products is centric to Synsam. They do not solely want to be seen as a chain of appliance but also as a chain of accessories. *"Our lenses from leading manufacturers, and our bows are the latest from Sweden's and the world's fashion houses."* To summarize, what distinguish Synsam from the competition is their track record, knowledge in the field, their quality, fashionable products but mostly the service they offers in stores. The staff is seen as the link between products and potential consumers (Brand Manager, Synsam, 2013).

THULE, THULE GROUP

The Thule brand is a premium brand in the Thule Group representing products facilitating the transportation of outdoor sport equipment for active families, outdoor enthusiasts and professional athletes in, as the say on their corporate website *"an easy, safe, smooth and elegant way"*. In Thule's product line includes everything from roof racks, bike and water sport carriers, roof boxes, towing solutions, horse and boat trailers, to accessories for recreational vehicles as well as laptop bags, camera bags and backpacks (thulegroup.com). The Thule brand is, as mentioned earlier, part of the Thule Group, a multi-brand organization of Swedish origin establishing in 1942 by the Thulin family. Since the founding the organization has been growing both internationally, organically and through acquisitions, owning a number of strong and well defines brands (Thule, CaseLogic, Brenderup, Chariot, Fogelsta, König, UWS) operating within several product categories. Even though Thule is not been seen as synonymous with the whole company it has continuously been the largest brand of the organization and the world leader in the field of transporting outdoor sport equipment. In the last three years a notable reorganization within Thule has taken place, where the brand

strategy has been change and a new customer-oriented strategy has been developed (thulegroup.com). The reorganization is discussed more thoroughly by the interview respondents in the semi-structured interview chapter below.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling is the market leading company within their field. They are recognizable for producing and delivering trucks, forklifts and additional service to Toyota Material Handlings customers (Toyota-forklifts.se). From a corporate structure perspective, Toyota Material Handling Sweden is a part of Toyota Material Handling Europe (TMHE). TMHE is the regional organization for the mother company Toyota based in Japan. The mother company, Toyota Group owns 13 companies that range from textile-manufacturing to car manufacturing and employs more than 500 000 people worldwide. However, the studied Swedish organization has not been a part of Toyota for a significant amount of time. The Swedish organization was known as BT until 2000 when it merged with Toyota Material Handling. BT manufactured trucks and forklifts prior to the merger and is still a product brand in the Toyota organization. Toyota has a history of strong corporate values, defined as 'The Toyota Way' (Toyota-forklifts.se). These core values a recognized in the business world and many management book has been written about the phenomenon. According to Toyota Material Handling, the company works with these values within the organization in order to deliver products of high quality to their customers (Toyota-forklifts.se).

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

All cases represented above are relevant to this paper because of their brand oriented approach. Their strategic stance can be confirmed by the results of the structured interview, presented in Appendix 3. The answers have been transformed into charts in order to facilitate further analysis. When viewing the charts all cases investigated have to a significant degree responded "to a high extent" which unquestionable embrace a brand oriented stance. However the cases also embrace a stance towards market orientation, as they in the diagram 1-3 reveal an adaption to the market. Nevertheless Urde (1999, 2013) argues that brand orientation is not a paradigm against market orientation but an expanded version of it. For this reason the diagrams stating a market orientation approach will not be considered as a contrasting stance to the brand oriented concept but rather a confirmation of Urde (1999, 2013) statement. As the paradigms interconnects, the readers of the strategic questionnaires in Appendix 3 may wonder however the cases used in this report is of a market oriented-brand oriented approach or a brand oriented- market oriented approach. The later of these ones is however confirmed

in the semi-structured interview analysis below, as the respondents in this context are able to illuminate and clarify their strategy further.

What is furthermore interesting to note in the structured interview is that Synsam and Alfa Laval differ slightly in regard to the other cases. Starting off with Synsam the organization states in question number four to a higher degree than the rest of the cases that their strategy and goals differ between departments. They are as well, in question number eight, stating that they are working less with their identity and core values within the organization than the other three cases investigated. As the authors see it the questions four and eight correlates, as question eight could be seen as the reason for the corresponding in question number four. When the organization work less with their identity and core values within the organization this will, as confirmed by theory, affect the integration between departments and be crystalized into differences in strategy as well as goals.

Finally what is protruding in the diagrams is the answers made by Alfa Laval in questions number twelve as well as number thirteen. In question number twelve Alfa Laval states that brand management only affects the basis of their market position to a certain degree and moving on to number thirteen they state that brand management only to a certain degree will determine the future success of the company. Both of these responds are to be seen as notable as Alfa Laval in both of these points take a less brand oriented stance than they do in the rest of the structured questionnaire. The answer to this, as we see, is that the communication manager might consider the whole organization and not just the brand management as held accountable for the market position and the future success of the firm. The respondent thus sees brand management as one of the factors affecting the company but not the critical one. However in question number seven Alfa Laval states that the organization to a high degree makes strategic decision upon the base of the brand. This underlines brand management as representing the core of the corporate strategy, not as a separate part but the most essential part, highly connected to the market position and the future of the firm. Furthermore the questions number four as well as eight states that the Alfa Laval organization is well integrated and make the decision upon identity and core values. As we see the case and the protruding answers in the structured questionnaire, the brand management not just includes a department but the whole organizations. This will be acknowledged in the semi-structured interviews as the employees working for Alfa Laval clearly work as brand ambassadors and operate in a brand oriented manner. To summarize this analysis, the authors deduce brand management in Alfa Laval to affect market position as well as future position for the Alfa Laval organization to a very high degree.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CONNECTED WITH STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

The structured interview questions have served us well in gaining knowledge of the studied organizations vis-à-vis market- and brand orientation in a less subjective manner. However, they do not serve as comprehensive material, which is why we will present semi-structured interview material in connection with the structured interview questions, circulating the brand oriented stance, in this opening empirical chapter, before we move on to put our empirical material in relation to the CBIM model. We will present the cases in alphabetical order.

ALFA LAVAL

In the interview with the Communications executive at Alfa Laval, it is evident that there is a clear brand oriented mindset within the organization. This is demonstrated by the following quote: *”The platform for our strategy is the brand and the brand without the business strategy has no content. It is a mistake to separate them like they were different things. There is a distance between them, absolutely, where the brand comes before the business strategy. The brand creates a promise that drives the organization, that the customers are attracted to and that the organization tries to live up to.”* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) This quote explicitly shows that Alfa Laval works with a brand oriented mindset when crafting their strategy. A strong brand idea, or core, is, according to the Communications executive, the most important thing in the discussion about brand management. It is discussed further in this way: *”[...] Where is our potential for improvement? Where do we have our strong sides, what is important for our customers? The brand. The brand guides the organization.”* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) This shows how the brand is prioritized in Alfa Laval by top management. The brand serves as the basis for the whole organization, which is also stated in the structured empirical material.

SYNSAM

When discussing the importance of brand in the eyes of Synsam as well as the importance of brands compared to other resources in the organization there is no doubt which stance the company take. As the communication manager (2013) states, *“In my opinion, the fact is, without a brand name, we would not be able to survive at all. If you think that you want to live in the long run, the brand is the alpha and omega, taking the first place. We can sell bows this year and next year, we can make sale campaign after sale campaign but without a brand name we will not be able to exist in five years’ time. We can create short-term activities, but in the long run this strategy will not work.[...]The brand is around all the time, all choices are made based upon the brand promise; fashion, service, quality and knowledge. We always*

start with these core values. We thus first start reflect in terms of our brand and then take a step from the brand platform we create.” When taking a brand oriented approach the brand is the strategic hub of the company, the core to the organizational strategy, the reason for their marketing activity and their position at the marketplace. As this statement shows, this is the case of Synsam. With no exception, their brand is their most important asset and will always be given most priority.

THULE, THULE GROUP

When discussing the brand importance from the perspective of Thule the Brand manager (2013) argues; *“The brand is the most important asset we have, it has even been recognized by Human recourses now. If we have three areas of focus for the company in its entirety, branding is at the top of the three. This means that we are focusing intensely on the fact that if not the business or what we do fits into the context of the brand we will not do it. We live on a very simple motto and it appears like this; the brand controls the product that controls the distribution, which controls communication. [...]We continuously check the product portfolio and if this is consistent with the brand. This analysis must be done regularly. [...]”*In most companies, you start with the Communications. Communications is the easiest thing to fix, with cosmetic changes. But they don’t care about the brand core. To go our way and work from within the organization as a first step is quite a tough medicine since you demand change.” It is a pure demanding journey but it is the only way to successfully build credibility and a strong brand.” In a CEO letter to the organization the CEO further underlines this statement by quoting: *”I believe our brands are the most valuable assets we have as a company. I am equally convinced that we can only maintain and improve their value in the market if you (employees, authors note) all act as ambassadors for our brands, in the best possible way.”*(CEO letter) The statements mentioned is evidently showing brand orientation as Thule’s main objective when building the business strategy as well as their compass in how to act and respond to the market. When reorganizing in 2010, this strategy became recognized, enlightened and seen as the appropriate strategy to use for building a solid and successful organization (Brand manager, Thule, 2013).

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

When studying the empirical material from Toyota Material Handling, there are clear signs that the company has a brand oriented mindset, as discussed by several authors (Urde 1994, 1999; Urde et al 2011; Wong & Merrilees 2007; Baumgarth 2010). The communication manager for Toyota Material Handling (2013) says the following about the brand

management: "The brand is very important [...] our business strategy and brand strategy are equal and go hand in hand. [...]However, if a decision goes against our corporate brand core, we will not make that decision". These quotes clearly show that Toyota Material Handling regards their brand as a prioritized asset, and that they view it as integral in the over-arching business strategy. Toyota Material Handling are confident in their brand and their products. Urde (1999) argues that a brand oriented mindset can be said to exist when an organization use their brand as a strategic hub. This can be said to be true in Toyota Material Handlings case and is by the above quote demonstrated. Also, it is important to note that the firm underlines the core as an important asset.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CONNECTED WITH THE CBIM-FRAMEWORK

The text above has revealed four companies that have a brand oriented mindset, they all have the brand as a strategic hub for making strategic decisions. What this thesis aims to do, however, is to present ways in which organizations are brand oriented. The paper will now turn to this and the focus of the presentation and analysis of the semi-structured empirical material. The analysis will be made upon the CBIM framework, presented in Appendix 1.6, starting with the internal and external category, moving on to external category and finalize with the internal category.

1. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL –CORE VALUES

The corporate brand's core values are vital in the four organizations investigated. The core values are seen as the heart of the business strategy as well as the navigator for the brand direction. The core values are the essence to the brand promise as well as what the brand stand for, both inside and outside the firms (Urde, 2013 FC).

ALFA LAVAL

As for Alfa Laval the Communications manager (2013) mention four words that represent Alfa Laval's brand core; action, courage, teamwork and profit. As for action the speed is of great importance for the firm, be alert and act rapidly is the essence for succeeding in the environment they act upon. Further on courage is stated to be a trait for the driver of action, change and for doing things differently. In combination with teamwork, the characteristics of action and courage become forceful and Alfa Laval sees this as the only way to be effective and perform well. Finally profit must be understood through the organization in terms of controlling costs, managing prices, and how to improve financial performance. The

Communications manager (2013) sums up these core values by mentioning them to be the soul of the company, to drive Alfa Laval to reach their goals as well as to make them live up to the decisions they make. As Urde (2013 FC) argues, a brand's core guides and provides focus to the organization in brand management. In Alfa Laval's case, this core guides the organization to perform with quality, effectiveness, efficiency and to be innovative. In the value proposition, part of the CBIM framework, we will return to how the respective companies' brand cores are reflected in the value propositions offered by the organizations. This is replicated by the following quote: *"When we in our change process went from being a product-centered company to a customer-centered company we created core values that would be clear guidelines to our employees. You have to be brave, which is an expression for an innovative force. Be brave, think differently, and think new. There are always better ways to do things. The second is to be fast and act now. The third is to be flexible and work together across boundaries in the organization and not become silo. That is very easy in an engineer- organization. The fourth is to keep an eye on the bottom line, our work has to be financially sound."* (The Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013)

SYNSAM

Synsam's corporate brand core is, as noted by the Communications manager (2013), four words; fashion, service, quality and knowledge. This guides their promise to their customers and the way the brand should be manifested. Furthermore this is reflected by the respondent in the following way: *"Value for money, that is what we strive for with our brand values. Fashion, service, quality and knowledge should flow through our whole organization. Those things combined should lift our brand. Our products are of high quality and cost a little bit more, but if we can explain our competence and our quality and what they mean to the customer, then the customer can walk from our store with a pleased feeling of getting value for money and not an expensive product. That is the worst thing that could happen, almost. That a customer feels it is expensive and cannot understand what they got, then we have failed."* (Communications manager, Synsam, 2013). For the authors, this means that Synsam wants their corporate brand core to be reflected in their value proposition and also delivered by the staff. The staff should also have a high competence in their respective areas.

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule's brand core is according to Thule three dimensions, namely Smart Solutions, Shared Passion and Active Life (Thule.com). These three dimensions reflect that their products are user-friendly and innovative. Also, they want to share the passion for outdoors with their

customers as well as sharing an active life. It also crystalizes more explicitly into these points made by Thule's CEO (CEO letter):

- Understanding consumers and their needs for transport of baggage and equipment
- To understand the value of innovative products that improve consumers' lives
- Simplify and streamline design and production processes in order to deliver these products
- To manufacture products of the highest quality and standards
- Being with the products on the shelves of the right sales channels, presented in a way that corresponds to brand values

According to Urde (2013 FC) the brand core supports and leads to a promise. As a consequence, a discussion about corporate brand core would circle around what the brand stands for. In Thule's case, these three concepts and the more explicit explanation below do reflect these questions brought up by Urde (2013 FC) by addressing what the brand should and will stand for.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling corporate brand core is, according to both the Communications executive (2013) and Toyota Material Handling documents; "The Toyota Way". This consists of five concepts. First off is challenge and this symbolizes how Toyota should work to sustain their long-term vision and to have the courage to meet challenges. Secondly is Kaizen, a concept that aims to constantly improve Toyotas work processes. Thirdly comes the core value Genchi Genbutso, stating that Toyota always should aim at finding the source to a problem or opportunity in order to make the right decisions. Fourthly in terms of core values comes respect; Toyota should, according to this, respect others and respect the environment. Finally the last core value by Toyota is teamwork and this concept aims at providing great teams for achieving positive results in the company (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013; Toyota.com). These five concepts builds Toyotas corporate brand core and is the guiding principle to how the whole company should work. As Toyota Material Handling Sweden formerly was a different company, BT, Toyota Way has not been the foundation for the company historically. The Communications manager argues, however, that Toyota Way is incorporated in the company. This is demonstrated in the following quote: "*In Sweden, we have been BT since 1947, and we still have a lot of BT in us. But already five*

years ago, when I started, I experienced we had integrated with Toyota Way a great deal. We work a lot with Toyota Way in our daily work, as constant improvements are highly important for us. That goes for both the production-line where it is even more outspoken, but also at the office to refine processes, Genchi Genbutso” (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013) However, this quote could also mean that BT’s core values are still present within Toyota Material Handling, and Toyota Way still is on its way to be fully incorporated into the company.

2. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL –PERSONALITY

The authors regard personality as one of the most important components in the CBIM framework in terms of the function it has when bridging the internal and external element of the framework. When speaking about bridging internal and external components it means consequently that the employees personalities should be visible in the corporate brand they presents and understandable by the customers (Urde, 2013 FC).

ALFA LAVAL

Describing the personality of the Alfa Laval corporate brand seems rather simple when speaking to the communication manager. When describing it in human characteristics it manifests into being passionate, proud, intelligent, longstanding (in terms of having great experience) but most of all, innovative and protruding. The Communications manager (2013) describes their personality as: *“One have not seen a similar personality before, it’s totally new and the more you look at the personality, the more you like it [...]One do not want a personality you see and like directly as one then get tired as fast.”*. As we see it, Alfa Laval’s personality is closely related to other dimensions in the CBIM model, such as their position in the market, their competences and their mission and vision. As their personality is described as innovative, longstanding and passionate, they bridge their market position and their internal elements such as competences by addressing how they do good in society, how they innovate and how they attract passionate and highly skilled staff to maximize their customers performance.

SYNSAM

When discussing the brand personality with the brand manager of Synsam he claims that brand personality is an unnecessary subject to discuss and serves no purpose in the dialogue about their strategic intention. The personality of the brand is, according to the respondent;

“something you just do for fun, but it doesn’t head in any useful direction, has no strategic gravity and no value for Synsam. So if doing it, for fun, I would say the brand personality is careful, well-informed, competent, forty years old and high demands on his vision, eyesight as well on how to look good.” (Brand manager, Synsam, 2013) However, when asking the Communications manager (2013) she states firmly “ *The brand personality is a big brother who is wise and show the direction to his siblings. He is credible, take responsibility and have both knowledge and answer.*” For the authors it is quite interesting to see the slight difference in the statements above, as the view of the brand personality should correspond internally. Likewise what is interesting is the statement of the lack of importance of brand personality made by the brand manager, as it is not a view the authors agrees upon. As Urde (2013) mention, personality is crucial for bridging the gap between internal and external and find a correlation between the firms perception of the brand and the customers perception. Not being aware of the importance of the corporate brand personality and the effect it has on the firm makes the company more vulnerable in the corporate brand identity matrix. As a matter of fact if Synsam would put more emphasizes on the brand personality, be alert to the difference made by the brand manager and Communications manager, they would discover not just the default with the brand personality but also the default in the generic brand core, mentioned more thoroughly above.

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule is seen and described as a sporty, sprightly, joyful personality, a curious person, who is always on the go, embracing an active lifestyle, want to try and experience new possibilities and be unique. As said by the CEO: “*The combination of these traits makes us a likeable, trusted, appreciated, professional frontrunner – a trendsetter – in a world that appreciates active life and the great outdoors.*”(CEO letter) Continue the statement the brand manager of Thule (2013) states “*In the past, it was enough you said you completed Vasaloppet to be cool, now it is no longer as cool, everyone is doing it. That's why multisport and triathlon has grown sharply, it is still unique. You have to see the next development challenge so you can distinguish*“. Not only does the attitude signify activeness but also a need to signalize the active lifestyle to the surroundings. “*We have increasingly shifted from being an enhancement to becoming a lifestyle accessory that signals “I'm an active guy so I bike, ski, snowboard, it is cool.*”(Brand manager, Thule, 2013) The personality in Thule bridge the internal and external with the activity seeking lifestyle they want to embrace, both inside as well as outside the organization. As for their vision to become a lifestyle brand, it is through their personality

the vision connects with their value proposition by the focus on lifestyle rather than engineering products, which was the case earlier in the company's history.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

When describing the personality of Toyota Material Handling the Communications manager states it to be *“curious, protruding, considerate, compassionate and responsible, a Toyota person with a little BT inside himself”*. (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013) The personality is equivalent to the core values in the “Toyota way” and the value proposition as well as the position and relationship Toyota take outside the organization. The “Toyota way” of doing thus infiltrates the personality of the corporate brand. Even though, as said by the communications manager (2013), BT still occurs in the background, shading a light on the current personality. The “Toyota way” characterizes the person one meets in the corridor as well as when experiences the brand through the eyes of an observer, but BT still exist contextual.

3. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL-EXPRESSION

A corporate brand often has an expression that is tangible or intangible. This consists of logotypes, tone of voice or graphic style (Urde, 2013 FC)

ALFA LAVAL

In terms of Alfa Laval's corporate brand expression, their Communications executive (2013) puts it in the following way: *“We don't have the money and stamina that Shell do, as are as old as Alfa Laval, to have a symbol that equals us. We made the word image in a symbolic way. Everyone now has a relationship to this symbol and we build upon that.”* In this expression dimension, it is also noted by us that Alfa Laval have imagery in their corporate headquarters that, according to the adjacent describing texts, symbolize respect for nature and a sustainable future. This, to us, reflects Alfa Laval's desire to express themselves, and their corporate brand core, through the use of symbols and imagery. In addition, their tone of voice in their written corporate material is easy and not technically focused.

SYNSAM

Synsam use several expressions. First of all, their marketing communications in terms of commercial are black and white. This is a way, as we see it, to reproduce their brand as something of style and sophistication where quality brands are being distributed. This is demonstrated by their Communications executive (2013): *“We activate our brand by for*

example using black and white commercial material, which is a way to communicate our brand short-term.” This means that Synsam does not have a long-term expression in their marketing communications. An interesting note, however, is that their corporate headquarters is styled as a store. They have glasses on display and signs that show the way to the optician. Furthermore, they use the black and white images as decoration throughout the headquarters. The respondent is quite clear in the way that all stores should be integrated in terms of expression: *”It is important that all stores are nice and tidy, clean and uniform in their expression”*. (Communications manager, Synsam, 2013) This shows that Synsam utilizes uniform expressions throughout the company, but can alter this expression from season to season. One explanation to this could be the very nature of their business, which is fashion oriented. It could be that change is important in that particular business, and not a way of showing doubt in the corporate expression.

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule’s corporate brand expression is interesting from a few different standpoints. Firstly, they utilize photographs to a high degree, both in their marketing communications material and their own corporate material (thulegroup.com). These depict Thule products in *”adventurous”* contexts, such as mountain-bikes in mountainous terrain and kayaks in white foam rivers. These images are overtly connected to Thule’s *”new”* strategic orientation, where they utilize their products in a context setting to shape their brand orientation. This is demonstrated by the brand manager (2013): *”Dedicated users usually takes their group of buddies and goes bicycling several times a week. There is a strong growth in this group. [...] These are inspiring to the less frequent users.”* This emphasize on how they think when crafting their communications. An important note in this discussion is that the branding executive states that communication is secondary in the brand management process: *”In most companies, you start with the communications. Communications is the easiest thing to fix, with cosmetic changes. But they don’t care about the brand core. To go our way and work from within the organization as a first step is quite a tough medicine since you demand change.”* (Brand manager, Thule, 2013) According to us this serves as an explanation to their brand expression. Furthermore, their expression is consistent in their corporate headquarters. The same imagery they utilize in their marketing communications is displayed in their headquarters, for example mountain-bikes and kayaks are placed next to Thule products in the headquarters.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling use Toyota's profile to a high degree. This is reflected upon by their Communications manager (2013): *"When we develop giveaways, clothes and decorate our offices, we use our graphic profile and colors associated with Toyota"*. This is indeed true, since their headquarters is designed in red and white colors, which symbolizes Toyota. Their corporate material is also crafted in this manner. An interesting note is that all their products are in the color orange, which serves as a way to distinguish themselves in terms of product expression. However, their main brand expression is in line with Toyota's.

4. EXTERNAL-VALUE PROPOSITION

Value propositions can be said to consist of appealing arguments to customers and other stakeholders to create a positive relationship between the brand and its stakeholders (Urde, 2013).

ALFA LAVAL

In Alfa Laval, the value proposition is reflected in their brand core. Their clear value proposition is to *"optimize customer's processes time and time again"* (alfalaval.com). This is demonstrated by the communications manager who says the following about Alfa Laval's value proposition: *"If we look at security of change, we can see an overarching business idea that is formulated as to optimize customer's processes, time and time again. They come from the same cradle. It's just two different ways of expressing one thing and hence, the brand and the business is interconnected as one which is the only way to live a brand. [...] The brand creates a promise that drives the organization and promises things that customers are attracted to and that the organization tries to deliver upon. It's easy to say that we want to optimize customer's processes but another thing to deliver just that. That the customers experience this promise, that is the real challenge."* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) Urde (2013 FC) notes that a challenge for managers is to have a value proposition that is consistent with a broad brand core. As demonstrated by the quote above, it is possible to derive that Alfa Laval's value proposition is concurrent with their overarching brand core which, as noted in the interview material, consists of action, courage, teamwork and profit. Innovation and a customer focus are formulated in both and hence, we argue that these two pillars are indeed present and coherent in the company. This is also reflected by the following quote *"We created our core values so that our employees know how to act to be in line with our brand"* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013)

SYNSAM

Synsam's value proposition is according to the communications manager the following: *"We turn to customers who appreciate a wide assortment, high quality, good service and are willing to pay a little bit more. [...] We have the best guarantees in the market when it comes to glasses and contact lenses. If something happens, our customers can just come in and get a new product"*(Communications manager, Synsam, 2013). Through this, we can see that quality, service and security is the main value proposition of Synsam. This is supported by their communications that focus on precisely this matter (Synsam.se). In relation to the organizations corporate brand core, we can find a correlation between it and the value proposition. Service and quality are the main denominators between the two dimensions in the case of Synsam. From our empirical material, it is not possible to draw a correlation between fashion and knowledge in their corporate brand core to their value proposition. This signals that the organization does not have a fully overarching view on the dimensions of corporate brand core and value proposition.

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule's value proposition is quite clear and is formulated as; *"help you bring anything you care for"*. (Brand manager, Thule, 2013) By this, the brand offers to transport what their customers care for, ranging from furniture to bicycles. This is demonstrated by the respondent by the following quote: *"Help you bring anything you care for is the glue to everything we do. If you look at our product portfolio today, it is highly disparate. But they all transport what you care for."* (Communications manager, Thule, 2013) By this quotes, it is possible to see a few common denominators between Thule's value proposition and its brand core that consists of smart solutions, shared passion and active life. Firstly, it transports things in a qualitative way which will make sure the things that one cares for will arrive in one piece through the smart solutions crafted by the firm's engineers. Secondly, it does it in a "exciting" way, which is also the focus of Thule's marketing communications. A positive correlation can be observed between shared passion and the marketing communications where things are depicted to be transported in an adventurous way. If we do a direct comparison between the brands core and value proposition, they are overlapping which sends us the signal that there is a correlation between what the brand stands for and what the proposition is. As in the case with Alfa Laval above, they manage to handle the challenge that Urde (2013 FC) puts forward; to integrate the value proposition with the corporate brand core. Similar to Alfa Laval, the corporate brand core values are created as guidelines to their employees in how

they should act as brand ambassadors for Thule and hence to be able to fulfill the value proposition.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling's value proposition is to be every customer's first hand choice and to be recognized for their innovative products and service. Furthermore, their value proposition contains their respect for society and their delivery of highly qualitative products and services (Toyota-forklifts.se). This is also reflected on by the communications manager (2013): *"We should be the first choice. We should be known for our innovative products and our respect to the environment."* Toyotas value proposition is related to their corporate brand core in a few ways. Firstly, respect is the clearest correlation between the two dimensions. Their concept of Kaizen is also present in their value proposition through their promise of delivering innovative and qualitative products and services. What we cannot see in the link between Toyota Material Handling's value proposition and corporate brand core, however, is the explicit use of the other three Toyota Way concepts. It could be argued that they are embedded within the value proposition in the way that they are a necessity to deliver the brand promise, but we cannot see the direct correlation between them.

5. EXTERNAL- RELATIONSHIP

The relationships that an organization has with its customers and stakeholders are an integral part of their corporate brand management. It is argued by Urde (2013 FC) that the way a company delivers service and works and relates with its customers is a sign of how their relationships are undertaken and needs to be reflected in the brand identity.

ALFA LAVAL

In the empirical material, both in the primary and secondary material, it is possible to see that relationships are an integral part of Alfa Laval's business. This is reflected upon by the communications executive in the following way: *"If you look at the exploration of natural gas in Qatar, they spend billions and have the best engineers in the world. It cannot fail or temporarily shut down. If you have a safe relationship, it is not such an exposed investment. The more critical and complicated a situation is, the important we get. Customers want us to be local and have a global network to have a safe relationship."* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) In the secondary material, a customer story says the following: *"We've worked with Alfa Laval for over a decade," he says. "We bought our first brewery in Cincinnati over 10 years ago, and one of the first things we installed was Alfa Laval Brew*

2000. Alfa Laval was also willing to take on much of the project management. They successfully managed the full process and were there for us throughout with technical support.” (Alfalaval.com). This shows us that it is important for both customers and Alfa Laval to have close relationships, and especially in critical business areas for Alfa Laval’s customers. Urde (2013 FC) argues that a company often has to handle multiple relationships of different nature, and this is emphasized by the respondent in the following way: *”Some customers value competence, some the product and some value the distribution. We have to handle everything and be where the customer wants us to be.”* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013). This is concurrent with Urde’s (2013 FC) view on relationships in the brand identity dimension.

SYNSAM

Synsam’s relationships are similar to Toyota Material Handling above, focused on service. This is demonstrated by the Communications executive: *”We do not focus on price hunters. We are nationwide and have the best guarantees in the market when it comes to glasses and contact lenses. If something happens, our customers can just come in and get a new product. [...] It is like comparing a tailor made suit to Dressman.”*(Communications manager, Synsam, 2013) This quote, also illustrated in their value proposition, shows that their service is what dictates their relationships with their customers. As we see it, when a customer chooses Synsam, they choose a long-term relationship with an optician and expects to have a high level of service nationwide. This is also concurrent with Urde (2013 FC) who puts it in the following way: *”Relationships, and how they are built over time, reflect and define a corporate brand identity. This is an element that defines a mode of conduct, and the choice of a brand is, as Kapferer (2012) puts it, also a choice of a relationship”* (Urde 2013 FC:15).

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule’s relationships with their customers have changed over the last years. According to the communications manager, it has become closer: *”We work with bicycle communities in Germany. We have three customer categories, occasional users, elite and dedicated users. We put much effort in building close relationships with the dedicated users since they can inspire the other customers.”* (Thule interview 2). Furthermore, the communications manager discuss the relationships with retailers in the following way: *”We interact much more directly with stores now than we did before. We have created a whole organization solely around that. Our salespeople have much less technical discussions and more that are brand oriented”*(brand manager, Thule, 2013) As for Thule’s relationships with their consumers, as we see it, they

handle their relationships in a rationalized way. They use dedicated customers to inspire others, which rationalizes their relationships with a quite disparate customer base.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling displays a focused way of dealing with relationships in terms of how they relate to customers and offer service. As the Communications executive puts it: *“The brand is very important, but hard goods tend to become more and more alike. It is through the services we can differentiate ourselves. [...] Our staffing is very important, we have a service department of over 300 service technicians who daily are out meeting customers. Hence, our staff is an incredibly important resource. Unless they do a good job, customers will not choose us. The staff is the brand. Products are one thing, but all of us (in Toyota, Author note) are really important to get everything working with the customers.”* (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013) As the marketing executive puts it quite explicitly, Toyota Material Handling focuses a great deal of effort in building strong relationships with their customers through a developed service program. The fact that they have their own body shops at customers’ factories shows us that their relationships are long-term and service focused.

