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Uncovering the Corporate Brand Identity: **A qualitative study of Rovio Entertainment**

Authors:
Gabriele Di Napoli
Thomas Koponen

Supervisor:
Clara Gustafsson

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Gabriele Di Napoli

Thomas Koponen

Abstract

Title: Uncovering the Corporate Brand Identity: A Case Study on Rovio Entertainment

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Authors: Gabriele Di Napoli and Thomas Koponen

Supervisor: Clara Gustafsson

Keywords: product brand identity, corporate brand, corporate brand identity, corporate brand building functions, SME growth, strategic brand management.

Thesis purpose: To identify and describe the corporate brand identity of a successful company from the mobile gaming industry, examining its corporate brand development at different growth stages.

Methodology: This thesis assumes a constructionist ontological stance and interpretivist epistemological position. We chose an exploratory, qualitative single case study approach where semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out in addition to email interviews. We also took advantage of secondary data in the form of previous interviews, conference speeches and gathering information from company press releases, company's website(s) and official blog.

Theoretical perspective: The thesis is based upon a theory consisting of literature and academic articles within the fields of branding, product brand identity, corporate brands, corporate brand identity and corporate brand building from a SME context.

Empirical data: The presentation of findings is in the form of business history, represented as a timeline. The empirical data has been collected through primary data of three semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and two email interviews. Additional qualitative data in the form of secondary data has been gathered from company press releases, past interviews, company's website(s) and official blog.

Conclusion: We conclude that Rovio Entertainment is a corporate brand, whereas predecessor Relude was not and Rovio Mobile only in later stage developed a weak, yet hidden corporate brand. We also conclude that the corporate brand identity has grown and been influenced alongside Rovio flagship product brand 'Angry Birds'. We find that it is only recently that the Rovio corporate brand identity has become developed and diverged from the Angry Birds brand.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction/Background	6
1.1	<i>Problem Formulation</i>	7
1.2	<i>Relevance of the study</i>	8
1.3	<i>Research Question</i>	10
1.4	<i>Aim</i>	10
1.5	<i>Disposition</i>	10
2	Methodology	12
2.1	<i>Research approach</i>	12
2.2	<i>Research philosophy</i>	13
2.3	<i>Research strategy</i>	14
2.4	<i>Case study approach</i>	14
2.4.1	Primary data	16
2.4.1.1	Interviews	17
2.4.1.2	Electronic Interviewing	19
2.4.3	Secondary data	20
2.5	<i>Ethics</i>	22
2.6	<i>Data Analysis</i>	23
2.7	<i>Trustworthiness and Credibility</i>	24
2.8	<i>Limitations</i>	25
3	Theory	27
3.1	<i>Brand</i>	27
3.1.1	The power of brand names	28
3.1.2	Brand characters, Visual symbols and logotypes	29
3.2	<i>Brand Identity</i>	30
3.2.1	Brand Identity Prism	32
3.3	<i>Corporate brand</i>	35
3.4	<i>Corporate brand vs. Product brand</i>	36
3.4.1	Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)	38
3.5	<i>Brand building in SME's</i>	44
3.5.1	Corporate brand building within SME's	45
3.6	<i>Business growth stages</i>	45
3.6.1	Growth stages in corporate brand building	46
4	Empirical	49
4.1	<i>Relude (2003-2005) - The beginning</i>	49
4.2	<i>Rovio Mobile (2005-2011) - Making mobile games</i>	50
4.2.1	Angry Birds (2009) - A hero brand	53
4.3	<i>Rovio Entertainment (2011-) - A new turn</i>	57
4.3.1	Rovio Entertainment games and expansion	62
4.4	<i>RovioStars™</i>	64
4.5	<i>LVL 11</i>	67
4.6	<i>Education and Learning</i>	67
5	Analysis	69
5.1	<i>Pre-establishment</i>	70
5.1.1	Relude (2003-2005)	70
5.1.2	Rovio Mobile - pre Angry Birds (2005-2009) - Part I	71
5.2	<i>Early growth</i>	72
5.2.1	Rovio Mobile - pre Angry Birds (2005-2009) - Part II	72
5.2.2	Rovio Mobile - post Angry Birds (2009-2011) - Part I	74

5.3	<i>Effective growth</i>	75
5.3.1	Rovio Mobile - post Angry Birds (2009-2011) - Part II	75
5.3.2	Rovio Entertainment (2011 - Present)	78
5.4	<i>Angry Birds Product Brand</i>	83
5.4.1	Angry Birds Brand Identity Prism	84
5.5	<i>Rovio Entertainment corporate brand</i>	88
5.6	<i>Rovio Entertainment CBIM (Corporate Brand Identity Matrix)</i>	90
5.6.1	Describing the corporate brand identity: Rovio Entertainment	90
5.7	<i>Summary</i>	95
6	Discussion	97
6.1	<i>Theoretical implications</i>	97
6.2	<i>Managerial implications</i>	99
7	Conclusion	100
7.1	<i>Suggestions for future research</i>	102
8	Reference list	104
9	Appendix	111
9.1	<i>Rovio Angry Birds brand extensions</i>	111
9.2	<i>App Icon Images</i>	111
9.3	<i>In-depth Rovio Timeline of significant events</i>	112
9.4	<i>Interview guide (excerpt)</i>	113

Tables

Table 1	List of Angry Birds games since initial Angry Birds launch in 2009	111
Table 2	Primary data for interview participants	17
Table 3	Secondary data from speeches, previous interviews	21
Table 4	Corporate brand building functions and activities. Adapted from Juntunen <i>et al.</i> (2010)	47
Table 5	We divide Rovio into four time periods and align them within Juntunen <i>et al.</i> (2010) adapted growth stages with the bullet as representation	69
Table 6	Angry Birds Product Brand Identity Prism	85
Table 7	Rovio Entertainment CBIM	90

Figures

Fig. 1.	Brand Identity and Image	31
Fig. 2.	Brand orientation and market orientation approaches	32
Fig. 3.	Brand Identity Prism	33
Fig. 4.	Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)	39
Fig. 5.	Rovio condensed timeline of significant events	49
Fig. 6.	Angry Birds: App Icon Image	111
Fig. 7.	Bad Piggies: App Icon Image	112
Fig. 8.	Rovio in-depth timeline of significant events	113

1 Introduction/Background

In a hit-driven, fast growing mobile gaming industry (Stenbacka, 2007) companies are finding it extremely difficult to differentiate themselves amongst the hundreds of games released every day. There are well over a few thousand games currently available for a variety of platforms making the industry an “extremely crowded market” (Vesterbacka, 2011a). In order to stand out from the competition and find your “red hoodie” as Rovio CMO Peter ‘Mighty Eagle’ Vesterbacka would call it (Vesterbacka, 2011a), a company needs to carefully think about their marketing, and pay special attention to branding. This is because a brand can act as an entry barrier (Melin, 2002) and source of differentiation (Aaker, 2004) by instilling a product with both tangible and intangible values, which drive customer purchase decisions (Aaker, 1996). In Stenbacka (2007: 13) it was found that if the brand is weak, “even a good-quality [mobile] game [...] cannot compensate for the negative impact of a weak brand”.

Brand management as a discipline or field of study within marketing has increased tremendously in the last decade and is considered to be a “vast and rapidly growing field” (Bresciani and Eppler, 2010: 2). Academics as well as marketing practitioners have started to realize in last decades that there is value in brands, that despite being intangible and conditional (Kapferer, 2012), they can be viewed as being strategic assets (Kapferer, 2008).

Angry Birds, a casual based puzzle mobile game first developed for the iPhone in 2009 has become an international phenomenon and a household *brand* within a few short years, since the mobile game app has become the number one downloaded app of all time (Rovio, n.d.b). The company behind Angry Birds is Rovio Entertainment, formerly known as Rovio Mobile and even before that as Relude. The growth of this company from their humble roots and identity within the mobile gaming industry to becoming a powerhouse within the entertainment industry is an intriguing, yet unexplored case when viewed from a *corporate brand* perspective.

1.1 Problem Formulation

A brand described by Kapferer (2012) is considered to be an intangible asset that is attached to a product, conferring it with an extra value added and providing the customers additional reasons for choosing a product. Branding has become an ever more important tool used to survive and differentiate from increasing competition (Kapferer, 2012). Within brand management literature, the concept of “brand identity” has increasingly been the centre of attention, and it has been explored by Kapferer (1986; Aaker, 1991; de Chernatony, 1999) and become more widely studied in recent years. Identity is a contemporary concept in a society now oversaturated with various communications (Kapferer, 2008), so defining and then understanding the brand identity is a necessary concept as it helps to, “distinguish the makes from one another” (Kapferer, 2008: 174).

The majority of literature published on the brand identity concept is rooted around product brands (Kapferer, 2008). However, recently corporate brands have become a more prominent research area (Aaker, 2004; Balmer, 2008, 2010; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Urde *et al.*, 2007; Urde, 2009; Urde, 2013), but scholars have mainly focused on large organizations (Urde, 2003, 2009; 2013; Balmer, 2008) and well-known brands (Berthon *et al.* 2008; Juntunen *et al.*, 2010; Bresciani and Eppler, 2010; Rode and Vallaster, 2005).

The area of research within corporate brands is becoming more interesting as more and more companies have started to shift their marketing strategies from a focus on product brands to their corporate brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Kapferer, 2008). As stated by Balmer (2008: 281), “just like brand identity is important when looking to product brands, identity fulfills the same functions for a corporate brand”. Balmer (2010: 181) continues by stating, “corporate brands are marshaled by individuals and groups to define who they are – and who they are not”. So, with the transition to corporate brands, there has evolved the study of “corporate brand identity” as a “distinctive institutional-identity type” (Balmer, 2010: 180) from product brands.

As a rising area of research that is starting to revolve around corporate brands (Balmer, 2010), companies are starting to become more focused on corporate brand

oriented strategies (Kapferer, 2008). This is because the transition allows corporations to leverage on their corporate culture and vision as part of their value proposition (Ackerman, 1998; Balmer, 1995; de Chernatony, 1999, 2001). A corporate brand, therefore, stands behind the company's offerings, functioning as an endorser or as a driver (Aaker, 2004). As stated by Morsing (2002), a corporate brand oriented strategy converts the whole company into a brand, and it has a longer-term focus than a product brand oriented strategy (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Inskip (2004: 364) found that long-term benefits can accrue if the branding process is handled properly and stated that, "branding is more than just a nice logo".

Up until recently, most marketing managers had only product brand identity based models to work with, which resulted in inconsistent, complicated and ineffective results (Urde, 2013). This is because, as found by Harris & de Chernatony (2001; Balmer, 2010; Urde, 2013), a corporate brand has to be managed differently in respect to a product brand. The problem was that there was no model or framework tool specifically designed for identifying or describing the corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013).

However, Mats Urde from Lund University recently published a paper in which he had developed the first framework that was specifically made for defining and aligning the corporate brand identity, called the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) (Urde, 2013). This can now be used to identify an organization's corporate brand identity and provide management with a better understanding and overview of their organization's corporate brand identity.

1.2 Relevance of the study

The specific research area of corporate brand identity is in its infancy, and so too is corporate brand building functions in smaller organizations. The intersection of these two fields is a very under-explored area, and in writing this thesis we aim to contribute to this area of research through our case study analysis and become part of the discussion. The lack of empirical data from the practitioners, and the identification of an underdeveloped research area combined with the recent and extraordinary success of mobile gaming companies in Finland has encouraged us to explore the

corporate brand identity of a successful Finnish mobile gaming company, Rovio Entertainment. Rovio Entertainment (formerly called Relude and later Rovio Mobile), better known as the makers of Angry Birds, is a result of Finland's booming tech scene.

Looking at the recent success of Rovio Entertainment from its early establishment, our interest is to investigate when they developed, and what their corporate brand is, with emphasis on their corporate brand identity during different growth stages. Exploratory research within corporate branding in a small business context has been conducted by (Inskip, 2004; Rode and Vallaster, 2005; Witt and Rode, 2005; Bresciani and Eppler, 2010; Juntunen *et al.*, 2010).

We use the Juntunen *et al.* (2010) study findings for guidance, since it focuses both on growth stages and corporate brand building. It argues that in order for a company to be successful, corporate brand building should be implemented even before the company is established (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010). Establishing a clear and coherent corporate brand identity is one of the most important steps in the process. In being able to identify and describe the corporate brand identity, we orient ourselves by making use of Urde (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. This is because Urde (2013: 3) claims that:

a serious practical problem for management is lack of a widely agreed framework that can help to define a corporate brand identity and also to align its different elements so they come together as an entity.

The framework helps companies examine, specify, coordinate and develop a corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013). In this study, we apply the corporate brand identity matrix to Rovio Entertainment by identifying and describing the corporate brand identity so that management can have an overview and understand what their corporate brand identity is, and can therefore make better strategic marketing decisions in the future that align with their corporate brand. Companies that fail to align their corporate strategy as they grow, might be overshadowed by their own successful product brands which might act as barriers for future growth or success.

In order to do answer our aim, an exploratory, yet descriptive research approach is used. A qualitative single in-depth case study design is implemented. We conduct semi-structured interviews and email interviews with strategic marketing, brand managers and senior executives who have been with the company or have experience of the company during both Rovio Mobile and Rovio Entertainment era as the main instrument of primary data collection, with support of secondary data in terms of previous interviews conducted at various conferences.

1.3 Research Question

This study aims to address the following research questions.

RQ: 1: What is the corporate brand at various early growth stages as defined by Juntunen et al. (2010)?

RQ: 2: How much does a product brand identity influence a corporate brand identity?

RQ 3: Why does a company move from a product brand to a corporate brand-oriented strategy?

1.4 Aim

The aim of this paper is to identify and describe the corporate brand identity of a successful company from the mobile games industry, examining its corporate brand development at different growth stages.

1.5 Disposition

The study is structured in a way that we found suitable in order to best fulfill our research purpose. Following the introduction, in chapter two we describe our methodological process wherein the research approach, research philosophy, research strategy and methods of data collection are discussed. In addition, we provide information concerning our primary and secondary data sources, how the data collected was analyzed, and we explain the main ethical issues and limitations. Chapter three outlines the theory, in which concepts of brand management, product

brands, corporate brands, product brand identity, corporate brand identity and corporate brand building functions at different growth stages from a small company context are discussed. Chapter four consists of our empirical findings, followed by our analysis and discussion wherein we discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the study. In the closing section of the thesis, we draw our conclusions and provide suggestions to future research.

2 Methodology

In this section we present the reader with the research approach, philosophy and strategy that was chosen to construct the study in order to answer the research aim. We then describe how and from where the data was collected. We provide a section on ethics to underline the reflexivity in our research process. The section ends with an evaluation of the credibility and trustworthiness of the chosen method used to conduct the study while providing limitations of the study.

2.1 Research approach

For the research design, we chose a qualitative, descriptive single case study approach, using both the inductive and deductive approaches, or also known as abductive approach. According to Yin (2011: 94) most qualitative research follows an inductive approach as it leads to the “emergence of concepts”. As the focus of our research involves identifying and describing the corporate brand identity from the mobile gaming industry at different growth stages, it thus “aims to generate theory from the research” (Greener, 2008: 16) using the inductive approach.

On the other hand, a deductive approach to the research entails drawing upon established theory and inferring hypothesis that must be tested by the empirical findings (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 11). Even though it is usually associated with quantitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 13), a deductive position can also be assumed while conducting qualitative research (Yin, 2011: 94). Saunders *et al.* (2007: 487) states that this would imply using “existing theory to shape the approach that you adopt to the qualitative research process and to aspects of data analysis”. During this research study, a deductive approach is taken when applying the Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 1991), the Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (Urde, 2013) and when using Juntunen *et al.* (2010) growth stages in relation to corporate brand building functions.

2.2 Research philosophy

Within business research, there is an inextricable relationship between questions of social ontology, epistemology and the research itself (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 23). Social ontology, which concerns the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 17; Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 108), consists of two main positions: objectivism and constructionism (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 20).

Considering the nature of the research questions and the inductive approach to the research, we argue that a constructionist stance should be taken. According to Bryman and Bell (2011: 22), constructionism “asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors”. Saunders *et al.* (2007: 108) refers to this concept as subjectivism and claims that social phenomena are originated from the perceptions and actions of the social actors involved, and are in a continuous state of reconsideration. Indeed, brand identity is a concept rooted in the core of the company (Kapferer, 2008), therefore it assumes a subjective meaning depending on the company, and it can also evolve with time. Kapferer (2008: 43) also claimed that “brand identity never results from a detail, yet a detail can, once interpreted, serve to express a broader strategy”.

Epistemology concerns the way of investigating into the nature of things (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 21), therefore the epistemological stance deeply affects how knowledge should be gained. In this research we take an interpretivist position. Indeed, while the main idea of positivism is to study and measure the social world by means of objective methods (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 22), the aim of interpretivism is to enter the social world of the research subject and understand it from the point of view of the individuals involved (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). As also stated by Bryman and Bell (2011: 17), interpretivism is more concerned with understanding the subjective meanings of social reality, thus we believe that taking such a position is appropriate in order to effectively answer our research aim.

2.3 Research strategy

In order to fulfil our research aim, we decided to conduct an exploratory study, since as stated by Saunders *et al.* (2007: 133), an exploratory study “is particularly useful if you wish to clarify your understanding of a problem, such as if you are unsure of the precise nature of the problem”.

We implemented a qualitative study, since a qualitative research is more suitable because it allows the researcher to gain access to insights and details that numbers could not provide (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 387-389). This choice is also explained by the importance of qualitative research in disclosing the respondent’s perception of the world (McCracken, 1988), allowing the researcher to investigate the social world through the eyes of the respondents, and to reveal things that the researcher, as an outsider, might not have expected (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 402-403).

2.4 Case study approach

The case study approach is popular within qualitative research designs (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007 cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011: 59; Yin, 2011) because one of the strengths is that the emerging theory from the case study is theory that is likely to be empirically valid (Eisenhardt, 1989). Single case studies are the most common form of study in business and management research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As Flyvbjerg (2006: 228) stated, one of the general misunderstanding of case study research is that it is not recommended to generalize from an individual case since a singular case study does not contribute to scientific development. However, he concludes:

one can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated.

Our research takes an idiographic approach where we are concerned to make clear the “unique features of the case” (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 60) in order to be able to identify and describe the case studied company’s corporate brand identity at different

growth stages. The primary unit of measurement and analysis is the organization (Bryman and Bell, 2011: 67) “Rovio”, where we largely look at four key growth stages of the company from Relude to Rovio Mobile in 2005 (pre-Angry Birds), Rovio Mobile from 2009 (post Angry Birds) to Rovio Entertainment in 2011.

For this research, we chose to conduct a single-case study because it is a unique case (Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 140). Saunders *et al.* (2007: 140) further suggests that a single case may be selected “because it is typical or because it provides you with an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon that few have considered before”, which is the case with Rovio, because their product brand Angry Birds is more well-known than their corporate brand. This is further confirmed by Eisenhardt (1989: 548), who states that “[case study] is particularly well-suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate”.

Rovio Entertainment (2011), formerly known as Relude (2003) but first incorporated as Rovio Mobile (2005) is a successful Finnish video game developer known as the creators of the successful “Angry Birds” video game franchise that was launched in 2009 on the iPhone. The company was on the brink of bankruptcy before Angry Birds, employing less than 12 employees before it made its turnaround (Heijari, 2011). The company has been rapidly expanding since the global success of Angry Birds and reportedly already has over 800 employees (Vesterbacka, Interview) making it a large organization in terms of headcount (AWU) according to EU definition of an organization. The company’s marketing and brand strategy can be argued to be that of a product brand because while operating as Rovio Mobile, it had adopted the Angry Birds characters as its main selling point, while the company was hidden behind the Angry Birds brand.

The company has grown into a global multi-billion dollar success in only a few years, and many product extensions of the Angry Birds games have been made (See Appendix: Table 1). However, the gaming company continues to develop other games which coincidentally have not gained as much attention or success, partly perhaps due to the fact that customers and gamers may not identify Rovio as a corporate brand, as it is overshadowed by the product brand of Angry Birds. The company has now

grown and expanded into an entertainment conglomerate, operating within several industries, working with the Angry Birds brand and other intellectual property (IP).

2.4.1 Primary data

Primary data is empirically collected data by the researchers. There are many ways of collecting primary data from case studies; such as observations and interviews, and questionnaires (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). For this study we have used interviews and electronic email interviews, since an “interview is the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995: 64) allowing us to understand the case from different perspectives and to gain interpretations and descriptions of the events from the main decision-makers of the company. We conducted semi-structured interviews with the case study company executives and marketing/branding managers with the help of an interview guide. The interview guide questions were based around Urde (2013) “indicative questions for the application of the CBIM framework”, but included also customized questions for each participant to answer to questions regarding their specific job role or function at the company. We conducted email interviews in order to gain valuable information from executives and decision-makers of the company, in the case that in-person interviews were not possible due to factors such as time, location. Our executive participants had very active and global business travel schedules to the extent that in-person interviews were not possible. We used some observations, as we have engaged with the mobile game Angry Birds and watched episodes of Angry Toons on ToonsTv.

