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Managing the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona

In Theory and Practice

by

Emma Jungerth
Sam Lidström

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Supervisor: Mats Urde
Examiner: Veronika Tarnovskaya

Abstract

Title: Managing the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona – In Theory and Practice

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Authors: Emma Jungerth & Sam Lidström

Supervisor: Mats Urde, mats.urde@fek.lu.se

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas and to further broaden the understanding through a communicative and managerial lens.

Theoretical Perspective: This study takes a Strategic Brand Management perspective on theory. Previous literature that is explored in this study are concepts in the field of Strategic Brand Management that are related to the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, namely brand identity, brand personality, brand personification, brand persona and storytelling.

Methodology: The research approach in this study has been inspired by Grounded Theory. The data collection methods that has been used are document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The interviews have been conducted with experienced communication professionals.

Empirical data: This study has gathered both primary and secondary data. The primary data that has been derived in the semi-structured interviews are the reasoning by communication professionals regarding the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The secondary data has been case examples of organisations that uses this type of brand persona. These have been gathered through the document analysis.

Originality: The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is a novel and unexplored phenomenon in the Strategic Brand Management literature. The following study shed light on the managerial aspects of communicating the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona by exploring why organisations use it, as well as where and when it should be used.

Contributions: The reasons why an organisation may use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can be explained through the abbreviation *the 5C's*, namely control, continuity, content, co-creation and compass. The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework can furthermore provide guidance regarding when and where this type of persona is suitable. The theory that has been derived through the empirical findings has both theoretical and managerial contributions, since it elaborates the theoretical field of brand personas and provides guidance for practitioners that wants to create a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Furthermore, this study has also contributed with a clarification of the array of concepts related to this phenomenon.

Keywords: Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, Brand Identity, Brand Personality, Brand Personification, Brand Persona, Storytelling, Strategic Brand Management

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Emma Jungerth

emma_jungerth@hotmail.com

Sam Lidström

sam.lidstrom@gmail.com

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1 Introduction

The personification of brands has been a frequent strategy in marketing communication for decades (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). The Marlboro Man, Tony the Tiger, Mr Clean, and Ronald McDonald are all a testimony of the effectiveness of brand personification strategies. These brand personas provide and portray their respective brands with human-like personality characteristics, which ideally stimulates positive brand attitudes amongst the target consumers (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014). Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsey in turn, are examples of real people who personify their own brands, thereby transferring their own human attributes to the brand (Cohen, 2014). Each of these brand personas clearly illustrate either a real or fictional character that in one way or the other embodies the brand. However, it appears that there are exceptions where the line between reality and fiction becomes blurred in terms of communicating the brand persona. It may come to you as a surprise that the founder of the global watch brand Daniel Wellington is in fact named Filip Tysander. Or, that the fashion designer Ted Baker never existed, even though the brand continuously communicates the thoughts and opinions of Ted. The personification of a brand can result in consumers evaluating the brand beyond its functional attributes and consequently lead to a stronger emotional connection between the brand and the consumer (Delbaere, McQuarrie & Phillips, 2011). Conversely, organisations that portray fiction as reality will eventually lose trust in their brand (Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). Accordingly, the case of Daniel Wellington and Ted Baker illustrate a paradoxical approach towards brand personification strategies as they successfully communicate a fictitious brand persona to such an extent that people perceive the persona as a real-life person.

The scarceness of empirical studies regarding brand personas and personification strategies in general should not be interpreted as a lack of managerial interest in the subject. In practice, there is an unmistakable array of personification strategies and even more variations to manifest the brand persona itself. However, the case of Daniel Wellington and Ted Baker highlights a particularly thought-provoking approach as they portray and communicate a fictional brand persona as a real-life person. Other cases that have followed this method include Uncle Ben's, Hollister and Betty Crocker. In common amongst all these examples, is that they all can be labelled under one of Cohen's (2014) many categorizations of brand personification strategies, namely the usage of a brand persona that embodies that brand as a whole. In general, this kind of brand personification strategy entails that the brand persona has the same name as brand itself, and/or share the same personality characteristics as if the brand would have been a real person. Beyond Cohen's (2014) novel contribution to map out distinct categories of brand personification strategies, he also developed a continuum that serves as a categorisation for the wider range of brand personas that an organisation can develop. Cohen's (2014) continuum ranges from fantasy to reality and illustrates everything from cartoon characters attributed with human-like characteristics, such as Tony the Tiger and Mr Clean, to real people personifying their own brand, such as Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsey. In the middle of Cohen's (2014) continuum, reality and fantasy intervene. This is where the brand personas of Ted Baker, Uncle Ben's, Hollister, Betty Crocker and Daniel Wellington would departure. Cohen (2014) himself

places Betty Crocker in the middle of his continuum and describes this category of brand personas as one where a fictitious figurehead has been given a human face. What Cohen (2014) defines as a human face is unclear. Nevertheless, the fact that both Ted Baker and Daniel Wellington illustrate two fictitious, yet abstract brand personas being portrayed as real-life people, suggests that this phenomenon entail a wider scope than Cohen's (2014) categorisation, including both abstract and visual representations of the persona.

Although Cohen's (2014) continuum is a helpful tool to navigate across the many established variations of a brand persona, it merely acts as point of reference by putting one category of brand personas in relation to others. To fully understand the usefulness of this phenomenon that Ted Baker, Daniel Wellington and the other identified examples constitute, it is necessary to move beyond a simple classification and instead map out the managerial aspects. To begin with, the terminology of Cohen (2014) is rather ineffective and requires some form of abbreviation. With Cohen's (2014) continuum as a point of departure, this phenomenon places itself in the middle where fiction and reality interact. Accordingly, the display of a fictitious brand persona being communicated as a real-life person, can appropriately be labelled as a 'Semi-Fictive Brand Persona'. The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona entail a personification strategy where the persona embodies the brand as a whole. In accordance with Cohen's (2014) previous categorisations of brand personification strategies, this involves that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has the same name as the brand itself, and/or the same personality characteristics as if the brand would have been a real person. Conceptually, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona include both visual and abstract representations of the persona, thus expanding the scope of the category. In other words, both the visual brand persona of Betty Crocker and the abstract one of Daniel Wellington can be labelled as a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona.

The managerial aspects of brand personas in general have received little attention from the academic field of Strategic Brand Management. Accordingly, the phenomenon of brand personas may be difficult to grasp. Dion and Arnould (2016) describes a brand persona as the embodiment of a brand's personality traits and psychographic details into a cultural stereotype. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010, p.21) similarly defines a brand persona as "the articulated form of the brand's character and personality". Despite the resemblances in definitions, this field of literature is still characterized conceptual and theoretical ambiguity. Concepts such as "brand personality" (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003), "brand personification" (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014) and "personified-brand" (Dion & Arnould, 2016) all have similar meanings and are practiced unsystematically in parallel.

While the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona illustrate an overall gap in theory, practitioners such as Daniel Wellington and Betty Crocker highlights the existence of the phenomenon in practice. Naturally, to document a greater understanding of this semi-fictitious persona and all of its managerial implications, the following research sought answers from the brands themselves. Interestingly enough, not one of the identified case examples wanted to talk to us about their brand persona. Without any further explanation, the general response was a reply stating that the brand did not want to disclose any information on the subject of a brand persona. One organisation even had a policy against speaking about practices related to their brand persona. Nonetheless, as the typical process of communicating a brand persona via a brand personification strategy entail a collaboration between a brand manager and an advertising agency (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014), there was a shift in focus towards a more consultative and communicative perspective. Accordingly, the following research paper began to seek further understanding regarding the managerial aspects of communicating a Semi-Fictive Brand

Persona by talking to qualified professionals within prominent agencies and organisations in this field of expertise.

Given the extent to which this phenomenon is unexplored, the following research takes an inductive approach in order to obtain a greater understanding and deeper knowledge of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in both practice and theory. With inspiration from Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the following study does not departure from existing theory. Rather, it begins to investigate the area of which the phenomenon is displayed and from there on generate theory that is empirically anchored.

1.1 Aim, Purpose and Contribution

The overall aim is to move beyond a conceptual categorisation of brand personas and broaden the view and understanding of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. With this aim the purpose of our study is to further explore the phenomenon Semi-Fictive Brand Persona through a communicative and managerial lens. In order to fulfil this purpose, this research paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What is a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?
- Why do organisations use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?
- When and where should an organisation use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?

From a theoretical standpoint, this paper aims to contribute with empirically anchored theory regarding the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona phenomenon. The following research further intends to investigate the relations amongst key concepts such as brand persona, brand personification, brand personality and brand identity. Hence, this study aims to bring clarity to the conceptual and theoretical ambiguity that characterizes the literature field of Strategic Brand Management. The conceptual development of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is additionally intended to provide theory that is both applicable and useful to practitioners in the field of communication. From a managerial point of view, this research intends to develop a framework that can help management to better grasp why, when and where the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is applicable.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will be structured as follows. After the introduction, the methodology of this study is presented. The methodology is presented before the literature review due to the fact that there are limited previous research on this phenomenon. This has entitled this research to take an inductive approach, inspired by Grounded Theory, which further makes it more comprehensible to present the methodology before the literature review. Thereafter, the literature review is displayed. The literature review explores concepts in the field of Strategic Brand Management that is related to the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, namely brand identity, brand personality, brand personification, brand persona and storytelling. The following section includes the

empirical finding that was gathered in the methods of data collection. Thereafter the analysis is presented. The analysis is divided in three parts, in accordance with the research questions. The thesis concludes with a discussion and a conclusion that summarize this research findings and contributions. This section also explores possible future research in regard to this phenomenon.

2 Methodology

In this chapter we aim to explain the method used in this research and how the investigation process has been performed. The purpose of this chapter is to be transparent about the process that derived our findings in this study. First, the research approach will be explained. Thereafter, the research design will be presented, which includes the type of data collected, choice of methods and our sampling strategy. After that, our method of analysis will be presented. In conclusion, there will be a section that reflects on all these choices through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria for trustworthiness.

2.1 Research Approach

In regard to the purpose of our research, a qualitative study was found to be an appropriate method. A qualitative study is characterised by the aim to gain a deeper knowledge and a greater understanding by interpreting and comprehending a chosen phenomenon (Skärvad & Lundahl, 2016). This research is in addition inspired by the basic features of Grounded Theory, since it was thought to be a natural way to investigate a relatively undiscovered phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23) gives the following definition of Grounded Theory:

A Grounded Theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection and analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

The purpose of Grounded Theory is to generate theory that is faithful to the area of investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) has developed four criteria for this form of theory; *fitness*, *understanding*, *generality* and *control*. The basis of Grounded Theory is, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), that the theory must fit the actual area to which it will be applied. The first criterion by Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasizes the importance of theory being empirically anchored. The second criterion relates to the usefulness of the theory. This means that the design and presentation of the theory should be accessible and comprehensible to practitioners in the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This research has strived to develop theories that will be useful in academia but also to practitioners within communication. The third criterion that Glaser and Strauss (1967) present is that Grounded Theory should be abstract enough to make theory that is generalizable. There is a danger that theory generated from a specific empirical context has limited utility. The criterion of generalization invites the researcher to develop theory that is applicable in different contexts and under different conditions. The fourth and final criterion by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for Grounded Theory is that the theory should guide action. Consequently, the theory contributes to some form of

control of the phenomenon. The theory should contribute to an understanding and analysis of a situation and enable predictions, changes and consequences. The relationships, assumptions and concepts generated from the empirical material should be clearly stated so that the theory can result in action, according to Glaser & Strauss (1967). The methodology that will be used in this paper, in accordance with the principles of Grounded Theory, is an inductive approach. In consideration to the limited existing research on the phenomenon, this was found to be a suitable approach. An inductive approach refers to when the research draws generalizable inferences out of observations with theory as an outcome (Bryman, 2012). This research has due to its inductive nature chosen to present the methodology before the literature review.

2.2 Research Design

The type of data that this study has gathered is both primary and secondary data. Secondary data has been collected in the form of case examples of organisations that uses a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The purpose of the case examples is to illustrate and explain the phenomenon of investigation. The secondary data has been gathered through a document analysis. Nevertheless, the main data that has been collected is primary data. The type of data that this study has gathered in order to gain a more deeper understanding of the phenomenon, has been the reasoning and thoughts of prominent communication professionals regarding the usage of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas as communication strategy. The reasoning that this study aims to accumulate is why, when and where this type of communication strategy can be favourable or unfavourable. In order to fulfil this purpose, the following study has chosen to collect primary data. Primary data is data that is developed and collected solely for the study in question (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Since limited research has been done on this phenomenon before and the answers this study seeks to collect are reasonings about this phenomenon, it is crucial to gain this knowledge on a primary basis. The primary data has been gathered through semi-structured interviews.

2.2.1 Document Analysis

A document analysis was chosen as one of the methods in this study. Document analysis can be defined as a systematic procedure for examining and evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (Bowen, 2009). The purpose of a document analysis is, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008, cited in Bowen, 2009), to gain understanding, obtain meaning and develop empirical knowledge. The aim with this method has been to gather relevant and illustrative case examples of brands that use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication. A document analysis was thought to be a suitable method since it is a particularly applicable method in case studies of a single phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). The case examples that was derived through the document analysis had a dual purpose. First and foremost, they were sought to extract a greater understanding of the phenomenon and what it entails, hence reciprocate the first research question. The additional purpose was to use the identified case examples as a foundation in the interviews with the communication professionals to ensure that they fully grasped the phenomenon.

A limitation that is inherent in a document analysis and regularly highlighted, is that documents, such as all secondary data, is produced for other purposes than the research and therefore cannot provide sufficient material to answer the research questions (Bowen, 2009). However, the phenomenon that has been studied is a communication strategy and has therefore been considered to be understood through the communication material produced about the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The documents that has been used is the organisations own websites, news articles, interviews, marketing activities and advertisement. Although, a document analysis was not found sufficient in order to answer all the research questions, ergo a second method was thought to be required, namely semi-structured interviews.

2.2.2 Document Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was used in order to collect relevant data in the document analysis. Purposive sampling is a when the criteria for a sample are defined in accordance with the purpose of the study. Entities is reviewed by these criteria and those who meet the criteria are included and those that are not are excluded from the sample (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Our criterion was that the examples fulfilled the characterization of the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Persona as established in the introduction. Namely, a fictitious brand persona portrayed as a real-life person that embodies the brand as a whole.

Five case examples were derived in this process. The case examples were Ted Baker, Hollister, Betty Crocker, Uncle Ben's and Daniel Wellington. These cases were chosen on the grounds that they all illustrated different aspects and executions of the phenomenon, which further contributes to a greater understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. A sign that a sampling has reached theoretical saturation is when a category is well developed in terms of characteristics and dimensions demonstrating variation (Bryman, 2012). Although, it may seem as if five case examples are a modest sample size, the data collected were sought to meet the criteria of variation that was needed to reach saturation. The cases were attentively selected in order to present a wide and legitimate explanation of the phenomenon.

2.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

In order to gain a deeper knowledge about the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas, semi-structured interviews were found to be a suitable choice of method. The purpose with interviews is to collect information about someone's knowledge, opinions and thoughts (Merriam & Nilsson, 1994). It is furthermore, a method that can contribute with data collection that can be hard to only observe (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This is a suitable method for this research since the aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning prominent communication professionals have about the usage of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas. Interviews differ from normal day-to-day conversations due to the fact that they surround around questions and answers of a specific subject. This method of data collection enables the researchers to learn more about the respondents' world and how they make sense of it (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Furthermore, interviews can contribute with both depth, comparison and detail (von Platen & Young, 2014), all of which is beneficial for this study. The conviction that this study's research question best can be answered through conversations and interaction has derived this study to choose interviews as method of data collection. Furthermore, this research paper takes a localist view

on interviews. This means that this study emphasizes that the data that has been collected through interviews must be seen in their social setting and can be used to answer other questions outside the empirical situation (Alvesson, 2003).

This study has selected to conduct semi-structured interviews. The characteristic for this type of interview is that it is based on a list of questions, however the questions can differ and be more flexible during the actual interview (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The list of questions for this research are presented in the Interview Guide (See Appendix A). This form of interview enabled the use of the interview technique *laddering up*. Laddering up is a technique that helps the respondent to move from statements and more descriptive facts towards revealing their own individual value base (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). One of the most common way to do this is to ask “why” questions. This was a technique that was very useful in the interviews in this study since it compelled the respondents to explain their views more in depth.

The interviews that has been conducted were executed both face-to-face and remote. A remote interview is when the interview is held over the phone or through video calls (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The ambition was to meet as many respondents as possible face-to-face due to the notion that nonverbal communication can perish in remote interviews (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Despite this, only four out of twelve interviews could be completed face-to-face as a result of geographical limitations and the respondents’ busy schedules. The remote interviews were conducted via video calls, using both Skype and Google Hangouts. It was thereby possible to gather some nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions. Most of the respondents in this study held a senior management position. Von Platen and Young (2014) refers to this type of interviews as elite interviews. One of the most substantial challenge with elite interviews is that the respondent can be very hard to get in contact with and that people with this type of position often have a very tight work schedules (von Platen & Young, 2014). The advantage with remote interviews is that they are more flexible (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This advantage was essential in this study due to the fact that the respondent held high positions and thereby had very busy schedules. The remote interview also made it possible to interview professionals located in other geographical areas.

Another noticeable challenge with elite interviews, specifically with communication managers, is that they often take the role as spokesperson for the organisation rather than as an individual person (von Platen & Young, 2014). This would potentially had been a problem if this study, as first planed, interviewed managers that worked in organisations that use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Although, since this study instead has chosen to investigate what communication professionals think about the use of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas, this potential problem disappears. The communication professionals have not been interviewed as a representative for their organisation, but instead for their profound knowledge about the field of communication which makes it easier for them to be neutral towards the phenomenon.