6. EXTERNAL- POSITION

Urde (2013 FC) argues that position in the CBIM model is a way for management to define how and where the brand should be positioned in the market and in the minds of the consumers.

ALFA LAVAL

Alfa Laval’s position in the market and in the consumers’ minds is argued by the Communications manager, 2013, in the following way: *“creating better everyday conditions for everyday people is Alfa Laval’s raison d’être. We are a good company and that is naturally connected to our brand. We have made a journey and are much more than just dairy and food processes now. We are something much broader. [...] The more complicated it is, the stronger we are. The simpler, and more commodity it is we get much more price unstable.”* This quote shows that Alfa Laval have an idea of what makes them market leaders and how they should continue to be just that. Contribute to the society and attract a large customer base is their main positioning elements. In addition, they are in a premium price segment which positions them further in the market place.

SYNSAM

In the case of Synsam, the communications executive (2013) is quite clear of their position: *"We like to draw a positioning map where we place high prices and high quality. We have competition, but compete in different courtsides. There is no one with the same prices and quality as us."* This demonstrates that price and quality are Synsam's main positioning tools. However, as we have found in other parts of the empirical material, service is also a key element in their positioning portfolio. They offer the "markets best guarantees", a way of distinguishing themselves in the minds of consumers which is the rationale for charging higher prices. As outspoken by the Communications executive, however, price and quality are the two main dimensions in their strategic brand positioning.

THULE, THULE GROUP

As mentioned earlier, Thule has had a transformative process over the last few years. They left the technological and engineering focused organization to become a lifestyle company (Communications manager, Thule, 2013) In this process, their positioning has changed. This is exemplified by the brand executive, 2013: *"There are few companies that have done this, gone from manufacturing industry and accessory platform to a market and brand oriented approach in only three years. Especially when it has happened inside-out. [...] A few years ago, we were an accessory company, and we don't want to be this. When you value an accessory company you end up in a lower level than a lifestyle company, which we want to be."* These quotes are quite clear in that Thule has indeed changed their positioning, from being an engineer organization to becoming more of a lifestyle company. This is also reflected in the collaboration they have with Apple, where one of Thule's daughter brands are sold in Apple Stores worldwide (Brand manager, Thule, 2013) That is one specific example of how Thule indeed has changed their focus, and done so in a short period of time.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

In Toyota Material Handling's case, their positioning is all about size, quality and service. This is demonstrated by the communications executive, 2013: *"We are larger, we have our big service organization that is three times the size of the number two in the market. The customers are close to us. We can be in place quickly. Since we are such a big organization we have a well-developed competence development plan where we train our technicians. We have a greater flexibility since we are larger, simply"*. This shows us that Toyota Material Handling aims at continuing to be market leading by utilizing the sheer size of the

organization to out-manuever competition in terms of service and quality and that they want to position themselves in precisely this way in the market and the minds of their customers.

7. INTERNAL-MISSION & VISION

In terms of the organizations mission and vision, why the organizations exist, what engages, motivates and inspires the organizations to move forward (beyond the aim of making money) the cases are more similar than expected. As all cases are brand oriented their mission shows as the point of departure for the field in question, they thus exist in the grounds of the brand.

ALFA LAVAL

As for Alfa Laval, the brands mission can be said to consist of three words; security of change. This stands for an experienced security by customers due to Alfa Laval's strong track record as well as to act responsible and secure in terms of the environment and the society. Security of change also stands for creating innovative and groundbreaking products as well as services, something that has been in the backbone of the Alfa Laval culture for a long time (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013). Finally the mission underlines the role of having valuable competences and to educate employees in order for the security of change to hit its true light and truly improve performance. The importance of the right competences further crystalizes their vision, *"creating better everyday condition for everyday people"* as the vision is employee oriented (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013). Alfa questions *"why does the people stay in our organization? It's not for the salary; we don't pay that amount of money. We believe we attract people in other ways. For us it's the utility the people feel when working for us, their raison d'être for Alfa Laval. We are the good company, contributing to the world by efficient management of natural recourses which is clearly associated with the brand and how the employees see us"*. (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013)

SYNSAM

Synsam characterized their mission as freedom of choice, safety as well as fashion. Freedom of choice means that the consumer always will find eyeglasses, sunglasses and contact lenses that fit given that Synsam is the largest optical retail chain with the widest range in Sweden. Safety assures the consumer that their products are secure to use and further their track record of existing since 1968. Finally their mission is about fashion and correlating glasses as an accessory that brings out the best of you (Communications manager, Synsam, 2013) As for

vision they state “*we want to become the leading model and the largest player in terms of value for money and optical solutions, although we already are in the lead we want to be better in this role*”. (Communications manager, Synsam, 2013) Value for money is most centric to their vision, for the consumers to truly feel that their products their offering is worth the expense.

THULE, THULE GROUP

In regards to Thule their mission also consist of three words like Alfa Laval, Bring your life. “*the mission should be associated with outdoor activity and an active life, doing things that are recreationally. It should be associated with adventure and with experiences. The mission signals participation in the outdoor activity*” (Communications manager, Thule, 2013). This mission reflect that Thule offers a wide assortment of accessories to simplify the transportation of the consumers gear and equipment in an innovative, user-friendly, secure, safe and stylish way that are made from the highest quality material. The vision is however more complicated to filtrate as the respondent 2 argues that there doesn’t exist any brand vision in the organization for the nearest tree years, they have a direction to follow but not a direct vision. The author however claim that this is not the case, as the respondents several time during their interview talk about being *Active Life, Simplified* (Brand manager, Thule, 2013). They want to inspire and motivate both employees as well as customers in how to enjoy as well as live their life. Further on simplify is also in terms of ensuring a global reach of the products. Thule can be found on all continents of the world; ” *on a secluded Australian beach, in the busy city streets of metropolitan Boston, on a bike trail high up in the Andes, or on the ski slopes in the Alps*” (Brand manager, Thule, 2013).

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

Toyota Material Handling mission aims to be recognized as the most respected and trusted material handling partner, the first-choice partner for all consumers looking for material handling solutions, innovative products and services and Toyotas respect for society. As vision they want their customers, by choosing their products, to benefit from the Toyota way of working as well as way of thinking of continuous improvement, teamwork as well as respect for the society as well as the expectations and ambitions of employees, stakeholders and suppliers through a never ending search to improve. They want to be a fair and honest business partner and build a solid relationship. (communication manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013)

8. INTERNAL -CULTURE

As mentioned earlier the culture in CBIM framework described how the working environment I the organization is characterized, the attitudes that exist among the employees, how they work and how they behave both separately as well as among team members.

ALFA LAVAL

For the company Alfa Laval the corporate culture is of great importance, especially since the company, at the year of 2000, was sold from Tetra Laval. The organization then decided upon restructure and reorganized the firm. The process, as stated by the respondent, was painful for many reasons, as with all changes in an organization. Many employees reacted and questioned the way Alfa Laval thought and acted when forming the new strategy. However, according to the communications manager (2013), the change was necessary, especially for the employees to be able to understand, work and live the brand, *“everyone should understand our direction and why we are heading that way. It is presumptuous to say that everyone does it, but the vast majority do, and 5-10 percent are on their way there. It's not that they do not thrive in Alfa Laval but they want continue in another business area and it has therefore nothing to do with the brand. For me it is important that one is either in or out, there is nothing “in between” ”* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) For the respondent, the employees connection to the brand is of key importance as it affect how they act later on within the company. He now sees the employees acting as being proud of the brand, seeing it as something that is presenting something bigger and better. They act and see Alfa Laval as a good company, taking responsibility and making significant difference for the global community. The employees feel part of a creative and groundbreaking organization where new thinking is not just necessary to continue to be market leader but also evident for the world’s future. *“It’s an engineer culture more than anything else”* (communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) Apart from being proud, society and environmentally friendly and innovative the employees finally feel the brand as a symbol for stability, quality and competence (communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013). These statements made by the respondent signals that Alfa Laval has a strong corporate culture that revolves around the brand. The culture is described as being strong, and deliberately so, to be able to build strong relationships and maintain their dominance in the market. This shows us that Alfa Laval has committed culture to the brand and the corporate brand core and that the culture supports the future success of the company.

SYNSAM

The culture of Synsam is characterized by highly skilled and qualified people within the optician area as well as recognizable good sales people. Further on, according to the brand manager (2013) *“The staff lives a Synsam Spirit , The staff radiates proudness of the chain’s long track record as well as our premium brands, high- quality products and the product function of filling the categories of both being useful and fashionable. The Synsam spirit infiltrates the service we give.”* The brand manager of Synsam (2013) continues by explaining the culture attributes by *“ when hiring new employees we are looking for people fitting into the Synsam way and when hired, they are further requested to read a descriptive compendium about the way they are expected to behave within the firm and towards their customers.”* However, when asking about if they make sure all employees read them he answers *“no, but we hope they do”*. When analyzing the culture it may seem that proudness is the distinct attribute of the Synsam culture but that the adjectives describing the phenomenon are missing. The authors deeply react in the sense that the brand manager talks about the Synsam way but not to a large extent explain what it is and what it contains. The authors get the impression that the brand manager only scratches the surface, not seeing true culture of the organization and how the employees concretely take action. The reflection is confirmed by the Communications manager’s (2013) view on the corporate culture *“During the last couple of years we have made significant changes which makes the culture vague and unclear. It is like the culture haven’t got a foothold yet”*. As the authors see it, the reason for this is not the organizational changes mentioned but that the core values makes it too vague for both the brand manager and the employees to understand the company culture and how to act upon it. This is also the case when discussing the brand personality of Synsam above.

THULE, THULE GROUP

When speaking to the respondents, both the brand manager (2013) as well as the Communications manager (2013) warmly describe the culture of the company. They describe it as a simple, uncomplicated, workplace with an intense tempo and constant attention on the surroundings. Furthermore they describe it as a relaxing, friendly, joyful motivating and supporting environment. What signifies the culture of Thule especially is the encouragement for the employees to live an active, healthy and balanced lifestyle while using Thule’s products. Hence, the employees should not just sell the products, they should use them in order for them to believe in them and in Thule as a company and Thule as a brand itself. In a paper shown by the Communications manager the CEO of Thule writes *”I believe our brands are the most valuable assets we have as a company. I am equally convinced that we can only*

maintain and improve their value in the market if you (the employees, authors note) all act as ambassadors for our brands, in the best possible way. I would love to have all employees passionately devoted to building our brands and doing everything to understand the fundamentals of what our brands stand for, and what kind of company we are. Something best expressed in our guiding principles, shared passion, smart solutions and an active life” (CEO letter). This shows us that the culture is indeed strong in Thule, where the culture revolves around the new focus of the brand, which is an active lifestyle. The new strategy has hence trickled down in the organization to the point where it supports the corporate brand core and future efforts made by the company to drive the brand further.

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

The Japanese company surrounds itself with strong core values, “The Toyota way”, mentioned above, that permeates the entire business, regardless of which country or department one are in (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013). The core values crystalizes into a solid corporate culture that the respondent describe as open-minded, forward looking, opportunity seeking, eager to develop as well as eager to take on responsibility Even though it was not long ago it shifted from BT. *“In Sweden we have been BT since 1947, and we still have a lot of BT in us. But already five years ago, when I started, I experienced we had integrated with Toyota Way a great deal. We work a lot with Toyota way in our daily work, as constant improvements are highly important to us. That goes for both the production line where it is even more outspoken but also at the office to refine processes, Genchi Genbutsu.”* (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013) The Genchi Genbutsu way permits the employees too continuously as the question why, be curious, find the true source to the problem and solve it in the best manner possible. The departments are well coordinated and are consistent in the strategy as well as the goal they move towards, teamwork are their way of moving forward. In Toyota the culture is marked by respect of the employees as well as upon taken a corporate social responsibility. The employees truly make every effort to understand, accept, take responsibility and build mutual trust together as well as with the society. The respondent clearly states that Kaizen way of doing thing, striving for continuous improvement but not doing it radically but rather carefully step by step, is one way of getting the team along, creating the change together. *”We do it one step a time, a change doesn’t occur over night. When we do changes we don’t do it fully, the whole of Europe at once but rather making the rudimentary job and then think about the next step to be made.”* (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013). To the authors, Toyota Material Handlings culture show primarily two things. Firstly, the

Communications manager (2013) argues that Toyota Way is incorporated to a high degree in the organization, both in the production line and in the administrative departments. Secondly, the respondent states that there is still a lot of BT left in the organization. This signals to us that the culture has not yet fully adapted to the new corporate brand core. As the authors see it, the process of converting one corporate culture into another can take time, and the respondents statements show both explicitly and inexplicitly that this process may not be fully completed. It does not seem to have any significant effect on corporate performance or service, since the respondent states that there is much of Toyota's core values being implemented in the daily work. But the merger and the old culture is still, to some extent, in the company.

9. INTERNAL -COMPETENCIES

When entering the component competencies the organization's capabilities and processes are highlighted to the creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage. The competencies is underlining the organization in question is particularly good at, what makes it better than competition. In all of our cases competences is seen as one of the most important assets in the company, equally important to the product itself.

ALFA LAVAL

Alfa Laval is certain that its competencies are one of the sources to its success as market leaders. First off, their brand attracts highly qualified engineers and serves as a foundation of building a strong, solid and trustable workforce. Secondly, their work force is their springboard to innovation of new products and quality of existing products. Alfa Laval differentiates because of their high quality in products; *"The more critical and the more complicated the process is, the more important is it to choose our product for the customer"* (Communications manager, Alfa Laval, 2013) For Alfa Laval competencies are thus everything for promising the customers an extraordinary product they can trust.