Primary data collection for our study purpose is relevant as we have attempted to understand how the management of the company views the area of product and corporate brand identity.

Name of Participant	Title of Participant	Primary data Collection	Duration	Contacted	Response
Peter Vesterbacka	Rovio CMO, <i>Mighty Eagle</i> , (2005-)	Interview (Skype)	58 min	2014-04-10	2014-05-10
Harri Koponen	Rovio COO, (2009-2013)	Interview face to face	49 min	2014-04-10	2014-04-25
Henri Holm	Rovio SVP (Asia), (2011-2013)	email	85 lines	2014-05-09	2014-05-11
Kai Torstila	Rovio Marketing Director, (2011-)	email	55 lines	2014-04-15	2014-05-07
Jakob Longer	Roviostars™ Product Manager, (2010-)	Interview face to face	36 min	2014-04-21	2014-04-26

Table 2. Primary data for interview participants.

2.4.1.1 Interviews

There are many forms of qualitative interviews, a common factor is that they are less structured than other research data collection within qualitative research such as structured interviews (Bryman and Bell 2007: 472). Main advantages of using qualitative interviewing is that answers provided by the interviewee are from his point of view, rich and detailed, and due to the less structured approach, it provides flexibility in terms of questions asked and direction of the interview which may take a different turn and may allow new insights to come forth that were not previously

considered by the researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 474). Our research aim has been continually redefined during the thesis writing process as new revelations have been made.

For this research we chose to conduct a semi-structured interview because we were researching for answers to specific topics and actions within corporate brand identity and are able to do so with the help of a designed interview guide. The interview questions are both open and close ended to give the interviewees freedom to express opinions both in broad terms or allow other topics to be explored and discussed in depth such as the branding strategy during the different growth stages.

The participant selection criteria was that the participant being interviewed had to either have or had a functional role within the specific area of research such as a product, marketing or brand managers of the case studied company or of a strategic management position such as the chief marketing officer or marketing director. These people would be aware of strategic long term planning of the case studied companies marketing and branding strategies.

We were able to gain access to participants due to social ties, as we were able to contact all the interview participants personally by phone call or email to schedule meetings face to face, making the process faster and easier. Only exception was Kai Torstila, with whom we conducted a cold-call via email invitation. The in-person interviews were carried out at the participants place of residence on April 25, 2014 with Harri Koponen and April 26, 2014 with Jakob Longer and video call via Skype with Peter Vesterbacka on May 10th, 2014. The choice of setting to be their place of residence was because the managers and executive would feel more at ease or at home, allowing a more relaxed atmosphere where a discussion could be created involving the sharing of information which might feel less intrusive, more natural and enable trust to be developed between us as the researchers and our participants.

The interviews were recorded on an digital recordable device (iPhone) and were later transcribed by the researchers (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 489) with the duration of each interview listed in Table 2. The reason for using an iPhone is because of the numerous advantages it has. Some features are beneficial for interviews, such as the small and

unobtrusive presence during the interview, as well as being able to record for longer periods of time than an audio recorder (Greener, 2008: 84). Due to the playback feature, we could also re-listen to the interviews at a later time, and use direct quotes, thus allowing us to focus more on the interview in the present, which allowed us to probe questions and active discussion in detail (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

2.4.1.2 Electronic Interviewing

For this study we also used asynchronous interviews conducted via email (Saunders *et al.*, 2007) which means the questions were conducted offline. An email interview as stated by Saunders *et al.* (2007: 597) consists of “a series of emails each containing a small number of questions rather than one email containing a series of questions”. It is used when the participants of the interview are “geographically dispersed” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 342) which was the case for Rovio due to the extensive travelling of the executives.

The reason why we included email interviewing is because set in-person interviews were not possible to be carried out physically within the time period of the research. However, due to the availability of constant Internet access, and limited in-person physical accessibility, we thought that conducting email interviews would be a feasible, yet suitable compromise, allowing us not only to ask specific questions and to follow up with further emails, but also to give the interviewees a reasonable time to answer in detail. Indeed, senior executives and corporate elites (Welch *et al.*, 1999) have very little time to spare and gaining access and interviewing them is different from non-elite interviews. Therefore, a cost and time effective alternative for executives to share their experiences or insights with us was through email exchanges.

Morgan and Symon (2004, cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 344) state that exchanges via email communications may take weeks, as there is a “time delay between a question being asked and its being answered”. The disadvantage of such methods are then apparent in the form of time delays and limited responses it can generate. Due to this fact, the interviewer can not be able to probe or ask real-time (synchronous) follow up questions or guide the participant in discussion which might lead to new and unexplored areas in rich detail. However, there are some advantages. Morgan and

Symon (2004, cited in Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 344) state that this time delay process “allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to reflect on the questions and responses prior to providing a considered response”. This allows questions to be specifically addressed in the response which aim to help answer the question that the interviewer is trying to address. As can be seen in our Table 2, we experienced a time delay with some participant responses, which slowed down the data collection process and postponed the analysis, but the responses when received were rich in detail.

After introducing our research topic and area to participants and them agreeing to interviews with us, we initially sent emails to each with short five/six questions in order to acquire their response and to develop an easy and trusting relationship by displaying our professionalism and deep knowledge of the subject. Based on their answers, we followed up with more emails, which gave us the possibility of “asking further questions, raising points of clarification and pursuing ideas that [were] of further interest” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007: 344). However, not all follow up emails were responded back to. The interview questions were different in each case since, as stated by Stake (1995: 65), “qualitative case study seldom proceeds as a survey with the same questions asked of each respondent”. Therefore, we adjusted and personalized the questions taking into consideration the position held in the company and the time frame in which they were/are employed, allowing us to gain different perspectives of the case and to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

2.4.3 Secondary data

Secondary data consists of information that is not directly gathered by the researchers themselves, since it has been previously collected for other purposes (Greener, 2008; Saunders *et al.*, 2007), but is still applicable in answering the aim of this research paper. For our research study, we found informative and useful information coming from the company’s corporate and product website, company press releases, official blog and previous interviews and speeches held by Rovio marketing or brand executives at various mobile game conferences to be useful in order to understand and study the company in more detail. As also confirmed by Stake (1995: 68), case study researchers often make use of “newspapers, annual reports, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and the like”.

We used Boolean Internet search strategies on Google Scholar and academic journal databases (such as Lubito, Ebscohost, Elsevier) to find and gain access to credible peer reviewed articles and literature. Since this is a relatively unexplored area of research, secondary data gives us a good overview of the research topic. However, in order to acquire deep knowledge of the issue, we conducted interviews, since only by asking specific and direct questions could we fully understand the corporate brand strategies applied during the various growth faces at the specific case studied companies which would be used to derive the corporate brand identity.

Name of participant	Title of participant	Data source	Data collected
Niklas Hed	Rovio Co-Founder, (2003-)	Interviews	2014-04-20
Mikael Hed	Rovio CEO, (2005-)	Interviews	2014-04-05 2014-05-05
Peter Vesterbacka	Rovio CMO, Mighty Eagle (2005-)	Interviews, Speeches, Q&A	2014-04-20 2014-04-21 2014-04-22
Ville Heijari	Rovio SVP Brand Marketing (2012-2013)	Speeches, Q&A	2014-04-17 2014-04-18
Michele Tobin	Rovio's Vice President, Brand Ad Partnerships and Advertising of Americas (2012-)	Speech	2014-05-6
Jami Laes	Rovio EVP of Games (2013-)	Interview	2014-04-10
Kalle Kaivola	Rovio Director of Development/ SVP Product & Publishing at Rovio Entertainment (2011-2013, 2013-)	Interview	2014-04-11

Table 3. Secondary data from speeches, previous interviews.

2.5 Ethics

Conducting a research study of this magnitude requires consideration of various ethical and political dimensions. One ethical issue that might arise during this research study is caused by our choice of convenience sampling (Greener, 2008). Using people we know in order to obtain access to the company might result in biased findings, since the interviewees might be inclined to please us, also providing socially desirable answers (Greener, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2011). In the case of interviewing former Rovio COO Harri Koponen, we had Gabriele Di Napoli carry out the interview to minimize any personal bias that might arise between Thomas Koponen and Harri Koponen due to family relations.

Confidentiality issues also need to be considered, as we must not cause harm to participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Releasing or providing sensible information about a current company's brand strategies which might result in a reduction of any current competitive advantages should be avoided. We have omitted any sensitive issues that arose during the data collection process that might cause harm to both company or participant participating in our research.

Political aspects of the research should also not be underestimated, since gaining initial access to the information needed, especially for university students, is not simple (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 90). Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2012: 90) distinguish between formal and informal access to the company. In this study, we managed to gain formal and informal access to the company, since, thanks to social ties, we gained informal access to the company via senior management in order to conduct the empirical study (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 90). Formal access to the company was given to us by Kai Torstila as we were viewed as outside researchers coming in to provide interesting insights on their corporate brand identity.

As stated by Bryman & Bell (2011: 473), after the initial permission is gained, it is prominent to fully inform the interviewees about the nature and aim of the research project. However, even when the initial access has been obtained, collaboration inside the company needs to be acquired in order to successfully carry out the empirical study (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012: 91). To achieve internal collaboration, we clearly

and transparently presented ourselves and explained the aim of the research project when sending out the request email to the Rovio company representatives.

2.6 Data Analysis

In this section we present how primary and secondary data were analyzed throughout our research study. We focused on interviews, since they were our main source of information, with secondary data mainly contributing to our general understanding of the research problem and supplementing findings. We audio-recorded the interviews in order to carefully listen and transcribe them, since it is a common practice in qualitative data analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). We listened and transcribed the interviews on the same day we conducted them, allowing us also to write down our fresh reflections and considerations.

When we transcribed the interviews, as suggested by Greener (2008; Saunders *et al.*, 2010; Yin, 2011), we allow in the document enough space for coding and additional notes to be made. As soon as we transcribed the interviews, and after we double-checked the transcript against the recording (Greener, 2008), we started analyzing and coding the qualitative data we obtained. Coding allows the researcher to “begin moving methodically to a slightly higher conceptual level” (Yin, 2011: 187), and, as also stated by Saunders *et al.* (2007: 502), it is one of the first step to take when analysing qualitative data, allowing the raw empirical material to be translated into theoretically derived categories. In doing this process, it made analysis of our collected empirical findings faster and easier.

One weakness in the research design is that the choice of interviewing as method collection is quite labor intensive and time-consuming (Greener, 2008) for a 10 week study. Also, we as researchers have to be conscious and accept the possibility that our collected data could be flawed due to the subjective interpretative nature of how we and our interview participants view the social world (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2012). The face-to-face communication during the interviews might provide a potential bias threat due to characteristics of the interviewer in regards to personality, age or interview skills (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 423). We are young and inexperienced interviewers, but showed a deep interest in the company, and therefore believe that

the bias towards our other characteristics were minimized. As the company is Finnish and one of us is of Finnish nationality with social ties to the company, it might have factored into the company's decision to let us interview them and for the participants to be more responsive during the interviews. This may cause the interviewee to subject of acquiescence bias and or providing socially desirable answers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). However, Bryman and Bell (2007: 235) suggest that this bias is equivocal in research.

Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2012: 28) mention that a weakness of using a strong constructionist epistemological view in qualitative research is that analysis and interpretations of the empirical data and findings may be difficult. This, it can be argued, causes the problem of generalization (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 423) as it becomes harder to be made from the research study.

2.7 Trustworthiness and Credibility

For this qualitative research, we use what Guba and Lincoln (1994, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2007: 396) propose, which is to use “trustworthiness and authenticity” of the empirical data to get reliable results. However, we place limited if any, attention to authenticity, because the study does not focus on the political impact of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

In qualitative studies this method is preferred because of the interpretive epistemological nature of the research. The approach could be different if the study were within quantitative methods, where the data can be measured in terms of high reliability and validity through statistic tests and numbers. Using the same approach to measure the accuracy of a qualitative study is not as reliable because the focus is on words rather than numbers (Bryman and Bell, 2007: Greener, 2008). Yin (2011) argues that qualitative research should follow three objectives to build the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. These are transparency, methodic-ness and adherence to evidence.

Transparency means that we describe and document our research procedures so that other people can inspect, review and understand them (Yin, 2011: 40). However,

reducing the trustworthiness in the study is the anonymity and use of pseudo names for some participants and company (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In our study, we provide excerpts of our transcripts, giving the reader a window in which to see our raw findings. We were also able to avoid using pseudo names or anonymity thanks to the cooperation of the case studied company. In doing so, we increase the trustworthiness of the findings of our research.

Methodic-ness refers to the process that ensures that the research design allows “adequate room for discovery and allowance for unanticipated events” (Yin, 2011: 40) whilst minimizing careless work being carried out by the researchers. Yin (2011: 41) further exclaims that “being methodic also includes avoiding unexplained bias or deliberate distortion in carrying out research”. For this study we indicate which data and interpretations are made and from which point of view. This is because Eisenhardt (2006: 577) argues that it “leads in particular to a sensitivity about the need to report, in a self-reflexive manner, the presumed interplay between the researcher’s positioning (as a research instrument) and the events and participants in the field”.

Adherence to evidence is the final objective and it simply states that the “qualitative research be based on an explicit set of evidence” (Yin, 2011: 41). Yin (2006: 41) further exclaims that this means that “the goal is to base conclusions on data that have been collected and analyzed fairly”. For this research we base our conclusions and analysis based on explicit evidence discovered through the data collected from our primary or secondary data.

2.8 Limitations

There are several limitations that should be acknowledged in this research paper.

Limitation within the qualitative approach. A limitation of our approach is our choice of conducting a single case study of Rovio Entertainment. This is because the findings of our research may not provide generalizations (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The mobile gaming industry is a unique industry and our findings may have limited applicability to other companies in different industries.

Limitation with data analysis and interpretation. In conducting our interviews with management and senior executives, we should not assume that they have let us know everything that we would need to know (Yin, 2011) in formulating a complete picture of Rovio. We were not able to get interviews with founder or owner of Rovio and so many ‘behind the scenes’ or specific details and events were left undiscovered, which if provided, would have given a more complete overview of Rovio and improved our analysis of Rovio’s corporate brand. We attempted to minimize this limitation by including important decision makers in our Interviews.

Limitation with choice of research on brand identity. In our thesis we mainly focus on the identity concept within product and corporate brands and not on the overall corporate brand building process. In writing the thesis, we take a management ‘inside’ identity based perspective instead of a consumer ‘outside’ image based perspective. This is because identity precedes image (Kapferer, 2008). We try to minimize our limitation by providing distinctions between these two aspects in our theory chapter, but do not focus on brand image.

3 Theory

In this section we first explain the concept of what a brand is, followed by the basic associations with brands such as the brand name, characters, visual symbols and logo. We introduce the reader to the concept of the corporate brand and discuss the differences between a corporate brand and a product brand. The reader is then introduced to the concept of the brand identity construct where we aim to make the reader aware of the difference between brand image and brand identity, focusing on brand identity. The later sections introduce models and frameworks to be used in the discussion of our field of research and specific domain, where we use Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism for product brands and Urde's CBIM for corporate brands. Finally, we present business growth stages that we use as a platform for the analysis and discussion of corporate brand identity building in SMEs.

3.1 Brand

A brand is considered to be an intangible asset which is attached to a product, conferring it with an extra value added and providing the customers additional reasons for choosing a product (Kapferer, 2008). Indeed, as stated by Melin (2002: 110-111), a brand plays different roles for consumers such as “information carrier, catalyst, guarantee and image creator”.

Even though there is a great deal of disagreement among experts and institutions such as American Marketing Association concerning the exact definition of brand, we use the definition by Kapferer (2008: 10), in that “[a brand is] a sign or set of signs certifying the origin of a product or service and differentiating it from the competition”. He further elaborates that a brand 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 standout” (Kapferer, 2012: 12).

As stated by Melin (2002), many companies have started to increasingly focus and invest in their brands since they realized their strong value-creating capacity, starting

to consider them as instruments of competition. One of the advantages of having a strong brand is that it represents an “eternal asset” for the company, thus providing an extremely valuable competitive advantage (Melin, 2002: 109). Indeed, it conveys higher degree of loyalty and therefore it assures future sales to the company (Kapferer, 2008). Moreover, a strong brand represents a relevant entry barrier (Melin, 2002), which helps the company to keep its competitive advantage in a crowded market.

3.1.1 The power of brand names

Kapferer (2008: 193) states that “the brand name is one of the most powerful sources of identity” and one of the “distinctive signs” (Kapferer, 2008: 228) in brand creation process. It is important to define what is meant by this, since most people only have a superficial understanding of the concept of what a brand is, and limits this to a brand name, symbols or logotypes. Like Kapferer (2008) we argue that not every organization with a name should be considered a brand. Many organizations often fail to recognize this and spend little time and effort in creating a brand name, this is especially true for small businesses (Mowle and Merrilees, 2005). This is important to note because, “consumers don’t just buy the brand name, they buy branded products that promise [both] tangible and intangible benefits created by the efforts of the company” (Kapferer, 2008: 4).

Kapferer (2008) states that a brand’s name is often revealing of the brand’s intention. This is further supported by Balmer (2008: 182) in that “brand names have meanings”. Kapferer argues that the choice of a name whether it is objective or subjective reveals insights into what characteristics an organization wants to communicate with their brand name. An organization might also choose a name without any “apparent objective or rational [logic], but that it still has the capacity to mark the brand’s legitimate territory” (Kapferer, 2008: 193). In a sense, the brand name can be considered the starting point for the creation of identity of an organization.

3.1.2 Brand characters, Visual symbols and logotypes

A choice of a good brand name will help an organization act as a good source of identity. This is further enhanced or supplemented by supporting brand characters, visual symbols and logotypes (Kapferer, 2008). These visual elements create brand recognition (Duncan, 2002) and are part of the company's identity (Smith and Taylor, 2002). However, we agree with Reizebos (2003) in that there is a need to distinguish brand identity and visual identity, in that visual identity is a visual representation or extension of the brand identity.

Kapferer (2008) states that having symbols is not very important in identifying the brand, but more to do with the fact that a brand can identify with them. This, despite Kapferer (2008: 195) stating, "symbols help us [people] to understand the brand's culture and personality" (Kapferer, 2008: 195).

Kapferer (2008: 194) argues that "just as brands are a company's capital, emblems are a brand's capital equity. An emblem serves to symbolize brand identity through a visual figure other than the brand name". Kapferer (2008: 194) lists a few functions of this such as:

- To help identify and recognize the brand
- To guarantee the brand
- To give the brand durability
- To help differentiate and personalize

For the last function, Kapferer (2008) states that animal emblems are often used because animals tend to symbolize the brand personality, but are also representative of the "psychological characteristics of the targeted public" (Kapferer, 2008: 195).

Logo's, like symbols are visual images that customer or stakeholders interpret as meaning something at one point in time and maybe something different at a different point in time (Kapferer, 2008). This is to say that different customers can find or be exposed to a brand logo at different times, which may infer different meanings at different times. A company's logo can relatively easily be changed to align with a

new marketing or branding strategy such as during a transition when the company is growing. This creates a new image of the company to customers and other stakeholders, but the identity may remain unchanged. The difference between brand image and brand identity is further explored and distinguished in the next section.

3.2 Brand Identity

To understand corporate brand identity it is first necessary to understand what it is meant by the term brand identity, which is usually associated with product brands. Identity has already been explored from an organizational perspective decades ago by Schwebig (1988; Moingeon and Soenen, 2003, cited in Kapferer, 2008: 271) but the identity construct has not received as much academic study as its counterpart “image”. In fact, image was already being studied in the 1950’s by Boulding (1956, cited in Harris and de Chernatony, 2001) while brand identity has become increasingly popular only after Kapferer (1991) publishing of the brand identity prism.

To those unfamiliar with branding terminology, brand image can be viewed as being on the receiver’s side of marketing communications, while brand identity represents the sender’s side of communications (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Kapferer, 2008). The difference is important to understand because consumers can discover a brand at different points in time, therefore the image of a brand can change over time in the mind of the consumer (receiving), while identity is rooted in the brand essence (Aaker, 1996), or core values of the company (Collins and Porras, 1998; Kapferer, 2008) and hard to change once established. In this view, brand identity is also considered to “precede image” (Kapferer, 2008: 174) as can be seen in Fig.1. Finding out the identity helps companies formulate current and future business strategy by making a brand unique (Harris and de Charnatony, 2001).