Information about the interview was distributed to the interviewees before the interview (See Appendix B). The information included an explanation of the phenomenon this study aimed to explore and the case examples of brands that use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication. The respondents were given this information in order to ensure that they fully grasped the phenomenon of investigation and enable them to reflect on the matter ahead of the interview. This furthermore facilitated the execution of the interviews since the respondents had a good knowledge about the intent with the interview beforehand.

In order to collect rich data, this study aimed to establish an interview situation where the respondents felt that they could speak freely. In consideration to the fact that all respondents were Swedish, as well as the researchers, the decision was made to conduct the interview in Swedish. The empirical material was thereafter translated to English. The translations were made as objective and neutral as possible in order to minimize bias. To ensure validity, the respondents were asked to check and approve the translated quotes before publication. The information that the respondents were distributed before the interview (See Appendix B) were also in Swedish, due to the same reasons.

2.2.4 Interview Sampling

The sampling strategy that was used in regard to the interviews was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling refers to when the sampling starts with someone who meets the set criteria in the study, who then is asked to name other individuals who also would be eligible. This is a suitable strategy when the research setting is characterised to be problematic and difficult to access (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Experienced professionals within the communication industry were evaluated to contribute with the most accurate insights in regard to the use of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas in communication. As previously discussed, this type of professionals tends to have very tight work schedules which makes it difficult to get access to these people. The use of snowball sampling proved to be an efficient strategy as several of the respondents were willing to recommend other professionals within nearby fields of expertise. Twelve interviews, each 45-60 minute-long, were conducted before saturation was reached. A research reaches saturation when the data is levelling off in variation (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In other words, saturation is reached when new data no longer leads to new insights into an emergent theory or dimensions of the theoretical categories (Bryman, 2012). After twelve interviews the variation in responses were levelling off and it was considered that a sufficient amount of data had been collected. The respondents that participated in this study is presented here below.

Presentation of the respondents

Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group

Anne Årneby is the CEO at Nordic Morning Group. Nordic Morning Group consists of three business areas, which are; data-driven marketing and service design, automated customer communication services and smart learning and information solutions (Nordic Morning Group, n.d.). Anne Årneby has 20 years of business and communication experience from the international arena in various markets, during which she has held positions such as Chief Marketing Officer at Bisnode, CEO at Revir and CEO at McCann Sweden. Årneby has also branded Stockholm as “The Capital of Scandinavia”.

Ann-Sophie Modigh, CMO at Hoist Group

Ann-Sophie Modigh is the Chief Marketing Manager at Hoist Group. Hoist Group delivers systems, products and services to hotels, hospitals and public areas in Europe and in the Middle East (Hoist Group, n.d.). Ann-Sophie Modigh has over 20 years of experience in B2B marketing. She has previously been Marketing Director at Acando and Marketing Communication Manager at Lawson Software, to name a few.

Kalle Håkanson, Copywriter at TBWA

Kalle Håkanson is a Copywriter at TBWA\Stockholm. TBWA is a global advertising agency that is ranked among the top 10 global advertising agencies worldwide (TBWA, 2017). He has great knowledge in the advertising field. He has previously held positions such as Creative Director at Rönberg McCann and Copywriter at Lowe Brindfors. In addition, he has also had his own advertising agency, called Pets.

Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup

Magnus Wistam is the CEO at MSLGroup in Sweden. MSLGroup is a global public relations and integrated communications partner (MSLGroup, 2018). He has great experience as a leader, strategic advisor and creator in the marketing and communication sector. He has previously held positions such as CEO at Efva Attling and CEO at Grey (today INGO).

Martin Hugosson, CEO, at GroupM Sweden

Martin Hugosson is the CEO at GroupM Sweden. Group M is the world's largest media investment group (Group M, 2018). Martin Hugosson has great track record of working in the marketing and advertising industry. Some previous position he has held is Managing Director at OMD Sweden and CEO at Wavemaker.

Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund

Martin Stadhammar is Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund. Berntzon Bylund is a strategic advertising agency with strong focus on business results and creative execution (Berntzon Bylund, n.d.). He has previously held positions such as Creative Director at Grey Stockholm, Co-founder & Creative Director at Albert Ken and Copywriter at Lowe Brindfors.

Mats Rönne, Senior Advisor at OffPist Management

Mats Rönne is a Senior Advisor at his own company OffPist Management and holds various board positions. He has a career in international brand development and marketing communications in different markets, both for B2B and B2C, as a client and at agencies. Some of his previous positions are Chief Marketing Officer at Readly, Marketing Effectiveness Advisor at Sveriges Annonörer and VP Brand Management at Electrolux.

Per Olholt, Partner and Account Director at TBWA

Per Olholt is Account Director and Partner at TBWA\Stockholm. TBWA is a global advertising agency that is ranked among the top 10 global advertising agencies worldwide (TBWA, 2017). Some of the clients that Per Olholt is responsible for are Audi, Canal Digital, SJ and Unicef. He has previously worked as Account Director at KING and as Senior Brand Manager at Pripps.

Ragnar Tingström, Partner at Scream Mediabyrå

Ragnar Tingström is Partner at Scream Mediabyrå. Scream Mediabyrå is an independent media agency in Sweden that emphasize the importance with an innovative approach to advertising and communication (Scream Mediabyrå, n.d.). He has great knowledge about marketing and media. Before Ragnar co-founded Scream, he worked at Modern Times Group (MTG) for 10 years. At MTG he held various high positions in sales and marketing.

Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow

Sofia Stenström is a Brand Strategist at Grow. Grow is a highly awarded consultancy agency in brand development with offices in Stockholm, New York, Oslo and Helsinki (Grow, n.d.). Stenström has previous experience within PR and communication and is currently providing various organisations with strategic consultation in brand development and brand transformation.

Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words

Tommy Lundberg is a writer and communication consultant. He runs his own communication agency Great Words and writes books about leadership. He has great knowledge about both internal and external communication and has worked with clients such as; Apple, H&M, Falu Rödfärg and Audi.

Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner

Torbjörn Valfridsson is currently working as a consultant in brand and reputation management at his own company Valfridsson & Partner. He has an extensive track record in developing and working with strong brands, sales and reputation management. He has worked in various sectors, such as the fashion industry and the energy sector. Previous position has been for example Director Corporate Branding at Statkraft and Managing Director and Marketing and sales Director at In Wear Fashion Group.

2.3 Method of Analysis

This research has undertaken an approach that is inspired by Grounded Theory. It was consequently essential that the method of analysis was suitable for an inductive process. The data that was collected through the interviews has therefore been analysed through Charmaz method of analysis which contains of two phases; initial and focused coding. Charmaz (2006 cited in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015) method has its foundation in Grounded Theory. Her conviction is that Grounded Theory is a tool to create and construct theory. She promotes the use of systematic, but still, flexible guidelines in the phase of data collection in order to interpret qualitative data and develop theories. By developing theory that is based on the empirical data, we can better understand the social context of study (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015).

In accordance with Charmaz method of analysis, the data has been analysed in two phases. First, the coding was analysed through initial coding. Initial coding should be extensive and spontaneous so that nothing gets overseen (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). In the research this entailed us to look over all of the transcribed interviews and mark the things we found to be interesting in regard to the research questions. This phase derived us to the material that can be found in the section that is called empirical findings. During this phase we strived to be open minded. The following phase is called focused coding. This step is more extensive since it aims to take a holistic approach to the material (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). In the phase the most prominent findings in the initial coding were identified so that more general categorisations could be made. The general themes which explained why organisations use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona could be abbreviated into the 5C's: Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass. In order to answer where and when a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona are suitable to use, the themes of Static vs. Dynamic and Visual vs. Abstract were identified and used as the foundation in the development of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

2.4 Method Reflection

The following sections aims to reflect and discuss the choice of method as well as the investigation process and the motivations behind it. Given the limited amount of research conducted around this phenomenon and brand personas in general, we pursued an inductive approach inspired by Grounded Theory. With limited existing theory to depart from, the following study began to investigate the area of which the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is displayed. Accordingly, the initial choice of respondents were managers within organisations that use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona and has great knowledge regarding the purpose with this communication strategy. The organisations of interest were the case examples we found in the document analysis. Great effort was made to get in contact with these organisations, but evidently all declined to participate in the study. One organisation even had a policy against discussing their brand persona. A new data collection method was consequently developed. The study changed direction and decided to take a communication perspective on the phenomenon Semi-Fictive Brand Personas. In order to gain diverse and valid data, the decision was made to interview experienced communication professionals in different fields of the industry at prominent agencies and organisations.

This study takes a qualitative approach to the research problem and will therefore further be reviewed through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria; *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability*. These concepts are specifically constructed to reflect on the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2012). Credibility is a crucial factor for the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Others will only accept the findings that a study arrives at if they are credible (Bryman, 2012). A measurement that this study has made in order to establish credibility is triangulation. Triangulation is when a research uses more than one method in the study of the phenomenon of investigation (Bryman, 2012). This study has in order to fully grasp the phenomenon Semi-Fictive Brand Personas used two different methods of data collection, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews. These two methods have complemented each other and enabled gathering of both primary and secondary data.

Qualitative research tends to derive findings that are linked to the contextual uniqueness of the social world being studied. In consideration to this, qualitative researchers are encouraged to present thick descriptions of their studied culture to ensure transferability (Bryman, 2012). This study has strived to provide as detail information possible of the context of study. The descriptions of the respondents are sought to achieve a greater transferability. The same applies to the case examples that illustrates the phenomenon. The description of the interview process has also been presented in order to explain the social context that the primary data has been derived from to enable transferability.

Dependability requires that the researcher provide a complete record of all phases in the investigation process (Bryman, 2012). In order to reach dependability, this study has endeavoured to be as transparent as possible. Detailed descriptions of the data collection and the method of analysis has been produced in order to show how the findings were arrived in a transparent way. Other measures that has been made in order to grant this, is to attach documents that were produced and used during the investigation process as appendices. Furthermore, quotes have been used in the presentation of the empirical findings and in the analysis to achieve transparency.

The last criterion for trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is confirmability. This refers to the elements of objectivity and subjectivity. Although complete objectivity is impossible to achieve in qualitative research, the researcher should show that he/she acted in good faith. This means that the researcher must ensure that he or she has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations influence the study (Bryman, 2012). This was specifically essential in the translation process of the conducted interviews. In order to ensure that the quotes and paraphrases in the empirical findings were correctly translated and understood, the respondents were asked to confirm everything before publication. This was a way to assure the objectivity in the empirical findings and prevent subjective translations. The empirical findings in this study are the foundation for the developed theories, hence the importance of ensuring its objectivity.

3 Literature Review

In this section, the literature review is presented. In accordance with our inductive approach, the literature review is presented after the methodology. Given the limited amount of research dedicated to the field of brand personas in general, the following literature review aims to explain and explore the concepts that are related to the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The brand persona, which is the focal point in this study, is a concept that can be hard to grasp since it is related to a range of similar concepts with related meanings, such as brand personality and brand personification. This section, therefore aims to contribute with a conceptual and theoretical overview to distinguish these concepts and further bring clarity to the brand persona construct. First, the overarching concept of brand identity is presented. Thereafter the related concepts of brand personality, brand personification and brand persona are further explained and defined. The theoretical purpose to personify a brand and develop a brand persona is also explained as well as the concept of storytelling.

3.1 Brand Identity

The importance for brand identity in the corporate world is widely recognized (Buil, Catalán & Martinez, 2016; Kapferer, 2012). The purpose of developing a brand identity is to create an emotional added value (Balmer, 2012; de Chernatony, 1999; Goodyear, 1996; Melin, 2002). A brand is not only the name of an organisation or product, it is the vision that derives the creation in the organisation forward under one name (Kapferer, 2012). The concept of brand identity is used to describe the brand's core values and key beliefs (Kapferer, 2012; Melin, 2002). Together, these facets can be referred to as the brands' distinct characteristics that derive the brands' uniqueness and enable it to differentiate itself from the competitors (Balmer & Stotvig, 1997; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2012; Melin, 2002). Balmer and Stotvig (1997) describe brand identity as the bridge between strategy, image and reputation. In order to create a competitive brand identity, there need to be a consistency and endurance in the brand identity development (Melin, 2002). It is essential that the brand identity is distinctive and clear since it is the foundation of all communication activities (Mårtensson, 2009). The brand identity can be compared to a genetic code that acts like an inbuilt plan for the brands development (Melin, 2002) and can often serve as the source of brand positioning (Kapferer, 2012).

3.1.1 The Brand Identity Prism

Several models have been developed in order to explain the concept of brand identity (e.g. Balmer and Stotvig, 1997; Ind, 1997; van Riel, 1995). One of the most prominent and used model is developed by Kapferer (de Chernatony, 1999). Kapferer (2012) aimed to illustrate what brand identity consist of and therefore created a model that he calls the Brand Identity Prism (See Figure 3). The Brand Identity Prism is a hexagonal prism that includes all the six factors that Kapferer (2012) mean contributes to a brands' identity. Kapferer's model is,

according to de Chernatony (1999), a powerful tool to explain a brand-based view of identity, which in turn reveals the essential differences between a brand and its competitors. The facets that Kapferer (2012) present as the six elements in a brand identity are; *physique*, *personality*, *culture*, *reflection* and *self-image*. Personality, relationship and culture are elements that other well-known researchers also have identified to be building blocks for a brand identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; de Chernatony, 2001, Melin, 2002). Furthermore, a shared notion is that brand identity is best understood through the picture of the sender (Farhana, 2014; Konecnik & Go, 2008) which Kapferer (2012) includes in his model.

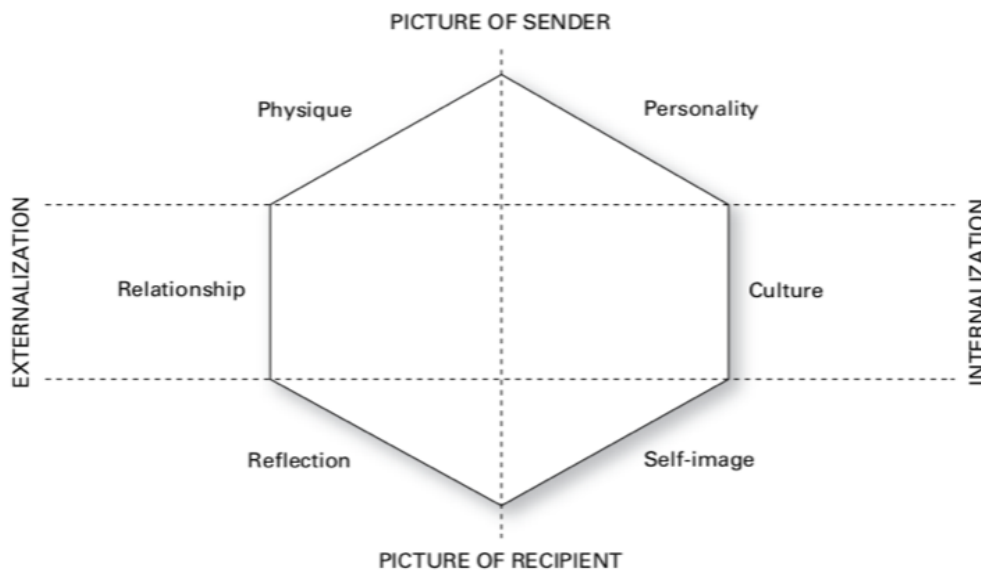


Figure 1: The Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2012).

The *physique* facet in the prism consists of the brand's physical specificities and qualities, according to Kapferer (2012). Kapferer mean that these traits are the brands backbone as well as its tangible added value. Like all other facets in the prism, it is an essential factor to build a brand identity, but it cannot alone form the identity. The initial step in building a brand is to define the physical aspects of the brand, such as what the brand should do and look like (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) continue that a brand, similar to people, has a *personality*. The communication a brand broadcast helps to define and develop a character with personality traits. The personality facets, humanize the brand, and illustrate what kind of person the brand would be if it was a person (Kapferer, 2012).

The third facet in the prism is *culture*. Kapferer (2012) state that strong brands are much more than product benefits or a personality; they are a culture and ideology too. The cultural facets of the brand are, according to Kapferer (2012), the most important element in brand identity since it makes the brand distinct and explicit. He further claims that most brands strive to be a cult brand. A cult brand is born when brands ideological underpinnings becomes the answer to a social crisis felt by a sub-group. In other words, it facilitates community creation. People tend to create communities around causes, ideas and values. This is what the cultural facet in the Brand Identity Prism entails. The culture serves as an ideological glue that paste everything together into a long-lasting community (Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) also compare a brand to a *relationship*. The brand is often the focal point in an exchanging transaction between

people. This is more eminent in certain industries and especially prominent in the service and retail sector. In these industries, the relationship facet is crucial in the development of a brand identity (Kapferer, 2012).

Next facet that Kapferer (2012) mean is a part of the brand identity is customer *reflection*. The customer reflection is the perceived client type a brand possess. A brands' communication and most striking offering will create an image of the type of buyer or user the brand seems to be addressing, hence a reflection. Kapferer (2012) clarifies that this facet should not be mixed up with target group. The target group describes the potential customer, whereas the reflection facet refers to how the customer wishes to be seen as a result of using the brand (Kapferer, 2012). The final facet in the Brand Identity Prism is *self-image*. Self-image refers to the targets own internal mirror, in contrast to customer reflection, which refers to the targets outward mirror. By consuming a brand, we develop an inner relationship with ourselves, and the choice of brand further define our self-image (Kapferer, 2012).

The sixth facet in the prism are furthermore divided in different sections in regard to their characteristics (See Figure 3). The upper section includes facets that define the picture of the sender, thus the organisation. The lower section consists of the facets that reflect the picture of the recipient. Additionally, the facets are divided in two groups vertically. The facets of physique, relationship and reflection are placed on the left side in the prism. These are the social facets that contributes to the brands outward expression. On the right side, the facets connected to internalization are presented. Personality, culture and self-image are facets that are incorporated within the spirit of the brand (Kapferer, 2012).