SYNSAM

As Synsam operating as an optician, competencies are highly important in the way of properly stating the condition of the consumers' eyes when doing the eye exam as well as offer the right solution for the consumer. As they also want to be signified as a retailer, seeing glasses not just way of getting better sight but also as an accessory, the seller competence is also highly prioritized. Furthermore, Synsams' core values are, as mentioned earlier; fashion, service, quality and knowledge and three of these cornerstones are based upon the

competences they have. *“Our products are high quality and they cost a bit more than the competition, but when we explain our skills and our quality and what these mean for the customer, then the customer will feel satisfied.”*(Communications manager, Synsam, 2013)

THULE, THULE GROUP

Thule agrees that they are market leading because of their priority in research, product development, competences in the field and the quality they further reach. When changing the strategy of Thule three years ago the requirement and demand for competences in the field of marketing- and consumer focus increased. The communications manager (2013) states accordingly that *“This change has required that we increase the resources. It has not increased the resources in marketing, then print and advertising - but primarily of personnel and expertise.”* The brand manager (2013) further states *“We value the skills very highly, Thule has the ambition and become so arrogant that they benchmark with Nike and Apple, we need people who have the capacity to may not reach all the way up, but that raises us some. You must have a good experience and be good to work at Thule.”*

TOYOTA MATERIAL HANDLING

One of the foundations in the Toyota brand philosophy is to stand for quality, innovation and professionalism, “Genchi Genbutso”. But is not the product that is the main objective in this description but rather the staff working in the organization and the service they offer the customers. It is the staffs’ competencies that make Toyota market leader. (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013) *“Our service department is three times bigger than number two on the market”* the Communications manager says proudly and continue; *“The brand is very important, but hard goods tend to become more and more alike. It is through the services we can differentiate ourselves. [...]Our staffing is very important, we have a service department of over 300 service technicians who daily are out meeting customers. Hence, our staff is an incredibly important resource. Unless they do a good job, customers will not choose us. The staff is the brand. Products are one thing, but all of us (in Toyota, Author note) are really important to get everything working with the customers.”* (Communications manager, Toyota Material Handling, 2013)

RESULTS

In this results chapter, the authors will discuss the outcomes and results of the analysis in the previous chapters, starting with the results of the structured interviews and then emphasizing the results of the semi-structured interviews in connection to the CBIM. The discussion will then turn to the presentation and discussion about the typology induced from the empirical framework, analysis and result.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

As we firstly have analyzed the existing theoretical frameworks concerned with brand orientation, see Appendix 1, we have found many similarities between the studied companies. First of all, they all display a brand oriented mindset in their strategic approach. This is shown by the structured interview material in the ways that they use their brand as a strategic hub for the guidance of the companies, that they are long-term in their brand strategies and that they realize that market orientation is equally important for their success. This is underlined by Urde et al (2011) where the authors argue for a more integrated view on market and brand orientation. Another similarity of great importance is that all four companies view the staff as an important part of the branding process. To summarize, all four cases place themselves high in our graphs, which is indeed indicative of them being brand oriented.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The semi-structured interviews gave an extensive understanding of the cases brand oriented mindset. When analyzing the empirical material gathered from these interviews, we have used Urde's (2013 FC) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix to put the material in relation to theory. This was a useful framework in order to give the authors an over-arching view on how the case companies work with brand orientation and how the different dimensions of the construct interact with each other in the organizations. The authors discovered similarities, but also differences in how the four companies work brand oriented.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRAND CORE

First of all, three of the companies display strong corporate brand values and emphasize the importance of it. This is of high relevance as the internal strategy, formation, approach and attitude is crucial for the organizations brand oriented stance. As highlighted in the theoretical framework both the market oriented and brand oriented position start within the organizations in question. Even though market orientation is more outside-in, the true difference is seen when one observes the brand core. Thus, the core values of the four cases investigated are one

of the most important parts of this paper. The core values are to be seen as strong, authentic, genuine and easy for the organizations to follow (Urde, 2013 FC). The simplicity and clearness are of main relevance for the organizational culture and behavior within the organization. This in order to act and perform in the brand oriented manner the organization strive for.

When analyzing the organizations brand core we primarily question one of the cases core values, namely Synsam. Their core values are seen by the authors as more generic. This is reflected by not describing in detail how they truly want to be seen and how they differ from the rest of the organizations within the same business area. The core values are thus weaker in comparison to the rest of the investigated cases. Take “Genshi Genbutso” and “Kaizen” for example. which are two of Toyota core values. These core values more explicitly, thoroughly and tangibly describe the brand and the core values compared to Synsam. Furthermore, because of the Synsam organization’s more ambiguous core values, the rest of the CBIM dimensions will be vaguer in their case.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCE

All four studied companies show that the competence dimension is crucial for the success of the businesses. They mention that the employees and their competences represent the brand and that they are integral for the future success and position on the market. The companies’ all market intricate technology, even Synsam because of their special optometric equipment, and this evidently has an effect on how the cases value competence. However, it is not solely specialized competence the companies are looking for, but rather competence that “fits” within the corporate culture and that can be ambassadors for the brand, which is a sign of internal commitment to the brand strategy. Alfa Laval does this to the greatest extent before Thule. Toyota Material Handling and Synsam are not as developed in this dimension of brand orientation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRAND CULTURE

In terms of corporate culture, two of the studied companies have strong corporate cultures that revolve around the corporate brand core. Synsam display less strength in terms of corporate culture which will be explained in more depth below. A note is that we see Toyota Material Handling as also having less strong corporate culture due to the fact that BT is still existent in the organization in terms of values. The cultural similarities displayed in the cases are as follows; all view culture as a crucial way of knitting the company together and all view the

brand as a uniting force in order to succeed in their markets. In Thule, the culture is focused on “living the brand”, as their products and their position makes it possible to experience the brand core. This signals that they are very committed to the brand strategy and its core values. However, as seen in the empirical material the whole organization is not conscious about the brand identity formed by brand management. In Alfa Laval, pride and a sense of doing “good” is the main driver of the corporate culture which all the employees are conscious about and committed to according to the Alfa Laval respondent. Synsam is focused on service in terms of culture. They want their organization to provide the best possible service to their customers since this is their main *raison d’être*. However, we are not quite sure this is the true corporate culture of the organization, but rather a way of their work process. To us, service is a more generic term which does not fully grasp the signs of a corporate culture. For us, this is a reflection of their core values which, as we discuss earlier in this chapter, are quite ambiguous. This makes it challenging for the organization to understand and be conscious about the brand management strategy as well as to be committed to it. Finally, Toyota Material Handling wants their organization to work according to Toyota Way, which is the global and overarching set of cultural guidelines. This is explicitly outspoken in the organization according to the respondent, and the conclusion drawn by the authors is that the organization is conscious about the aspects of brand management strategy. However, as mentioned earlier, there are some question marks that we have discovered in this process. As the merger between BT and Toyota Material Handling was conducted, the corporate culture had to change as well. As our empirical material shows, it has also done so, but there are still BT values in the organization, which makes the commitment to the brand management harder to achieve. This does not need to be either positive or negative, but it is emphasized by the respondent. An interesting note in this discussion, a parallel to Thule can be drawn. They changed their strategic approach in 2010 and have come a long way of implementing the new values in their organization. Toyota Material Handling merged with BT in 2000 and, as mentioned earlier, there are still signs of BT left in the company, according to their Communications manager. However, this can be a reflection of Toyota’s core values which focuses on slow progression to ensure a grounded result in the end. As said earlier, the authors do not value the time frame for the strategic change process in a positive or negative way, but it is indeed a result worthy of mentioning.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRAND EXPRESSION

Furthermore, in terms of culture, what is notable is the organizations brand expression. When the authors entered the interviews of respective organization it felt like “entering the brand” in three of the cases, Alfa Laval, Thule and Synsam but not in the same extent in the organization of Toyota Material Handling. Alfa Laval has a very modern headquarters which by the authors can signify an innovative organization. Thule has furthermore a headquarters filled with outdoor activity material and posters. As for Synsam they are truly concerning their core value fashion in their interior decoration, with colorful furniture and a large area filled with different eyeglasses. What is said earlier is that Synsam core values are quite vague in the CBIM framework. The fashion value however, is one of the core values that is seen as the strongest by the authors because of the organization’s strong expression of it. In the case of Toyota their headquarters is placed in an industry like building. As the authors see it, their website shows a more unified expression of Toyota as well as their core values “Toyota way” than the headquarters does.

BRAND ORIENTATION DEVELOPMENT SCALE

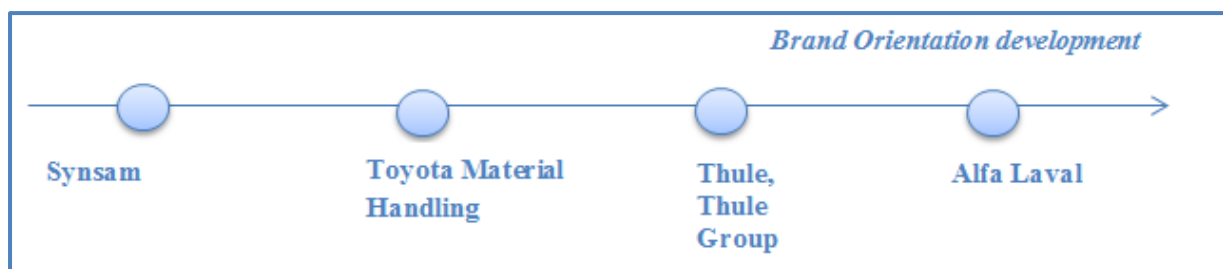


Figure 2, Brand orientation development scale of corporate brand organizations (Ericsson & Holmblad, 2013)

Overall the authors see a clear difference in the inside-out approach between the cases, how the core values are permeated in the organizations and expressed in the dimension given by the CBIM-framework. As mentioned before what is distinct between the market oriented and brand oriented dimension is the internal strategy. Therefore, when moving on to observing the distinct differences in the cases through the creation of a typology, what is especially interesting is the internal strategy, crystalized in the culture expressed by the companies. However before we begin to dig deeper in this notice we will place the cases in how developed we regard them to be in their brand oriented stance. This is based on the discussion above. Synsam shows clear signs of being brand oriented through having their brand as a strategic departure point and a clear and long-term priority for the company. However, as we

discussed above, their core values are quite ambiguous which reflects throughout the analysis through the CBIM. This gives us the signal that they have the least developed brand oriented stance of the studied companies. This indicates that their internal consciousness about the brand as well as their commitment to it is lacking. According to this fact we could argue that Synsam is not brand oriented yet at all. However, as the structured interview clearly state the firm has this stance, which is why we can place them in the brand oriented development scale.

Following Synsam Toyota Material Handling comes next in our development axis. They do this for the reason of BT's involvement in their corporate culture, which according to the respondent, is still present within the company. Therefore their core values cannot be fully integrated in the corporate culture which affects their internal brand commitment. However, the firm has a consciousness of the brand identity and its importance.

Next on the scale is Thule, Thule displays a high brand oriented stance in our empirical material. They view their brand as the most important aspect when crafting corporate strategy and they have undertaken an internal process to solidify the corporate brand core within the organization, which makes them highly brand oriented through their internal brand commitment, but, as shown earlier, not as brand conscious. As the change process of the brand has only been active for three years, it is natural that they are not fully developed in this process. Apart from this, as mentioned in the empirical framework, they have not yet reached the communications part of their brand strategy. This means their brand oriented stance is not externally visible to a large extent yet. The organization is in the changing process equal to Toyota Material Handling, by revising the brands old core values as well as replaces them with new ones. However, the differences between the two cases are their different perception of the time period that the change process should take. More importantly the Thule organization is more committed in terms of their brand strategy than Toyota Material Handling. However, Toyota Material Handling is more conscious about the brand strategy outlined by the brand management, crystalized in The Toyota Way. Nevertheless, because of the fast changing process Thule had time to move further along the axis of brand orientation than Toyota Material Handling. Thule is thus placed high in the brand orientation development axis, but not in the highest level as Alfa Laval.

Alfa Laval displays the highest brand oriented stance of the studied companies because of their high strategic importance given to their brand. They use their brand as a strategic departure point and emphasize the long-term importance of the brand. Furthermore, our empirical material shows that they have managed to implement this to a high degree in their

corporate culture, which places them high in internal brand commitment. They have had a change process similar to Thule and Toyota Material Handling, where they changed their brands direction. This started in 2001 when they split from Tetra Laval and they have thus had a somewhat equal time to develop their brand oriented stance as Toyota Material Handling. Alfa Laval has however the same attitude as Thule where they want the strategic change to be realized and embraced in the organization quite quickly. This has had consequences in both cases, where both describe a reality where people have been let go and not pleased with the new strategic change. In the case of Toyota, because of the long term process the respondent is not seeing the strategic change as dramatic. An opposite stance towards the strategic change has not been notable in the organization to a large extent. This may signify that being fast and becoming truly brand oriented in the axis first of the four cases may not be the best strategy. Toyota strategy of making the whole organization realizing, admitting and act toward the change could be as good, if not better.

TYOLOGY

In the analysis and discussion above the authors have mentioned internal brand consciousness and internal commitment continuously and these concepts will also be what the typology made up by two axis' will be based upon. The reason for these axis' departures will further be elaborated below.

Internal brand consciousness and internal commitment are created by the authors but are based on the culture dimension in Urde (2013) CBIM framework. When observing the CBIM framework the authors see culture as the crucial departure for differentating brand oriented firms. We argue that the brand management can affect the internal dimensions; mission & vision and competences, the internal and external dimension; expression, core values and personality and finally the external dimension; value proposition, without including the rest of the organization. However, the internal element culture is not only for the brand management to decide but its created in conjunction with the organization. This will in turn affect the firms relationships and main position taken on the market. To clarify, for the culture to then be formed in the ways outlined by brand management there are, as the authors see it, two essential emelents of culture that dictates the form the culture will take. These are internal brand consciousness and internal brand commitment mentioned above. The internal brand consciousness is how aware the organizations are of the brand strategy created and implemented. The internal brand commitment is how committed the organizations are towards the brand strategy, hence how they act in line with the strategy. If the organization

only take a committed departure and hence only act committed but are not aware of why they are committed, they lack the consciousness of the brand identity. They thus don't know why they act in the manner they do. In the other way around organizations can take a conscious departure, fully aware of the brand identity but do not know or are not willing to act in line with it. Thus they do not incorporate the brand identity fully into the corporate culture. Evidently the best way for the corporate brand organization are to be both internally brand conscious and internally brand committed for the culture to be formed in the ways outlined by the brand management and receive the outside relationships and the market position they wish these two ways, internally brand conscious and internally brand committed, are the ways of which we have identified that corporate brand organizations can be brand oriented in their strategic approach and these will thus be placed on the two axis' of the typology. We have in the discussion above argued for where and why the studied cases are placed in the typology which means the authors only need to present the typology in its whole.

Internal brand consciousness



Figure 4, A brand oriented typology on corporate brands organizations, (Ericsson & Holmblad, 2013)

Internal brand commitment

The four parts of the typology have been given four descriptive titles, 'The Spy Kid', 'The Einstein', 'The Gladiator' and 'The Superman'. The first one is 'The Spy Kid' which

describes someone that has not yet truly understood the relevance of the identity as well as how to act upon it. Moving on, 'The Einstein' describes someone understanding the relevance of the identity and possesses the knowledge but have not yet practically used this knowledge to any significant extent. 'The Gladiator' describes the other way around in comparison to 'The Einstein'. It describes someone who acts but has not fully understood the purpose behind the actions. Finally, 'The Superman' describes someone who has understood the relevance of their identity as well as how to act upon it. This typology is not a measure of how efficient corporate brand companies are in their brand management towards a brand oriented mindset, but rather ways of showing how they are brand oriented. Two examples are particularly interesting, Toyota Material Handling and Alfa Laval. Alfa Laval ends up in having high internal brand consciousness and a high level of internal brand commitment, whereas Toyota Material Handling ends up having a high internal brand consciousness and a lower internal brand commitment. As mentioned above, this is not a reflection of how efficient or inefficient they are in their brand management efforts towards being brand oriented, but shows different ways of working. The Toyota Way mandates slower change processes in order for the whole organization to adjust to new realities. This has resulted in that the whole organization is brand conscious but not as brand committed towards their core values as for example Alfa Laval.