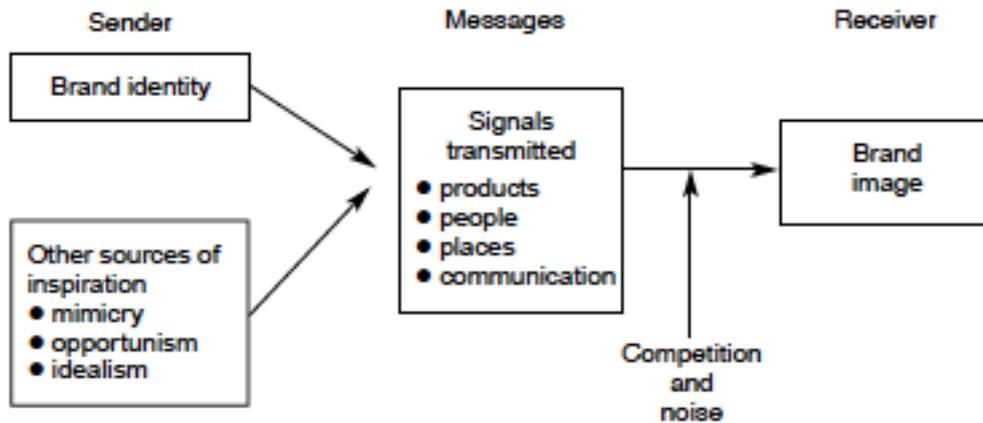


Fig. 1. Brand Identity and Image. Kapferer (2008: 174).

If an organization was to pursue an identity led approach to branding, it would follow Urde (1999) findings of taking a “brand-oriented approach” where an inside-out perspective is taken by the organization to first internally establish their brand and core values and then communicate these values to customers and stakeholders (Urde *et al.*, 2013: 15). The concept of brand orientation views a brand as a resource and strategic hub (Urde, 1994, 1997) for an organization to make better strategic decisions as it places a “greater emphasis to the organization's mission, vision and values” (Urde *et al.*, 2013: 15).

The alternative approach where brand identity is not key, is to take a more image driven approach which is termed “market-oriented approach” (Urde *et al.*, 2013). Here, an organization takes an outside-in perspective with the aid of external parties such as customers which define the brand and their core values. In other words, what the market demands, the organization will supply. These two different orientations, brand and market orientation approaches, are illustrated in Fig. 2. However, Urde *et al.* (2013) argues that both approaches could be used in synergy with one another, in that one does not mutually exclude the other, resulting in new branding philosophy made possible.

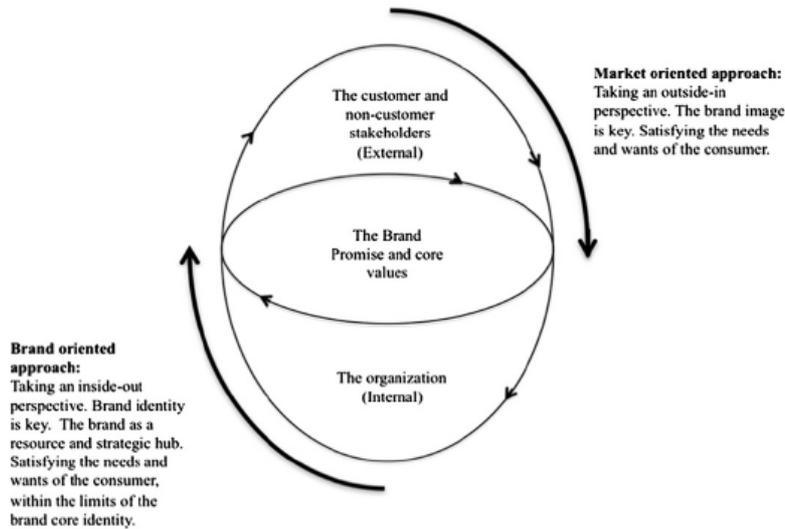


Fig. 2. Brand orientation and market orientation approaches Urde (1997).

3.2.1 Brand Identity Prism

One of the most influential models on brand identity was created by Kapferer (1991) which is referred to as the Brand Identity Prism, an important tool for many brand managers to help assess and evaluate the identity of a product brand (Kapferer, 2008). The reason why we present it and use it in our research on corporate brand identity is that it can be argued that in the early growth stages of a small or medium enterprise (SME), a company may focus on the product brand and only later focus on their corporate brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Kapferer, 2008). In this way, it is possible for the product brand identity to also define the corporate brand identity.

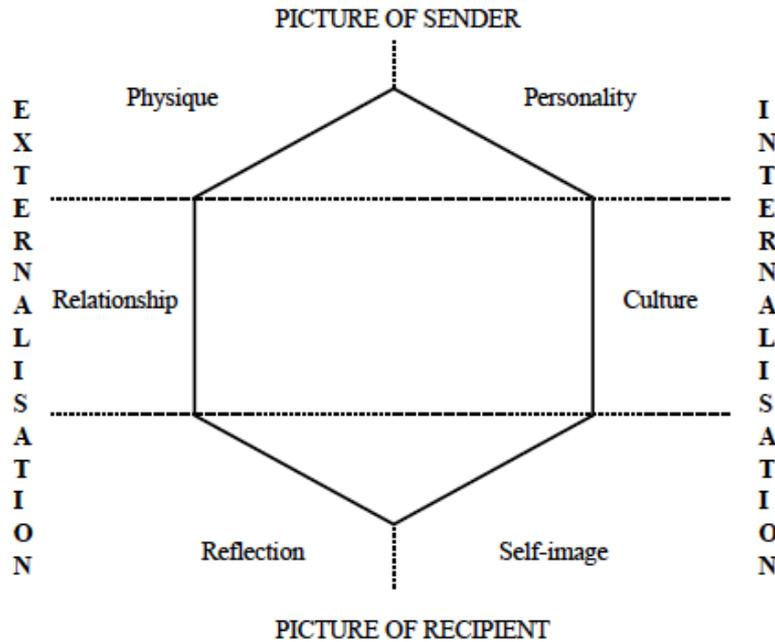


Fig. 3. *Brand Identity Prism Kapferer (1991).*

The model has two grids, grouped by internalisation and externalisation and has picture of sender and picture of recipient on the other axis's. One of the key contributions of the model was to differentiate and show the differences between brand image and brand identity. The model has six brand identity facets and are divided into the following:

Externalisation from Fig. 3: (brand image based)

Physique: A brand has physical attributes that are either salient objective features or emerging ones (Kapferer, 2008: 182) such as unique features or frequent colors used. Also, it is often referred to as a brands backbone and source of its tangible added value (Kapferer, 2008: 182), usually comprised of a “flagship product that is representative of a brands qualities” (Kapferer, 2008: 183).

Relationship: A relationship is how a brand behaves itself in exchanges and transactions with stakeholders. A relationship is very important for service sector brands (Kapferer, 2008: 185) as their business model revolves around relationships and networks. A relationship can be both a tangible and/or intangible asset for a

brand. The facet defines the “mode of conduct that most identifies the brand” (Kapferer, 2008: 185).

Reflection: A reflection viewed as the target audiences outward mirror (Kapferer, 2008: 186), more easily understood as “they are” (Kapferer, 2008; Urde 2013). It aims to showcase (reflect) how a customer would like to be perceived as a result of using a particular brand (Kapferer, 2008: 186). The reflection is intangible as it deals with customer perception of others and even stereotypes, but it can appeal to many different segments for different reasons.

Internalisation from Fig. 3: (brand identity based)

Personality: A brand is said to develop a personality by adopting human characteristics as it gradually “builds up character” (Kapferer, 2008: 183). Personality is internal and intangible to an organization, but equally important as it fulfills a psychological function. Kapferer (2008: 184) states that the easiest way to create a personality is to give a brand a figurehead or spokesperson “whether real or symbolic”.

Culture: According to Kapferer (2008: 184) “a brand is a culture [and] a brand should have its own culture”. It is considered an essential facet and sometimes neglected by companies as they focus too much on brand personality instead (Kapferer, 2008: 184). Culture is an intangible asset constructed of a set of values embedded in the organization which originates internally or through associations within the organization, but serves as a “great source of a brands aspirational power” (Kapferer, 2008: 184). A strong brand culture allows the development of a cult brand, which later enables brand differentiation from competitors.

Self-image: Self-image is another intangible facet which is more easily understood as “I feel or I am” (Kapferer, 2008; Urde, 2013) acting as the target audiences “own internal mirror” (Kapferer, 2008: 186). Brands can influence consumer attitude and behavior and self-image does so by “developing inner relationships with ourselves” (Kapferer, 2008: 186). Purchase of specific brands evoke emotions and can change attitudes and sense of belonging.

Kapferer (2008: 187) goes on to say that a good identity prism is one that is characterized by few words used for each facet, the words are not the same on different facets and not “lukewarm”. Although Urde (2013) claims that the brand identity prism developed by Kapferer is a good tool for brand managers wanting to identify and assess a brand's identity, and argues that it does indeed in a sense, bridge concepts of brand identity (physique and personality) and brand image (reflection and self-image), but argues that the model would be more applicable to product and service brands and that it is not fully applicable to a corporate brand (Urde, 2013: 7).

3.3 Corporate brand

According to Balmer (2010), the topic of corporate brands have acquired increasing resonance since the mid 1990s, giving rise to corporate branding as a new marketing branch and causing a remarkable development of this area of interest. In this chapter we present the main concepts of the corporate brand and the benefits that a strong corporate brand can bring to the company. This is important in order to bring attention to the differences that exist between a corporate brand and a product brand, these will be explained in the next section.

Schultz *et al.* (2005) state that theories about corporate brands can be divided into two different phases of development. Authors from the first phase consider a corporate brand as an extension of the product branding approach, in that a company's practices are more short-term and are associated with “marketing and campaign thinking” rather than “establishing long-term relationships” with stakeholders, which is the focus in the second phase (Schultz *et al.*, 2005). For our research, we choose theories that fall within the latter, second phase.

As stated by Hatch and Schultz (2003) globalization has made product differentiation increasingly difficult to achieve, and because of an increasing fragmentation and complexity of markets, companies are shifting their focus from product branding to corporate branding (Kapferer, 2008). A corporate brand allows a company to leverage on its vision and culture as part of its value proposition (Ackerman, 1998; Balmer, 1995; de Chernatony, 1999, 2001; Ind, 1997), focusing not on positioning the single

products, but the entire corporation (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Therefore, as Aaker (2004: 6) concluded “the corporate brand defines the firm that will deliver and stand behind the offering that the customer will buy and use”, rendering possible for the company to use its vision and culture as part of its value proposition (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

Given the complexity of today’s markets and the multitude of products, brands and sub-brands in the marketplace, corporate brands can play an important role in a company’s brand portfolio (Aaker, 2004). Aaker (2004: 10) goes on to state that, either as a driver or as an endorser, a corporate brand can:

help differentiate, create branded energizers, provide credibility, facilitate brand management, support internal brand-building, provide a basis for a relationship to augment that of the product brand, support communication to broad company constituencies, and provide the ultimate branded house.

According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), successful corporate branding is founded on the interaction between strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image, and, to achieve this, effective communication among members of the organization from all levels and external stakeholders is necessary. Indeed, as claimed by Urde (2009: 616), “a corporate brand cannot be stronger externally than it is internally”.

3.4 Corporate brand vs. Product brand

Given the aim of this paper, the perspective adopted is that of management and, in particular, corporate brand management engaged in the process of identifying and describing the corporate brand identity. In order to do so we need to clearly establish that corporate brand management is different from the typical product brand management. Balmer (2010; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Keller and Richey, 2006; Urde, 2013) state that there are many differences between corporate and product brands, and on how they are managed, therefore it is of importance to present them.

Product branding creates different brand identities for different products (Xie and Boggs, 2006), where the role of product brands is to enhance a product’s differentiation and preference (Knox and Bickerton, 2003) in order to “distinguish the

products and services of one company from another” (Kapferer, 1997). This differs in a corporate brand strategy where the company strategically and consistently communicates the values and identity of the company only (Mukherjee and Balmer, 2008).

As suggested by Morsing (2002), corporate branding implies converting the whole company into a brand, while not focusing only on branding its products. Leveraging the corporate brand is a growing trend since companies are facing increasing demand for responsibility and transparency (Kapferer, 2008). Moreover, companies that leverage on their corporate brand are able to take advantage of the so-called “halo effect”, where the image and reputation of the product brands influence the corporate brand, and viceversa (Kapferer, 2008).

Among the several branding strategies that a company might implement, it is possible to identify the two best defined ones: the product-brand strategy and the corporate masterbrand strategy (Kapferer, 2008). Understanding these two different strategies is useful to grasp the main differences between corporate and product brands. A corporate masterbrand strategy is characterized by a unique brand level, and it is mainly implemented by companies within the industrial, public and service sectors (Kapferer, 2008). On the other hand, in a product-brand strategy the corporation is hidden behind the product brands (Kapferer, 2008).

As argued by Harris & de Chernatony (2001), a corporate brand has to be managed differently in respect to a product brand, since the former necessitates greater focus within the organisation. As stated by Keller and Richey (2006: 75), “a corporate brand is distinct from a product brand in that a corporate brand can encompass a much wider range of associations”. Indeed, as claimed by Balmer (2010), even though the managerial responsibility of a corporate brand is assumed by the CEO, the functional and general responsibility are assumed by the whole organisation and personnel. This also implies a change in the role of employees, which, in this view, assume more the role of brand’s ambassadors, becoming central in the corporate brand building process, being able to influence the company’s values and image (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). According to Balmer (2001: 281):

A corporate brand involves the conscious decision by senior management to distil and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. This proposition underpins organisational efforts to communicate, differentiate, and enhance the brand vis-à-vis key stakeholder groups and networks. A corporate brand proposition requires total corporate commitment to the corporate body from all levels of personnel.

Balmer (2010) also argues that while product brands focus on consumers only, corporate brands communicate to multiple stakeholders, therefore the focus moves from the products to the organization (Xie and Boggs, 2006). The time horizon is also different, since a product brand has a relatively short life span (life of the product) whereas a corporate brand lasts as long as the company exists (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Besides, as stated by Aaker (2004), corporate brand have stronger heritage and deeper roots than product brands. All in all, managing a corporate brand has a greater strategic relevance, and even though it results to be complex (Knox and Bickerton, 2003), building a strong corporate brand enhances companies' competitiveness, especially in nowadays-fragmented markets (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

To summarize, a product tends to be the first source of brand identity, which makes product branding more practical for companies as a brand reveals its plan and uniqueness through the products (or services) it chooses to endorse to its customers (Kapferer, 2008: 190). However, because of the fragmentation of markets caused by globalization and the increasing demand for transparency (Hatch and Schultz, 2003), building a strong corporate brand is becoming increasingly relevant. This is particularly true for companies which are growing and expanding and catering to new multiple customers and stakeholders.

3.4.1 Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)

Corporate brand as defined earlier by Balmer (2010) is viewed differently from product brands and so previous models and frameworks based on studies involving product or service brands do not necessarily help brand managers identify or assess a corporate brand identity effectively or as easily. A new framework has recent been developed by Urde (2013) which is designed to be a new complete management tool

kit, “designed to support all those working operationally or strategically with the corporate brand identity” (Urde, 2013: 753).

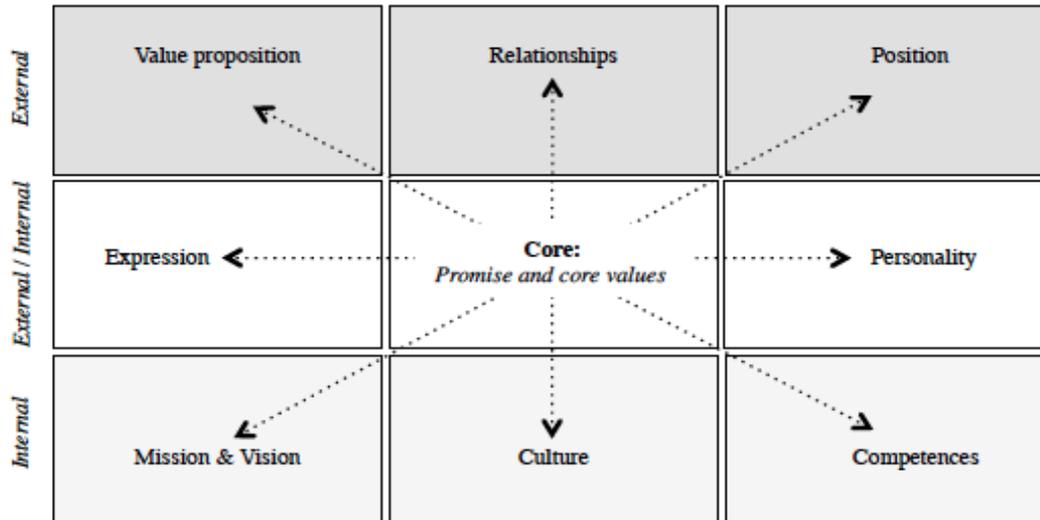


Fig. 4. Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) Urde (2013: 750).

The CBIM framework is divided into a three by three matrix with interrelated elements structured into one entity with three layers. The top layer is made up of the external (receiver) components termed “organizational” of value proposition, relationships and position. The middle layer combines both external and internal elements with the inclusion of expression, core and personality elements. This make up the “core value” in the middle from where the core radiates dotted arrows to other elements to show interrelation between elements. The bottom layer is constructed through internal (sender) components such as mission & vision, culture and competences. Urde (2013: 751) makes an important note that the framework “allows for a market-oriented, brand-oriented or combined approach to the process of defining and aligning corporate brand identity”, which uses his findings in Urde *et al.* (2013) as foundation.

External elements

The external elements represent the way in which a corporation wants its corporate brand to be perceived externally by others. The three external elements in the top layer of the CBIM framework influence the brand image (Park *et al.*, 1986) and

reputation (Greyser, 2009) to a significant extent according to Urde (2013: 747). Urde (2013: 753) also makes a distinction in his CBIM framework, stating that “it is important to note that self-image and reflection relate to customers and non-customer stakeholders”, terms previously defined by Kapferer (1991) in his brand identity prism and mentioned by Balmer (2010).

Value proposition: The value proposition is from the Brand Identity Planning Model developed by Aaker (1996). Aaker (1996: 7) defines value proposition as the “statement of the functional, emotional, and self expressive benefits delivered by the brand that provide value to the customer [...] and drive purchase decisions”. The inclusion of value proposition is important for management to ensure consistency of communications, while at the same time remaining true to the brand core (Urde, 2013: 753).

Relationship: The inclusion of relationships is from the Brand Identity Planning Model by Aaker (1996) and Kapferer (1991) Brand Identity Prism. A corporate brand identity is defined and reflected upon over time as it is being built through relationships (Urde, 2013). How a “corporate brand delivers service to its customer, works with them, and relates to them, needs to be reflected in the corporate brand identity” (Urde, 2013: 753). In the CBIM there is a vertical arrow linking relationship and culture. Unlike a product brand, a corporate brand “typically has multiple audiences to which it has to relate, multiple relationships have to be integrated, in that one forged with one stakeholder group potentially influences relations with others” (Farquhar, 2005 and Fournier, 1998, cited in Urde, 2013: 753).

Position: The inclusion of position is from the Brand Identity Planning Model by Aaker (1996) and “it defines how management wants the corporate brand to be positioned in the market, in the hearts and minds of key customers and non-customer stakeholders (Keller *et al.*, 2012, cited in Urde, 2013: 753). The choice of an intended position is a way to differentiate the brand identity (Esch *et al.*, 2006). In the CBIM, there is an arrow linking the position and “mission and vision” since Urde (2013: 753) views that a corporate brand’s intended position needs to be reflected in the organization’s “reason for being and direction”.

External / Internal elements

The middle layer is a mix of both external and internal elements that come together to form the core values of a corporate brand identity.

Expression: Urde (2013: 752) defines expression as involving “verbal, visual and other forms of identification as part of a corporate brand identity”. Expression can either be tangible or intangible features such as “tone of voice, design, graphic style and logotype (Olins, 1989 and Mollerup, 1997 cited in Urde, 2013: 752). Kapferer (2008) shares similar sentiments in his use of brand characters and visual symbols to help differentiate a brand’s qualities. The CBIM embraces the visual identity aspect of a corporate brand identity, but it does not consider it to be essential or “at the heart” (Urde, 2013: 752) of corporate brand identity.

Brand core: The brand core is derived from the Brand and Market Orientation Framework by Urde *et al.* (2013), The Brand Identity Planning Model by Aaker (1996), Core Ideology Model by Collins and Porras (1998) by focusing on core values, promise and the essence of a brand (Kapferer, 2008). The brand core is viewed as the heart of a corporate brand identity, and therefore positioned at the center of the CBIM to highlight its significance (Urde, 2013). Urde *et al.* (2013) mention that the brand core can be viewed as being core values that support and lead to a “promise” by the brand. He goes on further to state that “the importance of a brand core is its capacity to give focus, guidance and coordination in the management of brands” (Urde, 2013: 752).

Personality: The personality element is borrowed from the Kapferer (1991) Brand Identity Prism, however, it aims to define the corporate character instead of a product brand personality evident in the prism as Kelly and Richely (2006, cited in Urde, 2013) make the distinction between product brand personality and corporate brand personality. Kelly and Richely (2006: 76) argue that corporate brand personality is “much more about [the] perceptions of employees and [...] that corporate brand personality reflects the values, actions, and words of all employees of the corporation”. For this reason in the CBIM there is an arrow linking personality with expression.