The Brand Identity Prism illustrates that all six facets are connected and interrelated. Kapferer (2012, p.163) uses the following words to describe the connection "The content of one facet echoes that of another". The prism is developed after the basic assumption that a brand has the ability to speak. Kapferer (2012) emphasizes this assumption and claims that brands only can exist if they communicate, and that brands can even grow obsolete if they remain silent. He continues that since a brand speaks and endorses products that epitomize the brand, the brand itself can be regarded as a speech. Accordingly, a brand can also be evaluated and analysed like any other speech or form of communication (Kapferer, 2012).

An element that Kapferer (2012), not explicitly include in his prism is *name*. Although, this is a facet that Melin (2002) believes strongly influences the brand identity. He highlights that the brand name actually might be the most significant factor. The *name* of a brand is of great strategic importance since it is something that the brand will be stuck with for a long time (Melin, 2002). Melin (2002) continues to argue that there are two basic approaches to choose a brand name. Either you choose a name that has some kind of preconceived meaning, such as Aristokrat, or a whole new name with no preconceived content/meaning attached to it, such as Kodak. Melin (2002) conclude that both approaches come with their own advantages and disadvantages in terms of communication and legal aspects. Accordingly, it is essential to weigh pros and cons against each other before finally choosing a brand name (Melin, 2002).

To summarize, there is a consensus between researchers that brand identity encompasses differentiating characteristics, values and belief of a brand, which in turn works as a foundation in developing marketing communication toward the brands' target audience (Balmer & Stotvig, 1997; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2012; Melin, 2002, Mårtensson, 2009). There is also a common conviction between these researchers that brand personality, culture and relationship is an important part of brand identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; de Chernatony, 2001,

Melin, 2002). However, the definitions of brand personality can differ, and the concept will therefore be further explored in the following segment.

3.2 Brand Personality

Long before academics studied and accepted the concept of 'brand personality', advertisers and marketing practitioners coined the term to capture all the non-product dimensions of a brand (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). The late advertiser Stephen King (1970, p. 14) famously stated that "People choose their brands the same way they choose their friends. In addition to the skills and physical characteristics, they simply like them as people". Within the academic realm, the concept of brand personality has been present ever since the 1960s (Levy, 1959; Plummer, 1985) as a term to address how brands may attract consumers beyond functional product attributes by using human-like characteristics and symbolic values (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo, 1998). To illustrate the brand personality concept, Aaker (1997, p.347) use an example of the two vodka brands Absolut Vodka and Stolichnaya: "Absolut vodka personified tends to be described as a cool, hip, contemporary 25-year old, whereas Stoli's personified tends to be described as an intellectual, conservative, older man."

An imperative landmark in the brand personality literature is the joint publication by Aaker and Fournier (1995), which initially addressed the conceptualization, measurement and implications of brand personality (Radler, 2017). Later, in the seminal article by Aaker (1997), a theoretical and empirical foundation of the brand personality construct is provided. Subsequent research on brand personality has during the past two decades mainly been based on the work by Aaker (1997), thereby marking the actual point of origin for today's body of knowledge (Radler, 2017). Aaker (1997, p. 347) introduced the formative definition of brand personality as the "set of human characteristics associated with a brand". The main contribution by Aaker (1997) however, is her development of a five-dimensional brand personality scale by exploring 114 traits (or adjectives) across 37 brands that cover various product categories. Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale is in turn derived from the field of psychology and is based on the 'Big Five' model (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1958) stating that five factors (or dimensions of traits) could each load a number of adjectives to describe human personality. These five dimensions are commonly labelled OCEAN: Openness to new experiences, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1997). The five-factor solution that Aaker (1997) reached was Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness with only the first three factors corresponding to the elements of the Big Five model in psychology (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). Aaker (1997) argued that the latter two dimensions of Sophistication and Ruggedness differ from the human personality structure since these dimensions refer to characteristics that consumers wish to have, but do not necessarily possess themselves (Radler, 2017). Aaker (1997, cited in Radler, 2017) further suggest that this may indicate that consumers build relationships with brands to extend their own personalities to support their actual or ideal selves.

The majority of subsequent articles within the research field of brand personality has during the past 20 years departed from the overarching contributions by Aaker (1997 cited in Radler, 2017). However, despite two decades of research, there is still a lack of conceptual and theoretical consensus within the brand personality arena (Radler, 2017). Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) dispute that the seminal work by Aaker (1997) is problematic as the measurement scale

do not in fact measure brand personality, but mergers several dimensions of a brand identity which need to be kept separate for both theoretical and practical grounds. Aaker (1997, p. 347) defines brand personality as “the set of human characteristics associated to a brand”. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) argues that this definition involves a number of implications as physical traits, picture of the typical user and inner values also are ‘human characteristics’ that brands can be associated with. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) debate that a stricter and more clear definition of brand personality is needed in order to avoid conceptual confusion in branding research and to permit the concept to be more useful to understand and manage brands. They further discuss that not all adjectives to describe human personality are relevant to brands, such as ‘neurotic fatigue’. Consequently, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p. 151) propose an adaptation of the brand personality definition as: ‘brand personality is the set of *human personality traits* that are both *applicable to* and *relevant for* brands’. A stricter definition enables a delineation of what is included in and what is excluded from the concept, thereby also allowing more exact measurements of brand personality (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). Nevertheless, despite the elucidating attempts that has been made in this field of inquiry, a lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity still remains (Radler, 2017).

3.3 Brand Personification

Similar to the brand personality construct, brand personification too entails a certain degree of conceptual ambiguity. First and foremost, in order to grasp the concept of personification it needs to be explained through the idea of anthropomorphism. The concept of personification and anthropomorphism resembles each other but differ in their perspectives. Anthropomorphism refers to when non-human entities get assigned with human characteristics and qualities (Delbaere, McQuarrie & Phillips, 2011; Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007). In the context of branding, it reflects the audiences’ reflections and the human characteristics it attributes a brand with. Personification, in contrast, refers to the characteristics that the marketers wants to attribute the brand with. Hence, personification can be used in order to encourage consumers to anthropomorphize (Delbaere, McQuarrie & Phillips, 2011). However, studies have shown that people have a tendency to anthropomorphize even without the encouragement from marketers (Epley, Waytz & Cacioppo, 2007).

The reasons for a brand to encourage anthropomorphism of their brand are many. From a brand perspective, the reason why people have a tendency to anthropomorphize might be because they want familiar and meaningful personality traits to be attributed to a brand in order to mentally classify them (Aaker, 1997; Ambroise, Ferrandi, Merunka, Vallette-Florence & De Barnier, 2005). Moreover, Fournier (1998) mean that the willingness to humanize brand further implicates that consumers tend to view a brand as a partner in a relationship dyad. This in turn suggests that anthropomorphism of a brand enables the creation of a relationship between the brand and its consumers (Fournier, 1998).

Previous studies have found that humanization of a brand can contribute to brand awareness and brand differentiation. Keller (1993) claims that it can increase brand awareness through affective brand associations and by that result in a situation where consumers not only evaluate the brand through its functional components. Delbaere, McQuarrie and Phillips (2011) dispute that the consequence of an elicited brand personality leads to a stronger emotional connection between the brand and its consumers. The affective associations can also contribute to the

brands differentiation, especially when it comes to markets with high competition (Fleck, Michel & Zeitoun, 2014).

3.3.1 Brand Personification Strategies

Cohen (2014) takes brand personification one step further. He has studied the different types of brand personification strategies that a brand can pursue. Cohen (2014, p.3) defines a brand personification strategy as:

the design or implementation of a marketing plan that employs as part of the brand messaging, a brand-related person or human-like character in the brand's packaging, promotion, and public relations

Cohen (2014) distinguish five different types of brand personification strategies that a brand can employ. The first one is when the brand personification serves as a character that personifies the brand, hence embodies the brand as a whole. For starters, it usually has the same name as the brand itself, or at least a very similar name. Cohen (2014) uses the character Jack for the Jack in the Box hamburger chain as an example for this form of personification strategy. Moreover, this type of brand persona shares the same personality characteristics and qualities as the brand would have if it was a person. In the cases where real people personify their own brand, the brand often shares the same human attributes as the person who personify it, such as the Donald Trump brand (Cohen, 2014).

The second personification strategy is when the brand uses a spokesperson for the brand. The spokesperson works as a verbal advocate for the brand. The aim with the spokesperson can differ but it always comes down to delivering a message that hopefully persuades the consumers to view the brand in a favourably way (Cohen, 2014). Cohen (2014) further state that a spokesperson does not need to be exclusive to one brand and exemplifies this statement with the case of John Houseman. The actor John Houseman was in the peak of his career the spokesperson for a range of different brands, such as McDonalds and the investment firm Smith Barney (Cohen, 2014).

The third personification strategy is when a character works as an ambassador for the brand. Cohen (2014, p. 4) defines an ambassador as:

an official authorized representative of a brand that is typically unique in form, appearance, or costume, and that is held out to the public primarily for promotional purpose such as establishing or extending goodwill to the brand.

Cohen (2014) compare it to football teams' cheerleaders. A business case of this is the beer brand Budweiser and their animal ambassadors the Clydesdales. The Clydesdales are a team of horses that Budweiser has used in different promotional activities, such as television ads and at various parades (Cohen, 2014).

The fourth brand personification strategy is when a character is a mascot for the brand. A mascot can be defined as a recognizable and distinctive character that is exclusively associated with one brand. The aim with the mascot is to generate goodwill and positive feelings towards the brand. The mascot is the least verbal character in comparison to the other types of brand

personification strategies (Cohen, 2014). The last category that Cohen (2014) present is an “all other” category, were characters with other relationships to the brand than the previous mentioned categories are included.

3.4 Brand Persona

As identified by Dion and Arnould (2016), the concept of personas has been studied in a range of different fields, such as advertising (Stern, 1991, 1994), communication (Fischer, 1984), rhetoric (Deighton, Romer & McQueen, 1989), speech act theory (Austin, 1978; Searle, 1969, 1979), semiotics (Mick, 1989), psychology (Allport, 1937; Hall & Nordby, 1973), consumer culture theory (McCracken, 1989) and even in branding (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). This paper has investigated the kind of persona that can be identified in the Strategic Brand Management field, hence the *brand persona*. A brand persona can be defined as the embodiment of a brands personality traits and psychographic details into a cultural stereotype (Dion & Arnould, 2016).

A brand persona can manifest itself in different ways. In order to get an overview over the different shapes a brand persona can take, Cohen (2014) developed a reality continuum (see Figure 4). The continuum ranges from fantasy to reality and serves as a categorisation for the wide range of brand personas that a brand can develop. The categorisation takes departure in how real the persona is perceived to be by the consumers (Cohen, 2014).

At the lower end of the spectrum, Cohen (2014) has placed cartoon characters that has been attributed with some recognizable human-like characteristics, such as the M&M-figures or the Green Giant. This type of brand personification is very common and can be found in many different forms. Everything from humanization of products, such as the previous mentioned examples, to cartoon celebrities such as The Simpsons (Cohen, 2014).

One step up on the reality continuum are the use of costumed actors posing as fictive characters, where the costume rather than the actor itself is of importance. This type of brand persona has been used over a relatively long time and examples can be found from a century ago, but one current and prominent example of this type of persona is Ronald McDonald (Cohen, 2014). A similar type of brand personification, that Cohen (2014) place a bit further up in the continuum, is when real people represents a brand but are non-person specific. In accordance with the previous type of brand persona this means that the actor that plays the representative can be replaced at any time. Cohen (2014) highlights the brand persona Mr Goodwrench as a good example of this type of brand personification. Mr Goodwrench is General Motors brand persona for their auto repair services. Mr Goodwrench has throughout the years been portrayed by both actors and GM mechanics (Cohen, 2014).

Cohen (2014) has in the middle of the reality continuum, placed brands that has been given a human face by a fictitious figurehead. This includes brand personas that consumers perceive to be the real people behind the brand but in reality, only is fictitious. Cohen (2014) presents Betty Crocker as an illustrative example of this type of persona, since many consumers perceive Mrs Crocker to be a real person although she is entirely fictitious.

Moving upward in the continuum, there are the brands that has been given a human face by a real person. Although, these brand personas have over time been depersonalized due to various reasons, for instance death or acquisitions. The consequence of the depersonalisation of the brand persona may be that consumers are unaware that the brand persona in fact is built on a real person and not is a fictitious figurehead (Cohen, 2014). At the high end of the continuum, Cohen (2014) has placed real people that personify their own brand since their own name is the brand, as in the case of Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsey. This type of brand persona can also be referred to as human brands. Human brands include any well-known, real, persona that is the subject of marketing communication efforts (Thomson, 2006). Cohen (2014) also argue that another category can be placed in the high end of the reality continuum, namely brands that has been personified by consumers themselves. An example of this is when Snickers used celebrities as real-life consumers and through that conveyed the message that the consumers themselves personify the brand.

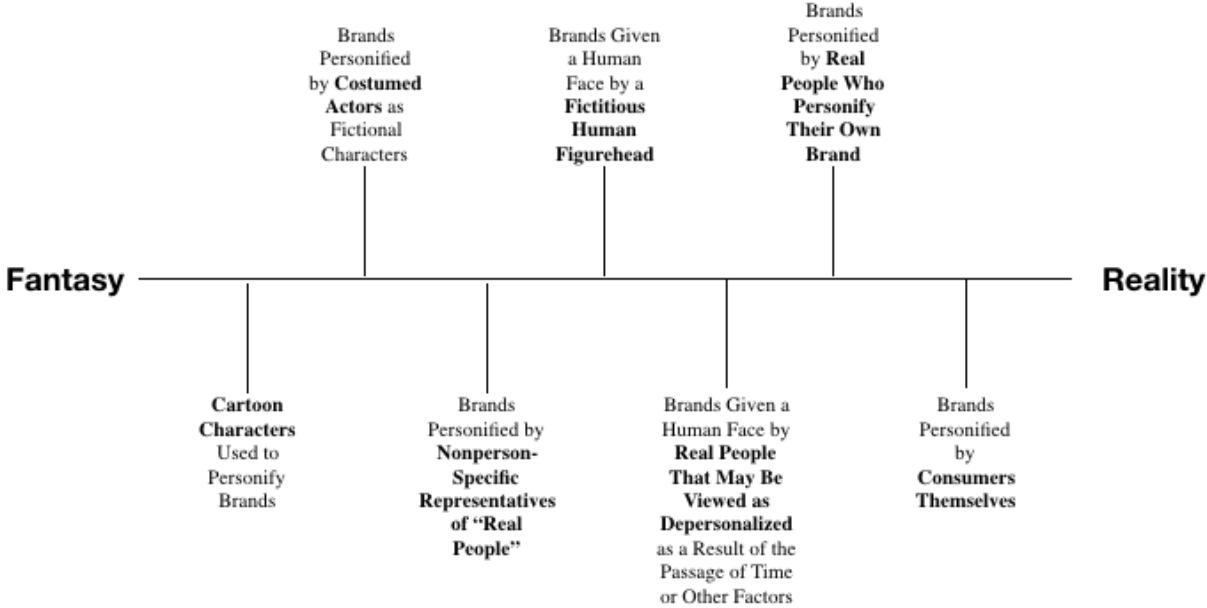


Figure 2: Developed from Cohen's (2014) reality continuum.

Stern (1988) claims that the commercial persona has three main purposes. First of all, it acts as an embodiment or surrogate for the brand. The persona provides tangible clues to the brand's personality and what it stands for to the consumers. Secondly, it defines the relationship between the brand and its consumers (Stern, 1988). The persona sets the expectations for what kind of relationship the consumer can expect from the brand (Dion & Arnould, 2016). Finally, the brand persona also influences the attitudes that consumers have towards the brand (Stern, 1988). The persona provides a set of qualities through which the consumers can develop an attachment to the organisation (Dion & Arnould, 2016). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) further elaborate that brand personas has the ability build long-lasting relationships and form emotional bonds with its audience using storytelling.

3.4.1 Storytelling the Brand Persona

Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) investigate how to develop a brand persona that is memorable, stable and capable of growth by combining the field of storytelling. To begin with, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010, p. 21) defines a brand persona as “the articulated form of the brand’s character and personality”. They argue that a brand persona must be easy to recognize and remembered while also being consistent and relatable. They claim that persona-focused storytelling is essential in branding as a strong brand persona has the ability to create long-lasting and emotional relationships with the audience. They further discuss that the brand persona offers a point of reference that audiences can relate to, regardless of the brand message or story. In other words, as the audience begin to “know” the brand persona, they will also become interested in the brand story and its actions. Eventually, the audience begin to understand the overall brand message, even if the organisation uses different stories in their communication. However, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) continue that if the brand persona fails to remain true to its core and lack internal consistency, the brand narrative weakens as the audience may perceive the stories being communicated as a set of multiple disconnected adventures. They elaborate that a strong brand persona stays true to its core values, thereby enabling the persona to grow over time while strengthening the emotional relationships with the audience. Furthermore, they add that a compelling and strong brand persona has the ability to cope with changing situations and has the capacity to evoke emotional responses from its customers, such as loyalty, devotion and trust. Accordingly, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) comment that it is essential to first develop a well thought-through brand persona before deploying a brand narrative, since the strength of the brand stems from the strength of its brand persona. They conclude that building a strong brand persona provide a connection between an organisation’s statements and performance. Ultimately, persona-based storytelling creates an emotional connection with the brand’s audience as the brand persona address implicit needs and attitudes (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

What about the story itself then? The story does not have to be based on real events (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & van Riel, 2012). In fact, people appreciate fictional tales as long as they can relate to the characters (Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). However, stories should never be perceived as deceptive (Lundqvist et al., 2012). Both the brand and its story must be perceived as authentic, since consumers are more critical towards what they perceive as manipulative marketing (Holt, 2002). Organisations that portray fiction as reality will eventually lose trust in their brand (Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). Nevertheless, stories in general can be a powerful tool to strategically communicate the brand (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004; Simmons, 2006). Stories fascinate people and are more easily remembered than facts (Lundqvist et al., 2012). Stories also help consumers to understand the benefits of a brand (Kaufman, 2003), and are less critically scrutinized compared to regular advertisements (Escalas, 2004). Compelling storytelling can generate positive feelings in the consumer that ultimately can raise brand awareness, increase trust in, and differentiate the brand (Kaufman, 2003; Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). A story has the ability to embrace the core values of a brand in ways that traditional marketing communication cannot (Lundqvist et al., 2012). Storytelling as a communication tool can accordingly strengthen an organisation both internally and externally (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010).