As the typology placed above embrace, the two different axis show how organizations can be brand oriented through utilizing their organizational brand commitment and internal brand consciousness. However, the authors see it as important to underline that these ways are not "silver bullets" to how one can concretize brand orientation in practice, but rather how one can think and act. Brand orientation is, as argued by many authors (Urde, 1999; Wong & Merrilees, 2007; Baumgarth, 2010; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Hankinson 2011), in it's foundation a mindset and not a method of how brand management should work. Hence, this typology crystalizes different ways of how this mindset can be manifested and worked with.

GENERALIZATION

The authors thus argue that even though these results are induced from these four specific cases, it could have bearing in other cases also, not just corporate brands but all. This is true for two reasons. Firstly, the axis' are quite general in their nature which supports the fact that these realities can be found in other organizational cultures as well. Secondly, due to the need for organizational understanding of the brand, these are the pillars in how an organization integrates with brand management. However, as discussed in the methodology chapter, a

qualitative study of this nature is never sure to be generalizable and we cannot for that reason claim the above mentioned reasons to be true. Nevertheless, the authors would argue that is indeed a reasoning that is useful to bear in mind when discussing brand orientation as a strategic intention.

DISCUSSION

This discussion will elaborate the typology presented above and discuss its usefulness. When discussing the usefulness, the relevance of the findings outside the context of this study will be elaborated. The four parts of the model will be discussed in turn.

THE SUPERMAN

As remembered by many people's youth, Superman is something many want to become and in the author's typology, it correlates in the same manner. However, in this context it should be seen as a goal for a corporate brand firms who desire a brand oriented strategic approach. Companies placed in this column have a high degree of both internal brand consciousness and internal brand commitment, hence a strong brand culture within the firm. It represents a commitment by the organizational culture to the brand identity which is in turn strong and clearly articulated. For firms placed in the other columns, this should be a strategic intention, but the companies who already titulate themselves as "Superman" should act active and reflexive. Hence, once a firm has achieved this, it is not a matter of course to stay there. To be able to move between or stay in the different columns of the typology, a useful tool is the brand management process model, that is presented in the theory chapter. To stay in the Superman column, firms should regularly do audits, with the brand management process model in mind, of both their culture brand consciousness and the brand commitment. This makes their brand orientation strong and could very much affect brand performance in a positive way, as shown by Gromark and Melin (2010).

THE SPY KID

When corporate brand organizations are placed in this column the organization in question is not yet fully developed in their internal brand consciousness as well as their internal brand commitment. As argued earlier this is because of the fact that their identity is not clear and fully understandable. As a causal result of this is that they cannot act upon it. What this typology does, however, is to provide an opportunity to move between the different columns, which makes it dynamic. The example given in this thesis, Synsam, is not determined to remain permanently in this column, but can move both horizontally, vertically and diagonally. In order to do so the organization must place a significant amount of time and effort on their core and its relevance for the brand and the employees working within the firm. It is important to acknowledge the critical part the employees have in the branding process to build a strong brand culture as well as a strong brand performance. This does not, according to the authors,

apply solely to Synsam. Other organizations who find themselves in this column can work with these aspects in order to develop further in their strategic brand management. Evidently firms do not want to see themselves as ‘The Spy Kid’ and could therefore deny this circumstance, which of course is a problem per se. Furthermore, the firms studied in this thesis are market leaders and a risk is therefore that they do not see a considerable improvement necessary. The authors argue that even market leaders need improvement and goals to reach. If they consider where they are placed in the typology in a larger extent, they are more likely to make improvements in terms of the aspects mentioned in the typology and perhaps, in the long run, on brand performance. For firms placed in the ‘Spy Kid’ column, much emphasis would be placed on the identity aspect of the brand management process model.

THE EINSTEIN

As mentioned above the corporate brand organization placed in the Einstein part of the typology have the knowledge, hence the internal brand consciousness but not the internal brand commitment. What this means is that firms has the brand identity clearly articulated within the firm but are in need of improving the organizational culture support and commitment to it. This is the case of Toyota Material Handling, which has a very strong corporate brand core in terms of ‘The Toyota Way’. As mentioned in the empirical analysis the mother organization, Toyota Group, is known for their clear and firm way of articulating the core values in the company.

As the authors see it, the reason behind the lack of support of the brand identity is that the organizational members do not wish to or cannot truly understand the brand identity. As for this matter the organization must place the employees in the center of the process and engage in dialogue with the organizational members to get an insight into their actions. There is therefore a need for strong brand management and an effort to the commitment of the brand in terms of the organization culture. This is outlined in the brand management process model presented in the theoretical chapter.

THE GLADIATOR

When picturing a gladiator one see a person fighting for his life but without the understanding of the purpose of his actions and the place he takes in the context. This metaphor is linked to the typology by depicting the organizational culture that has strong action in terms of the internal brand commitment but not truly realize the grounds of their commitment, thus the firm’s communication about their identity. To be able to move vertically to the ‘Superman’

column, the corporate brand organization should place a great deal of focus on working on the communication part of the brand management process model. In Thule's case the identity is actually quite strong, which is demonstrated in the empirical material, but there is a lack of understanding in the organization for it. For this reason, the communication aspect is crucial in Thule's case. However, firms who are in this column could also lack a strong brand identity, and in those cases emphasis should indeed be placed on the identity aspect of the brand management process model. In this aspect the CBIM model (Urde, 2013 FC) is useful to gain an in-depth understanding of the brand identity.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the thesis, the authors will conclude the study by discussing the thesis theoretical and managerial implications, its limitations and suggestions for further research.

SUMMARY

This study has been conducted with the purpose to outline different nuances of the brand orientation construct. For this reason a cross-sectional study and a multiple case study of four corporate brand organizations has been made to illuminate the differences the paradigm. Because of the use of both a cross-sectional and a multiple case study the study takes the form of a mixed method strategy with a small emphasizes on quantitative method and a dominant emphasizes on qualitative method. The quantitative method and cross-sectional study has been conducted through the use of structured interviews, which is based upon existing brand orientation definition. The aim of these interviews was to confirm the cases strategic intention, hence if they were brand oriented or not. The results of these interviews demonstrate that the organizations investigated in this thesis are brand oriented in their strategic approach. The qualitative method and multiple case study has been conducted through semi-structured interviews, which is based upon the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) outlined by Urde (2013 FC). The semi-structured interviews are an extension of the structured interviews with the aim of stress nuances of the brand orientation phenomenon. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and the CBIM framework, the empirical analysis concludes that there are two main nuances of brand orientation that are of underlined importance in this strategic process. The two main nuances, internal brand consciousness and internal brand commitment, are presented in a typology, where internal brand consciousness is on the y-axis and internal brand commitment on the x-axis. The typology can with these two axis outline four dimensions where organizations can find themselves in the light of these findings. The study finally argues that the typology is of a dynamic character which accordingly means that the organization, the corporate brands, can move in line with their strategic intention and their internal progress of its implementation.

To summarize, the study firstly concludes that a brand oriented mindset can be manifested by using the CBIM framework in the empirical analysis. Secondly the study finds nuances in the brand orientation mindset and strategy, namely internal brand consciousness and internal brand commitment. The nuances is found in the cultural dimension of the CBIM framework.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

This thesis and its induced typology contributes to the field of strategic brand management by discussing the concept of brand orientation and its importance for corporate brand firms who desire a strategic approach where the brand is a key part. Brand orientation is discussed in this paper by highlighting ways in which corporate brand organizations can be brand oriented in their mindset and actions. Previous research have focused on the existence or non-existence of brand orientation and this thesis takes the discussion one step further. This is done by arguing that brand orientation exists in synergy with market orientation as outlined by Urde et al., (2011) as well as the different forms it can take. As is shown by several authors (Wong & Merrilees, 2004, 2007; Urde 1999; Urde et al., 2011; Hankinson 2011; Baumgarth, 2010; Bridson & Evans, 2004; Santos-Vijande et al., 2013) brand orientation has not been discussed from the perspective of it's nuances. This has been done by this thesis and hence contributes to the field in this manner.

Furthermore, it argues that brand orientation has different nuances taken from a CBIM identity approach (Urde, 2013 FC) in general and in a cultural dimension in particular, mentioning internal brand consciousness and internal brand commitment. This highlights that the CBIM is a relevant framework for brand management and brand orientation. The framwork's cultural and core dimensions are of underlined importance in the light of brand orientation which contributes to the field by stressing this. Furthermore, this paper constitutes that the brand management process model (Urde, 2012) is indeed relevant from a brand orientation perspective as it useful for practitioners.

Finally, in a more general sense, it solidifies the argument that brand orientation is indeed a rising paradigm in the strategic brand management field and is used practically in the cases represented in this study.

MANEGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

For practitioners, this study could be useful in the way that it points out what nuances brand orientation has as well as the significant importance of the corporate culture. Thus, it could help brand managers in building an integrated organization towards a brand oriented mindset and a brand oriented way of acting, which in turn increase the organizations overall performance. This is supported by Gromark and Melin (2010) which points out that a brand oriented mindset increase financial performance.

Concretely, this thesis contributes in mainly three ways. Firstly, it provides a typology that outlines the nuances of how a firm can be brand oriented. Secondly, it shows that it is possible to move dynamically between the different nuances. Last, but certainly not least, it provides examples of how this is possible in practice by connecting the CBIM and brand management process model to the typology. This can be used for the navigation towards being a brand oriented firm or being a more brand oriented firm in terms of the brand oriented scale and the typology. In this context, developing the brand identity is a crucial part of having a brand oriented mindset, and through that, strong brand performance.

LIMITATIONS

Since this study is conducted on corporate brand management solely, it is a possibility that the work is limited to this type of brand management and cannot be said to hold true for product brand firms and or other type of management. Furthermore, as the study is conducted in a Swedish context, this could be considered a limitation since inter-cultural aspects in terms of different geographic locations are not discussed in the thesis. Lastly, as the study is conducted in a qualitative manner, it cannot be said to be an over-arching, measurable study on brand orientation but rather a qualitative framework which can be built upon in 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.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The authors would very much like to see a development of the typology proposed in this study from both qualitative and quantitative standpoints. The authors do not claim this typology to be true, but however useful, and are aware that other researchers could have different point of views. It would be interesting to see different qualitative approaches to this problem which is indeed a gap in the brand orientation theory. Quantitative studies could be undertaken to provide more over-arching results in to how the authors arguments are manifested in other organizations than the studied ones in this thesis. In detail, it would be interesting to see the employees point of view of the organizational strategy as this would provide a more extendable and understandable way on how the culture and brand identity interacts.

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Kjellberg, Peter; Brand manager at Thule Group. 15 April 2013.

Erlandsson, Fredrik; Communications manager at Thule Group. 15 April 2013.

Ring, Ylva; Communications manager at Toyota Material Handling. 19 April 2013.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: BRAND ORIENTATION FRAMEWORK

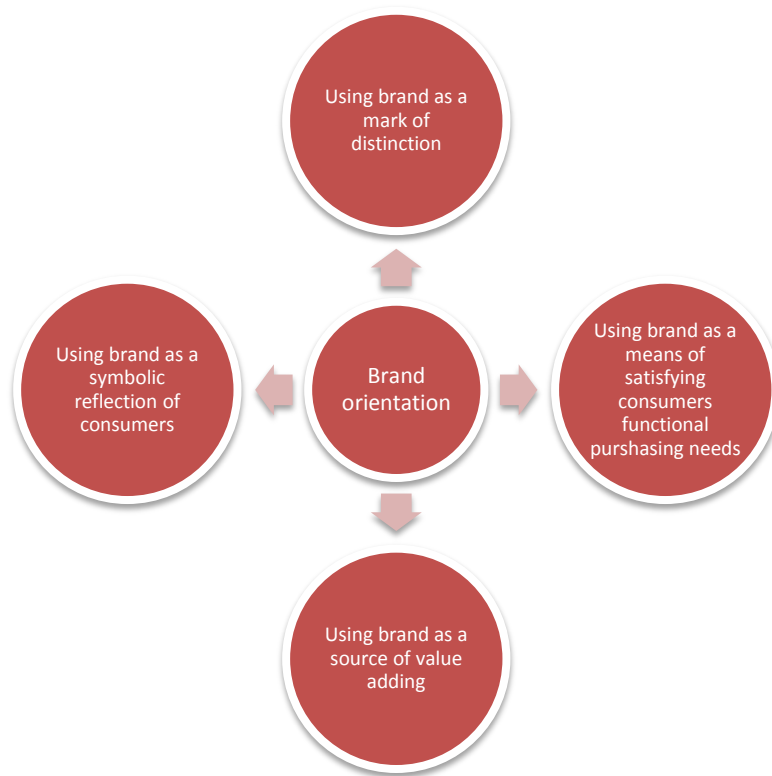
Merilees & Wong (2008):



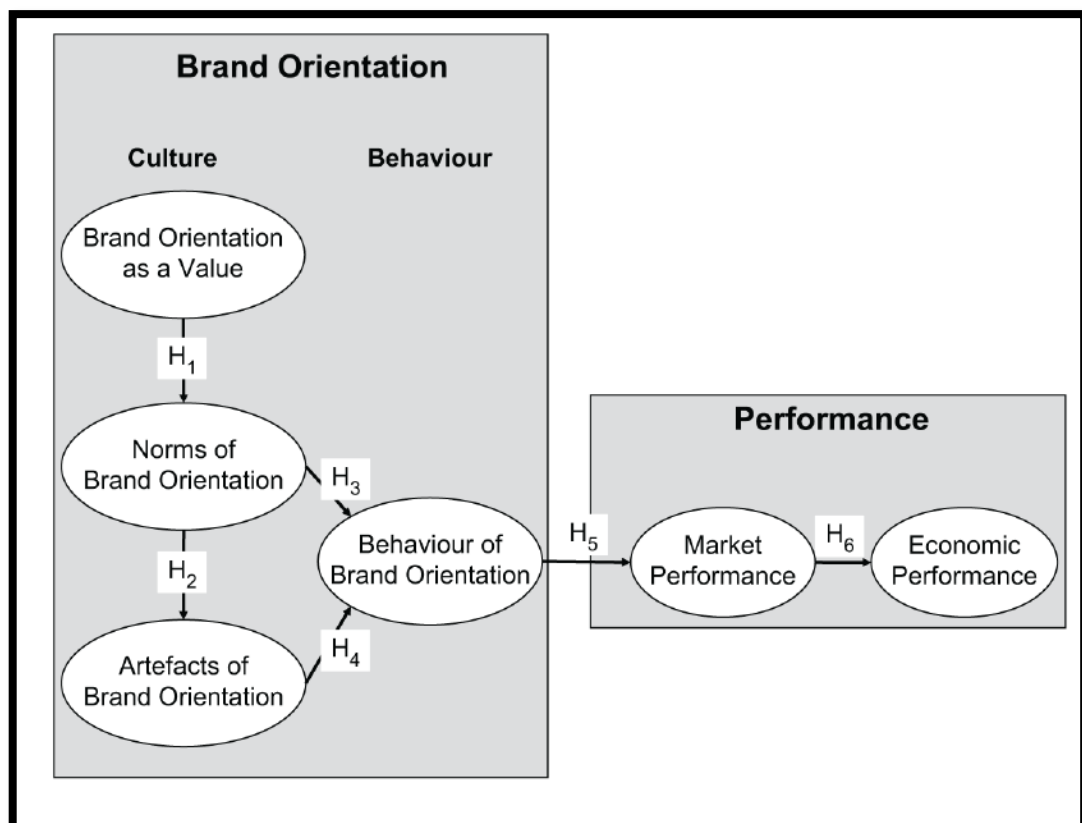
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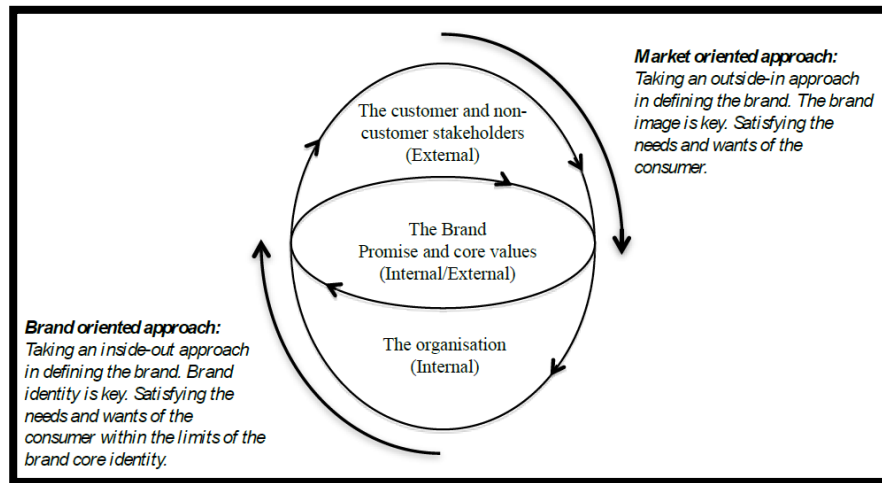
Bridson & Ewans (2004):