Internal elements

The bottom layer of the CBIM is composed of internal elements that “relate to the realities of the organisation and its values” that make up the corporate brand identity of an organization and considered to be a distinguishing feature of the framework (Urde, 2013: 751).

Mission and Vision: This element is taken from de Chernatony Brand Vision Model. It is considered to be vital to the corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013) as it explains and provides reasoning why a company exists “beyond the aim of making money” (Collins and Porras, 1998, cited in Urde, 2013: 751). De Chernatony and Riley (1998: 1083) define brand vision as the component which “specifies the brand’s purpose, its philosophy and view on the world, from which evolves its mission, indicating what the brand needs to do to achieve its vision”. If an organization takes a brand-oriented approach (Urde *et al.*, 2013) the mission typically represents a point of departure in the process of defining corporate brand identity (Urde, 1994; 1999, cited in Urde, 2013).

Culture: The culture element is strongly rooted in the corporate brand identity as an intangible resource. Culture is taken from Kapferer (1991) *The Brand Identity Prism* and Hatch and Schultz (2003) *The corporate branding tool kit*. Culture differs from organization to organization, providing it with potential competitive advantages (Brexendorf and Kernstock, 2007 and Burmann *et al.*, 2009, cited in Urde, 2013). Culture is considered to be a reflection of “corporate attitudes, values and beliefs, and of the ways in which it works and behaves” (Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Schroder and Saltzer-Morling, 2006, cited in Urde, 2013: 751). Some components that the CBIM includes is the heritage and track record (Urde *et al.*, 2007), country of origin (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2011) and iconic leaders (Holt, 2004). Urde (2013: 751) argues that there “are potentially significant aspects of a corporate culture that influence the nature of the corporate brand identity”.

Competence: The inclusion of competence in the CBIM is of added strategic value to management as it relates to the “creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive

advantage” (Urde, 2013: 752). A competence can be a set of skills or know-how that provides a sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors because an organization will know what it is good at and can do better than its competitors. Ideally, an organization wants core competences (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990) because a core competence is not easy for competitors to imitate, it can also be reused for many products and markets and it provides a significant contribution to the perceived customer benefits of the end product. Therefore, a core competence is important in the definition of corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013) and included in the CBIM.

The theoretical contribution of the CBIM framework is that it “integrates [credible] existing theory into a single framework” (Urde, 2013: 758) and in doing so, gives a more complete overview on corporate brand identity, not limited to one theory or perspective. The CBIM differentiates itself from other frameworks and product brand frameworks by including ‘competencies’ and focusing on the internal components of a corporate brand identity, “a distinctive theoretical feature of the CBIM is its combination of elements surrounding the brand core and the key correspondences between it and those elements” (Urde, 2013: 758). Urde further states that, “the CBIM uniquely positions the core values and promise as a beacon to guide the internal and external brand building processes” (Urde, 2013: 758). The division of the matrix into three layers also serves to clearly distinguish between the elements and give better understanding of where the value lies. Lastly, but perhaps importantly, Urde (2013) is able to integrate both marketing paradigms of a market-oriented approach and brand-oriented approach into the CBIM, “the CBIM is in that sense balanced, and reflects the theoretical proposition that those paradigms are different but synergistic” (Urde, 2013: 758).

In the business world, emphasis is placed on managerial implications. Previously, managers have had to struggle with multiple frameworks based on product brands. The CBIM is structured in a way that gives management a “structured overview of the corporate brand identity and clarifies what it is, how it works and how to build it” (Urde, 2013: 758). Urde (2013: 758) further declares that it is “vital for understanding, internal support and commitment from the organization, its top management and the board”. This is done through the placement of the elements and any corresponding arrows indicating a relationship. The CBIM allows an organization

to understand their corporate brand, if they have one or how to develop one, based on the chosen elements in the CBIM.

3.5 Brand building in SME's

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a basic concept and overview of corporate brand building within an small-medium enterprise (SME) context since our case study company started out as a startup and from there progressively grew to a large organization. Studies found within startup or SME context help to elaborate issues that are unique to this form of business compared to that of a large organization. Indeed, Ojasalo *et al.* (2008) argue that both SME's and large organizations can build brands, but the ways in which they do so are different, so attention should be paid to the approach taken. We present the growth stages during corporate brand building in the next chapter.

We follow the definition given to small-medium enterprise (SME) by the EU (2013) in that a small company has between 10 and 49 employees and medium-sized enterprises have between 50 and 249 employees. SME are interesting to study because they provide challenges that large organizations do not face when it comes to branding. In fact, the concept of branding and small businesses are considered to be seen as an oxymoron (Merrilees, 2007) because often, the founders or entrepreneurs of small businesses and startups, “only a vague idea of their business concept, core values and market positioning” (Merrilees, 2007: 405), concepts which lie at the core (Collins and Porras, 1998) or essence (Aaker, 1996) of a brand. Bresciani and Eppler (2010) outline three reasons for why this specific area of branding is an interesting and unique context.

First, a small business or startup company starts from scratch and builds itself up, therefore it has no established identity or reputation (Petkova *et al.*, 2008). The business therefore will also lack internal structures (Rode and Vallaster, 2005) but remains flexible, being able to quickly adapt and transition to meet new changes with relative ease. Second, Bresciani and Eppler (2010: 2) state that, “branding activities are of paramount importance for customer acquisition (Boyle, 2003) and therefore for the survival of the company”. Third, a small business is typically restricted in its

access to money (Kirby, 2002), have limited resources (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007; Opoku *et al.*, 2007), know-how (Rode and Vallaster, 2005) and time (Wong and Merrilees, 2005).

3.5.1 Corporate brand building within SME's

Within the small business context, there is an even smaller niche which focuses on corporate branding. Inskip (2004) examines why corporate brands can offer real opportunity for differentiation for B2B SME companies, Abimbola and Kocak (2007) take a resource based perspective on the brand, organization identity and reputation within SME's, Juntunen *et al.*, (2010) looks at corporate brand building in stages of small business growth and Spence and Essoussi (2010) assess brand identity, equity and brand management in SME's. In order to answer our aim, we choose to use Juntunen *et al.* (2010) findings as a foundation for our study because Juntunen *et al.* (2010) study focused on the corporate brand building functions at the various growth stages that small companies go through. However, instead of taking into consideration the whole corporate brand building process, we focus on the corporate brand identity development at the different growth stages in order to identify at what stage the corporate brand and identity were being created.

3.6 Business growth stages

We introduce various growth stages a company goes through in order to better identify the corporate brand building activities in developing a corporate brand identity. We use Juntunen *et al.* (2010) study for guidance, since it focuses both on growth stages and corporate brand building. We first introduce the growth stages identified by Scott and Bruce (1987), since they represent the foundation of Juntunen *et al.* (2010) study.

As Scott and Bruce (1987) stated in their study, businesses go through various stages during their growth. Even though this process can be compared to the product lifecycle, differently from products, businesses can remain in the same stage for longer periods of time (Scott and Bruce, 1987). Gaibraith (1982) also maintains that during these growth phases, managers often have to face different kind of issues since they usually do not think or plan stage wise. The model developed by Scott and Bruce

(1987) is based on the product lifecycle and comprises of five stages: inception, survival, growth, expansion and maturity. The model also includes crisis points that are often caused by moving from one stage to another, and that can be either external or internal.

3.6.1 Growth stages in corporate brand building

Juntunen *et al.* (2010) built on the findings of Scott and Bruce (1987) and made an explorative investigation concerning the corporate brand building process of small businesses at different growth stages. This resulted in a framework that indicated “specific functions for brand building at each growth stage” (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 115). A summary of these functions extracted from the tables provided by Juntunen *et al.* (2010) can be found in Table 4.

Growth stage	Corporate brand building function	Corporate brand building activities
Pre-establishment	Defining the corporate personality	Developing a company idea
		Planning company structure and characteristics
		Deciding a company name and forming core values
Early growth	Specifying the corporate personality	Defining core values
Early growth	Creating corporate identity	Emanating from daily operations and products of the company Close to the owner-managers' identity. Includes corporate culture, corporate behaviour, corporate internal communications and corporate design
	Creating consistent brand communication	Communicating core values
	Assuring employees' involvement	Unifies identity and image
Effective growth	Controlling corporate personality	Re-defining core values
	Emphasizing brand-oriented strategic planning	Adopting brand-oriented thinking profoundly. Revising the strategies. Forming new strategies
	Maintenance and development of the functions implemented in previous stage	-

Table 4. Corporate brand building functions and activities. Adapted from Juntunen et al. (2010).

Juntunen *et al.* (2010) identified three main growth stages: pre-establishment, early growth and effective growth stage. In the first stage, 'pre-establishment', the main corporate brand building functions involved were the following: to define the corporate personality, which included, "the development of a business idea, defining the company structure and characteristics, planning and deciding a company name and forming core values" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 123). Moreover, the pre-establishment phase also involves "brand oriented strategic planning" and "managing corporate branding relationships" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 123).

In the second stage termed as 'early growth' stage, the corporate branding activities considerably intensify (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010). Within the concept of corporate brand identity, the following can be considered as the main functions at this stage: "specifying the corporate personality" (core values), "creating corporate identity", "creating consistent brand communication" and "assuring employees' involvement" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 124).

Finally, in the 'effective growth' stage, according to Juntunen *et al.* (2010), the company has already developed a corporate brand, and the functions implemented in the previous stage need to be maintained and developed further. Besides, the company needs to shape the corporate personality by re-defining the core values, and "emphasise brand-oriented strategic planning" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 128). During this phase, "the market and environment in which the company operates might be turbulent and changing, which necessitates the company adapting to the changing environment" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 127). Moreover, corporate brand identity, image and communications need to be consistent with the corporate brand developed (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010). In the Juntunen *et al.* (2010) study, they determined the specific corporate brand building functions that occur in the different growth stages of a company. Moreover, ascertained that the corporate brand building process starts either in the early growth stage of a company's development or even before its actual foundation. Although Scott and Bruce (1987) model is linear, the Juntunen *et al.* (2010) is not. A company may go back and forth in consecutive stages (Smallbone and Wyer, 2006, cited in Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 119), and can therefore be at multiple stages at once (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 119).

4 Empirical

The chapter provides the reader with a historical timeline overview of the company growth through the use of data collected from the conducted interviews and secondary data. It provides the reader a comprehensive way to understand the company Rovio as it has grown from humble beginnings as a mobile gaming app developer to becoming a global success story due to their Angry Birds brand. The section is structured based on observed significant growth stages or events to serve as a reference to investigate the corporate brand identity building process, with focus being placed mostly on the core business of mobile gaming.

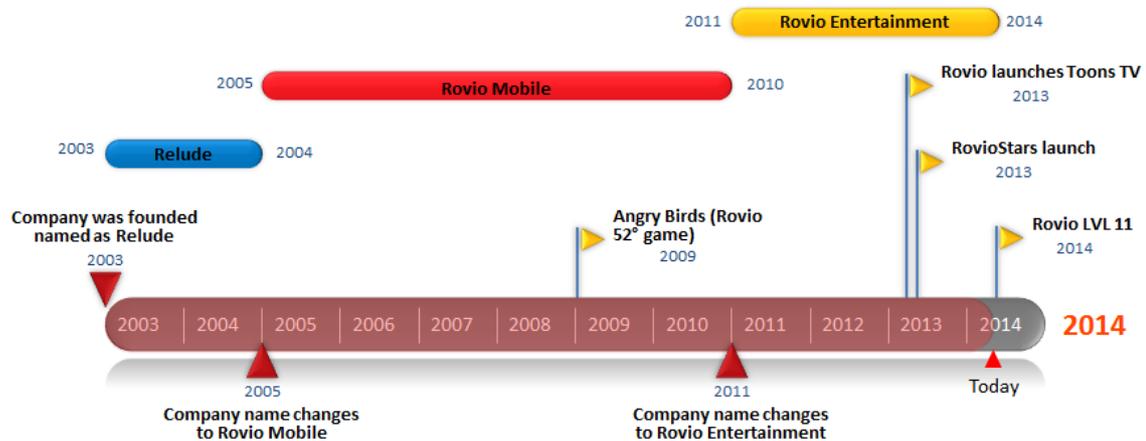


Fig. 5. Rovio condensed timeline of significant events

4.1 Relude (2003-2005) - The beginning

Rovio's origins are traced to Relude, a name adopted by three students at the Helsinki School of Technology after having competed in a competition held in Finland in 2003 which was sponsored by HP & Nokia. The students were Niklas Hed, Jarno Väkeväinen and Kim Dikert. Peter Vesterbacka, the event organizer, judge and representative from HP, tells us that the competition was about building the best possible multiple mobile multiplayer game. The topic was new and of interest as there were new opportunities opening on the market because this was the year that the first smartphones started entering the market and consumers could “actually play reasonable games” (Vesterbacka, Interview). The students presented their mobile game “Kings of the Cabbage World”, which was one of the world's first real-time

multiplayer mobile games and emerged as the winners of their category. Later, the students asked the judges of the competition for advice and were told by Peter Vesterbacka, now current CMO and Mighty Eagle of Rovio, “why don’t you make a company?” (Vesterbacka, Interview). The students did exactly that and eventually sold their first game to gaming company Sumea, which renamed the mobile game to Mole War, which Rovio has later acquired due to sentimental reasons. The company was micro size and the focus was to develop Java (J2ME) based mobile games for the smart phones.

4.2 Rovio Mobile (2005-2011) - Making mobile games



Image 1. Rovio Mobile logo

Relude was renamed Rovio Mobile after having received their first significant round of angel investment on January 15, 2005. The name Rovio was chosen because Rovio in Finnish means ‘Bonfire’. In our interview with Former Rovio COO Harri Koponen, Rovio was chosen because “it’s a good name, it shows strength and it also tells the story” (Harri Koponen, Interview). He further explains that “the shape of the R is also illustrating the bonfire when you look closer”. CMO Vesterbacka tells us that Relude was, “just not [an] amazing brand or name” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). In describing why renaming to Rovio Mobile,

back then it was pretty typical actually to have companies with Finnish name, like Sumea [...] it was like a trend back then [...] but there is no big story, of course it’s a nice name and bonfire is not too bad, is very like Finnish thing as you know (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Lower levels of management and employees such as Jakob Longer are able to identify the flame and bonfire element. The addition of descriptive name ‘mobile’ to the name was to emphasize what the company primarily was involved in, which was the mobile games industry.

As Vesterbacka tells us, the original strategy for Rovio Mobile was to be a mobile games company and to create the best possible mobile games out there. Rovio Mobile started to develop and release J2ME (Java based) games. In 2006, Rovio Mobile acquired Pixelgene, a 3D mobile game developer (Gamasutra, 2006). They continued developing J2ME games such as War Diary: Burma/Torpedo/Crusader, CyberBlood, Star Marine and other games such as Marine Sniper, Desert Sniper, Need for Speed: Carbon and Wolfmoon (Rovio, n.d.a).

In 2007, Rovio continued to work within the action, horror and strategy games, where the focus was on “great game play mechanic” as Vesterbacka tells us, and goes on to say that, “I would say that like Rovio owned games were pretty hardcore [at the time]. In our opinion what Vesterbacka means by ‘hardcore’ is that the games were more violent and action oriented in nature compared to their current game offerings. However, he brings out the point that Rovio’s first game, which was Kings of the Cabbage World, was “super casual” and that Rovio did do other puzzle based games and continued to work as subcontractor with games such as “Need for Speed and Burnout mobile for EA (Entertainment Arts) (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Former Rovio SVP Brand Marketing, Ville Heijari explained that the industry was tough [at the time] and that “customers had a hard time finding your games” (Heijari, 2011). As Vesterbacka tells us,

If you look at..10 years [2004-2005] back it was not a good time for a startup in the mobile game because it was a market dominated by big players, operators, handset makers all of that, and there was like no way to distribute directly [to the market] (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Between 2006 and 2007, Vesterbacka tells us that Rovio had grown at its peak to having a bit more than 60 employees, but that after this, the company had to

downsize. Important to mention that in the beginning of 2007, the mobile industry was revolutionized by the introduction of the iPhone and the App store by Apple. Niklas Hed described it as the following, “the iPhone opened up the whole world [...] you had one contact, plus worldwide distribution” (Wired, 2011) while Vesterbacka tells us that the change was significant for Rovio, saying that, “I think what has happened like last ten years, of course, was the iPhone and the App Store happened” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

In 2008, Rovio developed a game for Nokia’s N-Gage called Bounce Boing Voyage (Rovio, n.d.a). The N-Gage was Nokia’s attempt at a handheld gaming mobile, an interesting idea which never really caught on with consumers and discontinued after few years. Rovio continued with J2ME games such as Paper Planes, Gem Drop and Shopping Madness, but had started shifting attention and operations away from J2ME towards the iOS platform.

Between 2008 and 2009, Rovio started to experience financial trouble, almost to the point of bankruptcy (Wired, 2011). The company had developed a game for Nokia’s N900 Bounce Evolution and for Nokia N-Gage Bounce Tales, but the focus was shifting to iOS with more casual game features and Rovio were able to eventually release their first game on iOS in 2008, called Totomi.

Ville Heijari explained the change to iOS and casual games and away from the previous Java was not simple, “of course this change in this mindset and development philosophy doesn't happen overnight, so there was a lot of trouble, and the company went [down] to around 12 people in 2008-2009 (Heijari, 2011). Vesterbacka tells us that during this time the company did some restructuring and the company went through several changes.

Vesterbacka explains that the small company then became comprised mostly of only developers and engineers. In 2008, a new strategy for Rovio was put into place, where Rovio in addition to other things, also analyzed what factors go into making a hit game, and used that to build strategy,

Niklas and Mikael [Hed] who really thought things through and decided that ok, let's give it one more try and change the strategy. The strategy was pretty simple, just create great games for the iPhone until there is a hit, and then take that hit everywhere (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Niklas Hed had earlier stated that, “we [Rovio] thought we would need to do ten to fifteen titles until we got the right one” (Wired, 2011). However, Vesterbacka tells us this all changed when Rovio games designer by the name of Jaakko Iisalo presented a sketch of his game with unique, yet loveable characters, “everybody fell in love with the characters and then, you know, Angry Birds was kinda like started” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

4.2.1 Angry Birds (2009) - A hero brand

The company spent eight months, and 100,000€ developing their original hit game, double the typical budget amount for a Rovio project, as stated by Ville Heijari and further explained that this was a “big undertaking for the company” (Heijari, 2011). Their game ‘Angry Birds’ would go on to become one of the world’s most recognizable and beloved brands. The fortunes for Rovio changed after the Angry Birds success, as Rovio started making their way from a small struggling mobile game startup company making many games, towards becoming a larger mobile gaming company, focusing on one game.

The Angry Birds game is a physics based casual game for the mobile which has later become the #1 paid app of all time (Rovio, n.d.b) and a global phenomenon. As Vesterbacka says, Angry Birds was the 52nd game that Rovio had made, so it was not a company with an overnight success, but a result of good strategy and past learning experiences in the mobile gaming industry (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). Rovio attempted to eliminate luck throughout the process, although admittedly, some luck was involved in reaching success (Vesterbacka, 2012). On the Rovio website, the Angry Birds game is described as requiring players to “use logic, skill, and brute force to crush the enemy [pigs, with the angry birds] (Rovio, n.d.b), although in reality we observe that this description should not be taken literally, as characters are comical and seemingly harmless.

Vesterbacka explains the early growth of the game, “the game was launched in December 2009 and first twelve months we managed to hit 50 million downloads [...], in January [2010] 75, and then we hit 100 million in March, and 200 million in May, and right now [August] we are way over 250 million downloads” (Vesterbacka, 2011a). He went on to say that “we have [had] a lot of downloads and that has really helped us make the brand pretty pervasive” (Vesterbacka, 2011a). The starting point as mentioned earlier was the wingless bird characters as Ville Heijari explained,

everybody at the studio was looking at the characters’ sketches like ‘what are these guys? We really want to do something around this, so it started to evolve around the characters and we really [wanted to] polish the game so that the end product was fun to play, was engaging (Heijari, 2011).

Vesterbacka explains that the rapid success of Rovio’s Angry Birds indicated that the strategy was right, and that this was their hit, and so they took the Angry Birds games and made it into a brand, and took that brand everywhere, “the idea was really to not [be] limited to games, but build brands, and basically the Angry Birds brand, we took that into animation, consumer products, parks, everywhere” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). He goes on to explain that,

the vision is really to provide great Angry Birds branded experiences to our fans in all forms and shapes [...] we know how difficult it is to create hit games and great hits. We didn’t get carried away [thinking] “ok, now we made Angry Birds, let’s make the next Angry Birds”, [so] we decided, “let’s go all in with Angry Birds”, so I think that was very important [going forward] (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Vesterbacka explains to us that the Angry Birds characters drove the brand,

the game got started with like a great game play mechanic, but it was really the characters [...] I think there’s important lesson there, that not many games actually starts with the characters, and if you look at big characters businesses, you have people like Hello Kitty and so on. It just shows that when you find some characters that engage with people you can build amazing things around just characters, and with Angry Birds [we did that] (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Ville Heijari mentioned that a reason mobile games are so successful is because, “people have less and less time, precious little time, [but] they can engage with games for 30 seconds or 2 hours” (Heijari, 2011). Harri Koponen tells us that when people play Angry Birds, “they are feeling engaged, and they are happy and they’re killing their [leisure] time in positive way” (Harri Koponen, Interview).