To further shed light on the importance of stories in relationship to the brand, Aaker and Aaker (2016) introduces the concept of signature stories. The authors present signature stories as a critical asset that can provide brands with both internal and external direction while also enabling growth over time. Aaker and Aaker (2016, p. 50) explain signature stories as an

“intriguing, authentic, involving narrative with a strategic message that clarifies or enhances the brand, the customer relationship, the organization, and/or the business strategy”. The authors elaborate that a signature story must be intriguing so that it attracts the eye and the mind of its target audience. The story may be thought-provoking, interesting, entertaining and even fictional. However, a signature story must be authentic. That is, the story should involve substance and not be perceived as phony or as an obvious effort to sell something. Aaker and Aaker (2016) continue that by building a story that involves and attract the audience, it usually results in cognitive, emotional or behavioural responses. Together with a strategic message, they elaborate that a signature story will clarify the value proposition and personality of the brand while also giving support to the customer relationship. The strategic message can further facilitate the articulation of a brands’ vision, how to get there, and the overall business strategy. Unlike tactical stories that are used for communication with short-term objectives, such as an advertisement, signature stories are retold and reappears over a long period of time, thereby gaining influence and authenticity (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). Ultimately, signature stories have an enduring capacity to enable growth, inspiration and direction in the long run (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). Lastly, Aaker and Aaker (2016) discuss the challenge of actually creating and identifying signature story. They conclude that that older organisations can look back at its own history, whereas new brands or companies facing change may need to create one.

4 Empirical Findings

The following chapter presents the empirical findings that has been gathered in accordance with our methodological approach. First, the case examples that has been found and explored in the document analysis are presented. The case examples are Ted Baker, Hollister, Betty Crocker, Uncle Ben's and Daniel Wellington. Thereafter, the empirical findings derived in the semi-structured interviews are displayed. This material is divided in different subheadings inspired by the interview guide (See Appendix A), in order to establish a natural structure that facilitated an open coding. The role of the case examples and the material derived from the semi-structured interviews, is to empirically ground our findings and contribute to the emerging theory later to be discussed.

4.1 Case Examples

The following section presents the identified case examples that constitute the various forms of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The case examples have been gathered through a document analysis of the communication material produced around the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. This includes documents such as the organisation's own websites, news articles, interviews, marketing activities and advertisement.

4.1.1 Ted Baker

Ted Baker is a British clothing company and one of the fastest-growing leading lifestyle brand in the UK (Ted Baker, 2018a). The character Ted Baker is a totally fictitious person but is communicated by its founder and in brand communication as a real-life person. Ray Kelvin is the founder of Ted Baker and has the habit of talking about Ted Baker as if he was a real person. He is, in his own words, "the closest man to Ted" (Knowles, 2017). Kelvin has in an interview described Ted with these words:

Ted has always been something of an enigma, travelling the globe, setting rather than following fashion, mixing business and pleasure, wherever the fancy has taken him. He is a pioneering fashion icon (not to mention an intrepid aviator, all-round sportsman and consort of Princesses and Hollywood beauties), the life, loves and adventures of the debonair Mr Baker stand testimony to a man whose ambition is to experience everything. (Balmford, n.d.)

In the same interview, he also claimed that the key to the brand success is that "Ted tries very hard to bring personality out in everything that he does – a fundamental measure of a brand's success" (Balmford, n.d.). This way of talking about the character Ted Baker can also be found on the brand's website, where they state that "The idea for a global brand came to Ted whilst fishing" (Ted Baker, 2018b).

The Ted Baker brand takes pride in their rare approach to marketing. They primarily use word-of-mouth and out of the ordinary marketing activities. They claim that they are one of the only brands that has built an international label without doing one single advertising campaign (Ted Baker, 2018a). With that being said, the persona Ted Baker has been communicated in various marketing activities. For example, in September 2016 Ted Baker launched a cinematic short film in collaboration with the well-known Film Director Guy Ritchie. The plot surrounded about “T.E.D., an enigmatic leader of his eponymous agency, deploy his best agents to prevent a spectacular fashion catastrophe at the hands of one twisted villain” (Ted Baker, n.d.).

4.1.2 Hollister

Hollister is a lifestyle brand that is marketed towards relaxed, casual teenagers that likes the beach (Dailymail, 2015). The brand is a daughter brand to Abercrombie & Fitch, but employees at Hollister were for years told another story of the brands history. They used to tell the story of John M. Hollister during orientation and presented him as the founder of the Hollister brand (Eggers, 2015).

The story went something like this; John M. Hollister was born at the end of the nineteenth century and spent his summers in Maine as a youth. He was an adventurous boy who loved to swim in the clear and cold waters there. He graduated from Yale in 1915 and, eschewing the cushy Manhattan life suggested for him, set sail for the Dutch East Indies, where he purchased a rubber plantation in 1917. He fell in love with a woman named Meta and bought a fifty-foot schooner. He and Meta sailed around the South Pacific, treasuring “the works of the artisans that lived there,” and eventually settled in Los Angeles, in 1919. They had a child, John, Jr., and opened a shop in Laguna Beach that sold goods from the South Pacific—furniture, jewelry, linens, and artifacts. When John, Jr., came of age and took over the business, he included surf clothing and gear. (He was an exceptional surfer himself.) His surf shop, which bore his name, grew in popularity until it became a globally recognized brand. (Eggers, 2015)

The use of fictitious backstories is something that Abercrombie & Fitch has adopted in some of their other daughter brands as well, for example Gilly Hicks and Ruehl No. 925 (Eggers, 2015). But they have declined to comment on the matter (Dailymail, 2015).

4.1.3 Betty Crocker

Betty Crocker is a food brand own by General Mills. The character Betty Crocker was born in 1921 when the Washburn Crosby Company, a forerunner to General Mills, received a huge amount of questions about baking. They wanted to make their responses more personal and therefore signed the letters with the name Betty Crocker. The surname Crocker came from an appreciated and newly retired director at the company. The forename Betty, was chosen solely because it sounded friendly (Betty Crocker, 2018a). As the company grew, the fame of Betty Crocker grew with it (Tablespoon, n.d.).

In 1924, Betty Crocker even got a voice in her own radio show. The radio show, *Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air*, aired for 24 years (Betty Crocker, 2018b). The character has also been given a face. A face that has changed six times in relation to the trends in society (See Figure 1). She has for example gone from being a housewife to businesswomen (Deseret News, 2007). In addition to this, the character Betty Crocker has even been played by actresses during

the years, both in television and in advertising (Avey, 2013). Furthermore, Betty Crocker was in 1945, the second-best well-known women in America according to Forbes Magazine. It was only the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt that beat her (Betty Crocker, 2018b). This shows how famous this character became and, in some terms, still is in America.



Figure 3: The many faces of Betty Crocker, from 1936-1996 (Avey, 2013).


4.1.4 Uncle Ben's

Uncle Ben's is a well-known food brand that was founded in the 1940s (Uncle Ben's, 2018). It is now owned by the food giant Mars (Elliott, 2007). The real founder of the brand is Gordon Harwell, not the character Uncle Ben whose face adorns every packaging. The story behind the character Uncle Ben is unclear. The legend says that the name comes from an acclaimed rice farmer that was famous for his high-quality rice (Uncle Ben's, 2018). However, Uncle Ben's themselves states another alternative version on their webpage. The alternative version is that the name is derived from the time before the American Civil War when the name Uncle was used to describe a respected man at a plantation and the name Ben was a common name amongst black plantation workers. Accordingly, the brand concludes that the name Uncle Ben might have been a way to honour the American Southern values and the workers at the plantations (Uncle Ben's, 2018). The background story of the face that portrays the character Uncle Ben is a bit clearer. The face of Uncle Ben belonged to a head waiter at a restaurant that Gordon Harwell regularly visited (Uncle Ben's, 2018). The man was named Frank Brown and it is said that he received a very small compensation for lending his face to the brand (Factfiend, 2017).

Uncle Ben's has been criticised for using a racial and ethnic stereotype as brand character. Elliott (2007) explains in The New York Times the baggage attached with the Uncle Ben's brand with these words:

That reticence can be traced to the contentious history of Uncle Ben as the black face of a white company, wearing a bow tie evocative of servants and Pullman porters and bearing a title reflecting how white Southerners once used "uncle" and "aunt" as honorifics for older blacks because they refused to say "Mr." and "Mrs."

Attempts to change the perception of the Uncle Ben's character has been made in regard to this type of criticism. In 2007, Uncle Ben's together with its advertising agency launched an advertising campaign where the character Uncle Ben was made Chairman for the company (See Figure 2). The campaign received a mixture of responses, some thought that it was an innovative way to elaborate and evolve the existing brand character whilst some thought it was not enough (Elliott, 2007).



FROM THE DESK OF UNCLE BEN
— CHAIRMAN —

*Perfection cannot be attained
but that's no reason to stop trying.*

unclebens.com

Parboiled to perfection,
this is the purest,
simplest expression of
what rice aspires to be.

Ben knows best.




Figure 4: A newspaper ad of Uncle Ben in his office (Elliott, 2007).

4.1.5 Daniel Wellington

Daniel Wellington is a Swedish watch brand that was founded by Filip Tysander. The story behind the brand is the tale of a random encounter. During a trip, Filip Tysander met an interesting British gentleman with an impeccable style named Daniel Wellington. Daniel Wellington liked to match his vintage watches with old NATO wristbands. Filip Tysander became so inspired by Daniel Wellington and his timeless sense of fashion that he founded a watch brand in his name (Daniel Wellington, 2018).

The details of the encounter vary. In an article by Pulvirent (2015), the encounter between the two men occurred when Tysander was backpacking through Australia. Evidently this was before everybody had a smartphone and needed a watch to tell time (Pulvirent, 2015). Others mean that the special encounter took place when Tysander was traveling in the British Isles (The Idle Man, 2017). The founder himself and the company has been restricted with more information about the mythical Daniel Wellington. Although Tysander, told the following in an interview with Business Insider in 2016;

A part of me wishes to contact Daniel Wellington and explain what's happened, but at the same time I want to [let] the sleeping bear lie. If the source of my inspiration should turn up at the office one day I guess I should have to hide underneath my desk. (Byttner, 2016)

4.2 Empirical Findings from the Interviews

The following section presents the empirical findings as derived from the twelve semi-structured interviews. Moreover, this section presents the material generated from the initial coding which will later provide a foundation to the focused coding in the analysis. The outline of the empirics will be presented in accordance with the second and third research question, namely why, when and where the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona should be used in communication. The material is further structured in different subheadings inspired by the interview guide (See Appendix A).

4.2.1 Why Do Organisations Use a Semi-Fictive Brand Personas in Their Communication?

The reasons for *why* an organisation develop and deploy a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona are many, according to the respondents. Some discussed that a Semi-Fictive Brand persona can work as an effective tool to build trust in the brand and to create a relationship between the brand and its target audience. Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, elaborate:

It [Semi-Fictive Brand Personas] can help a brand to build a relationship with the end-consumer and attract the aspiring target group. Through brand personification, the consumer can relate to the brand in another way. A lot of companies today work with brand experience. Today it is no longer just about products, promotion and advertisements, but all experiences with the brand must also have the exact same feeling. To use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona then, can facilitate this feeling and become something consumers can relate to.

Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words, continue that people love stories and that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has the ability to encapsulate stories in a way that gives the consumer a point of reference:

That is how the human brain works. Stories gets people going and give them something to relate to. Since people constantly seek to put things into context, a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is helpful. Whether if it is Ted Baker or not, these kinds of brands enable you to embody a story that is trustworthy, and that people can relate to.

Another aspect of why an organisation would use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona derives from the current state of today's crowded marketplace. Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, discuss today's market and describes it as a place where there are no longer any unique selling points. Accordingly, Stadhammar argues that why a brand would develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona lies in the possibilities to generate an emotional selling point. Stadhammar explains:

I believe it was Ogilvy who said that "If you have nothing to say, sing it". It's a world where there are no longer any USP:s [Unique Selling Points]. All the clothes are the same, all the watches are the same. The only thing that stands out is the brand. Then you need to find an emotional selling point.

Ragnar Tingström, Partner at Scream Mediabyrå, further argue that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is great tool to break through the "noise" of the market. Tingström refers to a general saturation of any given market and that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can help an organisation to gain recognition and awareness as the persona makes the brand more eligible to customers. Tingström discuss as follows:

As marketers, we need to simplify everything for the customers, especially now when everything moves so fast. A semi-fictive figure like this [refers to the case examples] can thereby facilitate choice for consumers as they begin to recognize the persona. A persona can help your communication to break out from the noise and embody the message or core business. This kind of persona is great then, since you can control it 100 % and be completely calm that there is nothing under the surface.

A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona may not only work as a differentiator in today's crowded marketplace, but it also enables a certain degree of control. Several respondents discussed the motives for using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in relation to the more common, real-life spokesperson or celebrity endorser of a brand. Per Olholt, Partner and Account Director at TBWA, debate that all brands want a strong spokesperson for the brand, such as Steve Jobs or Elon Musk, but not all organisations have that. Olholt argue that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona may consequently be an alternative to a spokesperson. Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup, add that a real-life spokesperson implies several commitments:

Once you decide to have a spokesperson, it leads to several commitments. You have to be able to answer to both this and that. A Semi-Fictive persona like this will help the brand win time and make the organisation more effective.

Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, continue that there are several reasons to use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona from a brand communication point-of-view. Hugosson explain:

A fictive person won't get involved in a metoo-scandal. It is a risk-free option in communication. Additionally, you don't tie yourself up with the founders or owners who might leave, pass away or do something different in life. That way, the semi-fictive person become durable over a long period of time. A fictive persona also permits one to develop the character more than what is possible with a real person. There are also reasons in which the founder wants to do a persona under pseudonym because they do not want to become associated with the company or become famous.

Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, argue that creating your own persona permits several advantages over using a celebrity endorser. He debates that a celebrity endorser, such as an athlete or movie star, have their own personal ups and downs which may reflect poorly on the brand itself and also entail certain costs. Valfridsson elaborate that by developing your own brand persona, the organisation can avoid any form of royalty fees or unwanted costs related to contracts with real-life talent. Valfridsson conclude that:

A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is cheaper if you develop it well. It won't get you into trouble over things that you cannot control, compared to a celebrity. This also give you freedom to create your own story so to speak.

Ragnar Tingström, Partner at Scream Mediabyrå, continue the discussion by comparing the Olympic sprinter Ben Johnson with Uncle Ben's. Ben Johnson was caught cheating using anabolic drugs, an outcome that would never happen with Uncle Ben's, Tingström argue. Tingström also follow up on the aspects regarding costs by illustrating an example of "ICA-Stig", a fictional character acted out by a real-life person which the Swedish grocery retailer ICA have used in their communication since 2001, amounting up to nearly 600 commercials (ICA, n.d.). Tingström explain:

What happened with ICA-Stig was that the effect of the commercials became so much stronger and much more explicit. Consequently, they [ICA] could half their marketing expenditures while reaching the same results. ICA-Stig has enabled gigantic savings. That's the point of using some form of persona [...] it is a perfect point of recognition and it couples clear associations.

According to Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona may also be used to build a mystique around the brand and also obtain a larger following. Stadhammar elaborate as follows:

All brands want some sort of clan, a following. When something is exciting and mythical, it becomes easier to follow the brand as a consumer and I think that the fictional element of this kind of persona helps to generate that mystique. [...] The mystique excites and makes you want to know more.

Ann-Sophie Modigh, CMO at Hoist Group, continues the discussion by stating that a fictitious brand persona is an impactful tool for storytelling and discuss the mystical allure of combining fiction with reality:

Everybody loves a story in one way or another. When I supplement a company presentation with the little extra, which may be about the founders and why they started the business, it is usually what raises the most interest. In this context of fictional personas, there is a certain mythical aspect that makes it even more exciting. The aspect of not being sure whether or not a persona is real, enables it to never become ordinary.

Kalle Håkanson, Copywriter at TBWA, further emphasizes the mystique that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona could entail and also discusses how it stands out in relation to a completely fictitious brand persona. Håkanson debate that a consumer will find it more appealing to talk about a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona compared to a entirely fabricated one:

Everyone wants some kind of brand story. It makes the brand more valuable, which is evidently a positive thing about it. In contrast, if you compare it with a brand persona that is a totally fictitious, where everyone knows that it's fictitious, you cannot talk about it the way you can with this [the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona]. This [the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] is in fact something you can talk about and something that gives the brand some kind of mystique.

Lastly, A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona may not only enable an external following, but it can also facilitate an internal direction, as illustrated by Sofia Stenström, Brand strategist at Grow:

This [Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] can be an important tool internally as well; to have a guiding star of how to act, and be able to ask yourself: “Is this something that Sofia would do? Does Sofia’s values correspond with this?” It humanizes the organisational values in the form of a person. Then it becomes easier to “tick off” what you are doing.