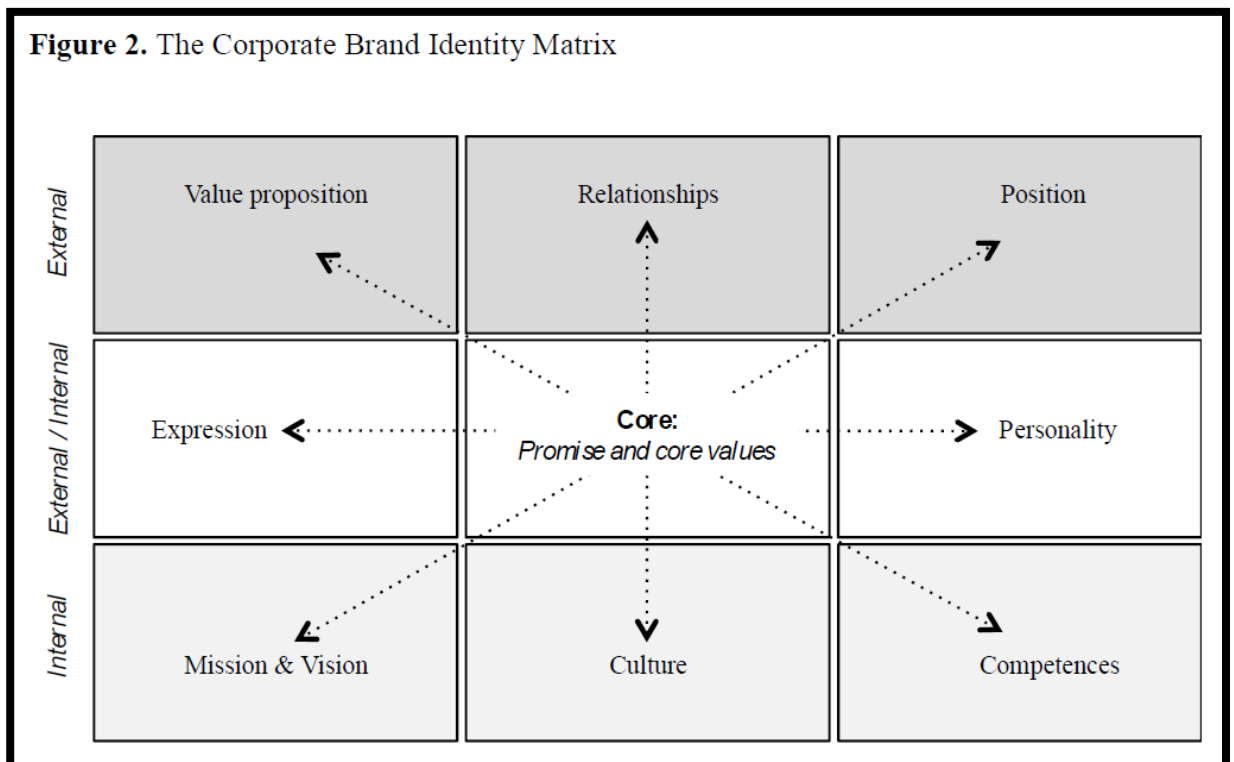
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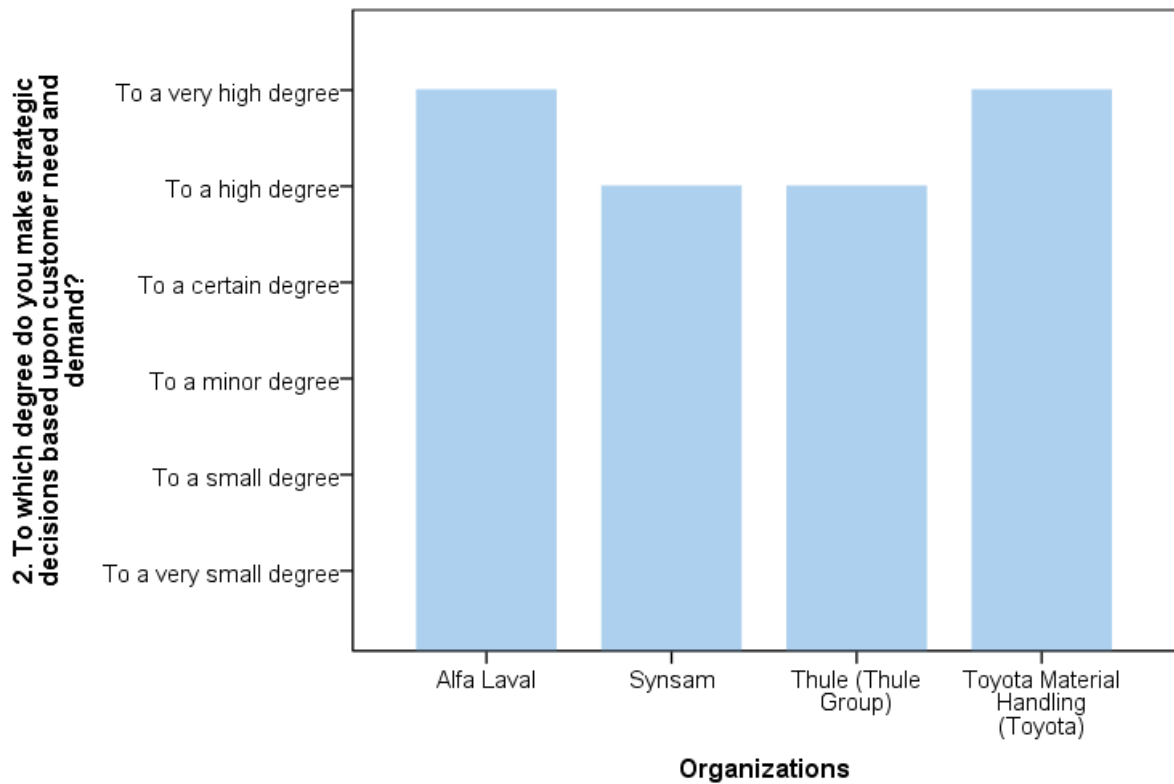
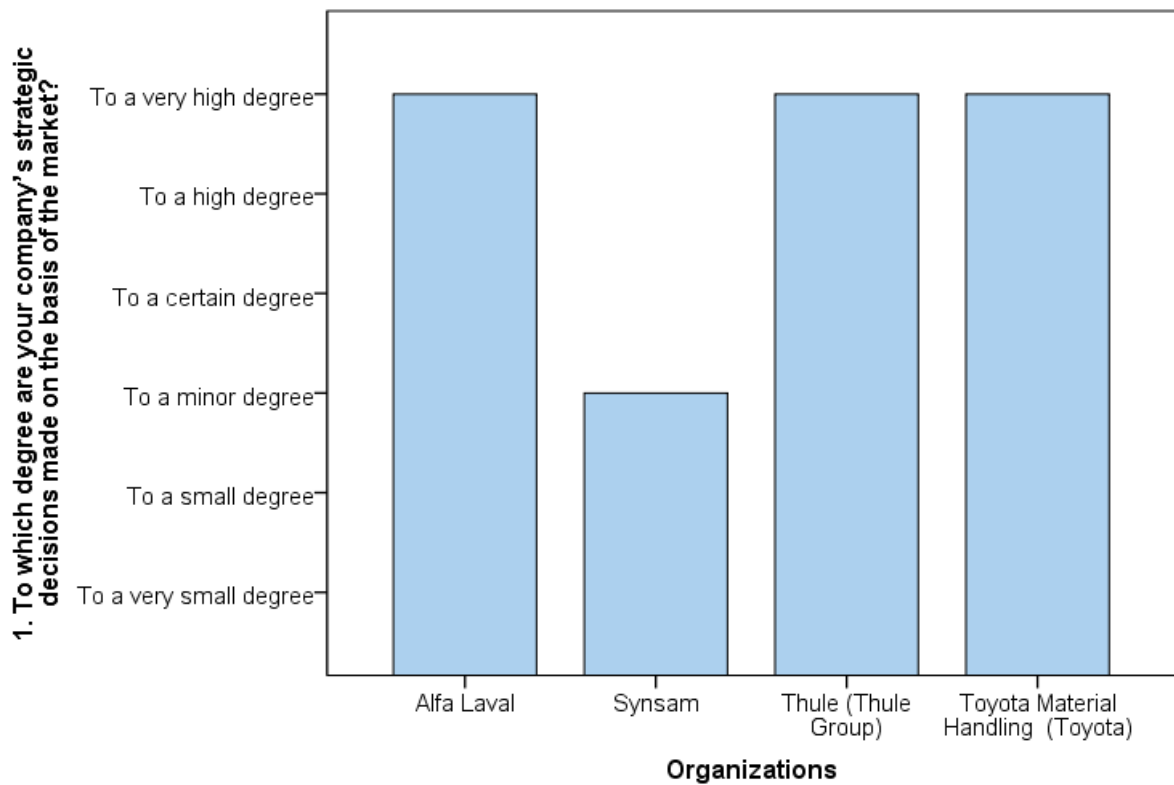


APPENDIX 2: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

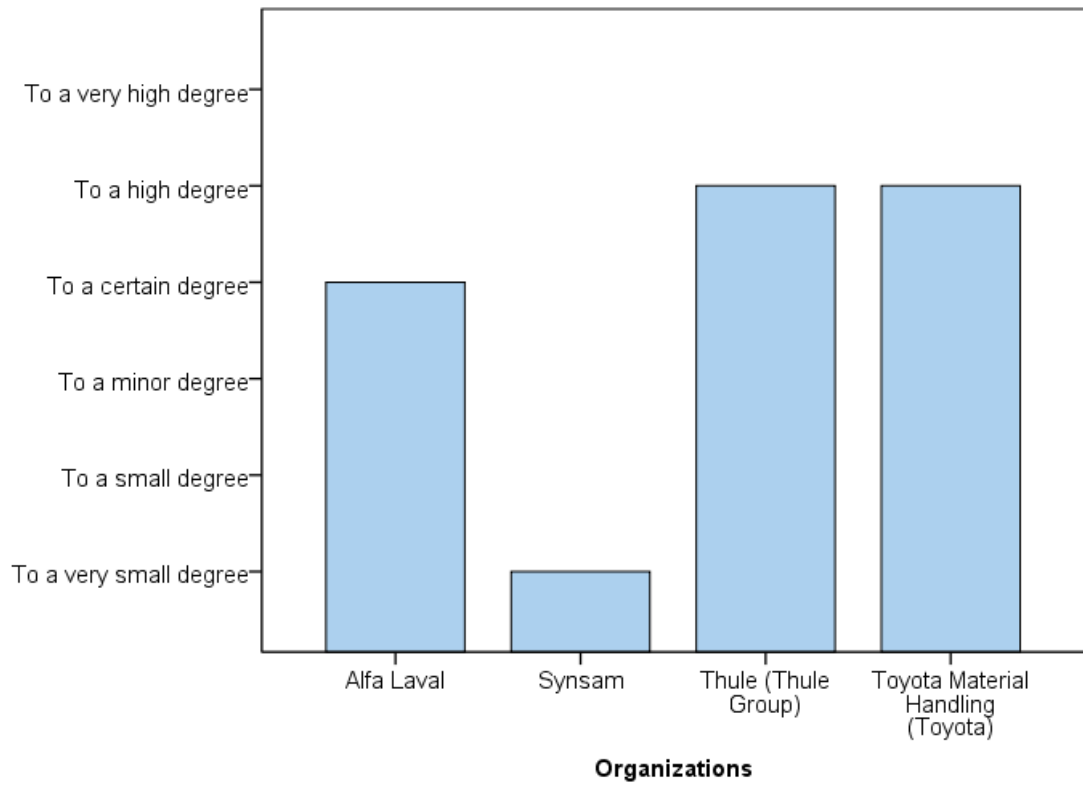
This questionnaire has been produced in order to reflect how strategic decisions are made in the cases/ companies chosen. To respond the companies answer verbally with the number that best suits them. The numbers are an increasing order, number one represents “to a very small degree”, followed by number two: “to a small degree”, number three: “to a minor degree”, number four: “to a certain degree”, number five: “to a high degree” and finally number six: “to a very high degree”. Please answer as accurate as possible.