Harri Koponen (Interview) tells us that the Angry Birds brand and culture is very “ambitious, forward leaning, experimental and fun” (Harri Koponen, Interview), while Vesterbacka tells us that, “We’re [Rovio] not afraid of doing things differently, and I think that there is a lot of value to be added, that again, not doing what everybody else is doing” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). Ville Heijari has said that the game was so engaging and fun to play that the release was a little delayed because he says that the developers would simply play the game days on end, “why it took so long to develop [game] was that, for a number of times, when the game was being tested, the guys at the studio were actually spending days and days, just playing the game” (Heijari, 2011).

Harri Koponen (Interview) tells us that what engages people with Angry Birds is not only the characters in the game, but also the stories they bring,

the birds have been chosen because there was a story behind the Angry Birds. There’s the pigs and birds, and the birds are typically happy, but they’re only angry when their eggs are stolen. There’s only three known bird eggs left in the planet and the red bird is protecting them against the pigs (who used to be their friends), but then, the King Pig, he was addicted to the eggs and then so they started to steal the eggs. So there’s a story behind the brand (Harri Koponen, Interview).

Henri Holm, Former Rovio SVP of Asia tells us that Angry Birds is successful also because it is inclusive and is for everyone,

[an] Angry Birds fan is very engaged with the brand and story. Fans are from all four quadrants of consumer segments, and [in] all our events we organized to prove the power of this innovative brand. No fan felt or thought Angry Birds being a children's brand, but engaging across all ages (Henri Holm, Interview).

He goes on to say that the Angry Bird brand stands for “FUN, ENTERTAINMENT and QUALITY” (Henri Holm, Interview). He makes a special mention in stating that Angry Birds provides a “GREAT TIME WITH FAMILY and FRIENDS” and is “the best in class family entertainment” (Henri Holm, Interview). The inclusion of family is a good attribute to have for the Angry Birds brand according to Vesterbacka as he explains that,

Angry Birds is something that will always have the family for sure, it is a family brand, but then some of the other areas where we do other things, Rovio might not always just be family friendly (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

What we found interesting is that Rovio calls people engaging with Angry Birds brand as “fans”. Indeed, as Harri Koponen told us,

The relationship is that you like to treat everybody like a fan. It’s the fans’ brand. They are collaborating all the time. That’s the essence of the Angry Birds relationship that you don’t talk ‘customers’, you talk ‘fans’. Then you try to provide ultimate experience for the fans that they are experiencing happy moments and they’re not frustrated, they’re motivated to good things (Harri Koponen, Interview).

Rovio’s Vice President, Brand Ad Partnerships and Advertising of Americas, Michele Tobin continued on the same lines as Harri by stating that,

I think we have a really unique relationship with our fans [...] all the games we look at as a service, not as a product, so what you won’t see from us is to create a game, throwing it out there and we never revisit it. We have continual updates to the games, new content, new levels to play, things like that, which I think, allows us to provide a pretty amazing entertainment proposition to the fans (Tobin, 2013).

In developing these relationships, Angry Birds made game launches spectacular and appealing to a global audience. Henri Holm tells us that early on that Rovio, “held 50 separate large scale events and media happenings over the brand building time” (Henri Holm, Interview). He described the launches like “grand movie launches” as

they were launched at iconic sites such as Taipei 101 and the International Space Station [Angry Birds: Space] amongst other things (Henri Holm, Interview).

4.3 Rovio Entertainment (2011-) - A new turn



Image 2. Rovio Entertainment logo

Angry Birds was quickly becoming a global phenomenon and a recognizable brand and in March of 2011, Rovio Mobile received a substantial investment of \$42 million in venture capital funding from Accel Partners, Atoomico and Felicis Ventures (Rovio, 2011a). A few months later, in July of 2011, Rovio Mobile made the decision to rename the company again, this time to Rovio Entertainment. Henri Holm tells us that “the shift [from Rovio Mobile] to Rovio Entertainment, presented [the] whole company and entertainment world, a change from [a] game centric world, to story and brand centric entertainment powerhouse” (Henri Holm, Interview).

Harri Koponen described the move as the following,

Rovio Mobile was rather limiting and Rovio Entertainment means that, you know, you suddenly have the same capability as Disney and other entertainment companies, they [Rovio] clearly saw it’s not only a games company, they wanted to have an entertainment company (Harri Koponen, Interview).

This message is echoed by others at Rovio like Jakob Longer, “I mean we don’t just want to be a gaming company, you know, we want to be an entertainment company” (Jakob Longer, Interview). Rovio CEO Mikael Hed said it more bluntly, “Rovio wants to be an entertainment company. Period. That's what we are” (WSJ, 2014).

In 2011, Rovio CMO Peter Vesterbacka stated that, “our longer term plan and vision [is that] we want to be first entertainment brand with a billion fans, not a billion downloads” (Vesterbacka, 2011a). In our recent interview with Peter, he explains that this has since changed to, “we [Rovio] want to reach a billion fans, everyday” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Peter Vesterbacka tell us in our interview and in past interviews that a continual mission at Rovio is storytelling but also,

how do we [Rovio] surprise, how do we delight the fans, and that is something that we still at Rovio, and everything we do, it’s always the first priority, if it doesn’t surprise and delight our fans, we don’t do it, I think it’s very bad reason to do something, just because we can make a quick buck [...] you have to have a great product, a great experience (Vesterbacka, 2012).

The focus on fans and the brand is one aspect that differentiates Rovio from others, another is their entrepreneurial corporate culture.

Rovio is different. I mean, people walk around with [Angry Bird] hoodies, there’s managers riding from meeting to meeting on scooters. It’s just this insane place where creativity is flowing. There are game ideas and pitches happening all the time and everyone has an open door policy. There is constant warmth and energy. It is a fun, growing company to be a part of [...] we’re doing a back flip on the typical corporate culture that is around at other companies (Jakob Longer, Interview).

Harri Koponen went further explaining that Rovio has had a, “very informal dress code, you’re not allowed to come to work with a suit on. Normally the shoes are tennis shoes or something like this and informal business behavior inside the company” (Harri Koponen, Interview). Peter Vesterbacka, when asked about the organizational culture, stated that “we [Rovio] need to create an environment where it is fun to fail. The organization needs to know that it is ‘OK’ to try new things” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Due to the success of Angry Birds and subsequent rapid growth of the company, it created a large strain on the limited resources of the still small-scale company. The company began to recruit heavily and started acquiring other companies within strategic areas in order to drive growth. In October 2011 Rovio purchased Kombo, a Helsinki based animation studio, a move which Rovio CEO Mikael Hed said,

this acquisition is an important step in the execution of our media strategy. The attitude, creativity and quality of Kombo's work is simply fantastic, and we look forward to delighting our fans with more Kombo animations (Rovio, 2011b).

This was followed by the acquisition in March 2012 of the game development division of Futuremark Game Studios (The Verge, 2012). The rapid growth and talent acquisition of animators, developers can be seen as the part of Rovio strategy of hiring the best talents there was according to Harri Koponen,

Rovio tries to have the most talented people. The best graphical people and best music people and best game developers and technical teams [...] this allows the great graphics, great sound and good story, storytelling and then fast prototyping [development] (Harri Koponen, Interview).

For Rovio, the fans are the most important and at the heart of business, as Vesterbacka earlier stated about delighting the fans, but also has stated that, "the brand is most important to us, after our fans (Vesterbacka, 2011a). During our interview, Vesterbacka confirmed that 'delighting and surprising the fans' and 'keeping truth to our brand' are keys to success for Rovio (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). Henri Holm, Former Rovio SVP of Asia has stated previously "our [Rovio] brand is about fans, not features, and the way to get fans is through engagement" (Campaign India, 2012). The engagement is seen on all levels and Rovio takes it very seriously as Vesterbacka explains,

we really talk to our fans every day. Twitter, Facebook, and then you know, Weibo, Renren in China, all the different social networks around the world. So it's something that most of the current entertainment brands don't do. So I think that's a huge difference (Vesterbacka, 2011b).

“It’s progressive and engaging and fun. This is supposed to be the idea of the company, that you always have the most satisfied fans” (Harri Koponen, Interview). An opinion that is widely shared by Rovio Marketing Director Kai Torstila, “we are in the business of delighting people. It’s about entertainment, versatility, depth, quality and great value” (Kai Torstila, Interview).

Kai Torstila continued by describing the company as still “humble, but ambitious” (Kai Torstila, Interview) an opinion held by others at Rovio. Ambition is a characteristic that is also highlighted by Peter Vesterbacka, “I always talk about ambition and attitude. We [Rovio] need people that are super ambitious and have happy attitude and get things done”, going on saying that “we [Rovio] need to have an organization that really thinks that impossible is nothing” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). When we ask Jakob Longer to describe who Rovio is, he replies “I think we’re still eagerly learning and trying to work out where we’re going, we’re still finding our feet, but we are growing [...] we know what we want and we’re eager to go after it” (Jakob Longer, Interview). Kai Torstila goes on to say that,

what sets us [Rovio] apart from many others is our passion for creating entertainment. Our characters have depth that we continue building in our books, parks, animated series and web presences. We think of our games as services that evolve over time. We also take much care in polishing our products, so that you get a fantastic Rovio level experience when you play (Kai Torstila, Interview).

Indeed, with the transition from the small Rovio Mobile to the large Rovio Entertainment that now employs over 800 people [2014], and amazingly reached 1 billion downloads by May 9th 2012 [now 1.7 billion], the company has evolved. Henri Holm tells us that Rovio Entertainment is now an “innovative powerhouse that makes high quality animation, games and branded consumer products” (Henri Holm, Interview). According to Peter Vesterbacka, what also sets Rovio apart from the competition, apart from providing “all forms of entertainment”, is the focus on branding. As he tells us,

we are all about the brand. I think that's something that is very different [from competition], and I think that we think that by doing what we're doing, so focusing on the brand long term, I think that we also guarantee our success long term. So, if you take Hello Kitty, you take Mario, Mickey Mouse, they've been around forever, and I think our goal is to be around forever as well. [...] I think that we are ahead of the curb when it comes to building brands, compared to everybody else, so market is kinda moving in our direction (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Another unique attribute to Rovio Entertainment is the focus on relationships. Kai Torstila tells us that Rovio treats others, "like we work with our own colleagues. We listen to each other and then try to make things HUGE TOGETHER!" (Kai Torstila, Interview). Harri Koponen reinforces this and says it's part of the Rovio strategy,

Rovio looks for strategic partnerships and leading brands to collaborate with, so that's the strategy of Rovio. They always try to work with the biggest or the best or the smartest brands in the planet, so they are associated with smart people and smart products (Harri Koponen, Interview).

In our interview, Vesterbacka also highlights partnerships as a key strength at Rovio Entertainment,

We have more than 500 - 600 [global] partners working in different areas [licensing, merchandising, etc]. So of course this brings its own complexity, but we know how to work with partners, so that will also be a strength going forward because nobody can do everything by themselves. So, if you don't have the best people working at Rovio, then hopefully you can partner with people or have the best people for whatever job you need to get done. That's something that is super important (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Vesterbacka continues to explain to us what Rovio, now as an entertainment company, is all about, "we like to look at Rovio like a triple E company, so we do entertainment, education and then we apply entrepreneurship in everything we do" (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

In 2012, Rovio started building Angry Birds theme parks and attractions, global activity parks and public play parks (Rovio, n.d.c) featuring the characters. In 2013, they launched their own animation channel called Toons.tv which, “is the home of the wildly popular Angry Birds Toons series and hand-selected family entertainment shows from around the world” (Toons TV, n.d). Rovio now publishes books as Rovio Books which, “works with all the Rovio brands and in cooperation with all the teams in the company – with a sharp eye on finding and sharing all the fun stories of the amazingly creative Rovio universe” (Rovio, n.d.d) and currently as Peter earlier mentioned, work with education in advancing education and learning through their Angry Birds Playground learning concept (Rovio, n.d.e) amongst other things.

Rovio wants to, “dare to do things that haven’t been done before” (Vesterbacka, 2012). As further stated by Peter, “we’re not afraid of doing things differently, and I think that there is a lot of value to be added, that again, not doing what everybody else is doing” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

4.3.1 Rovio Entertainment games and expansion

Since the launch of the original Angry Birds game in late 2009, Rovio has made multiple extensions of the Angry Birds game. Not counting the original, Rovio have released a further eight Angry Birds games (See Appendix, Table 1). Vesterbacka explains, “Angry Birds is really kind of at the core of what we [Rovio] do” (Vesterbacka, 2014). Ville Heijari has earlier said that, “we’re [Rovio] always going to be creating Angry Birds, so Angry Birds is never going to go away, but at the same time, we are also creating new and exciting properties [...] there is a lot of room for us as a company, as entertainment company for parallel brands” (Heijari, 2013). A reason for acquiring or creating new intellectual property (IP) for Rovio was explained by Mikael Hed,

If we want credible and sustainable growth, we need to diversify, to take some actions so that we don't build all of our existence purely on the assumption that everything we do will become a hit (WSJ, 2014).

In 2012, Rovio started pursuit of new IP unrelated to Angry Birds, and on July 12, 2012 Amazing Alex was released by Rovio after its rights were acquired from Noel

Llopis and Miguel Ángel Friginal's game, 'Casey's Contraptions'. Harri Koponen explains to us that,

Amazing Alex was the experiment for Rovio [...] is it possible to bring a [game] up to number one spot with help of the Rovio name, and it proved to be right, it was successful in that sense. Although, it never made so much money (Harri Koponen, Interview).

Jakob Longer agrees, stating the game was "in the right direction where we are going, where it is testing new ideas [...] but it wasn't engaging enough for users to become a really hit" (Jakob Longer, Interview).

On September 27th, 2012, Rovio published Bad Piggies, a spin-off of Angry Birds. Bad Piggies was "where fans can finally get the pigs' perspective!" (Rovio, n.d.f). Bad Piggies allowed Rovio to further tell the story of the Angry Birds universe to fans, Henri Holm tells us that Bad Piggies resonate[ed] well among Asian audience, whereas Amazing Alex was [a] less recognised emerging brand and game" (Henri Holm, Interview).

Another new step and learning experience for Rovio (away from Angry Birds) was The Croods, released in 2013. Rovio partnered up with Dreamworks and developed a mobile game to be released at the time of the movie release by Dreamworks. At this point in time, Rovio was going through another organizational transition, changing their mobile games business model. Mikael Hed shed some light by explaining that,

we're doing a big transition into the free-to-play business model, from a paid game company [...] the free-to-play transition has taken longer than we anticipated. This year we're fully into the free-to-play model and there's been a huge shift in the whole mind-set of the company (WSJ, 2014).

Jakob Longer comments,

The Croods was our first free-to-play title we went with. The industry is now moving away from premium titles. People essentially don't want to spend money upfront in the App store. People are moving away from these premium models where

you pay money upfront to where it's free to play [...] and have free experience. If you want to enhance your experience, you spend some money (Jakob Longer, Interview).

Two days after *The Croods* launch, on March 16th, 2013, Rovio launched their much anticipated ToonsTV which would feature weekly *Angry Birds* episodes, that, “brings to life the characters and adventures from one of the most beloved games in history, revealing the fun and sneaky worlds of the Birds and their nemesis Piggies (Rovio, n.d.g). The animation *Angry Birds Toons* has been widely viewed by 2 billion as of 2014, and is renewed for a second season. The channel now features *Piggy Tales*, following the Piggies, and the studio is “currently [in] development [of] a number of properties, including animation series, promotional and live action videos” (AngryBirds, 2014). The next leap for Rovio Entertainment was to enter publishing and becoming their own publisher. As Vesterbacka stated “it’s not about the game, it’s about building up the brand, that’s something that again we don’t view ourselves as I said as a game company but we’re really building next-generation entertainment franchise” (Vesterbacka, 2011a).

Mikael Hed, and Peter Versterbacka in our interview, both say that Rovio is currently producing and filming their own *Angry Birds* movie for a cinema release in 2016 and expect it to become a huge hit at the box office.

4.4 RovioStars™



Image 3. RovioStars™ logo.

On May 14th, 2013, Rovio Entertainment launched a new program called ROVIOSTARS™ “which [would] feature the best new games from talented and innovative developers” (Rovio, n.d.h). The initiative signalled Rovio’s entry into mobile game publishing where they would, for the first time, release third party developed games under the Rovio brand. Rovio EVP of games Jami Laes stated at the

time that, “publishing is a logical step for us at this point” (Rovio, 2013a), a sentiment echoed in our interview with Peter Vesterbacka.

The unique selling point for developers to join the ROVIOSTARS™ program is that “Rovio can introduce your game to a massive audience while supporting you with world-class marketing and PR” (Rovio, n.d.h).

The ROVIOSTARS™ logo uses the name ROVIO in bold followed by the word STARS. The graphic logo of three golden stars bears resemblance with the company’s iconic Angry Birds game play, where three golden stars are used as a ranking system to indicate that a player has attained a full score or mastery on a certain game level. This is a feature of the Angry Birds game that makes it so engaging for players. Players will play a level over and over again in order to achieve the three golden stars rating before moving on to the next level. When we asked why it is called “stars”, the significance of it, and if it relates to Angry Birds game. Jakob Longer replied to us,

on the logo and stars you’re right, they have been a key part of previous games. Three stars for completion, and essentially [...] represents these quality third party titles that we’re looking for (Jakob Longer, Interview).

ROVIOSTARS™ has had a very successful launch, and the company has been flooded with request from smaller gaming companies and individuals around the world requesting to join the program. The website claims to, “be in touch within a few weeks if we think your game could be a good match for the program” (Rovio, n.d.h).

An interesting keyword here is the term good match for the program. As of April 2014, ROVIOSTARS™ has released four games; Icebreaker: A Viking Voyage (2013), Tiny Thief (2013), Juice Cubes (2013) and Word Monsters (2014). What makes these games a good match for the program according to Director of Development at Rovio, Kalle Kaivola, is that these games have “memorable characters and entertaining gameplay that [they] are also just really fun to play!” (Rovio, 2013a). A few months later, Kalle Kaivola now the SVP Product & Publishing at Rovio Entertainment said of Juice Cubes,

when we first saw Juice Cubes, it was clear it had the hallmarks of a great RovioStars game: it combines smooth and engaging gameplay, great characters and a fun atmosphere, which makes it a perfect game for people of all ages (Rovio, 2013b).

A similar sentiment shared by Jakob Longer, when he first stated that the majority of Rovio's user base is formed by Angry Birds fans, going on saying that,

with RovioStars we use that [Angry Birds' user base], we want to find titles that fit within that user base [...] family-friendly entertainment. They can't be heavy on violence. We don't like heads being cut off (Jakob Longer, Interview).

Vesterbacka tells us that the reason for naming the program ROVIOSTARS™ was a strategic marketing decision to incorporate elements of Angry Birds game play to the new program. This was so that current and future fans would start to recognize the name 'Rovio' more and more as the source of "great fun games with great characters and storylines". Harri Koponen also told us that the name 'Rovio' has always appeared on all forms of marketing and presentations, which has been used to create familiarity and brand recognition, "Rovio was always in the slides, in a small like 'intel inside'. So Rovio was always in the slides, but the brand was the main story" (Harri Koponen, Interview).

As stated by Peter Vesterbacka, "it's almost like Rovio [brand] and Angry Birds [brand] are one and the same". However, as he goes on saying, this was the case before ROVIOSTARS™ was released,

it's only now that with RovioStars and then you know Retry, which of course is only a few days old [May 6th, 2014] it's only now that the Rovio brand and Angry Birds they start to diverge a little bit, I would say more and more. It's only now that the Rovio brand is starting to become much more important (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

4.5 LVL 11



Image 4. LVL 11 logo.

Rovio's latest games program was released in May of 2014, their first game was RETRY, a simple retro game play that reminded players of the “now infamous Flappy Bird game” (Jakob Longer, Interview). Vesterbacka tells us that Rovio's LVL 11 is, “another example that again, we're taking the Rovio brand more to the forefront and then publishing different kinds of games [...] we're expanding the audience for games” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview). Jakob Longer makes a point to mention that LVL is where Rovio can release games, which do not have same values or game elements that are found in other Rovio games.

Vesterbacka tells us that Rovio's success with Angry Birds has shown that gamers in today's day and age don't view or identify themselves as purely gamers anymore.