Risks and disadvantages of using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona

Evidently, there are many reasons for why an organisation would develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. However, since this specific kind of persona portray fiction as reality, certain risks or problems can arise. One common theme in particular amongst the respondents is the issue of transparency and honesty towards the customer. Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden present his point of view:

If you are to build a character with a fictive element and not be honest about it, consumers will eventually find out as it is easier now than ever to find out the facts for yourself. Then you have a problem to deal with as the customer might feel duped. So, now more than ever, it’s essential to be open and transparent with what you are doing. There is a built-in risk that you build up an air castle that eventually will fall if people find out about the truth.

Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, provide a similar analogy by comparing the risk of lying with a house of cards, stating that the brand becomes fragile and risk crashing down. However, he states that once brands become big enough, the house of cards will grow steadier and be able to better deal with criticism. Although, there must be some form of substance into the persona as Stadhammar explains “However, if it’s all made-up, with no kind of anchoring regarding *why* you exist, then of course the house of cards will fall quickly”. Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words, compare brands to personal friends and state the same rules apply. However, these rules also apply to all kinds of brand personas, not just semi-fictive. Lundberg elaborate:

It is kind of like me having a partner or a friend for four years and then it turns out to be all fake. That the person I used to golf with was only wearing a mask and wasn’t who he said to be. That can be a mental collapse to the customer. On the other hand, this apply to all brands if you don’t practice what you preach. Especially today when it all moves so fast. It takes so much time to build up a brand, and so little to destroy one.

Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup, stress the importance of being transparent right from the beginning, even if there is a fictional element in the brand persona. Wistam also touch upon the critical standpoint that today's consumers hold against fake news and fake brands. Wistam clarify:

It's always like this when you don't speak the truth in communication; it is much better to be honest right from the start because when things become exposed and reach the surface, there is a risk that it will create disappointment and that you feel that it's fake and not real. Customers are much more allergic against fake news and fake brands nowadays. I believe that you have more to win by being genuine. If I were to reflect about Uncle Ben's: at least they are transparent about their source of inspiration and why they named it like that. I can buy that. I understand why they would do that as it becomes more personal, build credibility and provide a face outward.

As previously illustrated, many of the respondents saw advantages of using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona over a real-life spokesperson, endorser or ambassador for the brand. However, not all share the enthusiasm over using a persona with fictive ingredients. Per Olholt, Partner and Account Director at TBWA, believe that if you were to develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, the associated risks, such as the consequences of misleading the customer, would outrun the potential gains. Ultimately, Olholt argue that the actual construction of the persona becomes more difficult if it is based on a lie, as a personality can much more easily be developed if there is substance and some form of soul behind it. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, continue the discussion of a real persona against a fictional and highlight that there are strengths and weaknesses at both ends:

It is always easier to feel something strong for something that is authentic. It becomes easier to add your values to something that is sourced from something genuine, like a story that captivates. Otherwise we wouldn't have all these movies stating that they are "based on a true story". It provides that added dimension. That is the weakness [of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas], that there isn't this authenticity that we people deep down love. At the same time, it can be a huge advantage since real people or authentic stories may bear certain risks. That is, somebody didn't do what he or she was supposed to, or that everything isn't 100 percent tip top. I mean this Daniel Wellington, this fine British gentleman, he is probably blameless as he could never do anything wrong being fictive. So, it's pros and cons at both ends I would say.

Lastly, Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, discuss that there is a challenge of staying current if you develop a too specific or detailed image of the persona. He argues that the brand persona must be able to keep up to speed with the market and not grow out of style. Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words, continue on the same topic and argue that the brand persona must constantly be developed. Lundberg uses Ted Baker as an example:

Ted Baker doesn't age. I am 57 and somewhere I will reach the limit of when to stop buying clothes that are meant to be worn by a 35-year-old. But Ted Baker keeps on being forever young. It has to keep on developing all the time.

4.2.2 When and where should an organisation use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?

Identifying the *why* and the pros and cons of using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is a great first step in order to extend our knowledge of this phenomenon. However, in order to map out the full managerial and communicative spectrum of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, we must ask more questions. One of these questions being *when* an organisation should or even could use this particular persona. For example, is a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona more applicable in new or old organisations? Should the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona be used in all communication or only specific campaigns? Ragnar Tingström, Partner at Scream Mediabyrå, begin by reflecting upon the essentials that an organisation need to have in order before introducing a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona:

You need to think very carefully before you launch a persona like this and make sure that all kinds of imaginable crash tests show that this persona can strengthen the brand or the message you want to communicate. This can be done through internal workshops with your colleagues, use agencies and then also do a lot of testing in focus groups. If each test gives you a green light, then you are good to go in making the persona public.

In terms of a brand's timeline, there are different views on when an organisation should introduce a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, argue that it is likely more difficult to successfully launch this kind of persona if the brand has been known for a long period of time. Hugosson further stress that such an introduction should never be regarded as a solution or retrieval to a brand's poor reputation. Hugosson elaborate with an example of Volkswagen and debate that if they were to communicate a fictive and fun persona after Volkswagen's emission scandal, also known as 'Dieselgate', the public reaction would likely not be forgiving. Hugosson conclude that it is better to build a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona from the very start of the brand itself and then let the story develop out of the company. Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, argue that there is no overarching recipe that works everywhere and all the time in terms of when to communicate a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. However, Stadhammar recognize a common theme amongst the identified case examples:

Many of these brands do not base their commercials or communication on the persona. Instead the persona function as an underlying foundation to create a greater attraction, appeal and credibility.

One the same topic, Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, discuss the case of Daniel Wellington. Hugosson claim that Daniel Wellington would destroy their premium position if the brand begins to communicate their persona, as it entails fiction.

Once a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has been carefully developed and introduced, it can be communicated to a different extent. To what degree the persona should appear in a brand's communication is a hot topic of discussion amongst the respondents. Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, argue that it would be a shame not to use and communicate a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona since it builds awareness and recognition. At the same time, Stenström argue that using the persona in all communication can become exaggerated. Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, argue that the extent to which a persona should be communicated depends on how firmly the brand is established in the minds of the consumers. Valfridsson continue that if the brand has a solid position within people's consciousness, there is a risk of saturating the persona if it is communicated too repetitive. Mats Rönne, Senior

Advisor at OffPist Management, elaborates this and argues that it depends on the organisations purpose with the Semi-Fictive Persona and the industry it is operating in:

I think it's about what role one wants the personality to take. In some cases, history is important. Then it's more about the fact that there are traditions and traditions never change. [...] In the fashion industry or industries similar to that, it is much more important that you are in phase with the development, hence a need to be more dynamic in the role setting.

An additional aspect to take into consideration relates to the context and under what circumstances a brand should communicate a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Stenström continue that the persona shouldn't be communicating on behalf of the brand under serious circumstances, such as the event of a crisis or during a serious press conference. Valfridsson add that in the event of a catastrophe, it is essential to stop using the voice of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona and instead let the real people behind the brand step forward and do the talking and handle the crisis management. Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, conclude that the persona should be used as much as possible in any situation with positive connotations, but be removed in any form of negative context.

4.2.3 Where is the use of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona suitable?

The question of *when* to use or develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona quickly transcend into a matter of *where* this particular persona is of better use. For example, is a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona more applicable to certain markets, product categories or price segments? Should an organisation communicate the persona both internally and externally? Are there any differences between B2C and B2B in terms of adopting and communicating a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona? Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, begin by arguing that where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is appropriate, depends on the values and goals behind the company communicating the persona. Stenström reflect upon where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona would be more applicable by comparing Volvo and IKEA against each other:

Volvo stands for safety. They have been using a lot of real people in their communication, such as Zlatan Ibrahimović, Robyn, Swedish House Mafia and more. When you are communicating that the brand is all about safety, then you cannot bring in a person that isn't real. That wouldn't give the same comforting feeling. So, it all depends on the values and goals of the brand. IKEA on the other hand, is more about lifestyle. In that case, the application of a persona is not as critical as when you are trying to communicate something as delicate as safety.

Several respondents take the discussion of *where* one step further by reviewing the fit of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona amongst different product categories and price segments. Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup, argue that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona would not work very well in a high-end and luxurious segment but do better in a cheap one. Wistam conclude that the more expensive a product is, the more authenticity the customer expect. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, debate that a Semi-Fictive Brand persona can be used as a tool for generic products to become slightly more attractive and thereby obtain a higher price. However, Årneby also claim that there are limitations to how much this kind of persona can climb upward in terms of price. Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words, elaborate that a consumer must be able to rationally defend their purchase which become more difficult if there is a fictive element included. Lundberg explain:

No one really questions a purchase of a Daniel Wellington watch for 1200 [SEK]. However, if this watch would cost 120 000 to 150 000 [SEK], then you need to be able to rationally explain to others that there is some form of unique features in the gear wheel or at least something. Ted Baker is not cheap compared to H&M or Zara. But it isn't expensive compared to a premium brand, like Ralph Lauren. They [Ted Baker] have positioned themselves by appealing to emotion. The customer thereby perceives a brand with a personality as better than if they were to buy their clothes at H&M.

Lundberg continue the discussion of rationality and argue that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona would not work as well in B2B segments as the buying process entail one being more reasonable. Lundberg comment that a professional buyer faces a multitude of requirements from both the finance department, the board and upper management in general. Accordingly, a professional buyer must be able to defend and rationally explain all of their purchase decisions. Lundberg conclude that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is not much of an arguable defence. Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, state that it is easier to talk about products, performance and price in B2B. Valfridsson continue that B2B communication tend to be rather conservative and not as creative as a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona might imply. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, state that B2B is not that different compared to B2C markets in terms of communication, as even professional buyers are driven by emotion:

B2B is not particularly different. Many might have thought so for several years, but behind the B2B firms, there are still people doing business with other people. However, compared to what is required from a private consumer, a professional buyer have to be able to explain and argue why he or she purchased something from a certain place.

Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, also criticize the argument of rationality ruling out a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in B2B markets. Stadhammar note that while there is no single-handed answer to the question, he claims that those who buy industrial drills, also buy jeans, whiskey and all kinds of consumer goods. Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, elaborate that people do not register communication as either B2B or B2C. In the end, it is all about how the message that is being communicated appeals to a person and how well that message can be attributed to the product categories one engages with. Ann-Sophie Modigh, CMO at Hoist Group, has over 20 years of experience in B2B marketing. Modigh emphasizes the importance of relationships within B2B, as the end-product or service can be similar in terms of price and performance between other competing businesses. Modigh concludes that a fictitious brand persona can clarify the brand promise act as a distinct differentiator amongst competitors:

There are so many aspects to take into consideration when it comes to these kinds of investments. These investments involve long-term cooperation where the working relationship with your supplier is usually very important in B2B. You want to like those you work with and a persona who clarifies the brand promise can give a clearer picture of the company and its values. The persona can show the commitment, innovativeness and capability of the brand to visualize the value of the product.

Not all respondents share the optimism of introducing a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in B2B markets. Per Olholt, Partner and Account Director at TBWA, argue that B2B communication is more dependent on having a personal touch. Olholt debate that it is not obvious why you would create a brand persona to succeed better than others in B2B. Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup share similar thoughts on B2B demanding more personal communication:

I don't think it [Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] is suitable in B2B. You don't expect that kind of communication in B2B. The communication is more about creating a relationship with other companies and it needs to be more personal. If I was to generalize, I believe that this [Semi-Fictive Brand Personas] would work better in more playful and creative markets.

Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, reflect over why there are less Semi-Fictive Brand Personas to be found in B2B segments. Hugosson suggest that B2B brands face longer periods of procurement and more extensive buying cycles compared to B2C brands. Hugosson illustrate his thoughts by providing an analogy of Argentina's government buying the multirole fighter aircraft *JAS 39 Gripen* from the Swedish aerospace company Saab:

The Argentinian government will likely conduct the same decision-making process regardless if the plane has a brand persona or not. Their primary concern is that the planes work. This kind of persona rather builds on the premise of providing a product with more of an emotional value. That value will have a greater impact if the if the decision-making process is rather short, not as rational or as contain as much procurement.

Evidently, there are both advocates and sceptics of introducing a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in B2B markets. Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup, further debate that this kind of brand persona wouldn't work at all in some market segments, regardless if the business faces the private consumer or other companies. Wistam exemplify with the common practice of naming law firms after the surnames of the founders:

Take the example of law firms. Not everyone, but almost 90 per cent name their firm after a real person within the organisation. If someone would use a fictional name, clients would likely become annoyed or bewildered: "Why don't you dare to put your own name on the door?" I believe that there is a greater fall in certain lines of business where authentic people often appear.

Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, conclude that businesses which are built on trust, credibility and authenticity, like pharmaceutical drugs, will also face challenges in building a semi-fictional character.

To Communicate the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Internally and/or Externally?

The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona may, as previously illustrated in brief, both be used as an internal tool for brand direction or solely as a foundation that lies silent in the external communication. The following section dives deeper into the inquiry of *where* the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is more suitable from the perspective of internal and external communication. Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, has professional experience of using brand personas internally during his time as Managing Director for In Wear Fashion Group. Valfridsson explain that In Wear developed an internal, fictional persona called Trine who represented the In Wear-girl. Trine facilitated the internal communication between everyone who was involved in the process, from purchasing- and supply managers to designers. The internal persona of Trine further helped In Wear to position the brand in the market in terms of image, Valfridsson adds. He continues that one aspect that is often overseen, is that an internal brand persona can work as instrument to create internal pride:

One aspect that people often forget, is that an internal brand persona can work as an instrument to create internal pride of one's work. The persona operates as a reminder of why we come in to work during the days.

Valfridsson has also personal experience of conversing with Ray Kelvin himself, the man behind Ted Baker. Valfridsson discuss how Ted Baker has been able to transcend an internal brand persona to become a part of the external dialogue through persistent communication:

On Ted Baker's website, they still talk about Ted in third person: "Ted wasn't happy about that" or "Ted was inspired by". Ray [Kelvin] has been so consistent in talking about Ted that the fictional persona has internally achieved a status of being a real person. Apparently, it all works, since Ted Baker still communicate through their persona.

Tommy Lundberg, Writer and Consultant at Great Words, argue that there is a possibility to use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona as a tool to develop a culture of responsibility and ownership in an organisation. Lundberg discuss that firms can develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona for different parts of an organisation. Lundberg exemplify that a semi-fictive persona can take the part as an internal coach to the employees and thereby make the organisation more efficient. Lundberg conclude that transparency from the beginning is essential, especially when you work with a persona internally. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, follow up on the topic of streamlining the organisation through a Semi-Fictive Persona internally. Årneby argue that an internal persona facilitates brand direction and thereby enables great efficiency:

It [Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] becomes a guideline that makes it easier to work. For example, product designers at Daniel Wellington can feel what this gentleman would wear. They wouldn't design a watch with a plastic wristband in the colour of green peas, because no British gentleman would wear that and keep his dignity [...]. The persona becomes a bannister for everyone to hold onto.

Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, present the advantages of using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in the external brand communication. Stenström explain that a persona of this nature operates as a differentiator. While competitors can imitate commercials and products, a person is more difficult, she argues. Stenström continue that since a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona acts as a point of recognition while also being an embodiment of the brand values, the persona can ultimately strengthen the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Stenström add:

Through the persona, you can translate your whole business strategy into the language of the consumers. Thereby, it becomes easier for the consumer to talk about the brand. Most of the time, consumers look for brands that reflect themselves. If that brand happens to be an aspiring persona, that's great. So, the external communication enables recognition, differentiation and inspiration.

Stenström conclude that since the persona becomes a point of inspiration and self-expression to the customer, there are also limitations to what kind of contexts the persona can be communicated, but also how detailed the persona itself should be. Several respondents argue that the context and values behind the brand, dictates the appropriateness of giving a persona a face, the length of the persona's story and also what kind of name the persona should have.

Stenström for one, argues that it is more difficult to give a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona a face in markets where the consumer seeks products and services for self-expression, such as fashion apparel. Stenström add that low engagement products, such as FMCG are better suited for a visual Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, believe that it is highly deliberate that fashion brands exclude faces in their brand persona. Årneby explain:

You rarely see a person wearing Hollister clothing from top to toe. People rarely wear just one brand. Instead, these brands aim to be a part of the selection of brands that a consumer puts together for his or her outfit. [...] A face makes the persona more static and sets limitations to where the persona can grow. In contrast, Ted Baker and Daniel Wellington for instance, they have the ability to add more products to their offering without it damaging the brand or confuse to the customer.

Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, argue that brand personas and faces in general is one way to add more weight into the external brand communication. Hugosson explain that while evaluating surveys on advertisements, measurements indicate that people tend to increase their trust and likeability towards a brand if a face portray the communication. Nonetheless, Hugosson add that different faces should portray different communication, as one face may be more applicable to communicate watches than rice. Mats Rönne, Senior Advisor at OffPist Management, elaborates that a visual figuration is more critical for organisations where the packaging is more important than the content. He further explains:

Traditional FMCG-products plays a more functional role. You do not buy them in order to show how good of a chef you are, instead you buy them because you know that it works and that its going to result in a good meal for you and our family. It [the visual persona] is trust-based and is easier to identify since it is a person on the packaging. There is some subtle belief that the person [on the packaging] is a guarantor for high quality.

He further discusses that the downside with a visual design is that people may not identify with it and therefore do not choose it. Rönne means that the more you as an individual can mould the persona yourself, the easier it becomes to identify with the persona. He believes that brands that are used by consumers to create their identity should be careful in developing a visual persona since it limits the possibilities for consumers to identify themselves with the persona. Kalle Håkanson, Copywriter at TBWA, conclude that it is easier to give the brand persona a face when it comes to simple products, such as Betty Crocker and Uncle Ben. He continues that this might be because it is not as trend sensitive as more advanced fashionable brands.