Market Orientation	1. To which degree are your company’s strategic decisions made on the basis of the market?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	2. To which degree do you make strategic decisions based upon customer need and demand?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	3. To which degree are you affected by your competitors’ strategic decisions when crafting your own strategy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	4. To which degree does the company’s fundamental strategy and goals differ between departments?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	5. To which degree do departments in your company work integrated with a shared strategy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	6. To which degree would you say your brand is important compared to other resources in your company?	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand Orientation	7. To which degree are your strategic decisions made on the basis of your brand?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	8. To which degree do you work with your brands identity and core values within the company?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	9. To which degree do you work with your brands identity and core values so that they reach outside the company?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	10. To which degree should the brand be the basis of your customers’ purchasing decisions?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	11. To which degree would you say that your profitability is based on your brand management?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	12. To which degree is your brand management the basis of your market position?	1	2	3	4	5	6
	13. To which degree would you say that your brand management will determine the future success of your company?	1	2	3	4	5	6

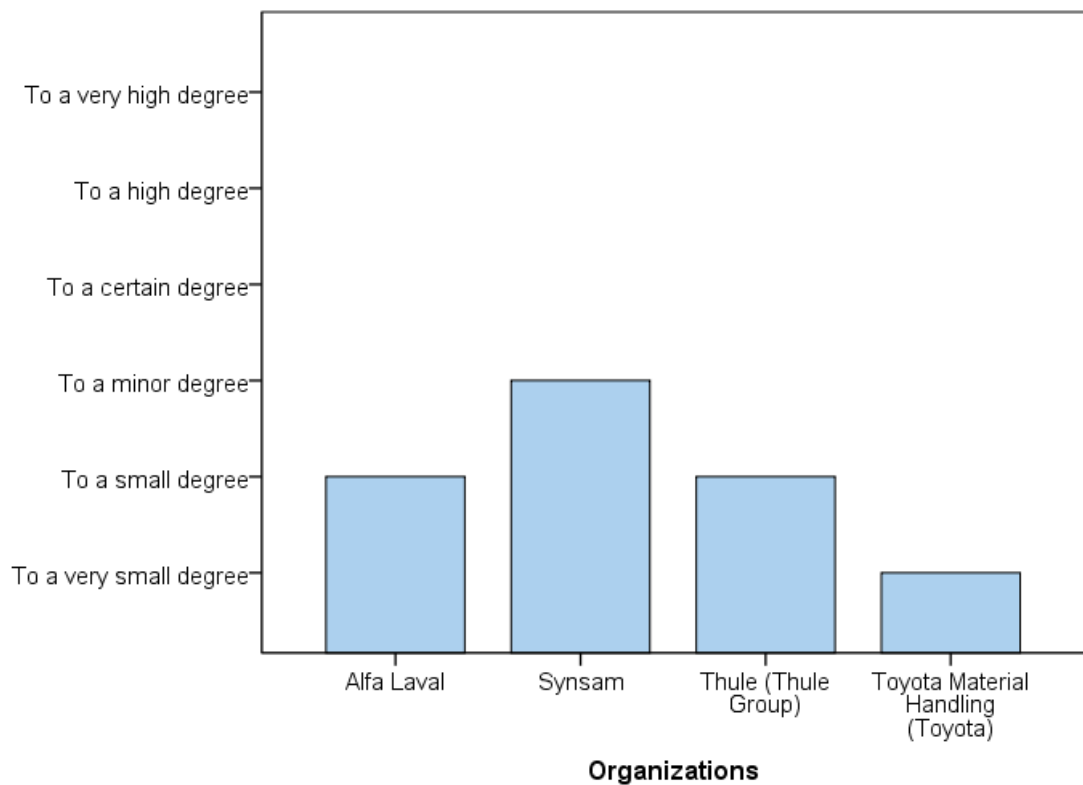
APPENDIX 3: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDS



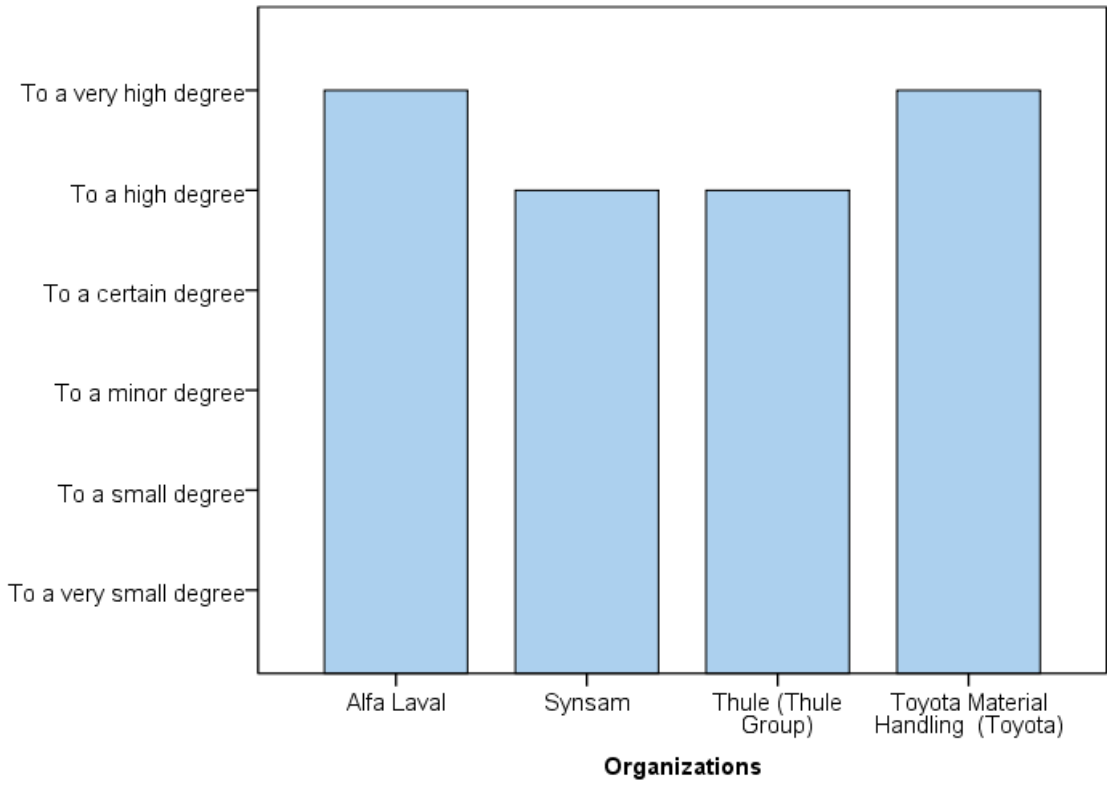
3. To which degree are you affected by your competitors' strategic decisions when crafting your own strategy?



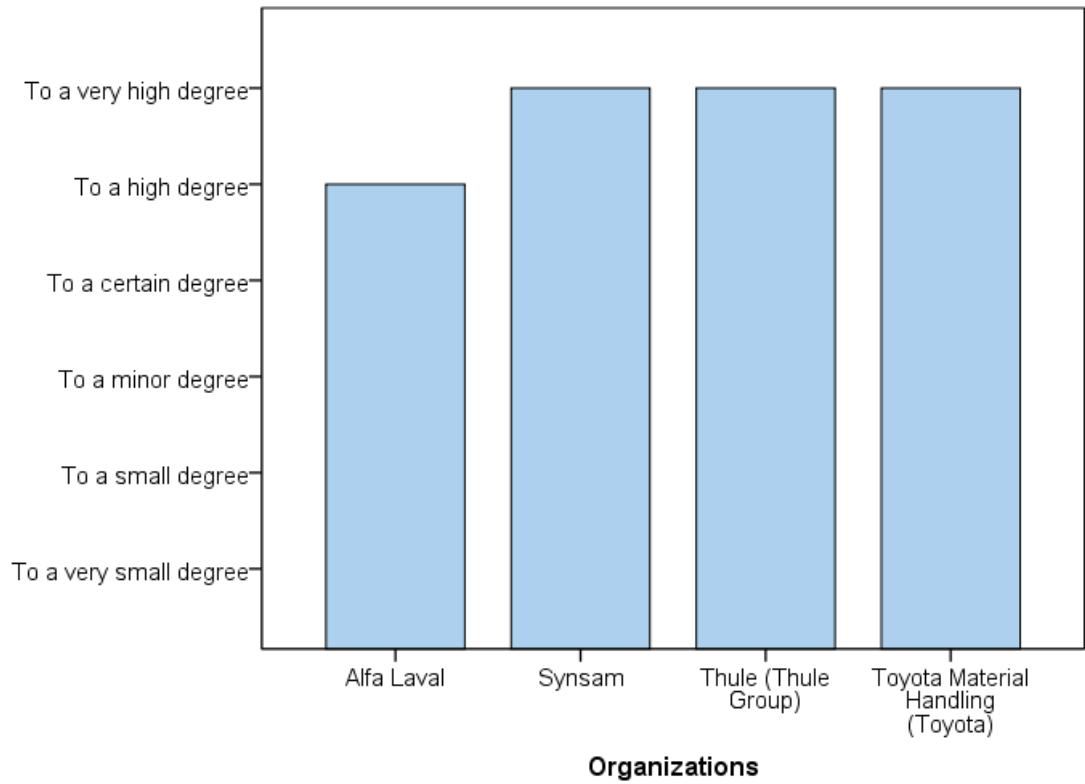
4. To which degree does the company's fundamental strategy and goals differ between departments?



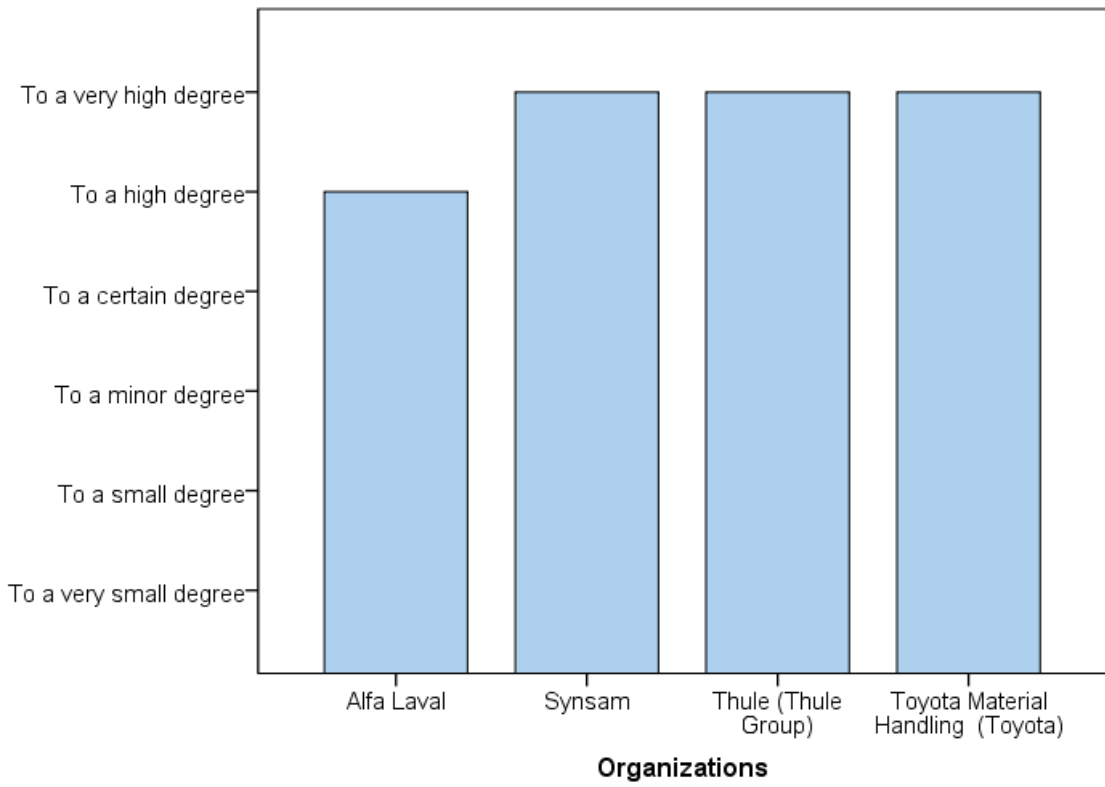
5. To which degree do departments in your company work integrated with a shared strategy?



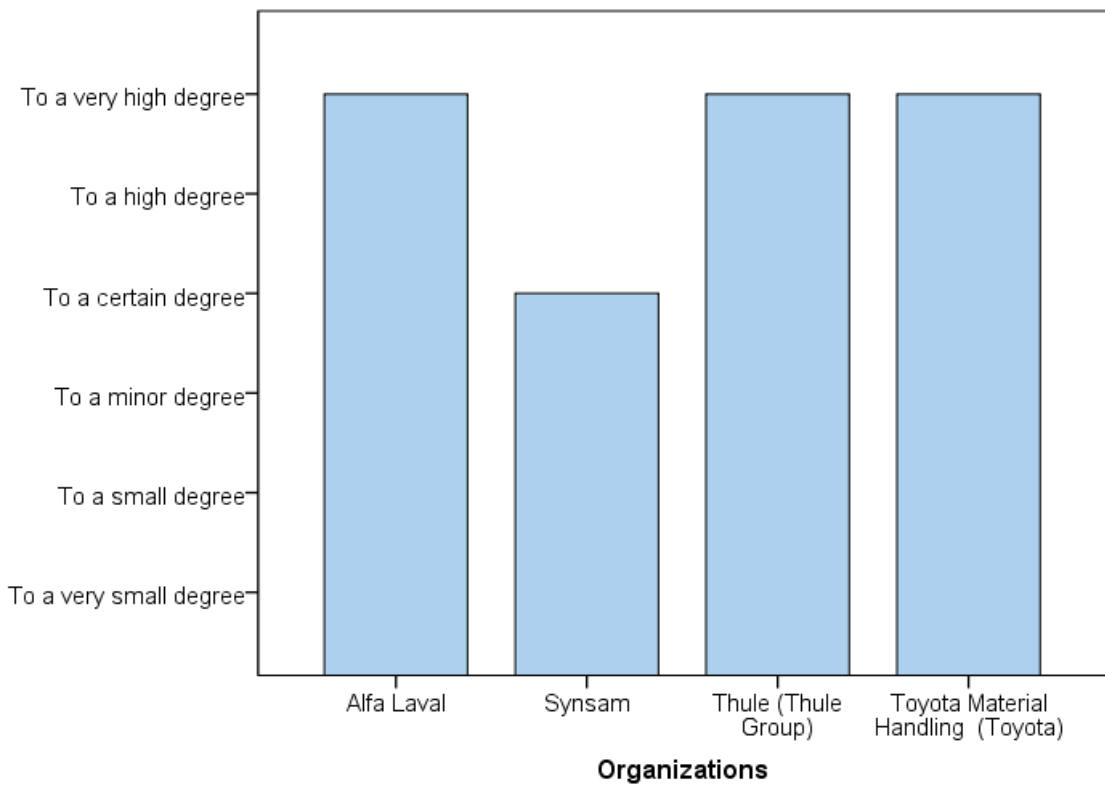
6. To which degree would you say your brand is important compared to other resources in your company?