I think what is interesting now, if we take what used to be considered pretty hardcore games, there's actually a massive audience for those, because the smart phones, tablets have made it very easy for people to getting into games” (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

4.6 Education and Learning

With Rovio Entertainment going forward, Vesterbacka tells us that Rovio Entertainment wants to,

Establish [a] strong presence in many of the areas that we are getting started in now. So again establishing Angry Birds as a massive brand, in things like soft drinks, in toys, in apparel, so a lot of consumer products (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

As a triple E company, and with the aim to reaching and actively engaging with one billion fans everyday, Rovio has intentions to grow and include education and learning. This new area that they have been developing and investing in for a few years now, is explained to us by Vesterbacka,

One area that I think it might be our biggest business by that time [in 5 years time] is learning. The whole 'fun' learning education program that we've been investing for the last three years, I expect that to be as big or maybe even bigger than entertainment business. I think we will be a massive force in education and I would actually say that in five years, we'll transform education globally. That's pretty ambitious (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

He goes into saying that the education and learning is based on the highly successful Finnish education system and it will utilize both the Rovio brand, Angry Birds brand and perhaps other Rovio IP brands to facilitate and make the learning fun.

5 Analysis

The chapter provides the reader with an analysis of the empirical findings, conducted in a structured manner consistent with the timeline approach to help identify the early growth stages of the company and the development of the corporate brand identity. The analysis is also based on our theoretical framework, and entails an iterative process, where we move back and forth between theory and empirical findings. The first part of this chapter is organized according to the three main growth stages pinpointed in the theory chapter, in which we explain the empirical results and their relation with the theory, and we analyze how the corporate brand has evolved with the time. In the second part of this chapter we derive the Angry Birds brand identity and Rovio's corporate brand identity by devising respectively the Brand Identity Prism and Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. This, in order to see if the product brand 'Angry Birds' has influenced the Rovio corporate brand identity. In doing the CBIM, we are able to identify and describe what the Rovio corporate brand identity is.

	<i>Pre-establishment</i>	<i>Early Growth</i>	<i>Effective Growth</i>
<i>Relude (2003-2005)</i>	•		
<i>Rovio Mobile (2005-2008)</i>	•	•	
<i>Rovio Mobile (2009-2011)</i>		•	•
<i>Rovio Entertainment (2011-)</i>			•

Table 5. We divide Rovio into four time period and align them within Juntunen et al. (2010) adapted growth stages with the bullet as representation.

5.1 Pre-establishment

5.1.1 Relude (2003-2005)

What in the theory section has been described as the pre-establishment stage by Juntunen *et al.* (2010) we identify a time in our case study that goes from 2003 to 2005, when three students after participating in a mobile games competition, decided to found a company called Relude. The company's aim was to create the best possible mobile games, on the Java based platform.

As Relude was created as a startup, there was no existing or established identity or reputation (Petkova *et al.*, 2008) as the organizational structures still needed to be built (Rode and Vallaster, 2005). According to us, the corporate personality, which includes the development of a company's idea, company's structure and characteristics and company's name and core values (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010), became only partially built, if at all. While the aim was clear, and the name established, the company was too small to have a clear structure, and “[it] is still completely informal, including all the activities and planning that take place before the company is officially established” (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 123). Moreover, no clear sign of core values definition was found during our empirical study. Specifically focusing on the corporate brand identity aspect, we discovered that this was non-existent at Relude. Relude is only the name of the company, and does not meet the requirements of what it means to be a corporate brand as stated by Hatch and Schultz (2001) in that a corporate brand makes for the company possible to integrate in the value proposition its vision and culture, which in Relude's case are not developed. In fact, Relude does not meet the requirements or definition for being a brand (Aaker, 2004; Kapferer, 2008; Balmer, 2010) as the brand lacks tangible and intangible values and meaning used for differentiation.

Our initial findings in the Rovio case study seem to contradict one of the main conclusions of Juntunen *et al.* (2010: 127), which stated, “corporate brand building does indeed start even before the corporation in question exists”. Besides, we believe that in the Rovio case study it can be argued that two pre-establishment stages can be identified and exist at the same time, which Juntunen *et al.* (2010) found was possible.

If we consider the milestones that we defined in our empirical findings, which are signalled by the three company's name changes (Relude, Rovio Mobile and Rovio Entertainment), it seems quite straightforward to associate them with the three growth stages identified by Juntunen *et al.* (2010). However, considering the development of the company along with the corporate brand building functions, we believe that a distinction has to be made concerning Rovio Mobile before (2005-2009) and after their release of Angry Birds (2009-2011) by looking at these two distinct growth stages.

5.1.2 Rovio Mobile - pre Angry Birds (2005-2009) - Part I

In the Juntunen *et al.* (2010) model, which is based on Scott and Bruce (1987) growth model is not linear, as we have identified that “a company might go back and forth between the consecutive stages (Smallbone and Wyer, 2006 cited in Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 119), and can also be at multiple stages at once (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010) as identified in the early growth phase of Rovio Mobile.

In 2005, after receiving initial investment, Relude was renamed into Rovio Mobile. We argue that at this point in time, Rovio Mobile still can be considered at its pre-establishment stage, according to the definition provided by Juntunen *et al.* (2010). Indeed, even though the company had been established two years before, the corporate personality was still in its development process, since a new name was just decided and the corporate idea, structure and core values were being developed. However, we can say that at this stage, Rovio Mobile was still not a corporate brand.

Peter Vesterbacka (Interview) had stated that the name Rovio was chosen because it was a nice name and it was a trend back in the past, to use a Finnish name giving examples of other gaming companies such as Sumea. The addition of the descriptive and objective ‘Mobile’ next to Rovio was made to indicate the industry where the company would be involved in, which further signify the descriptive character of the name, without any real strategic or deeper meaning. Vesterbacka also said that he did not consider Rovio Mobile or the name Rovio to be a brand.

However, Kapferer (2012) states that even just choosing a good name, helps the organization create a good source of identity, as he states that a brand name is a powerful source of identity. Kapferer (2008: 193) had stated that a brand name is revealing of its intention even without “apparent objective or rational [logic], but that it still has the capacity to mark the brand’s legitimate territory”. For Rovio, in choosing the color red and a fire element in the graphic logo (the bonfire), it displayed emotions of strength, drive and ambition, core elements that define the corporate brand identity today. These are strong visual symbols for Rovio and have guided the growth of the company by also establishing a source of identity around storytelling. A bonfire is where people come together to share and listen to stories, so it is a sign that evokes meaning. For instance, there were elements of stories and character development in their early Java based games such as Darkest Fear, but this identity was only brought forward after the release of Angry Birds.

5.2 Early growth

5.2.1 Rovio Mobile - pre Angry Birds (2005-2009) - Part II

After changing the name to Rovio Mobile, the company started growing, having its only focus on the mobile gaming market. Soon after the company was renamed, we believe it entered what can be identified as ‘early growth’ stage, according to Juntunen *et al.* (2010) findings. At this stage the corporate identity was becoming clear, and it was “emanating from daily operations and products of the company” (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010:124). Indeed, the company’s strategy at that time, according to Peter Vesterbacka (Interview), was to create the best possible mobile games, and the company started to consistently develop and release Java based games such as Darkest Fear, Paid to Kill, War Diary: Burma/Torpedo/Crusader and CyberBlood (Rovio, n.d.a). The focus of the company was on hardcore, action, horror and strategy games for a gamer audience. At this stage, however, even though the corporate identity and personality were becoming defined, the core values and the corporate brand identity were still only partially developed (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010).

We argue that Rovio had implemented a market-oriented approach, the predominant marketing paradigm (Urde *et al.*, 2013) as Rovio’s organizational approach to brands

and the market at the time took an outside-in, image-driven approach. Rovio was meeting the needs and wants of a hardcore gaming audience, which was at the time, finally able to play and enjoy ‘reasonable games’ on the mobile handheld devices. The games were made on a project basis and although there were some common themes and genres found in the games such as strategy, involving characters and stories and casual puzzle games, Rovio Mobile did not show what the brand stood for. In a brand-oriented approach the brand is seen as a resource and strategic hub (Urde, 1994, 1997), which was not the case for Rovio Mobile at this stage, but we observe that this happened in the next time era.

During this time, the strategy of the company as Peter Vesterbacka (Interview) told us, shifted from creating several Java based games to trying to develop games for the recent iPhone and App store. During our interview, Vesterbacka said that at the time, “there were different games, different faces of the company”, which we believe indicates not a fully clear understanding of identity. The introduction of casual games such as Collapse Chaos and Burger Rush in 2008, indicated the strategy change at Rovio Mobile, the shift was to different audience than the hardcore gamers, even though they were still mobile, and with Totomi for iOS, they entered the App store.

Before the iPhone was introduced in the market, Rovio could have been considered to partially fit into the early growth stage as it is defined by Juntunen *et al.* (2010), because after the disruptive innovation came out, the corporate identity started to diverge from the previous one. Also the structure of the company changed, with the company downsizing from 60 in 2007, to 12 employees (mostly developers and engineers) in 2009, with major restructurings happening. We believe that in this phase, considering the significant changes occurring, Rovio was floating between the pre-establishment and the early growth stage, since the company was not carrying out all the corporate brand building activities that were supposed to be performed according to Juntunen *et al.* (2010), such as defining and communicating core values, but was massively restructuring the company. However, the company was indeed creating a corporate identity, as expected in the early growth stage, by consecutively realising mobile games, becoming a very skilled mobile gaming company.

5.2.2 Rovio Mobile - post Angry Birds (2009-2011) - Part I

The turning point was the creation of the Angry Birds characters by Rovio's games designer Jaakko Iisalo in 2009. Niklas Hed had described the event as such that, "people saw this picture and it was just magical" (Wired, 2011). They finally found their hit game, and their aim was to take the game and the brand everywhere. As Peter Vesterbacka (Interview) told us, "we decided 'let's go all in with Angry Birds'". In doing so, Rovio made Angry Birds their flagship product (Kapferer, 2008).

Considering the initial success generated by Angry Birds, Rovio Mobile benefited from the increasing visibility of the game on the App store and media attention, as the brand was visible everywhere from bus advertisements to cable car rides in Singapore. We believe that it was at this stage that the core values started to be defined, and to be consistently communicated, although they were intertwined with the core values of the Angry Birds brand, as seemingly all operations of Rovio both internal and external were being conducted for the Angry Birds brand.

We see that Rovio Mobile's weak and developing corporate brand identity is starting to be based on its product brand Angry Birds. Between 2009 and 2011, Rovio mobile worked almost exclusively on the Angry Birds games, with several releases and brand extensions and took it outside the mobile games industry such as; toys, merchandise and licensing, all involving only the Angry Birds brand and characters. Therefore, the corporate identity was clearly "emanating from daily operations and products", and it included "corporate culture, corporate behavior, corporate internal communications and corporate design" (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 124), as contemplated in the early growth stage. As further stated by Juntunen *et al.* (2010: 125), "the nature of the products is present in all decision making and evaluation of the operations of the company", as this is the case with Rovio Mobile and its flagship product brand Angry Birds.

Moreover, the whole organization and employees were deeply involved in the Angry Birds brand and characters. This is another main feature of companies within the early growth stage. Indeed, Juntunen *et al.* (2010:125) discovered in their study about growth stages that employees contribute "to unifying the corporate identity and the

corporate image”, influencing how the company is perceived and how it will develop in the future. This is observed to have happened at Rovio Mobile at the time, with employees wearing Angry Birds ‘red hoodies’ with the red bird in focus, and with executives such as Peter Vesterbacka a.k.a ‘Mighty Eagle’, being nicknamed after powerful Angry Birds character, Mighty Eagle, and Rovio office spaces at the headquarters being named after Angry Bird characters. Rovio Mobile became synonymous with the Angry Bird brand or ‘as the makers of Angry Birds’. The corporate brand is largely hidden behind the product brand of Angry Birds as the product brand has high degree of freedom (Kapferer, 2012). Rovio seem to follow a procterian dogma of marketing, where, “brand must correspond to one, and only one, product” (Kapferer, 2008: 295) which was made famous by P&G.

However, we find out in Interview and validate this through observation, that the Rovio name and red R emblem are still however, visible and part of each presentation slide or Angry Birds release in either small font or at the beginning of the game launch to indicate the source of the material, creating positive associations and awareness of the corporate brand from customer perspective.

5.3 Effective growth

5.3.1 Rovio Mobile - post Angry Birds (2009-2011) - Part II

In a very short time Angry Birds became a huge, worldwide success, becoming the number one paid app of all time (Rovio, n.d.b). During our interview with Jakob Longer, he stated that what Rovio was doing at the time was “huge, in the terms of gaming companies and that no one was sort of matching us [Rovio] [...] we’re stepping up to the plate and we’re swinging pretty hard” (Jakob Longer, Interview). We see that it was when Rovio Mobile reached its peak of success with Angry Birds that the company entered what Juntunen *et al.* (2010) called the ‘effective growth’ stage.

At the effective growth stage, Rovio Mobile is growing in size and has employees who perform activities at professional and full-time level that was not found in earlier stages such as pre-establishment and early growth phase that is consistent with

Juntunen *et al.* (2010: 129). When analysing the events, at this stage the company seems to have developed a corporate brand (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010) which we believe is strongly derived from its strong product brand 'Angry Birds'. We make the distinction that Juntunen *et al.* (2010) does not explicitly define what a corporate brand is, so we use the definition provided by Balmer (2010: 281) in that a corporate brand,

Involves the conscious decision by senior management to distil and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition.

In making this distinction to a corporate brand, we see that Rovio Mobile does not meet Balmer's definition for a corporate brand, as there is little to no evidence that senior management makes known the attributes of Rovio Mobile's organization identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. This highlights a problem in the new corporate brand research paradigm in that there is no concrete and widely used definition for what a corporate brand is. This is because identity, as a social construct, is subjective which can be interpreted to mean different things to different thinkers such as Aaker (2004; Hatch and Schultz, 2003; Kapfer, 2008; Balmer, 2010).

According to Juntunen *et al.* (2010) in the effective growth stage a corporation has two alternatives, either maintain or develop the corporate brand strategies further. In Rovio Mobile case they seem to have chosen to maintain their corporate identity and corporate brand building activities, without developing them further as evidenced by their choice of sticking to the old strategy of making a hit game and remaining with it. So what we do not see with Rovio Mobile is a revision of their strategies as is expected according to Juntunen *et al.* (2010). Juntunen *et al.* (2010) also states that re-defining core values is evident at this growth stage, but this is not evident with the corporate brand of Rovio Mobile, although interestingly, the Angry Birds (product brand) re-defines their core values as they move from mobile gaming into the consumer market and start instilling meaning and intangible associations with the brand, such as 'fun' and developing a stronger personality and relationships with customers they refer to as 'fans'.

Juntunen *et al.* (2010) also claims that at this stage the corporation should implement brand-oriented strategies, this is evidenced at Rovio Mobile as they seem to have changed from their previous short-term, market-oriented strategy of catering to the masses through many different hard core games involving a ‘customer is king’ attitude (Urde *et al.*, 2013) towards a ‘brand is king’ approach where the brand of Angry Birds is developed and maintained within established core values.

It is very interesting to note, that Rovio Mobile at the time, choose to not change to a classic strategy of branding (Kapferer, 2008) using their best or leading brand (Angry Birds) for the corporation as had been done earlier for example by Tokyo Tsuhin Kogyo becoming ‘Sony’.

Kapferer (2008: 206) continues by stating that;

a company coins its identity by focusing on one or two key values (Schwebig, 1985). These are the values, which feed the brand, give it the company’s outlook on the world and the impetus to transform the product category. This ‘source-value’ gives meaning to the brand.

As a quality mobile games company, Rovio Mobile with Angry Birds, there is a sense that the corporate determination is to offer “more than a strictly functional product” (Kapferer, 2008: 206) which is a brand that fans can engage with and always aims to ‘delight and surprise’ them.

Kapferer (2008: 206) states that it is usual that over time, the relationship between brand [product] and company are switched around and that the company’s “outward image is reflected inside and becomes far more effective in mobilizing the workforce”. Rovio Mobile are unique in the sense that the entire workforce were all already working under the pretense of an ‘Angry Birds’ brand, but that the corporate company still was named Rovio Mobile.

Our conclusion, at this stage, is that the corporate brand identity of Rovio Mobile was rather weak in comparison to its hero product brand. Rovio mobile had a weak

corporate brand and it was not strategically leveraging on it at the time. The company focused on the strong product brand of Angry Birds and everything revolved around that, with the corporate brand identity being shaped by the strong product brand identity. Angry Birds was the flagship brand and representation of the company, while Rovio Mobile lurked in the background, but things were coming to a tipping point and executives decided to take the company in a new and exciting direction, where the corporate brand identity of ‘Rovio’ would become stronger.

5.3.2 Rovio Entertainment (2011 - Present)

In July 2011 the company made an important strategic decision: changing the company name from Rovio Mobile to Rovio Entertainment after an \$42 million investment. The name change from “Mobile” to “Entertainment” is quite significant, since it conveys a brand meaning and the intentions of the company concerning future strategies (Kapferer, 2008; Balmer, 2008) which was to become an entertainment brand, and move away from making “mobile” games. From the information we gathered during our interviews with the company’s executives, it can be concluded that this name change signalled the decision of switching to a broader strategy, becoming increasingly brand-oriented (Urde *et al.*, 2013; Juntunen *et al.* 2010), but also showing elements of market-orientation as ‘fans’ were influencing the brand identity as Harri Koponen had mentioned, “it’s the fans’ brand”, indicating a marketing paradigm where the two approaches could exist and benefit from synergies (Urde *et al.*, 2013).

Rovio’s interests had exceeded the mobile games industry and expanded its business in the entertainment industry largely by its driving ‘hero’ brand ‘Angry Birds’ as Vesterbacka (Interview) explained to us that, “moving forward of course we’ll do other things besides Angry Birds, but we’re really using Angry Birds to build everything, so distribution and all the other businesses”. For this reason, we believe that at the time of the name to Rovio Entertainment, the company fully fitted into the effective growth stage as identified by Juntunen *et al.* 2010).

Juntunen *et al.* (2010) outlined that the growth stage also sees a re-defining of core values which is part of controlling the corporate personality which for Rovio we

identify as being fun, innovative, daring and ambitious. As evidenced by Rovio Entertainment's bold entry into many new markets and industries without the know-how, and setting unheard of goals and objectives internally such as reaching one billion fans that was made in 2011, and already reached by 2012, showing the entrepreneurial and exceptional drive of the company and can-do corporate attitude.

While we believe that Rovio Mobile (post-Angry Birds) also fits into what it has been defined as the effective growth stage as mentioned in the earlier section, with Rovio Entertainment the match with Juntunen *et al* (2010) findings is more exact. Indeed, Rovio Entertainment did not only maintain its corporate brand building activities, but also developed them further (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010). It is at this stage that we believe that Rovio's corporate brand identity, already formed with Rovio Mobile, acquired strength and resonance and started to be strategically leveraged by the company over the audience that Angry Birds and its spin off Bad Piggies had developed. As confirmed by Balmer (2001:281),

A corporate brand involves the conscious decision by senior management to distil and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition.

In addition to this, the company's strategies were revised and new ones were formulated, as expected at this stage (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010), such as the decision to go into the entertainment industry, as already stated, but more important than this was the unexpected mention of Vesterbacka of Rovio to become a "Triple E company" which included entrepreneurship and education.

As stated by Mukherjee and Balmer (2008), in a corporate brand-oriented strategy, the company systematically communicates its core values and identity to multiple stakeholders. The company continued its rapid growth, characterized by acquisitions of animation studios (Kombo and Futuremark Games Studios) and massive talent recruitment to run their newly launched Toons channel, which further aimed to share and tell the Angry Birds story and adventures to new and existing fans and bring great branded experiences.

The growth brought Rovio Entertainment to have hundreds of employees, in total a rise to over 800 as of 2014, making it into a large organization, but we make the distinction that it may still fall within the Juntunen *et al.* (2010) effective growth stage, even though his study was based on corporate brand building in SMEs. In Bruce and Scott (1987), we see that Rovio Entertainment would fall within the maturity business stage, as major investments are becoming focused on marketing (Scott and Bruce, 1987) and Vesterbacka told us that management of the company is becoming decentralized, as the corporate structure is divided into smaller units, to avoid becoming too bureaucratic and to remain in a form of ‘startup thinking’. Also the owner is becoming to be financially and operationally distant from the business (Churchill and Lewis, 1983).

Juntunen *et al.* (2010) indicates that the corporation should also manage their corporate branding relationships by developing new relationships and maintaining existing cooperative relationships, which is done by “management, key customers, [...] and all external stakeholders” (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 128). Rovio Entertainment actively engages in finding key strategic partners that are leading brands in various areas of business (licensing, merchandising, etc.) and develop and maintain a relationship with them as if they were their own colleagues, taking a long-term approach and creating win-win scenarios for both partners. Currently, Rovio Entertainment have between 500-600 partners, this is because the company enjoys a high reputation amongst other stakeholders as evident by Harri Koponen, “Rovio set out to create this reputation that they are, “trustworthy, long-term, innovative, quality oriented”. These multiple relationships are supported by the fans of the corporation on all levels as they benefit from access to new companies that Rovio indicates are also great sources of new branded experiences.