Apart from the issue of whether or not to include a visual representation of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, there is also the question regarding the depth of the persona's background. Several respondents comment on the length of the background story amongst the identified case examples. While Daniel Wellington's and Uncle Ben's brand personas are rather short and concise in their descriptions, Betty Crocker, Hollister and Ted Baker are in relation rather detailed. Torbjörn Valfridsson, Senior Advisor at Valfridsson & Partner, argue that there are more opportunities for future brand development and growth if the persona has a shorter story. Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, comment that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona should develop through some form of evolution. He continues that it is better for the consumer to gradually realize that the brand persona might be fictional. Hugosson conclude that if you immediately launch a fully developed brand persona and simultaneously have to communicate that some ingredients are fictional, the customer will have a difficult time to accept and consume the brand. Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, compare the brand personas of Daniel Wellington and Betty Crocker. Stenström argue that Daniel Wellington is less vulnerable as their short anecdote is not used in their daily external communication. Instead, the story is more of a short elevator pitch that brings some mystique to who Daniel Wellington really is, Stenström debate. Stenström continue that Betty Crocker on the other hand, has a very outspoken brand persona which forces the brand to eventually take a stand on social issues in society. She further claims that Betty Crocker becomes very dependent on different macro-trends in society which forces the persona to continuously adapt itself and the brand values at large. As illustrated in the case of Betty Crocker, the brand persona has moved from a housewife

to a businesswoman and also changed her appearance. Anne Årneby, CEO at Nordic Morning Group, comment on the changes that the brand persona of Betty Crocker has gone through:

Betty Crocker has gone from being an older lady to a younger woman. The reason is likely because you want to expand and reach a larger target group. It is a classical strategy of re-positioning, as Betty Crocker would otherwise pass away along with her customers. By re-developing a younger brand persona, you also expand the lifespan of your persona. You can thereby stay with your customers for a longer period of time. By now, we also know that people tend to establish their brand preferences early in life and stick to them. After 30, you rarely switch brands.

Lastly, the actual name of the persona is an additional factor that should be taken into consideration in a brand's external communication. Martin Stadhammar, Partner and Copywriter at Berntzon Bylund, argue that there is a high level of trustworthiness embodied in brands with personal names, whether the persona is fictional or not. Stadhammar elaborate that personal names signals that the brand dares to be open and stand for what they do, even if the name is fictional. Martin Hugosson, CEO at GroupM Sweden, continue the discussion of names and argue that the name of the persona has to correspond with the product itself. He exemplifies that if a watch is to be considered as 'prestige', its brand persona either needs some form of legacy, handicraft or at least a credible name. Hugosson conclude that: "You cannot introduce a watch named *Kurt* and then sell it at a price range of 1500 to 2000 [SEK]". Magnus Wistam, CEO at MSLGroup, note that the name of Ted Baker has a function as it says something about the British legacy. He concludes, that the trick is to protect the name, as there might be several people named Ted Baker which may result in legal issues.

5 Analysis

In the following section, the analysis of the empirical findings and the existing literature is presented. The analysis is divided into three parts in accordance with the research questions of this study. First, a more elaborative exploration and explanation of the phenomenon is given. This involves an explanation of the brand persona concept in general and the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in particular. Second, the reasons why an organisation uses a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is explored. The findings in regard to this matter has derived us to determine five main arguments for the use of this type of persona. The reasons are called *the 5C's* which stands for of Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass. Finally, an analysis about when and where this type of brand persona is suitable is presented. To answer this question, a framework has been constructed, named The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

5.1 What is a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?

To fully grasp what the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona entail, one must analyse the uniquely owned characteristics of this phenomenon in comparison to the general brand persona construct. In order to do so, the phenomenon is further explored in relation to previous literature and the empirical findings. This section further serves as a foundation for the understanding of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, so that it can be analysed more in depth in the following sections in the analysis.

The shared conviction between researchers is that a brand identity encompasses differentiating characteristics, values and beliefs which in turn works as a foundation in developing marketing communication toward the brands' target audience (Balmer & Stotvig, 1997; de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2012; Melin, 2002, Mårtensson, 2009). Brand personality, which is defined by Azoulay and Kapferer (2003, p. 151) as the set of human personality traits that are both applicable to and relevant for the brand, is solely a part of the brand identity (Kapferer, 2012). A brand persona however, is a broader concept than brand personality. Dion and Arnould (2016) define the brand persona as the embodiment of personality traits and psychologic details into a cultural stereotype. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010, p. 21) in turn defines a brand persona as "the articulated form of the brand's character and personality". Both these definitions emphasize that brand personality is a part of the brand persona. Although, the embodiment and articulated form that these definitions describe, entails that the brand persona is something more than just personality traits. One might conclude that the brand persona, since it is the embodiment of a brand, also is the embodiment of the brand identity. The brand persona humanizes the brand and its identity, which in turn includes all facets in Kapferer's (2012) Brand Identity Prism. The similarities between a brand persona and the brand identity could also be found in the interviews. The empirical findings, show that a common reflection in the interviews was that the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can serve as a guiding star in the organisation. For example, Anne Årneby said "It [Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] becomes a

guideline that makes it easier to work.”. This was also emphasised by Sofia Stenström who explained:

This [Semi-Fictive Brand Persona] can be an important tool internally as well; to have a guiding star of how to act, and be able to ask yourself: “Is this something that Sofia would do? Does Sofia’s values correspond with this?” It humanizes the organisational values in the form of a person. Then it becomes easier to “tick off” what you are doing.

With the definition of a brand persona and the empirical findings in mind, we could conclude that the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona fits in Cohen’s (2014) first personification strategy. The first personification strategy is when the brand personification entails a character that personifies the brand. Another evident feature for the first personification strategy is that the name of the character is identical or at least very similar to the brand itself, which is something that the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona also is characterised by. The name that the Semi-Fictive characters has been given is usually the same name as the brand itself, or at least very similar. An example of this is the character John M. Hollister, that has been given a forename in addition to the brands name. The importance of a name is according to Melin (2002) something that strongly influence the brand identity, which further means that this feature of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can enhance the brand identity. The respondents also reflected upon the names that the Semi-Fictive Brand Personas has been given. Martin Stadhammar argued that there is a high level of trustworthiness embodied in brands with personal names, whether the persona is fictional or not. He further elaborated that personal names signals that the brand dares to be open and stand for what they do, even if the name is fictional. To conclude, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, as other brand personas, embodies the brand itself, hence also embodying the brand identity. This is an important notion since it means that the brand persona is a broader concept than brand personality, and therefore should not be mistaken for each other. Although, this is something they share with all brand personas that falls into Cohen's first personification strategy. To better understand the unique features of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona one must study its unique characteristics.

The characteristics of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can further be explained through Cohen’s (2014) reality continuum. In the continuum, which ranges from fantasy to reality, Cohen (2014) has placed brands that he likes to call *Brands given a Human Face by Factious Human Figureheads*, in the middle. Cohen (2014) states that a brand persona that is placed in this category is a brand persona that consumers perceive to be real but in fact is completely fictitious. Furthermore, Cohen (2014) explains that this type of brand persona, as the name entails, has been given a human face. The case examples expand this category of brand personas as it includes both visual and abstract representations (See Figure 5). The case examples clearly show that a brand persona that is placed in the middle of the reality continuum does not need to be attributed with a face. Ted Baker, John M. Hollister and Daniel Wellington are all characters with no visual appearance, that many people perceive to be real even though they are in fact fictitious. The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is alluring due to the fact that it balances between what is real and what is fiction. The different types of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas as identified in this study will be further elaborated in The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

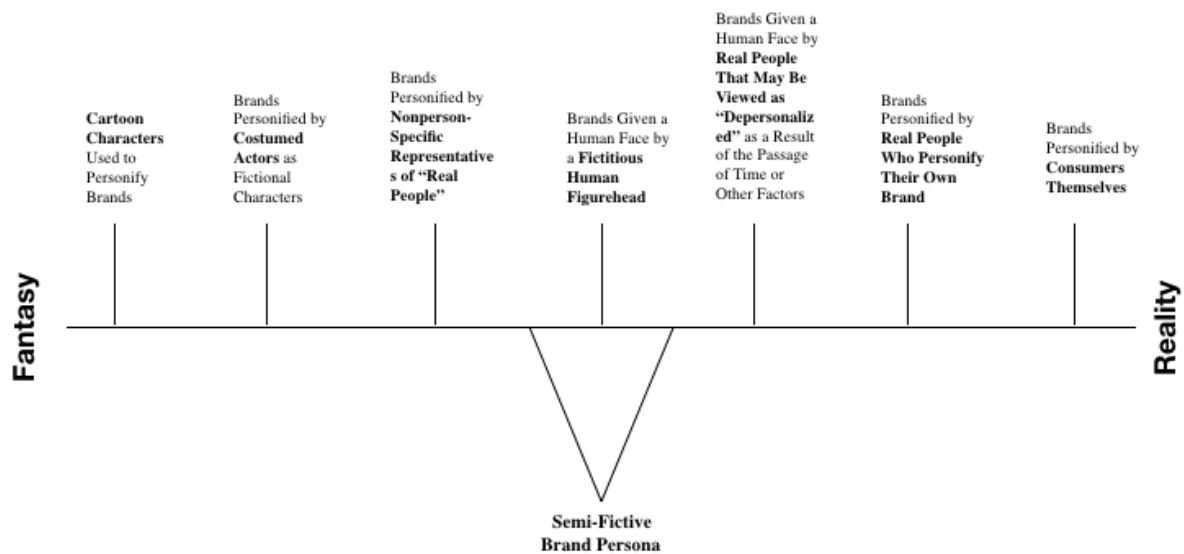


Figure 5: The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in Cohen's (2014) reality continuum.

5.2 Why do organisations use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?

After careful analysis of the empirical findings, it was possible to determine five emerging and consistent themes that altogether explain the reasons for why an organisation would use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication. These explanations can be abbreviated to *the 5C's*: Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass.

5.2.1 Control

A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has the key advantage of complete *control* compared to any real person acting as an endorser, spokesperson or ambassador for the brand. Because the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona allows for control over both actions and opinions, the persona is less likely to go as wrong as a real person potentially could. A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona will consequently never have to deal with wrongdoings of the past or speak unfiltered to the public. As illustrated by Martin Hugosson and Ragnar Tingström, a fictive persona never risks of getting involved into a metoo-scandal or get caught for using illegal substances. The persona may ultimately function as a risk-free tool for communication since the organisation itself controls whatever actions that could reflect badly upon the brand due to the persona. Accordingly, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona suggests an antithesis of lowering the risk and thereby obtain a greater return. As recognized by Torbjörn Valfridsson, a fictional persona will never act out of bounds which will further remove expenditures related to controlling the persona. Ultimately, organisations may achieve a greater cost efficiency, as a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona removes contractual transaction costs of controlling the actions of the real-life

persona. Additionally, in the potential long run, once the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has established a firm point of recognition in the minds of the recipients, marketing expenditures can be reduced extensively, as noted by Ragnar Tingström. Through repetitive use of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, the brand associations accordingly become stronger. Eventually, the road towards building a greater brand awareness becomes more cost effective, as the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona do not entail any form of royalty fee per usage in the communication.

5.2.2 Continuity

Based on our analysis, *continuity* strongly emerges as a theme which provides insight into the phenomenon and helps to answer the question of why an organisation should use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Not only does a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona permit control in terms of risk reduction, it also enables a greater outlook for continuity in terms of maintenance and development of the persona compared to a what is possible with a real person. Martin Hugosson debate that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona will not leave the organisation to do other things in life compared to a real founder, owner or any other form of real-life brand persona. It may also be difficult for a real-life person to continuously live up to whatever expectations that the brand's customers and other stakeholders have. Accordingly, a fictive persona enables the brand to mould its character and continuously fine-tune the desired associations. However, as previously discussed by Anne Årneby, Tommy Lundberg and Torbjörn Valfridsson, there is a challenge of maintaining a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona current and up-to-date with the changing winds of society. The case of Betty Crocker particularly illustrates a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona that has continuously been perceptive to society's macro-trends and developed its persona accordingly. Betty Crocker has grown from being a housewife to a businesswoman and thereby begun to appeal to younger customer segments. As noted by Anne Årneby, this re-positioning strategy has extended the duration of Betty Crocker as it prevents the persona to fade away along with an elderly audience. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) fittingly explain that a strong brand persona stays true to its core values, thereby enabling the persona to grow over time while strengthening the emotional relationships with the audience. A compelling and strong brand persona has furthermore the ability to cope with changing situations (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

However, it appears that the preconditions of altering the brand persona may be different between the identified case examples. Daniel Wellington's and Uncle Ben's rather short background stories are more of an underlying foundation to these brands rather than an active ingredient in the external communication, as identified by Martin Stadhammar. The type of personas that Daniel Wellington and Uncle Ben's display could therefore be described as more contemporary in the long run given their rather passive position in their respective brand communication. Though the contentious history of Uncle Ben's proves that even a deeply established brand persona may eventually have to face some form of adaptation, as the attempt of promoting Ben to chairman illustrate. Regardless, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona do offer a promising alternative for brands who wish to be timeless. Given that the brand takes care of its own persona and provide adequate maintenance, it may very well live forever.

5.2.3 Content

Another prominent theme that was derived from the empirical findings was the ability of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona to encapsulate *content* in the form of stories. A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona acts as a great instrument to embody stories and ultimately strengthen the relationship between the brand and the customer, as disputed by Tommy Lundberg. Lundberg conclude that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is helpful as it encapsulates the story and thereby give people something to relate to and put into context. Lundberg finds support for his claims by Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) who argue that persona-focused storytelling is an essential tool in branding, as it enables an organisation to build long-lasting and emotional relationships with the audience. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) add that the brand persona offers a point of reference that audiences can relate to, regardless of the brand message or story. In other words, as the audience begin to “know” the brand persona they will also become interested in the actions of the brand (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010)

Preceding arguments by Lundqvist et al. (2012) demonstrate that the story being communicated by a brand does not have to be based on real events. Mossberg and Nissen Johansen (2006) add that people tend to appreciate fictional tales as long as they can relate to the characters. However, these stories should never be perceived as deceptive and/or insincere, as organisations that portray fiction as reality will eventually lose trust in their brand (Lundqvist et al., 2012; Mossberg & Nissen Johansen, 2006). The most transcending concern towards this phenomenon amongst the respondents, is the issue of not being transparent and honest about communicating a fictional brand persona as a real-life persona. Consequently, to prevent any form of crisis in the future, several respondents stressed the importance of being transparent in the brand communication right from the beginning. Martin Stadhammar concur with the importance of honesty in today’s market of endless information while also identifying a paradoxical counterargument. As previously discussed, Stadhammar argues that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona builds an alluring mystique around the brand which ultimately can generate a larger external following. To openly communicate the fictional elements of a brand persona would likely then disturb this mystique and appeal that radiates around the persona. The ultimate solution then, would entail a combination of transparent communication where the mystical attraction of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is maintained. One way to hedge yourself as a brand, is to take the same approach as Uncle Ben’s. That is, to never reveal or communicate the fictional aspects of the persona externally but present a transparent disclaimer somewhere on the brand’s website in case the organisation falls under public scrutiny. Nonetheless, the aspects of transparency should always act as an underlying counterweight when communicating the brand persona.

A Semi-Fictive Brand Persona additionally portray similar traits to the concept of signature stories, as introduced by Aaker and Aaker (2016). Both of which can be viewed as critical assets that can enable growth, inspiration and direction both internally and externally while also endure change in the long run. More importantly, a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona must, just like a signature story, be viewed as authentic and entail substance in the eyes of the receiver (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). Since this particular kind of persona intervene with both fiction and reality, this category of personas likely faces challenges in being perceived as completely authentic, as noted by Magnus Wistam and Anne Årneby. However, the opportunities of building substance into the persona are endless, given that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can embody the brand message and ultimately strengthen the relationship with the customer.

5.2.4 Co-creation

The substance of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is moreover a result of *co-creation* both internally amongst colleagues and externally in-between brand advocates. Although the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas function as a powerful instrument in the external communication to build strong brand associations, it turns out that this kind of persona can be of equal influence internally. Additionally, drawing from the literature of brand personas and their three main purposes as previously discussed by Stern (1988) it appears that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona communicated internally bear striking similarities to the functions of a commercial brand persona. A commercial brand persona is simply a persona used within efforts of marketing communication (Dion & Arnould, 2016). The difference is merely a replacement in terminology, where the word ‘consumer’ is substituted with ‘employee’. First of all, a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona used internally also provide the employees with tangible clues to the brand’s personality and what the brand stands for. As previously discussed by Anne Årneby and Sofia Stenström, this kind of persona can act as a guiding star, a guideline, and a banister for everyone to hold onto. Ultimately, this enables an organisation to act more efficiently as the persona can help the brand to move forward while also staying on track. Anne Årneby’s example of the British gentleman Daniel Wellington never wearing a watch with a plastic wristband in the colour of green peas, is a simple yet highly accurate analogy that pinpoints how this kind of persona can facilitate internal decision-making and coordination between all parts of an organisation. Secondly, a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona used internally can also help to define the relationship between the brand and its employees. As previously elaborated by Torbjörn Valfridsson, the case of Ted Baker demonstrates an example of a relationship between the brand and its employees that have grown so strong that the employees talk about ‘Ted’ as if he was real. Finally, a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can also influence the attitudes of its employees. The interplay between co-workers using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona as a basis, can further stimulate a culture of responsibility and ownership within the organisation, as identified by Tommy Lundberg. Whether or not the persona is communicated internally and/or externally, it can create a sense of pride amongst colleagues. Torbjörn Valfridsson testify that an internal persona act as a reminder and a banner to the employees of why they show up at work, and that their work makes a difference.