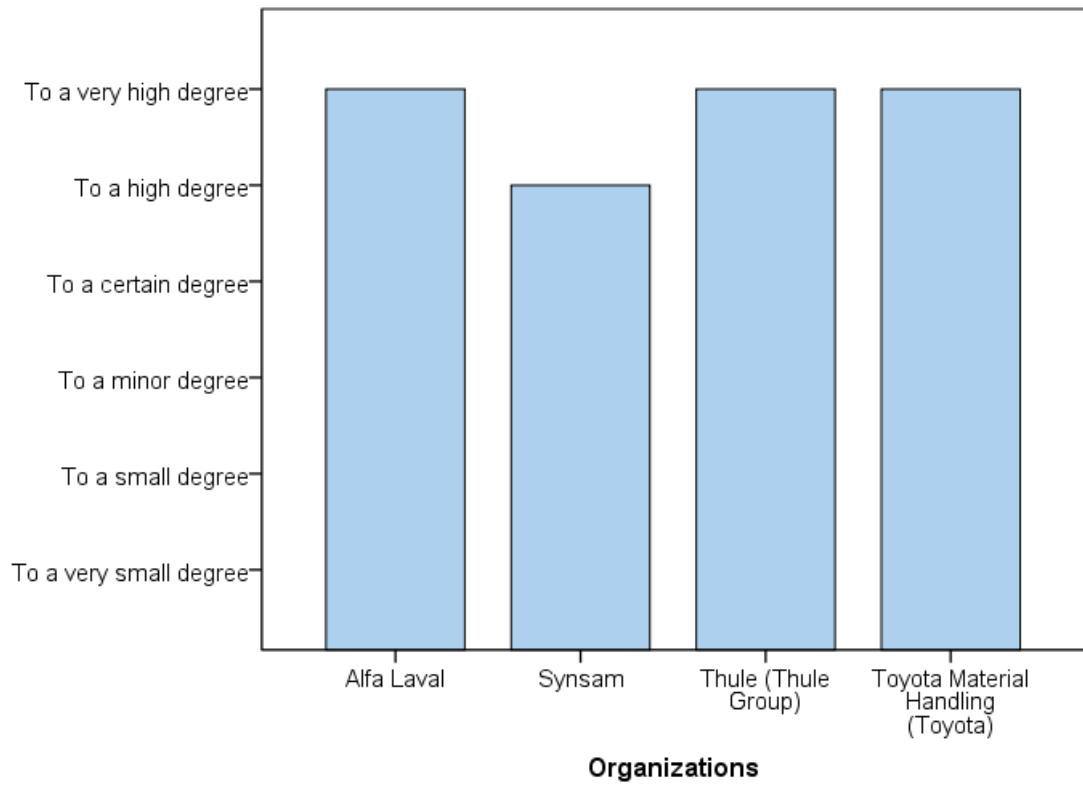
7. To which degree are your strategic decisions made on the basis of your brand?



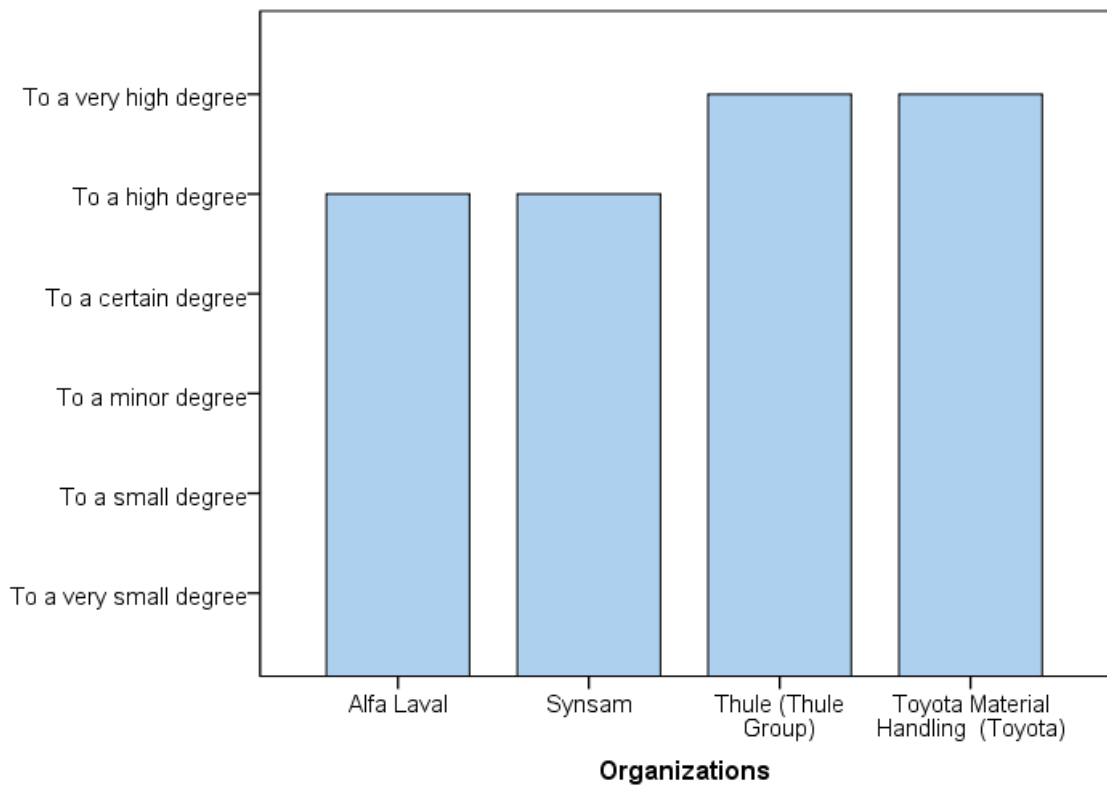
8. To which degree do you work with your brands identity and core values within the company?



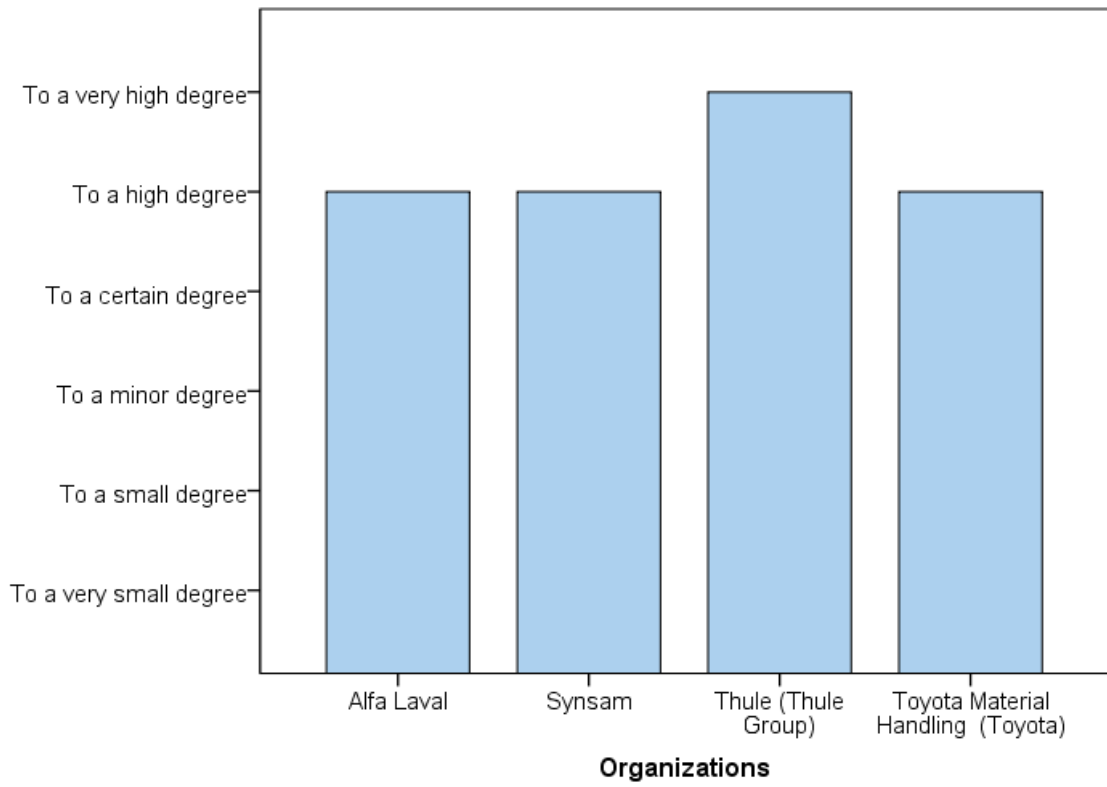
9. To which degree do you work with your brands identity and core values so that they reach outside the company?



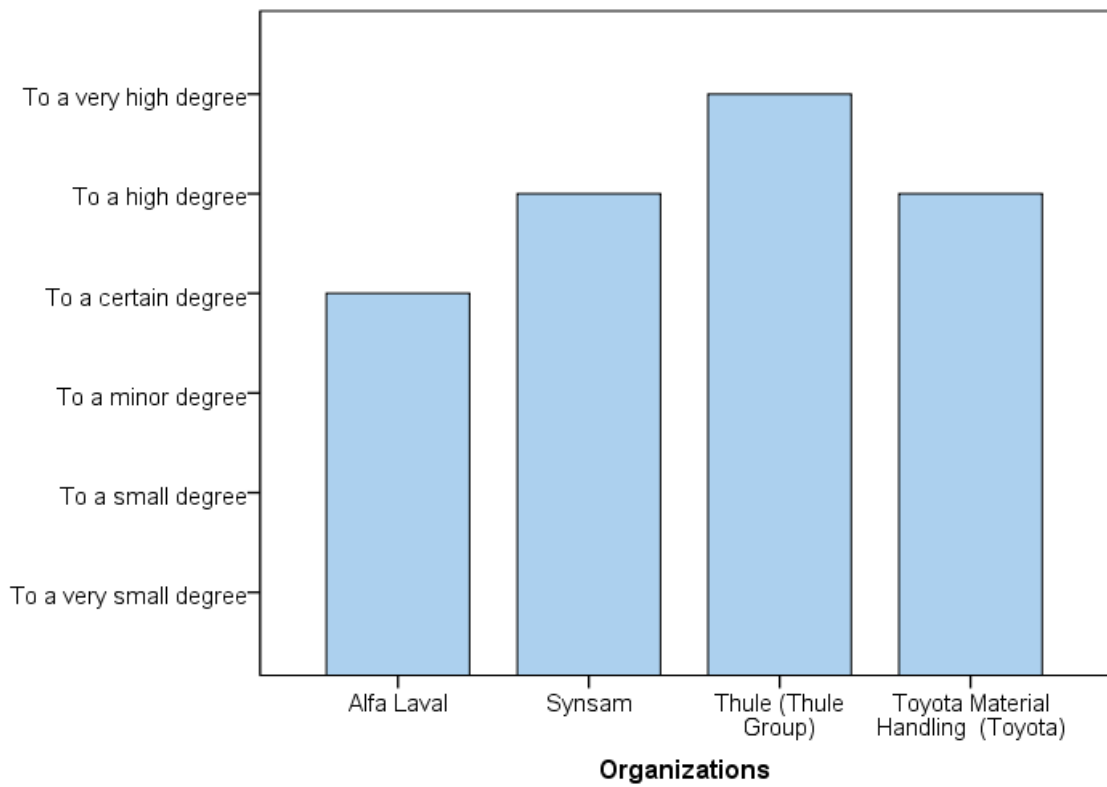
10. To which degree should the brand be the basis of your customers' purchasing decisions?



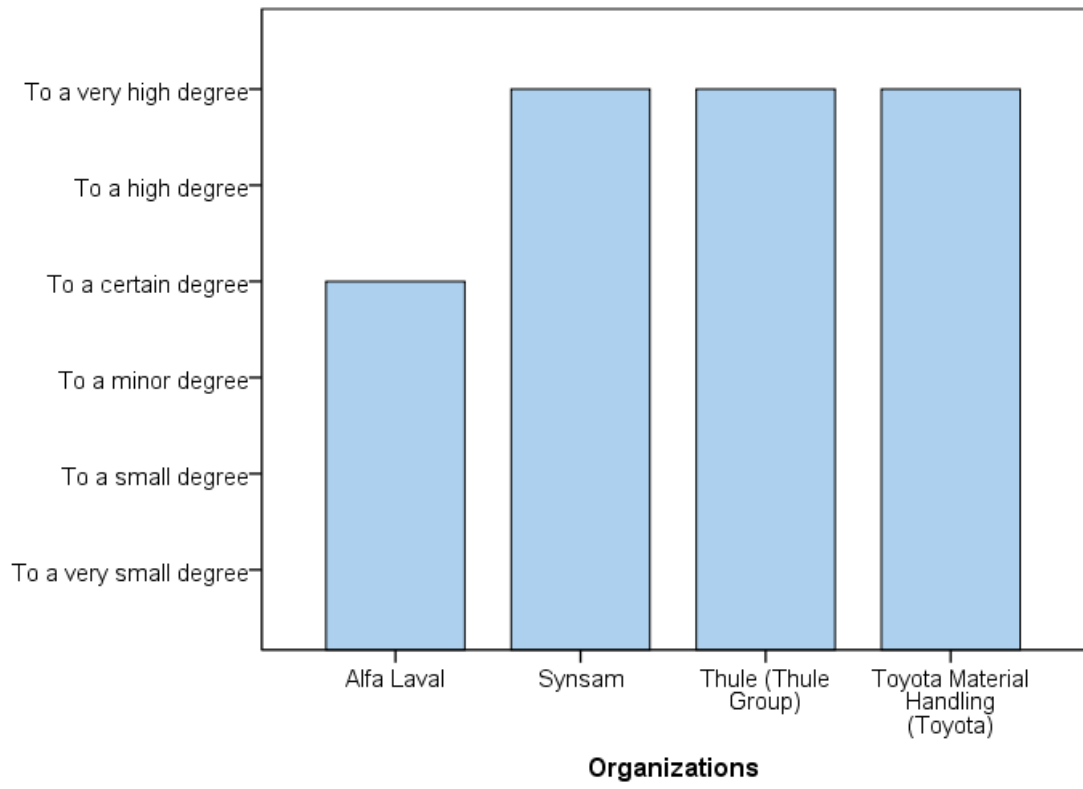
11. To which degree would you say that your profitability is based on your brand management?



12. To which degree is your brand management the basis of your market position?



13. To which degree would you say that your brand management will determine the future success of your company?



APPENDIX 4: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Extension
of
structured
interviews

1. How would you describe your brand in an overall perspective?
2. How would you characterize your brand as a strategic asset?
3. How and on which grounds do you formulate your brand strategy?
4. How important is your brand in comparison to other resources?
5. How important is your brand for your financial performance and future position in the market?
6. How do you view your competitor's strategies when crafting your own business- and brand strategies?
7. Is there a benchmark in your business area?
8. Can you give us your view on your short- and long-term brand strategy?
9. How do you implement your brand strategy within the organization?
10. How are your employees involved in the brand process?
11. How does your brand strategy relate to your business strategy?
12. Which are the most and least important aspects for the strategic work with your brand?

CBIM-
Framework,
Urde 2013

1. **Value proposition:** What are your key offerings and how do you want them to appeal to customers and non-customer stakeholders?
2. **Relationships:** What should be the nature of your relationship with key customer and non-customer stakeholders? Which characteristics in your brand would you say your customers appreciate the most?
3. **Position:** What is your intended position in the market, and in the hearts and minds of key customers and non-customer stakeholders? What differs your brand strategy from your competitors?
4. **Personality:** If your brand were a person, how would you describe it?
5. **Core:** What do you promise, and what are the core values that sum up what your brand stands for?
6. **Expression:** What is unique or special about the way you communicate and express yourselves making it possible to recognize you at a distance? Are there any signs or symbols in your brand you would like to accentuate?
7. **Mission and Vision:** What engages you, beyond the simple aim of making money (*mission*)? What is your direction and inspiration (*vision*)?
8. **Culture:** What are your attitudes and how do you work and behave?
9. **Competences:** What are you particularly good at, and what makes you better than the competition? How do you value competence in your brand management?