What really is interesting with Rovio Entertainment is when they started producing intellectual property other than Angry Birds. The company started producing new IP such as Amazing Alex (2012) and Angry Birds spin-off Bad Piggies (2012) and The Croods (2013) which signaled that Rovio Entertainment was creating parallel brands under the Rovio Entertainment corporate brand in order to increase their fan base, which they could then later leverage the corporate brand on. We see that Juntunen *et al.* (2010) is no longer applicable to Rovio Entertainment as it has outgrown the

boundaries of the study and now serves as trailblazers in how to successfully transition into an entertainment brand.

Shortly after releasing *Amazing Alex*, Rovio Entertainment released *Toons.tv*, an animated channel that would air weekly *Angry Toon* episodes of the *Angry Bird* characters in order to better tell the story of the *Angry Birds* universe and engage with the fans. The previous acquisitions of animated studios made it possible for the production to be in-house and have Rovio control the channel. This event provides clarity in what Rovio aims to do which is to tell the story of the *Angry Birds* with the beloved characters in focus. The red emblem R for Rovio now as mentioned earlier, seems to become a more symbolic emblem as it represents a bonfire, which people usually associated with sharing stories with. Initially the word Rovio was chosen because it was trendy and a good name, but it turns out that it provides real added value and powerful source of identity for Rovio as a strong, ambitious, forward-thinking company that has a core competence in storytelling and this image reflected to the fans.

Another milestone for the company was entering into the publishing area. Rovio Books has over hundreds of products published and translated into many languages and within the mobile games industry became their own publisher. The change provided more exposure to the Rovio brand as the mobile app now displays a little R ‘Rovio’ emblem permanently on the app in the top right corner, as well as inside the game. This exposure further allows customers and other stakeholders to recognize the Rovio corporate brand and associate it more with intangibles that they associate with their product brands such as *Angry Birds* and *Bad Piggies*.

The Rovio recognition and use of the Rovio corporate brand was further strengthened by the announcement of *ROVIOSTARS™*, Rovio’s first publishing arm for (third party games). Despite not using the Red Rovio emblem, it retains the name ‘Rovio’ and adds the words ‘stars’ with the graphic logo being three stars, a resemblance from the gameplay of *Angry Birds*, making the relationship between Rovio and *Angry Birds* once again very close and the stars symbolizing ‘quality’ in that, “stars go hand in hand with a star title, so a quality title” (Jakob Longer, Interview).

This month Rovio also announced the release of LVL 11, a program where Rovio launches mobile games which are “different kinds of games” from what the Angry Birds games and identity are known for. From the first game RE TRY we observed that the main differences are that there is no story, it is not centered around characters, and as hinted by Vesterbacka, games may not be family-friendly, as the family friendly label is reserved for the Angry Birds brand, but not Rovio. This is a further evidence of the fact that the corporate brand identity of Rovio is not the same as Angry Birds brand identity.

Peter Vesterbacka told us also that they are launching Angry Birds playground, an education concept centered around the famous and world-renowned Finnish education system. Rovio aim to revolutionize and make learning ‘fun’, an element consistently found in their brand identity. The move into education is still within their core values and promise as it aims to delight and certainly ‘surprise their fans’. Despite findings that the age and gender split are equal for Angry Bird fans, we believe that majority of fans are children who are attracted to the animated cartoons and are the most engaging fans with the brand. It therefore makes sense for Rovio to enter into education as this serves to only increase the relationship with their current fans and bring in news fans. This move also aligns itself with the corporate mission and vision of Rovio, which is to reach a billion fans, daily.

In conclusion, after becoming an entertainment/publisher/education company, the company seems to consolidate and strengthen their corporate brand identity of Rovio Entertainment by introducing ‘Rovio’ related programs and launches, consolidating strategic relationships with game developing companies and increasing their partnerships. This is common in a corporate brand-oriented strategy since, as stated by Balmer (2010), the company enlarges its focus to all stakeholders, without only focusing on consumers.

5.4 Angry Birds Product Brand



Image 5. Angry Birds.

Smart phones were becoming widely adopted by consumers starting 2007, especially after the release of the iPhone and the App store, resulting in a big opportunity and boom in the mobile gaming industry. A small skillful mobile games company, Rovio Mobile realized that in order to differentiate themselves (Aaker, 2004) from their competitors in an extremely crowded and growing market, they should take a branding approach (Kapferer, 2012), giving their product meaning through intangible and tangible benefits which would form a beloved international brand. In a small study on the mobile games industry, Stenbacka (2007: 13) found that if the brand is weak, “even a good-quality [mobile] game [...] cannot compensate for the negative impact of a weak brand”. Therefore, branding in the mobile games industry can be seen as a precursor to both growth and success.

Based on our findings in empirical and theory, we conclude that Rovio implemented a product/service-brand strategy using ‘Angry Birds’ after the games success on the App store. This is because the company Rovio was hidden behind the product brand of Angry Birds (Kapferer, 2008) and Vesterbacka explaining that the company was “going all in with Angry Birds”. As an SME with limited resources (Okopu et al., 2007) and time (Boyle, 2003) there was no roadmap for Rovio for ‘how to build a brand’, since much of the existing literature was based on large organizations (Urde, 2003, 2009; Balmer, 2008) or at the time, well-known brands (Berthon *et al.* 2008; Juntunen *et al.*, 2010; Bresciani and Eppler, 2010; Rode and Vallaster, 2005). The

existing theory on building a brand within the SME context is limited (Bresciani and Eppler, 2010; Merrilees, 2007; Spence & Essoussi, 2010; Witt and Rode, 2005) with little to no direct relevance of their findings that could be carried over and applied to the mobile gaming industry, but could be used in analysis of Rovio during the pre-establishment and early growth stages.

As the flagship brand for Rovio, Angry Birds has become a beloved international brand by all ages around the world. With Angry Birds, we see that they were able to create their own roadmap in how to build a brand and shape that brand's identity. The references made by Vesterbacka pertaining to animated characters and globally well-known brands such as Hello Kitty, Mario, Mickey Mouse are indications of benchmarking and of what the brand wants to become, which is to say an enduring brand, built around memorable characters. For Rovio, their animated characters are the Angry Birds, in which we observe that the red bird is often seen as the original or leader, as he appears in the middle of the group of birds, his red color can be associated with the emotion anger or passion, bears a resemblance to the red Rovio emblem and he is an original character and the face on all the Angry Birds mobile game apps. The popular red bird character of Angry Birds can also be argued to be an emblem itself, since it "serves to symbolise brand identity through a visual figure other than the brand name" and can also "help identify and recognise the brand" (Kapferer, 2008: 194). In fact, it constantly recurs in company's communications and it is the only Angry Birds' character that appears on the iconic red hoodies worn by Rovio's employees and executives inside and outside the office.

5.4.1 Angry Birds Brand Identity Prism

Considering the worldwide success of Angry Birds, which allowed the company to grow remarkably in a short span of time, it is interesting to discover how much the product brand identity of Angry Birds influenced the corporate brand identity of Rovio at the time, in order to arrive to a complete understanding of what is the corporate brand identity of Rovio Entertainment nowadays. In order to do so, we made use of Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2012), which allows to understand and evaluate the identity of a product brand, and we therefore we applied it to Angry Birds.

The illustration below is a representation of the brand identity prism by Kapferer (2012) collected from our interview findings of Rovio executives, managers, secondary data and observations.

Physique Animated characters (red bird), typography, quality game app, consumer products, Angry Toons, activity/theme parks	Personality “Mighty Eagle”, young, quirky, fun
Relationship Fan-centric, social	Culture Entrepreneurial, ambitious, daring
Reflection For everyone, pop-culture, family-friendly	Self-image Happy, positive, trendy

Table 6. Angry Birds product brand identity prism

Physique: *Animated characters, typography, quality game app, consumer products, toons, parks*

The physique describes the external elements of a brand, what we can see and touch. Angry Birds started out as a mobile game, so many still see the brand as a mobile game or app. Angry Birds still have a strong presence in the mobile games with various release of brand extensions as seen in Appendix (Table 1). We observe that the brand characters and typography that spell out ‘Angry Birds’ is distinct, and has been communicated consistently since the start, which creates familiarity and consistency of the brand. The animated characters, such as the angry birds and green pigs, are the main external representation of the brand physique. The birds are shown typically with angry expressions, while the pigs seem to have a worrisome expression, although they are drawn in a comically and lighthearted manner. This is to illustrate the relationship that the characters have between each other’s and is introduced to the players in gameplay as well as storylines before each level. The Angry Birds

characters and typography of the name are found everywhere from on screen mobile platforms to various consumer products, Angry Bird Toons and Angry Bird theme and activity parks.

Relationship: *Fan-centric and social*

Angry Birds have a very unique relationship between their customers and other audiences. What we found was that the relationship is extremely fan-centric. They do not use the terms ‘customer’, but use the word ‘fans’. This creates a more personal and emotional connection with the brand, which increases engagement with the brand. Angry Birds actively engage with their fans on all forms of social media, replying to all posts and even have a dedicated space for ‘fans’ on their newly launched ‘www.angrybirds.com’ home page, where fan mail is posted as ‘monday mailbag’ and fan art is collected and shared. Vesterbacka even stated, “the brand is most important to us, after the fans”.

Reflection: *For everyone, pop-culture, family-friendly*

Angry Birds has grown to become a global phenomenon and it has become part of pop-culture. The brand’s characters as shown in the games and the weekly ‘Angry Toons episodes’ we watched, are quite comical and with their various personalities reflect many types of individuals in society. There seems to be an angry bird for everyone, which makes it a very personal and inclusive brand that speaks to family values. Some would say that Angry Bird is still ‘just’ a game, but to others it’s a way of expressing your personality through the choice of bird characters on branded merchandise. The largest reflection of Angry Bird’s is that it is family-friendly and for the entire family. There are many different characters that fit a family member. Consumer products, Toons, activity and theme parks enforce because these are places that families and parents can spend time with their children or places and things that children enjoy doing.

Personality: *“Mighty Eagle”, young, quirky, fun*

Kapferer (2008:184) states that the brand personality comprises of the human characteristics of the brand, and that they can be “real or symbolic”. For Angry Birds, we have a very real example in the form of our interviewee Peter Vesterbacka. Not only is the undisputed global Angry Birds ambassador as CMO, he also holds the job title of ‘Mighty Eagle’ which is a rare character in the Angry Birds universe, but also the strongest and show of strength. Other personalities associated with Angry Birds are the birds themselves, which are comical in the storylines. They always seem to unsuccessfully protect their eggs from the pigs, have them stolen from them, and somehow manage to get the eggs back. There is a youthful element in the birds’ constant and new adventures, which makes the experience enjoyable and fun to watch and to eagerly anticipate the next story.

Culture: *Entrepreneurial, ambitious, daring*

The spirit at Angry Bird’s is an ambitious can-do attitude, which dares to do things differently, which is evidenced in their corporate culture that is turned ‘upside down’ compared to standard corporate culture norms. This is an entrepreneurial trait that is common in startups where structures are more loose (Rode and Vallaster, 2005), but lost as companies grow larger and bureaucratic. Rovio executives and employees try to remain in that startup thinking, as evidenced by still coming to work in the iconic red ‘Angry Birds’ hoodie and wearing it in public as well in private. This also creates a form of unity and pride amongst the organization about their work and showcasing it to others. Creativity flows freely and employees are given meaning in their jobs. High quality is central to all process from gaming to merchandise and experiences, because Rovio wants to provide great Angry Birds branded experiences to their fans. Vesterbacka explicitly said that ‘I think it’s very bad reason to do something, just because we can make a quick buck [...] you have to have a great product, a great experience”. In a trade off of quality vs price, for Angry Birds, quality and their fans are always the priority and the culture reflects this.

Self - Image: *Happy, positive and trendy*

Urde (2013) calls this the “I am” when speaking of engaging with the brand. For Angry Birds there is an aspect of being seen as trendy, because Angry Birds has become part of pop-culture. Also, it is a brand that brings positive emotions such as feelings of happiness, laughter and enjoying killing time in a fun way.

5.5 Rovio Entertainment corporate brand

In less than ten years, Rovio has grown from being a small mobile games company to a growing global entertainment powerhouse and possible education and learning provider in the future. As outlined in the growth stages, the organization has gone through periods of growth and changes that have influenced how the corporate brand has developed and effectively, how the corporate brand identity has been formed at Rovio. It is somewhat important to make a distinction in that Rovio the company and brand share the same name, and so it is difficult with certainty to determine if Rovio is a corporate brand or a commercial brand as introduced by Kapferer (2008: 29). Both can be present and true, and after looking through our empirical findings and looking at “context, objectives and target of communication”, we can make the distinction that Rovio Entertainment is a corporate brand.

Balmer (1995, cited in Balmer, 2010: 187) had found that “increasingly, institutions will find it difficult to hide behind their product brands with a more astute public wishing to know more about corporations”. In Rovio’s case, the desire to grow the corporate brand can be argued in that the corporate brand did not want to eventually become overshadowed by the strong product brand of Angry Birds. Also, as Mikael Hed had stated, Rovio needed to diversify in order to achieve sustainable and credible growth in the future. Rovio should not rely solely on Angry Birds brand and has therefore set out to acquire and build other brands such as Amazing Alex and Bad Piggies.

Choosing to move from a product brand to a corporate brand oriented strategy leads to several advantages. An argument for this is provided by Hatch and Schultz (2003) in that the product brand has a relatively short life span compared to the corporate

brand, while the corporate brand lasts as long as the company. Having a stronger corporate brand allows Rovio Entertainment to leverage on the values and value proposition that it represents to all aspects of the company, and not just limited to one product or brand such as Angry Birds. Other than to enhance a company's credibility and trustworthiness in a specific market, leveraging on a corporate brand allows company to differentiate (Aaker, 2004) and to enhance competitiveness in fragmented markets (Hatch and Schultz, 2003).

From our empirical findings, it becomes clearer that Rovio Entertainment started to leverage and develop on Rovio corporate brand when they entered publishing. As a publisher, they could use their corporate logo on their mobile game apps icon (See Appendix Fig. 6. and Fig. 7.), creating more visual associations with the logo and emblem of red bird. They were also able to launch RovioStars™ which released other games, which had similar features of Angry Birds (characters, fun, game play) but could also reach other gaming audiences than Angry Birds. These new gamers would become fans of Rovio and recognize the quality and positive associations with the corporate brand of Rovio named titles.

According to Aaker (2004: 10) Rovio is the endorsing corporate brand that could eventually become an “ultimate branded house” such as the strategy that Disney has. This would make sense as Rovio in the past has made references to and benchmarks to the Disney brand. We now take a look at how we analyse the Rovio Entertainment corporate brand identity in the CBIM.

5.6 Rovio Entertainment CBIM (Corporate Brand Identity Matrix)

<p>Value proposition</p> <p>Entertainment, versatility, depth, quality and great value for money</p>	<p>Relationships</p> <p>Fan-centric, Partnerships</p>	<p>Position</p> <p>A Triple E company: <i>Entertainment</i> <i>Education</i> <i>Entrepreneurship</i></p>
<p>Expression</p> <p>Rovio emblem Storytelling, Memorable characters</p>	<p>Promise and core values</p> <p>Delight and Surprise the fans</p>	<p>Personality</p> <p>Fun, Innovative and Ambitious</p>
<p>Mission & Vision</p> <p>Reach a billion fans, everyday</p>	<p>Culture</p> <p>Not doing what everybody else is doing</p>	<p>Competence</p> <p>Talented people, a desirable partner, storytelling, animation</p>

Table 7: Rovio Entertainment Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM).

5.6.1 Describing the corporate brand identity: Rovio Entertainment

In describing the corporate brand identity, it improves the general understanding of ‘what’ the Rovio Entertainment corporate brand identity actually is. Many organizations do not have one or, more importantly, are not aware that they have a corporate brand and therefore cannot utilise it for differentiation or gaining competitive advantage. The CBIM matrix is a brand new tool that is specifically made for looking at corporate brand identity and helping management with this issue.

On Rovio’s official home page there is written that, “Rovio has grown alongside Angry Birds” (Rovio, n.d.i). This, combined with the results of our findings is that we interpret this as seeing Rovio as a master or corporate brand and Angry Birds as the

product brand. We also make the connection that the Angry Birds brand as a form of ‘daughter brand’ has influenced and shaped Rovio’s corporate brand identity. Indeed, Kapferer (2008: 27) states that,

Many companies that based their success on product brands have now decided to create a corporate brand in order to make company actions, values and missions more salient and to diffuse specific added values.

The corporate brand that is taking shape and demonstrated in our earlier ‘effective growth stage’ (Juntunen et al., 2010) has borrowed many elements found in our Angry Birds Brand Identity Prism (see Fig. 6). However, there are distinctions between the two brands and the separation is becoming more clear as Rovio keeps growing as an entertainment company.

Value Proposition: *Entertainment, versatility, depth, quality and great value for money*

What Rovio is able to do as a corporate brand is to leverage on their existing audience and fan bases of its popular and recognizable brands such as Angry Birds and Bad Piggies, not so much on Amazing Alex. Value to the customer or ‘fans’ is that they know that products and services are coming from a reputable company which has provided them with previously and on-going great entertainment, consistently provided high quality products and experiences, and provide a source of great value for money. As confirmed by Kapferer (2008: 28), a stronger corporate brand has an influence in how consumers perceive the company’s product brands, “especially if they share the same name as the corporation or are visibly endorsed by the former”. An example of value for money is that the Rovio games division listened to their fans and popular trends by switching to a freemium-model of gaming, making the game experience accessible and free to all. Rovio is also becoming a Triple E company that will offer versatility and depth across many industries. The main value proposition of Rovio is that customers know what they are getting in their product or service, regardless of industry, much like what Disney or Virgin have been able to accomplish with their brand.

Relationships: *Fan-centric, Partnerships*

Rovio maintains their approach to relationships the same as their product brands. They are all about their fans. At Rovio, “it’s the fans’ brand. They are collaborating all the time” (Harri Koponen, Interview). The active fan-centric focus on their fans enables relationships to be intimate and engaging and built over long periods of time (Urde, 2013) and is something that Rovio is ahead of other entertainment brands. The emergence of social media and two-way communication between companies and customers has shown that brands need to be available around the clock and provide service and support to their customers, but also to listen and respond to them. In the the CBIM there is a vertical arrow linking relationship with culture, which is to show the relationship between Rovio’s fan-centric mindset and their internal culture of not doing what everybody else is doing. This serves to differentiation Rovio and to stand out by providing the best experiences for their fans in ways that other companies are not doing yet.

Partnerships are also a very important for Rovio’s corporate brand identity, which it forms by engaging in desirable key strategic partnerships with world leading brands. Currently, they have around 500-600 global partners and value their partners as close as their own colleagues, and select their partners on a basis that it enables a win-win solution for both parties.

Position: *A Triple E company: Entertainment, Education and Entrepreneurship*

The position element as warned by Urde (2013) is not about brand positioning as suggested by Kapferer (2012). According to Urde (2013: 17), position relates to how the company wants “the corporate brand to be positioned in the market”, and to be perceived by customers and stakeholders. During our interview, Peter Vesterbacka explained that Rovio Entertainment wants to be a triple e company; Entertainment, Education and Entrepreneurship. Basically, its position in the marketplace is the one of a service company.

Expression: *Rovio 'R' emblem, Storytelling, Memorable characters (Red Bird)*

A key component that has been evident at Rovio since the start has been storytelling. The main example is provided by their main product-game Angry Birds. The company created memorable and beloved animated characters around which it developed a story in order to engage its fans. Moreover, as stated by Urde (2013: 16), the “expression element is concerned with verbal, visual and other forms of identification”. The Rovio emblem, the bonfire, is indeed consistently present as a visual element. Kapferer (2008) shares similar sentiments in his use of brand characters and visual symbols to help differentiate a brand’s qualities.

Core: *Delight and Surprise the fans*

Rovio’s core and promise is to always ‘delight and surprise the fans’. This is at the heart at what they do, every game, project, event that Rovio produces has to keep this promise and due to significance is located in the middle of the CBIM. Vesterbacka mentioned that Rovio will not do something out of character, even if there was the opportunity to make a quick cash in. Urde (2013: 752) stated that, “the importance of a brand core is its capacity to give focus, guidance and coordination in the management of brands”. As Rovio expanded from the mobile gaming industry to their other industries, such as animation and their most recent ‘surprise’ entry into the education and learning industry, we see that the core does not change. It might be strange to have imaged that a mobile gaming app could become used as an education tool, but that has become the case and Rovio cleverly leverages its beloved characters by children to advance learning as something fun through their Angry Birds Playground program which is based on the famous and proven Finnish educational philosophy of education which consistently ranks as one of the world’s best.

Personality: *Fun, Innovative and Ambitious*

The corporate personality differs from the product personality in that it should reflect the, “values, actions, and words of all employees of the corporation” (Kelly and Richely, 2006: 76). From our findings, we believe that Rovio has a fun, innovative and ambitious personality.