The substance of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is not only generated from the interplay within the organisation, but to a certain extent also built externally in-between brand advocates. Martin Stadhammar previously initiated the topic of the mystical aspects that brings allure to the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Ann-Sophie Modigh reflect that consumers might be attracted by the mystique of not being sure whether the persona is real or not. Stadhammar add that the mystique can create a greater cult-like following as it makes the brand more exciting and creates a longing for more information. Kalle Håkanson in turn, argue that the mystical aspects of a persona make the brand more interesting and easy to talk about in comparison to brands that are entirely and outspokenly fictional. In relation to Kapferer’s (2012) brand identity prism and the culture facet, he previously discussed that brands are much more than product benefits, but a culture and ideology too. Similar to Stadhammar’s reflections, Kapferer (2012) argue that most brands strive to be a cult brand whose ideological underpinnings become the answer to a social crisis, ultimately facilitating community creation. Kapferer (2012) add that people tend to create communities around causes, ideas and values. Arguably, the mystical balance between fiction and reality of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona could act as an ideological glue between brand advocates that further differentiate the brand apart from the competition.

5.2.5 Compass

Evidently, the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas displays several characteristics that facilitate managerial guidance and direction both internally and externally. Sharing the same qualities of a *compass*, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can furthermore help the brand to navigate past the “noise” of today’s crowded marketplace. By referring to a general saturation of any given market, Ragnar Tingström proclaim that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can aid an organisation with recognition and awareness, as the persona embody the message and core business of the brand. Ultimately, this enables the brand to become more eligible to customers as they begin to recognize the persona more easily, he concludes. Previous studies within anthropomorphism support these claims. Preceding arguments by Keller (1993) for one, state that the humanization or embodiment of a brand can increase brand awareness as consumers can develop affective brand associations and consequently evaluate the brand beyond its functional components. Delbaere, McQuarrie and Phillips (2011) add that the embodiment of a brand can lead to a stronger connection between the brand and its consumers, while Fleck, Michel and Zeitoun (2014) conclude that such affective brand associations can contribute to brand differentiation, even in markets of intense competition. Martin Stadhammar continue the discussion of using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona to stand out in today’s crowded marketplace. He continues that we live in a world where there are no longer any unique selling points. When all the clothes and watches are the same, the only thing that stands out is the brand. Then it is essential to have an emotional selling point, Stadhammar conclude. Arguably, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona does not only function as a compass to steer the brand past the competition and towards a point of differentiation. Conversely, this persona will eventually act as a lighthouse to the customers, as the brand embodiment presents an invitation that can build an appealing and emotional relationship. A brand is indeed a relationship according to Kapferer (2012). He argues that the brand is often the focal point in exchanges and transactions between people, particularly amongst retail brands and in the service sector. Although the phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas entails a competitive point of differentiation in relation to both consumers and other brands, a fictitious persona will likely acclimatize better within certain environments and product categories. The next question then, is when and where an organisation should use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?

5.3 When and where should an organisation use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?

The topic regarding where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is suitable was frequently discussed during the interviews. One thing that many respondents reflected upon, was how this type of communication strategy would suit the Business-to-Business (B2B) segment. The interviews revealed a range of different views on this matter. Some of the respondents reasoned that the buying process in B2B is more rational than in the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) industry, and therefore more reluctant towards the fictional element in Semi-Fictive Brand Personas. Tommy Lundberg described this by pointing out that a professional buyer must be able to defend and rationally explain all purchase decisions. Lundberg continued on this by concluding that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is not much of an arguable defence. However, a number of the respondents, even Lundberg himself, contradicted this and highlighted that there in fact are no major differences between B2B and B2C when it comes to communication since all people are driven by emotions. Torbjörn Valfridsson concluded that people do not register communication

as either B2B or B2C. In the end, it is all about how the message that is being communicated appeals to a person and how well that message can be attributed to the product categories one engages with. This is further emphasized by Sofia Stenström that argues that where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is appropriate, depends on the values and goals behind the company communicating the persona. This lead to the belief that a distinction between B2B or B2C was not an important one, since it does not necessarily entail different communication strategies.

While there might not be an issue of B2B or B2C per se, different product categories might do better than others in relation to a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. As discussed by the respondents, it also comes down to a question of price. Magnus Wistam argued that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona would not work very well in a high-end and luxurious segment but do better in a cheap one. He meant that the more expensive a product is, the more authenticity the customer expect. Anne Årneby also discussed this and stated that a Semi-Fictive Brand persona can be used as a tool for generic products to become slightly more attractive and thereby obtain a higher price. However, Årneby also highlighted that there are limitations in to how much this kind of persona can climb upward in terms of price. Price could therefore be an indication of where the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is a suitable communication strategy, regardless if the organisation has a B2B or B2C orientation. However, another factor that could answer this question more in depth is how the different executions of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona suits different product categories.

In order to determine where and when a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona should be used, a framework has been developed with the empirical findings as a foundation. The framework has been built on the realization that in order to answer where the persona should be used, one must first distinguish the different types of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona that can occur. Two themes were shown to be the most prominent and reoccurring in the empirical findings in regard to the matter of where, namely Static vs. Dynamic and Visual vs. Abstract. The themes help to distinguish different types of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas and classify them into four types. Each type has its own features which also implies different implications to the brand it personifies.

5.3.1 Static vs Dynamic

The first theme, Static vs. Dynamic, revolves around *when* and how much an organisation should use their Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication. The case examples show that this varies between the organisations that uses a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Daniel Wellington, Hollister, and Uncle Ben´s, resembles each other since they all have a stable Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The Daniel Wellington persona essentially solely revolves around a story about an random encounter. In resemblance, John M. Hollister is only the tale of the origin of the Hollister brand. As well, Uncle Ben´s is almost exclusively a friendly face with a fuzzy background story. Despite a small attempt to change the perception of Uncle Ben by promoting him to Chairman, they have otherwise not pursued to evolve the persona further. This is a characteristic that the respondents also reflected upon. Martin Stadhammar explicated it like this:

Many of these brands do not base their commercials or communication on the persona. Instead the persona function as an underlying foundation to create a greater attraction, appeal and credibility.

One advantage of a static persona is that it does not risk being worn out. Sofia Stenström, Brand Strategist at Grow, means that if an organisation uses the persona in all of their communication it can become exaggerated. Martin Hugosson took this argument further claiming that Daniel Wellington would destroy their premium position if the brand started to communicate their persona, as it entails fiction. In addition, Torbjörn Valfridsson elaborated this when he explained that if the brand has a solid position within people's consciousness, there is a risk of saturating the persona if it is communicated too repetitive. Another advantage is that the static Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is not as limited as a dynamic persona, due to its short story. Torbjörn Valfridsson argued in the interview that it is more opportunities for future brand development and growth if the persona has a short story. Furthermore, Sofia Stenström stated that Daniel Wellington is less vulnerable since its short anecdote of a story is not used in the brands daily external communication. Stenström further elaborated that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona with a short story is more of an elevator pitch that brings mystique to the brand. Mats Rönne further concludes that personas that are stable and solely consists of a short background story are used in that way just because they are manifesting a history and traditions, which never change hence are static.

In contrast, Ted Baker and Betty Crocker have both evolved during the years. The Ted Baker persona has not only been presented as the founder of the brand (Ted Baker, 2018b), but is also a main character in much of the organisation's communication. The way that Ray Kelvin talks about Ted Baker as a real person in interviews makes him (the Ted Baker persona) a constant that always is up to date since he can evolve for each question. Ray Kelvin has further described Ted Baker as "a pioneering fashion icon" (Balmford, n.d.), which might entail the need for a constant change since the conception of what is ground-breaking change over time, not to mention in the ever-changing fashion industry. Although, Ted Baker takes pride in their unwillingness to use advertising campaigns they have used their Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in different marketing activities. For instance, the short film they produced with Guy Ritchie (Ted Baker, n.d.) where the persona played the main character. The Betty Crocker persona has likewise evolved during time. She has during the years been attributed with more and more "human" features, such as a voice and a face. However, the most striking sign of her dynamic characteristic is that she has changed over the years in accordance with trends in society (Deseret News, 2007).

Martin Hugosson view was that organisations that have developed a brand persona should use it as much as possible in any situation with positive connotations but be removed in any form of negative context. Sofia Stenström supplementary argued that an organisation should use their Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication since it builds awareness and recognition. Furthermore, another advantage with a dynamic brand persona is that it can keep up with trends. Mats Rönne argued that a more dynamic role setting enables the brand to be in phase with the developments in society. Anne Årneby further concluded that a persona that constantly develops also can facilitate brands to expand and reach a larger target group. She explained that Betty Crocker would have died with her customers if she did not evolve during the years. The constant development of the Betty Crocker has expanded the persona's lifespan.

5.3.2 Visual vs. Abstract

The second theme is the distinction between visual and abstract Semi-Fictive Brand Personas. This characteristic showed to be an important characteristic in the interviews with the respondents. Both Uncle Ben's and Betty Crocker has been attributed with a face and by that a visual appearance. The most prominent feature of the Uncle Ben persona is his face. It could even be viewed that the face that adorns the packaging is the only feature Uncle Ben has been attributed with. Since the origin of the name is doubtful, and even the organisation itself questions the veracity of the legend behind it (Uncle Ben's, 2018), there is no substance left expect its friendly face. Betty Crocker, has not only been assigned with one face, but six different ones (Deseret News, 2007). She can therefore definitely be categorized as a visual Semi-Fictive Brand Persona.

In the interviews, some insights regarding the visual approach was reflected upon. Martin Hugosson explained that brand personas and faces in specific, is one way to add more weight into the external brand communication. He further shared that while evaluating surveys on advertisements, measurements indicated that people tend to increase their trust and likeability towards a brand if a face portray the communication. Mats Rönne claimed that the visual figuration serves as subtle guarantor for high quality. He also emphasized that the visual persona is trust-based and that it enables brand recognition. The respondents also discussed where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona with a face was most suitable. Kalle Håkanson speculated that it is easier to give the brand persona a face when it comes to simple products, such as Betty Crocker and Uncle Ben. He continued that his might be because it not as trend sensitive as more advanced fashionable brands. Sofia Stenström reasoned that low engagement products, such as FMCG, are better suited for a persona with visual appearance. Mats Rönne agreed and further elaborated that he thought that a visual persona is more suitable for FMCG-products because they play more of a functional role. Or, as he also puts it, in organisations where the packaging is more important than the content.

On the other hand, there is Daniel Wellington, Hollister and Ted Baker. All these Semi-Fictive Brand Personas have not been attributed with a face, or any other unique visual feature. Daniel Wellington has, even though the organisation claims that he is real (Daniel Wellington, 2018), not been credited a face. He has merely been entitled for being a gentleman with an impeccable and timeless sense of fashion (Daniel Wellington, 2018). John M. Hollister has a detailed background story, that includes all main events in his fictitious life. Similar to Daniel Wellington, John M. Hollister has not been attributed with a face or another type of visual appearance. Ted Baker has previously been described by Ray Kelvin with the following words:

Ted has always been something of an enigma, travelling the globe, setting rather than following fashion, mixing business and pleasure, wherever the fancy has taken him. He is a pioneering fashion icon (not to mention an intrepid aviator, all-round sportsman and consort of Princesses and Hollywood beauties), the life, loves and adventures of the debonair Mr Baker stand testimony to a man whose ambition is to experience everything (Balmford, n.d.)

This shows that the persona Ted Baker has been attributed with a range of different qualities and personality traits. However, they have not given him a face which makes him an abstract character. Anne Årneby believed that it is not a coincidence that abstract personas are more apparent in certain industries. Årneby elaborated as follows:

You rarely see a person wearing Hollister clothing from top to toe. People rarely wear just one brand. Instead, these brands aim to be a part of the selection of brands that a consumer puts together for his or her outfit. [...] A face makes the persona more static and sets limitations to where the persona can grow. In contrast, Ted Baker and Daniel Wellington for instance, they have the ability to add more products to their offering without it damaging the brand or confuse to the customer.

This view was shared by Sofia Stenström, who argued that it is difficult to give a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona a face in markets where the consumer seeks products and services for self-expression, such as fashion apparel. This argument was also brought up by Mats Rönne. Rönne argued that brands that are used by consumers to establish their identity should be careful in developing a visual persona, since it limits the possibilities for consumers to identify themselves with the persona. He further evolved this statement by explaining that the more you as an individual customer can mould the persona yourself, the easier it becomes for the customer to identify with the persona, hence making it more appropriate with a abstract Semi-Fictive Brand Persona.

5.3.3 The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework

With an inductive approach as point of departure, the themes of Static vs. Dynamic and Visual vs. Abstract were combined in an empirically anchored framework we call The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework (See Figure 5). The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework categorizes the different forms that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can undertake. On the horizontal axis, the distinction between static and dynamic characters are made. On the vertical axis, the categorisation between abstract and visual are presented. This further reveal four different archetypes; The Role Model, The Influencer, The Trusted Friend and The Counsellor.

Abstract	The Role Model	The Influencer
Visual	The Trusted Friend	The Counsellor
	Static	Dynamic

Figure 6: The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

The Role Model: Static and Abstract

The Role Model is a mythical figure. This character is a manifestation of history and traditions and is therefore not interested in changing. This figure has a short background story which enables future development and growth, as the persona has little or no baggage in terms of previous storytelling of the character. The Role Model likes to avoid the limelight and is not a big talker, which makes it less vulnerable for possible scrutiny. The Role Model rarely get too repetitive, due to his shyness and avoidance of being in the centre of attention in the brand communication. The Role Model's mystical appearance is enhanced by the fact that the persona has not been attributed with a face. This characteristic enables consumers to connect with The Role Model, since it is easier for them to identify themselves with a persona with no established visual features. The Role Model can due to this, serve as an actual role model to consumers that are searching to express themselves and their identity.

Case examples that fall into this category is Daniel Wellington and Hollister. They are both static and have not evolved during time. Furthermore, they are abstract characters with no visual attributes. The Role Model is suitable in organisations that offers products and services for self-expression, for example the fashion industry.

The Influencer: Dynamic and Abstract

The influencer keeps up with trends, is a big talker and therefore often in the centre of attention in the brand's communication. These dynamic characteristics makes it a great influencer for the brand since he helps the brand to achieve brand awareness and recognition. The Influencers way of keeping up with trends also enables it to reach new target groups and expand its own lifespan. The Influencer has an aura of mystique since it does not show its face. This entitles it to influence people, since the customers easier can identify themselves with a persona that does not already has fixed physical attributes.

Ted Baker is a case example of this type of persona. Ted Baker is a character that the organisation uses in a range of different communication activities, which also enables him to change over time. This has further enabled him to be attributed with a range of personality traits. However, he is an abstract figure and thereby holds an aura of mystique. The Influencer is, similar to The Role Model, suitable in organisations that offers product and services used for self-expression, for example the fashion industry. The difference between The Influencer and The Role Model lies in the extent to which a brand intends to communicate through their brand persona. While The Influencer can be described as main character in the brand's communication, The Role Model acts more of a silent foundation to the brand.

The Trusted Friend: Static and Visual

The Trusted Friend is a mystical guarantor. This character is somewhat a contradiction since it is both mystical and distinct. It is mystical due to its short background story and its unwillingness to talk. The Trusted Friend is true to its history and traditions and is therefore not interested in change. Although, it has the opportunity to do so since it is not weighed down by any baggage in terms of previous storytelling of the character. Its limited communication attempts make it less vulnerable for possible scrutiny. The Trusted Friend has a distinct visual appearance, which generates likeability and trustworthiness. This persona is like a friend, a

subtle generator of quality that people can trust in. Even though it is not a big talker, its visual attributes are often communicated in the brand communication to raise brand awareness.

Uncle Ben's falls into this category. The Uncle Ben's persona has, as previously established, a face that arguably can be viewed as his only feature. Despite the organisation's attempt to portray Uncle Ben as chairman in a response to public critique, the persona is still to be regarded as static rather than dynamic. As a result of the features of The Trusted Friend, this persona is more suitable for goods and services typically considered as low engagement products and/or products with more functional attributes, such as FMCG-products.

The Counsellor: Dynamic and Visual

The Counsellor is a trustful communicator. This figure is a big talker and is often the main character in the brand's communication. It is interested in personal development and likes to be up to date with the trends in society. This character's sensitivity towards trends enables it to reach new target groups and expand its lifespan, as it always strives to be relevant. The Counsellor has a known visual appearance, which enables people to easily spot and recognize the brand. It is a likeable and trustworthy character that people often look to for advice. This persona's role as a subtle guarantor makes it a natural counsellor.

Betty Crocker is a case example of this type of persona. She has a face and has over the years changed both her visual appearance and her features. The change from a housewife to a businesswoman is a profound example of her dynamic characteristic. The Counsellor is, such as The Trusted Friend, suitable for goods and services typically considered as low engagement products and/or products with more functional attributes, such as FMCG-products. The difference between The Trusted Friend and The Counsellor lies in the extent to which a brand intends to communicate through their brand persona. While The Counsellor can be described as main character in the brand's communication, The Trusted Friend acts more of a silent foundation to the brand.

Categorical Overview

To conclude, an overview over the different categories identified in The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework is presented (See Table 1). The purpose with the overview is to facilitate a greater understanding of the different categories and to further enable comparisons between them. Although each category presents different strengths, it is imperative to remember that the appropriateness of developing a specific Semi-Fictive Brand Persona will differ between organisations. Accordingly, each brand will have to carefully assess to what extent they intend to communicate through their brand persona and review this in relation to their product and/or service offering. Given the individual prerequisites of any brand, this evaluation will turn out differently and accordingly illustrate that certain Semi-Fictive Brand Personas are more or less appropriate than others.