Mission and Vision: *Reach a billion fans, everyday*

The vision for Rovio Entertainment is to reach a billion fans, everyday. It is an extremely ambitious goal which might take a few years to achieve. Vesterbacka gave us an example of Coca Cola as a benchmark, and with the aid of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, the goal is realistic. It is interesting to see how the mission and vision has developed for Rovio since inception from making the best mobile games out there, to then changing it to reach one billion fans, which at the time was unheard of and was met by ridicule to now aiming to reach those billion fans, everyday, actively engaging with one eighth of the world's population.

Culture: *Not doing what everybody else is doing*

The culture at Rovio is of ambition, drive and not doing what everybody else is doing. As Jakob Longer told us in our interview, "Rovio is different". Employees wear Angry Birds hoodies, the environment is very informal, and the culture is entrepreneurial, a backflip on traditional corporate culture. Employees are pushed to always "try new things" (Peter Vesterbacka, Interview).

Competence: *Talented people, a desirable partner, storytelling and animation*

Competence is of strategic management value as it relates to the "creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage" (Urde, 2013: 752). A core competence of Rovio is its people, who are extremely talented at what they do and are recruited or acquired for their skills such as storytelling. Rovio also has core competence in animation as they can make their own animations and control the value chain by in-house studios. The reputation of Angry Birds has also served to attract top talent to seek employment at the company as evidenced by the growth in employees from 12 in 2009 to over 800 in 2014. Rovio manages their brands very carefully and enjoy high brand awareness and reputation globally through licensing offices. This makes them a very desirable partner to work with. Rovio's philosophy of fan first,

brand second is applied to partners as well as they are treated just like any other co-worker. As a desirable brand with a huge user base, Rovio has the power to select their partnership, partnering with key strategic partners, and ensures a win-win situation for both companies, making a working relationship attractive.

5.7 Summary

As for the corporate brand development of Rovio, we see that the corporate brand was non-existent at Relude, only partially fit criteria as Rovio Mobile in the early growth stage and only started to develop as a corporate brand when Rovio Entertainment in the effective growth stage. The corporate brand has been largely hidden behind the product brand of Angry Birds and the corporate brand can be viewed as being very weak. Management did not even believe there was a corporate brand in the pre-establishment and early growth stage of Relude and Rovio Mobile, as stated to us by Vesterbacka, “I think that Rovio and Rovio Mobile that’s like not really a brand [...] it is about the game brands, that’s really what’s been driving”.

However, when defining brand identity and source of powerful brand identity as stated by Kapferer (2008) Rovio Mobile at the early growth and effective growth stage does show signs of a brand as evidenced by the choice of a good name and strong visual emblems that add value and instil meaning. The Rovio emblem, the red ‘leader’ bird and bonfire might not have had special meaning when being chosen but these have meaning now as the red color demonstrates aggressive and ambition, both which are characteristics and organizational traits unique to Rovio culture. The bonfire element can represent a gathering where stories are told and shared. Storytelling has become a core competence at Rovio and has been used effectively in the games and animation to increase the amount of fans that actively engage with the brand.

The company states that the Rovio has grown alongside Angry Birds that we interpret and use theory in determining that the product brand identity of Angry Birds has heavily influenced the corporate brand identity of Rovio. This is evident from the culture existing and driving Rovio. After becoming a publisher, Rovio started to strengthen and bring forward the corporate brand. This is seen by their introduction of

new IP such as Amazing Alex and spin-off Bad Piggies and The Croods. The launch of RovioStars™ and LVL 11 both embrace Rovio in the name (*RovioStars™* and in LVL 11, the centerpiece of the logo). Their entry into publishing as evidenced by RovioStars™ and LVL 11 also indicated that the mobile gaming was still a core business and source of growth and identity for the company, although the identity was different for Rovio as stated that Angry Birds is family friendly but that all things Rovio related, might not be. Also recent revelations about Rovio entering education through the Angry Birds Playground program, but still using other Rovio IP show that the company aims to position itself more as Triple E company in the hopes of fulfilling their vision of reaching (and engaging) with a billion fans, everyday while utilizing their other brands under the corporate brand of Rovio.

6 Discussion

In this section, we offer theoretical and managerial implications of our study.

6.1 Theoretical implications

In our study we find that in the pre-establishment, early growth and even effective growth stages, Rovio fits in with what researches describe as issues that startups or small business typically face, which include; limited know-how (Rode and Vallaster, 2005), finances (Kirby, 2002), resources (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007; Okopu et al., 2007) and time (Wong and Merriless, 2005; Boyle, 2003). Our case study would indicate that finances and money (Kirby, 2002), primarily in the form of capital investment, seem to be the largest restriction and possibility for growth at the pre-establishment and early growth stage (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010). We would argue that capital investment acts as the “crisis point”, that the company needs to pass in order to get to the next growth stage (Juntunen *et al.*, 2010: 119).

This is evidenced by the fact that after receiving investments as Relude, the company was renamed. They then had the necessary capital to solve other issues that plague small businesses by investing in know-how such as employing game developers and designers. When Rovio Mobile received substantial investment, the company again was renamed, and was able to restructure the company and pursue new strategies. They were able to acquire specialist animation know-how through their acquisitions of Kombo and Futuremark, which in turn allowed them to establish their own in-house animation and prototyping while gaining core competencies (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990) within this area which would serve to differentiate them from competition. We therefore contribute empirically valid theory in that capital investment would represent the main prerequisite in moving between growth stages and eventually passing a crisis point as it provides a small company the means to solve their other issues.

Balmer (2010: 194) proclaims that “for corporate branding scholars, policymakers and consultants, these [next 15 years] are indeed exciting times”. Balmer argued that

corporate branding is a new marketing philosophy and he is right in arguing that it will cause us to reflect on some key marketing concepts. In our findings, for example, we see that while Rovio Entertainment was building their corporate brand, they started integrating and using both brand-oriented and market-oriented approaches. The combination of the two different marketing paradigms is argued to be possible by Urde *et al.* (2013) as he claims that these marketing paradigms, despite being different, are also synergistic and can be used together. Our case study provides theoretical validity to the “the market and brand-oriented approaches model (Urde *et al.*, 2013) which is used as a base in constructing a balanced CBIM and ability to understand the corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013).

Urde (2013: 758) argues that a strong theoretical contribution of the CBIM is that it, “integrates [credible] existing theory into a single framework”. However, there is a weakness in that it is very subjective in terms of deciding how much existing theory should be used to create this framework. When conducting the study, we found that some of our participants mentioned the term brand reputation, as defined by Kapferer (2008: 26), “brand reputation is created by familiarity, (I know it well, I use it a lot) and by brand perceived uniqueness (this brand is unique, is different, there is no substitute)”. This is similar and contributes to differentiation as defined by Aaker (2004). However, this element is not found in the current CBIM matrix. Urde (2013) does make brief mentions in his external element that a value proposition should lead to a favorable reputation (Greysier, 2009) while claiming that image and reputation have significant influence over how corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013: 753).

We therefore propose a revised CBIM matrix with the explicit inclusion of brand reputation as an element and would suggest that it includes factors introduced by Dowling (2002) when he introduced the topic in his ‘creating corporate reputations’, but also more recent and fluid thinkers such as Balmer (2010) who includes corporate brand reputation in his discussion of the new identity and brandscape. We believe that adding brand reputation, and even more explicitly corporate brand reputation to the existing published framework, would further serve to validate the theoretical framework developed by Urde (2013) as it is viewed as both of theoretical and managerial importance for the understanding and management of the corporate brand identity.

6.2 Managerial implications

The aim of this thesis was to identify and describe the corporate brand identity of a successful company from the mobile games industry. The growth and expansion of Rovio into the entertainment industry provides new opportunities and challenges for the company, which are made more difficult as they now begin to enter the learning and education industry. As the result of this thesis, the management of Rovio Entertainment will have an overview and understanding of what their corporate brand identity is right now. The main issues going forward are what to do with it, “how it works and how to build it” (Urde, 2013: 758). In discussing this, Rovio needs to start looking at marketing strategies that enable them to leverage their corporate brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2003) in order to take advantage of the halo effect (Kapferer, 2008) that the Angry Birds fan base has created for the corporate brand of Rovio.

The Angry Birds brand has over a billion fans globally, so if they can create the halo effect and transfer the core values of ‘fun’, ‘quality’ and ‘fans’ to their corporate brand strategy, it would substantially improve the Rovio corporate brand identity and allow future undertakings by the corporation ‘Rovio’ to be more easily recognized by consumers as a provider and source of high quality entertainment and fun. This would further serve to differentiate Rovio from other entertainment brands in a good light, as consumers would begin to know more about what to expect from Rovio products and services across its variety of industries. Consumers might become more reciprocal and at ease of trying or engaging with Rovio branded experiences, products and services in industries such as education and learning, allowing Rovio Entertainment to reach their vision of engaging with one billion fans, every day.

As the corporate brand identity is shaped and influenced by a company’s employees from all levels, the findings and structure of this report would be beneficial for new employees and summer interns to Rovio Entertainment. The historical account of the company timeline and growth would allow new and current employees to understand the history of the company and see where the company is at currently. This allows employees to better assimilate to the existing corporate culture, enhance the corporate brand identity and support the overall company strategy going forward.

7 Conclusion

In the following chapter we answer our research aim, drawing the main conclusions of our study, and provide suggestions for future research.

The aim of this paper was to identify and describe the corporate brand identity of a successful company from the mobile games industry, examining its corporate brand development at different growth stages.

In order to explore Rovio Entertainment corporate brand identity, we started by examining Rovio's corporate brand development at different growth stages, where we used Juntunen *et al.* (2010) growth stages as boundaries. At the first growth stage (pre-establishment), when Relude was founded, it was a startup where the corporate brand was non-existent, even though Juntunen *et al.* (2010) had found that corporate brand building should start at the pre-establishment growth phase, but was not the case with Rovio's predecessor Relude. Before the name changed from Relude to Rovio Mobile in 2005, the company was still in its pre-establishment stage, a difference to what it would have been expected according to Juntunen *et al.* (2010) findings. According to definitions of a corporate brand, Rovio did not fulfill the criteria and therefore could still not be considered a corporate brand at the time.

However, there were some elements of a corporate brand development as evidenced by the choice of a good name and strong visual emblem for Rovio. After the release of their successful mobile game Angry Birds, the company entered the early growth stage. It was at this stage that Rovio started to develop its corporate brand, which was strongly being influenced by its flagship and globally successful product brand 'Angry Birds'. Due to Angry Birds' success, the company entered the effective growth stage as they revisited and formed new strategies and renamed to Rovio Entertainment. It was finally at this time that Rovio's corporate brand started to become stronger and more fully developed as it acquired strength and resonance with the release of Rovio name related programs and intellectual property that was different from Angry Birds. Now is the time when Rovio has started strategically

leverage the corporate brand, mainly across the audience that Angry Birds had developed in order to successfully enter new markets and industries.

From Rovio's case study we can conclude that a strong product brand identity can influence the corporate brand identity remarkably. As shown in the analysis section, the core values and culture from the Angry Birds' product brand identity influenced heavily the corporate brand identity of Rovio Entertainment. From our empirical data it can be argued and contributed to the theory that in SMEs, when a strong and successful product is developed, it can strongly affect the future development of the company, influencing the corporate identity, the core values and, consequently how the corporate brand identity develops.

To summarize, based on the analysis of our empirical data, we first examined the corporate brand building activities of Relude, Rovio Mobile and Rovio Entertainment in order to find out if they had a corporate brand and at what point in time they developed a corporate brand. We then used the product brand identity prism to derive the brand identity of their flagship brand 'Angry Birds' because we identify the Rovio strategy as a product brand based strategy where the corporate brand is mostly hidden behind Angry Birds brand. We conclude that Rovio has grown alongside the Angry Birds brand and that the brand identity of Angry Birds has influenced the corporate brand identity of Rovio. In applying the CBIM to Rovio Entertainment, we identify and describe the similarities that are shared with the brand identity of Angry Birds, but also differences that are unique to Rovio Entertainment. We also conclude that it is only recently that the Rovio corporate brand has become stronger and diverged from the Angry Birds brand. Going forward with expansion into new industries, Rovio should align their marketing and branding strategies with the now uncovered corporate brand identity and remain true to their core promise to delight and surprise their fans. This fan-centric mindset is their source of differentiation or 'red hoodie', providing them with a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors in a crowded market, where branding is becoming more common.

7.1 Suggestions for future research

First, from a strategic brand management perspective and in light of the recent events at Rovio Entertainment, such as entering the education and learning industry, it would be very interesting to see what sort of brand architecture and brand strategy would be used going forward in expanding the corporate brand. The company is moving towards a corporate brand, but interesting to see whether they employ more of a house of brands strategy or branded house strategy. So a suggestion would be to investigate Rovio's future marketing strategies comparing these two brand architectures.

Second, in addition, the research of other unique cases could be studied within the same framework of using Juntunen *et al.* (2010) and Urde (2013). This, in order to see if any findings are generalizable, industry specific, or company specific. A first investigation could be to include other mobile gaming companies from Finland such as SuperCell, Sumea and Dark Chocolate to find out similarities and differences regarding corporate branding functions within the mobile gaming industry within Finland.

Third, Rovio is a unique case as it has transitioned from a mobile games company to an entertainment brand, it is hard to find comparative or similar case studies, but becoming an entertainment brand could be focal point of a study, especially entertainment brands that are also character based. We would suggest to study the corporate brand of Sanrio and how much its flagship brand Hello Kitty has influenced the development of Sanrio corporate brand identity and whether this process is similar or different than what Rovio experienced.

Fourth, our research outlines the basic concept of corporate brand identity and corporate brand building functions at different growth stages. As we found out, many researches use different definitions and have different opinions regarding what a brand means, and what is meant by the terms corporate brand or corporate brand identity. In future studies, researcher should aim to take a critical branding perspective and contrast how corporate brand identity is viewed from a contemporary perspective by comparing for example Balmer (2008, 2010) with Kapferer, (2008, 2012).

Finally, Rovio say they are the first entertainment brand to actively engage with all of their fans on social media. This could become an industry standard, where other companies follow suit and benchmark to Rovio. Therefore, we suggest an examination of Rovio's current social media strategy where attention is paid to the research area of collaboration and brand co-creation with fans or users of the brand.

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9 Appendix

9.1 Rovio Angry Birds brand extensions

Angry Birds Seasons	2010
Angry Birds Rio	2011
Angry Birds Space	2012
Angry Birds Star Wars	2012
Angry Birds Friends	2012
Angry Birds Star Wars II	2013
Angry Birds Go!	2013
Angry Birds Epic	2014
Angry Birds Stella*	TBA

Table 1. List of Angry Birds games since initial Angry Birds launch in 2009.

9.2 App Icon Images



ANGRY BIRDS

Fig. 6. Angry Birds: Rovio



Fig. 7. Bad Piggies: Rovio

9.3 In-depth Rovio Timeline of significant events

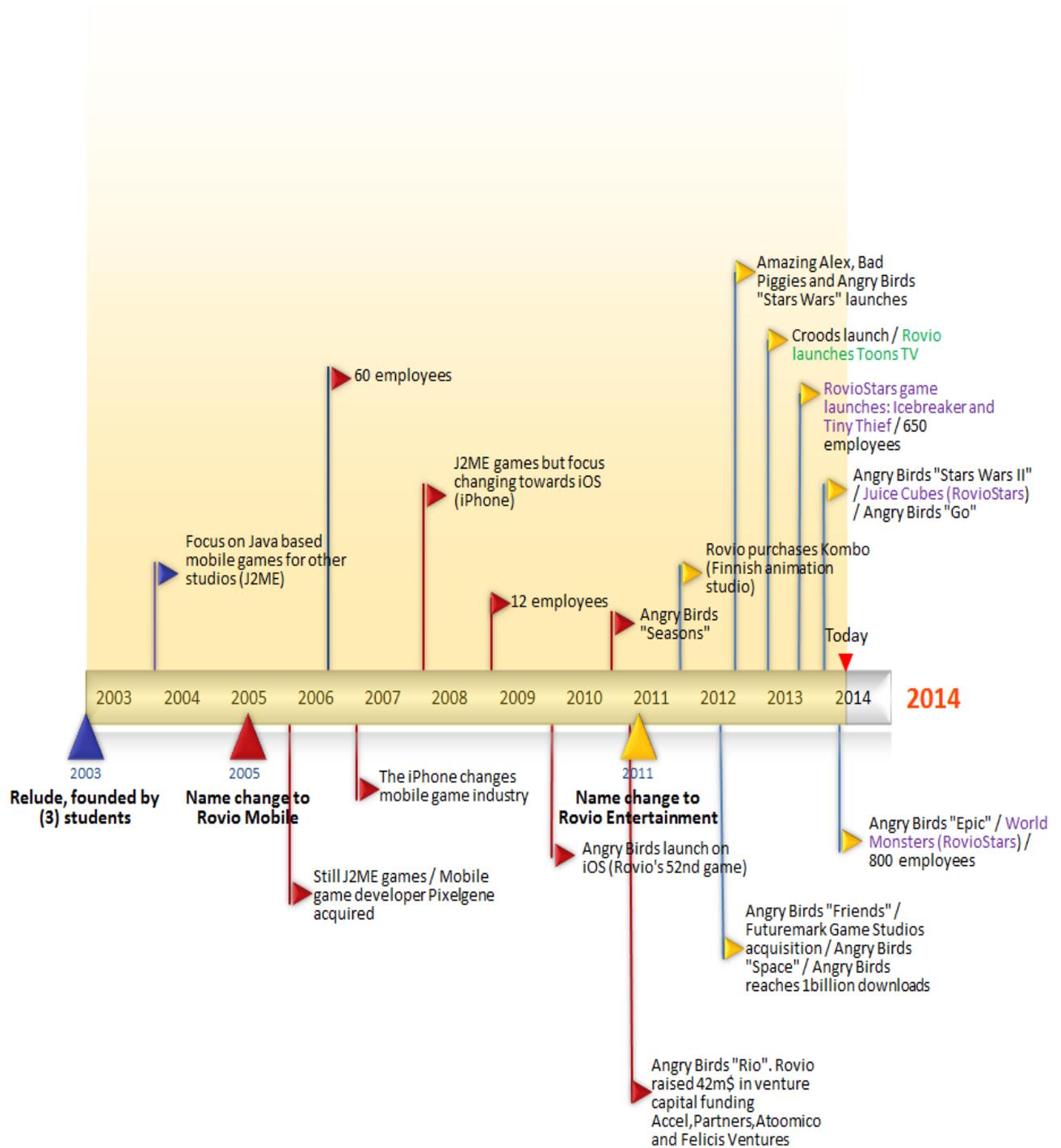


Fig.8. The Rovio Timeline. Provides further and specific details to Fig 5 regarding important events.

9.4 Interview guide (excerpt)

Why was the name Rovio chosen? Why the choice of the red 'R' emblem?

Why in your visual material is there the name 'Rovio' with the emblem only, instead of full company name? Is there a significance?

Why did you change the name from Relude to Rovio Mobile when launched in 2005?

What were the reasons why you chose to brand yourself through Angry Birds and not as Rovio Mobile?

Why did you change the name from Rovio Mobile to Rovio Entertainment? Was this intentional?

→ Was it because the success of Angry Birds was clouding the organization future ability to deliver other games, which fans could identify as being made by you?

→ You have now launched RovioStars, is that an attempt to build the Rovio name?

When did you start attaching the Rovio emblem to the apps top right corner? Why?

Would it be fair to say that you are trying to raise the brand awareness for Rovio by doing so?

How well do you think your current fans would recognize the Rovio brand?

What are the perceived benefits of making your existing fan base familiar with the Rovio brand instead of simply Angry Birds?

Is Rovio and Angry birds one and the same or are there differences? If yes, what?

Corporate brand based questions (based on Urde (2013) "Indicative questions for the application of the CBIM framework")

External elements:

Value proposition - Why do people play your games instead of others? What is your value proposition? How do you want your value proposition to appeal to your fans (and stakeholders?) What does Rovio do better than others?

Relationships - What kind of relationship does Rovio maintain with its 'fans'? What is the relationship with other stakeholders? How important are relationships to Rovio?

Position – Where does Rovio see itself in 5 years? What do you hope to be recognized for and known for amongst the fans? Do you want to be the best selling or most grossing mobile games company?

Internal/External elements:

Personality - If you had to compare some human characteristics or qualities to Rovio's corporate character, what would they be?

Core - What does Rovio's promise to its fans? What does the Rovio brand stands for?

Expression - Does Rovio have a unique or special way to communicate to the market? If yes, what is it? If no, why not?

Internal elements:

Mission and vision - What drives you as a company, beyond the aim of making a profit? Is it still your mission to become the first entertainment brand with billion fans? Where do you see the company to be in the next three years? Doing what?

Culture - We noticed you all wear the company's 'hoodie', and the dress code is informal. Why is that? You are a large organization, does it feel like it? Or do you still consider yourself a startup? As a Finnish company, do share Finnish culture traits in the office?

Competences - What do you think makes you stand out from other game developers and companies? Are people important? Or is the game most important? Where are Rovio employees from? What is Rovio doing better than anyone right now?

Interview transcripts available upon request.