Table 1: Overview over the different categories in the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

Name	The Role Model	The Influencer	The Trusted Friend	The Counsellor
Characteristics	Static & Abstract	Dynamic & Abstract	Static & Visual	Dynamic & Visual
Product Category	Products used for self-expression	Products used for self-expression	Low-engagement products Functional products FMCG-products	Low-engagement products Functional products FMCG-products
When and how much it is communicated	Silent foundation to the Brand	Main character in all communication	Silent foundation to the Brand	Main character in all communication
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not risk being worn out</i> • <i>Not limited due to its short story</i> • <i>More opportunities for future brand development and growth</i> • <i>Less vulnerable since it's not used in the brands daily communication</i> • <i>Mystical</i> • <i>Manifesting history and traditions</i> • <i>Enables product extension</i> • <i>Consumers can identify themselves with the persona</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brand awareness and recognition</i> • <i>Keeps up with trends</i> • <i>Facilitate brands to expand and reach a larger target group</i> • <i>Long lifespan</i> • <i>Enables product extension.</i> • <i>Consumers can identify themselves with the persona</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not risk being worn out</i> • <i>Not limited due to its short story</i> • <i>More opportunities for future brand development and growth</i> • <i>Less vulnerable since it's not used in the brands daily communication</i> • <i>Mystical</i> • <i>Manifesting history and traditions</i> • <i>Likability</i> • <i>Subtle guarantor for high quality.</i> • <i>Trust based</i> • <i>Brand recognition</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brand awareness and recognition</i> • <i>Keeps up with trends</i> • <i>Facilitate brands to expand and reach a larger target group</i> • <i>Long lifespan</i> • <i>Likability</i> • <i>Subtle guarantor for high quality.</i> • <i>Trust based</i>

6 Discussion and Conclusion

The phenomenon of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas illustrates a paradoxical approach towards brand personification strategies and marketing communication in general. To portray and to communicate a fictitious brand persona in such a way that it is perceived by customers as a real-life person, may instinctively pose as a thought-provoking method. Nevertheless, the cases of Betty Crocker, Uncle Ben's, Hollister, Ted Baker and Daniel Wellington illustrate how this phenomenon in various ways can be practiced. Under the label of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, all of these examples portray a persona that embodies the brand as a whole. With either visual or abstract representations of the persona, they all share the same name and personality characteristics as if the brand were to be a real-life person. When communicated, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is portrayed as a real-life persona, while in actuality, the persona is either completely or partly fictional.

From the empirical findings, it was possible to derive five transcending arguments to why an organisation would use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication. These explanations were abbreviated to the 5C's, namely Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass. To begin with, a fictitious brand persona will in general always be more easily controlled in relation to real-life spokespersons, endorsers and ambassadors to the brand. With complete *control* over the behaviour of the brand persona, organisations will never have to worry over actions that might reflect badly upon the brand. Hence, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona also entail control over cost. Overseeing contracts with real-life talent to make sure they act in line with the brand values can be time-consuming and consequently imply cost inefficiencies. Marketing outlays can further be reduced, as the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona acts as a point of reference to the customer and accelerate brand awareness and brand associations. In the other words, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona imply less expenditures as the embodied brand message of the persona is more easily communicated. Ultimately, the road towards building a greater brand awareness will become more cost effective, as a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona does not require a salary per performance, unlike any real-life persona.

With control over the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, there are furthermore endless opportunities to mould and fine-tune the character in accordance with the desired brand associations. The *continuity* of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is a facet of multiple layers given the different preconditions of altering the persona. Accordingly, there is a different outset in terms of adapting the persona towards the greater milieu between dynamic and static brand personas, as they are communicated to a different extent externally. However, the bottom line regarding a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is an advantage of having a timeless character embodying the brand message and even the core business.

The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can act as a tool to encapsulate *content*, such as brand stories, and thereby enable the customer a point of reference, ultimately strengthening the emotional bond between the brand and its audience. As disputed by Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), once the audience begin to "know" the brand, they will also become interested in the actions of the brand. However, the notion of an eternal life does not come for free. The most apparent threat towards a timeless Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is the issue of transparency as confirmed both

empirically and by previous literature regarding brand personas and storytelling. The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona pose a paradoxical condition given the external requests for an alluring mystique yet complete honesty. An obvious implication of balancing fiction and reality, is to fulfil the criteria of authenticity. There is however a multitude of opportunities to counterweight the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona with substance.

The substance of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is moreover a result of *co-creation* both internally amongst colleagues and externally in-between brand advocates. The mythical aspect of balancing fiction and reality is an alluring notion that could facilitate an external community creation around the brand, as people arguably find this paradox more interesting and appealing compared to a persona that is entirely and outspokenly real or fictitious. Arguably one of the most apparent reasons for why an organisation would develop and communicate a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is the opportunities for internal and external direction. Internally, the interplay between co-workers using a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona as a basis, can stimulate a culture of responsibility and ownership within the organisation and additionally provide fuel for a sense of internal pride. The persona further becomes a banister for everyone to hold onto, thereby facilitating the internal decision-making and coordination between all parts of an organisation. Ultimately, the persona act as a benchmark between the internal and external communication, enabling management to tick off initiatives against what the brand persona symbolizes, and the brand values embodied. In conclusion, using the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona internally fulfils the same main purposes of a commercial brand persona communicated externally, as presented by Stern (1988). Namely, (I) it provides employees with tangible clues about what the brand stands for, (II) it defines the relationship between the brand and its employees, and (III) influence the attitudes of the employees.

Lastly, with co-created substance as a foundation, the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can become more eligible to customers, as there is an emotional selling point incorporated. The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona will further act as a *compass* and help the brand to navigate past the crowded marketplace, since its embodied characteristics will act as a competitive differentiator. There are however different product categories of which a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona will have better opportunities to acclimatize and prosper. Fortunately, there is now a framework to provide such managerial guidance.

The empirical findings derived much knowledge in regard to where a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona should be used. It was shown that the distinction between B2B and B2C were not important considering the shared conviction between the respondents that it does not entail different communication strategies. Although, the price segment was displayed to be of relevance. A common view between the interviewees were that a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is not suitable in the high-end and luxurious segment. However, it can provide an additional value to generic products. This further could derive the conclusion that the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona should be used by organisations which is segmented in the low or middle price category, in both B2C or B2B.

To answer more in depth where the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is suitable, an empirically anchored framework was developed (See Figure 5). The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework were built on the realization that in order to answer where the persona should be used, one must first distinguish the different types of Semi-Fictive Brand Personas that can occur. Two themes were identified to be of importance in the distinction between the different types of Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, namely Static vs. Dynamic and Visual vs. Abstract. The first theme, Static vs. Dynamic, clarifies when and how much the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona

is used in communication. The case examples showed that there was a variation in regard to this matter between the different Semi-Fictive Brand Personas. Static refers to when the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona solely has a short background story and is not communicated in additional communication activities. The static persona serves as a foundation in the organisation it personifies. The dynamic Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, is in contrast continually evolving and is communicated in numerous communication activities. The second theme, Visual vs. Abstract, illustrates the different executions in regard to appearance that were identified in the case examples. While a visual Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has been attributed with visual attributes such as a face, an abstract Semi-Fictive Brand Persona is more mythical in nature as it is faceless. These established themes helped to distinguish the different types of a Semi-Fictive Brand Personas that exists and classify them into four types: The Role Model, The Influencer, The Trusted Friend and The Counsellor. Each of which, has its own qualities that imply different implications to the brand it personifies. Moreover, each type of Semi-Fictive Brand Persona has, through the framework, also been shown to be more applicable in different types of product categories. The Role Model and The Influencer are more suitable in organisations that offers products and services for self-expression, for example the fashion industry. Whilst The Trusted Friend and The Counsellor are better suited in organisation that offer goods and services that are typically considered as low engagement products and/or products with more functional attributes, such as FMCG. Lastly, each type of persona also presents different approaches regarding the extent to which an organisation intends to communicate through their brand persona. While The Influencer and The Counsellor can be described as main characters in the brand's communication, The Role Model and The Trusted Friend acts more of a silent foundation to the brand.

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study has contributed to the theoretical field of Strategic Brand Management and more specifically the knowledge about the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona.

- I. The first theoretical contribution is the clarification of the array of concepts related to this phenomenon. The concepts brand personality, brand personification and brand persona have in the literature review been explored, distinguished and explained in order to supply an overview of the concepts and how they intertwine.
- II. The second theoretical contribution is an empirically anchored understanding of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. This study has in its exploration of the phenomenon, evolved Cohens (2014) novel categorisation and coined a new and broader category into his reality continuum.
- III. A third theoretical contribution is the demonstration of why an organisation might use this form of a brand persona. Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass has been encapsulated in *the 5C's*. The alliteration ultimately provides an explanation to why an organisation would use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication.
- IV. The last theoretical contribution is The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework. The framework further evolves the understanding of the phenomenon as it illustrates the different forms a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona can portray, namely as a Role Model, an

Influencer, a Trusted Friend or a Counsellor. All these forms of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, has through the framework also been terminated to suit various contexts, such as different product categories. The framework additionally highlights the extent to which different Semi-Fictive Brand Personas should be communicated in relation to the product and/or service offering.

6.2 Managerial Implications

One of Glaser and Strauss (1967) criterion in Grounded Theory is that it should be useful for practitioners. The design and presentation of the theory should consequently be accessible and comprehensible for practitioners in the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It was essential to this study that the theory developed also would be useful and applicable for practitioners in the field of communication.

- I. The first managerial implication of this research is the conceptualization of the phenomenon as a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. By facilitating the terminology of the phenomenon, it becomes easier for practitioners to talk about this communication strategy more naturally while also enabling a point of reference in terms of other brand personification strategies.
- II. Secondly, the alliteration of *the 5Cs*: Control, Continuity, Content, Co-creation and Compass is a useful rule of thumb to grasp the unique features of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The 5C's can accordingly provide a rational and overarching argumentation to why an organisation would develop and implement a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication.
- III. The final managerial implication is The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework. The framework provides dual guidance for practitioners. First, it helps practitioners to understand the different types of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona that they can create. Second, it also advises which type of Semi-Fictive Brand Persona that is most suitable to use in a certain product category and to what extent the persona should be communicated. The framework can thereby be regarded as a compass for practitioners that wants to develop a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. The last criterion for Grounded Theory as presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is that the theory developed in the research should guide action. Accordingly, The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework help practitioners to gain some control over the phenomenon and predict where it is suitable to use.

6.3 Future research

Finally, some future research in regard to this field is proposed. Our first suggestion is to investigate the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona from a consumer perspective. This entails how the consumers think about the use of this phenomenon. We believe that it would be beneficial to gain knowledge about how the consumers perceive this type of communication strategy in order to further grasp the phenomenon and its implications as a whole. This knowledge would potentially also contribute to a better use and execution of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona and evolve The Semi-Fictive Brand Persona Framework.

The second suggestion for future research is to investigate the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in relation to recent technological advancements. The technological development is gradually blurring the lines between reality and fiction, hence making the concept of Semi-Fictive more alluring than ever. One example of this is the influencer Lil Miquela. She is a freckled singer, fashion influencer, model and activist (Macdonald Johnston, 2018) and has over one million followers on Instagram (2018). Her fame has even landed her a collaboration with Prada (Bobila, 2018), even though she is in fact completely fictitious and a result of advanced technology. The technology behind Lil Miquela has devised some to believe that she is real (Macdonald Johnston, 2018). Lil Miquela could thus be seen to be a semi-fictive persona. This innovative way of using technology might be the future for the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona. Brands could be inspired to create their own Lil Miquela, hence take the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona one step further in its execution. Today's technology has additionally started to experiment with giving a voice to non-human entities. Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa are both examples of how people today can have conversations with their phones or other technical devices. The technology makes it possible for brands and organisation to develop their own unique voice that can interact with the consumer, without losing any control. Could the next step for Ted Baker be that he is provided with a voice? It would enable the brand persona to interact with consumers in a dialogue and thereby perhaps build a stronger relationship. Both these technical advancements could be the future development of the Semi-Fictive Brand Persona and should therefore in our opinion be further investigated. How would this Semi-Fictive Brand Persona 2.0 be perceived? Is it ethically correct? What are the implications of blurring the line between reality and fiction even further?

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Appendix A - Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

- Presentation of Semi-Fictive Brand Persona
 - Case Examples
- Where do you work and what position do you hold?

WHY

- Why does organisations use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?
- What is the main advantages/benefits?
- What is the possible risks/disadvantages?
- Why do you think that mentioned case organisations did not want to talk about their Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?

WHEN

- When should/ an organisations use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona in their communication?
- Should organisations use it in all communication or just in specific campaigns?
- Is it more applicable in new or old organisations?

WHERE

- Where is the use of a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona suitable?
- Is it more suitable in one type of communication? external/internal
- Is it more suitable in one type of industry?
- Do you think it is more suitable in B2B or B2C?
- Is it a communication strategy that can be used by both big and small organisations?

CONCLUSION

- Should you recommend a client/another organisation to use a Semi-Fictive Brand Persona? Why?
- That was all our questions, is there something more you would like to add?

Appendix B - Interview information

Hej!

Vi är två studenter från Ekonomihögskolan vid Lunds Universitet som just nu skriver vårt examensarbete inom International Marketing & Brand Management. Studiens ämnesområde utgörs av Semi-Fictive Brand Personas, det vill säga personifierade varumärken med både verkliga och fiktiva inslag. Syftet med studien är att få en djupare förståelse kring varför företag använder sig av denna typ av brand persona i sin kommunikation för att bygga sitt varumärke. För att kunna genomföra denna studie har vi valt att intervjua personer med stor erfarenhet och kunskap inom ämnesområdena kommunikation och brand management som kan bidra med praktiska insikter kring fenomenet. Exempel på varumärken som använder sig av Semi-Fictive Brand Personas är Daniel Wellington, Uncle Ben's, Ted Baker, Betty Crocker och Hollister. För att tydliggöra konceptet kring Semi-Fictive Brand Persona, kommer nedan en kort beskrivning som illustrerar hur dessa företag applicerat just sin persona.

Daniel Wellington: Det svenska klockvarumärket Daniel Wellington är inspirerat av en brittisk gentleman som grundaren Filip Tysander slumpartat stötte på under en av sina resor. Den brittiske mannens förmåga att klädsamt kombinera vintageklockor med NATO-armband blev startskottet för Filip Tysander att skapa sin egna kollektion med liknande design under namnet Daniel Wellington.

Uncle Ben's: Uncle Ben's är världskänt för deras boil-in-bag produkter som gjort riskokning enklare än någonsin. De flesta känner även igen det vänliga ansiktet av en äldre man som pryder Uncle Ben's produkter och som personifierar varumärket. Namnet Uncle Ben's och dess tillhörande ansikte är däremot baserat på två helt olika personer. Ansiktet tillhör Frank Brown, hovmästare på en restaurang som grundaren ofta besökte och namnet är taget ifrån en risbonde från gulfkusten, känd för sitt kvalitetsris.

Ted Baker: Ted Baker är ett brittiskt klädföretag, som har fått sitt namn efter en påhittad person. Grundaren Ray Kelvin pratar dock ofta om personen Ted Baker såsom att han vore en verklig person. Kelvin har som vana att uttrycka sig på följande sätt i olika intervjuer om Ted Baker "Ted has always been something of an enigma" samt "He [Ted Baker] does not want to be ordinary or like anybody else". Det är inte enbart Kelvin som pratar om Ted Baker som en riktigt person, även på företagets hemsida kan man hitta följande formulering kring företagets historia "The idea for a global brand came to Ted whilst fishing".

Betty Crocker: Den påhittade personen Betty Crocker dök upp första gången i en reklamkampanj för Washburn-Crosby Company år 1921. De hade under lång tid fått in brev från kunder gällande bakningstips och kände att det skulle ge en mer personlig tvist om de svarade dessa brev med att signera svaret med ett namn. Personan Betty Crocker har sedan dess växt och blivit mer än bara ett namn. År 1924 fick hon en röst då hon fick sitt egna radioprogram med namnet "The Betty Crocker School of the air", som sändes i hela 24 år. År 1936 fick Betty Crocker ett ansikte, ett ansikte som sedan dess har ändrat utseende sex gånger, allt eftersom

tiden har gått och samhället har förändrats. Hon har till exempel gått från att vara en äldre dam till en yngre kvinna och gått från att vara en husfru till att vara en affärskvinna.

Hollister: Klädvarumärket Hollister har internt kommunicerat en bakgrundshistoria kring företagets grundare John M Hollister. Berättelsen bygger på en akademiker från Yale som lämnar det trygga livet på Manhattan för att segla till Nederländska Ostindien. Under sina resor förälskar sig John i en kvinna vid namn Meta och tillsammans öppnar båda upp en surfbutik i Kalifornien. John M Hollister är i själva verket helt fabricerad av moderbolaget Abercrombie & Fitch som internt kommunicerade berättelsen som den sanna historien bakom varumärket.

Hantering av material

Innan intervjun startar ber vi om din tillåtelse att få spela in intervjun. Detta är enbart i syfte att underlätta transkribering av det material som intervjun bidrar till. Transkriberat material kommer vidare att enbart tillges vår handledare och kommer således inte vara offentligt. Innan materialet används för artikeln kommer transkriberad intervju även att skickas till dig som respondent för godkännande. Självfallet kommer du även få ta del av artikeln när den är klar. Förhoppningsvis bidrar vårt resultat till nya och intressanta insikter.

Frågor till intervjun

Intervjun kommer att vara semistrukturerad. Nedan finner du tre öppna frågor som vi planerar att samtalet kommer att cirkulera kring. Vi önskar ett öppet samtal där du fritt får utveckla dina tankar och synpunkter rörande de frågor som ställs. Vi beräknar att samtalet kan ta cirka 45 min.

- Varför tror du att företag använder sig av en Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?
- När är det passande att använda sig av en Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?
- I vilken kontext passar det att använda sig av Semi-Fictive Brand Persona?

Vi vill på förhand rikta ett tack för ditt deltagande! Vi kommer som tidigare benämnt även återkomma till dig efter att intervjun transkriberats. Nedan finner du våra kontaktuppgifter ifall några funderingar skulle uppstå.

Vänligen,
Emma Jungerth och Sam Lidström