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Rhetorical analysis of
brand communication over time

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Rhetorical analysis of brand communication over time

Jens Gudacker, Alan Ryan & Genevieve Blanch

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to utilize rhetoric to analyse the brand communication in the case of a state controlled alcohol monopoly (Systembolaget) and how it has evolved over time.

Design/methodology/approach: This study implemented a multi-method qualitative approach including a literature review, documentary analysis and a longitudinal case study applying rhetorical theory on Systembolaget's brand communication.

Findings: Urde's brand core framework is applicable not only to private enterprises but also likely to state owned brands. Rhetoric has great analytical capacity with regards to management of a brands communication over time. External and internal forces should also be taken into account in the brand core framework.

Research implications: Rhetoric provides a strong theoretical foundation for analysis of brands communication and management over time. As a result of this study, four future research questions arise: (1) Is the brand core framework universally applicable? (2) Is there a sequential pattern corresponding to the way a brand communication develops over time? (3) Are there relationships and dependencies between the pillars of persuasion? (4) Can rhetorics be used as a quantitative measurement to analyse brand communication?

Practical implications: For brands to be effective, the presence of rhetorical modes of appeals is highly recommended and suggested as a tool for strategy in brand communication. By shifting perspectives on a brand's core over time, a brand has to consider internal and external forces in its brand communication.

Originality/value: Validation of the universal applicability of Urde's brand core framework integrating rhetorical theory as well as new external and internal considerations for the framework.

Keywords: Brand core framework, Rhetoric, Brand Communication, Systembolaget, Brand Identification, External and Internal Forces

Introduction

"The application of analytical rhetoric has not been given the attention it deserves within the research field of strategic brand management."(Urde, 2015, p.33)

The purpose of this study is to utilise rhetoric to analyse the strategic communication of a state controlled alcohol monopoly and how it has evolved over time. This study seeks to understand the applicability of brand core and in particular a new model (Urde, 2015) for analysing brand core and its interrelated communication components, on a state owned monopoly over time.

The research is based on the lines of argument of the Swedish Government owned Alcohol Monopoly, Systembolaget. Systembolaget for consecutive years has had higher approval ratings than their equivalents in Norway and Finland (Alko, 2014). Additionally our interest in Systembolaget is sparked by the reported success of the system on alcohol consumption in Sweden with a reduction of 11% over the last 11 years (Trolldal & Leifman, 2014).

This comes at a time when the pressure to privatize is greater than ever. In 2006 the new centre-right government in Sweden promised to terminate the Pharmacy monopoly and sell most of the state owned pharmacies, and in 2009 private competition was permitted. These

key events bring to question the core brand values of Systembolaget and how the communication of these values have adapted and changed over time to compete with growing pressures.

The field of marketing has recently placed more attention on the application of analytical rhetoric, however very little literature focuses on the rhetoric theory in the analysis of strategic brand management and more specifically, brand core. In 2015, Urde presented a new brand management framework to examine a firm's brand core and its "continuity and change" over time (Urde, 2015). Urde (2015) integrated rhetoric (logos, ethos, pathos) in his brand core framework and aimed to apply this model universally without focusing on a brand, target group or approach. His research however was centred on the case of Volvo, a well-established brand with characteristics that can be applied broadly, but perhaps not universally.

The central question here is if the brand core framework still applies when the brand is a state owned monopoly brand, and if so how exactly it applies. Our answer shifts attention away from the more traditional methods of analysing brand core and brand communication strategy to one that emphasises the line of persuasion and its change over time.

We begin by examining definitions and approaches to brand core in the literature. This confirms the absence of rhetoric used in literature on brand core and the way it is embedded over time. We then discuss rhetoric and the use of three principle perspectives (logos, pathos and ethos) to strategic brand management. This leads to the introduction of Urde's brand core framework. The methodology section explains the analysis of the Systembolaget case and how we apply the brand core framework to the monopoly brand. Drawing on research and analysis the paper concludes with a discussion and the research implications of the use of the new brand core framework.

Literature Review

A common theme in the strategic marketing literature is how best to manage a brand's communication. Much of the research is relevant to the 'brand core' concept and what constitutes brand identity. However, very little research draws the connection between rhetoric and brand core. We will begin our literature review by addressing the importance of rhetoric to marketing and brand communication. We then look to uncover the literature that moves towards management over time through rhetorical perspectives and describe a recent direction in the literature that applies rhetorical analysis to analyse a brand's core over time.

Rhetoric theory dates back hundreds of years in literature and its origins lie with the philosopher, Aristotle. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation" (Kennedy, 2007). The authors, Flory and Iglesias (2010) focus on the way rhetoric has influenced changes over history and suggest that a change relies upon how the world is framed by our language. Additionally, rhetoric has presence in the field of psychology in ways that contribute to its use as a framework for analysing communication. Urde (2015) suggests its purpose is to make the audience see a goal and want to reach it. Grau (2014) looks at rhetoric from a psychological point of view, and draws a parallel between rhetoric and identity, stating that it is important to look at one's past in order to protect one's identity.

The literature reflects the importance of rhetoric effective communication. Flory and Iglesias' (2010) research points to the fact that when developing a line of argument, there is more at work than just the argument which influences the audience. In their research, the authors state that human communication is something that cannot avoid being rhetorical. Drawing on a definition from the book, *A Rhetoric of Motives* by Burke (1969), Flory and Iglesias define rhetoric as "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to

symbols” (p.43). This definition coincides with the article by Lucas (2014) where the author states that objects take on a symbolic meaning and identity beyond their pure function and that people want to consume these products based on that symbolic meaning and identity. Similarly, Mejia et al. (2014) see a brand's communication as a change in worth (either positive or negative) rather than a change to the physical object. They suggest that objects can be communicated by value alone, however it is marketing, or use of rhetoric that adds value to the exchange. These observations suggest that consumers' choose brands and their objects (product/services) because of their symbolic or added meanings rather than simply preference based on the value of the product or service itself. This highlights the importance of building an argument surrounding the identity of a brand and thus the important role of rhetoric in marketing today.

The identity of a brand is closely tied to a brand's value (Urde, 2013). Identity and how it is sustained over time comes into focus in the work of Balmer and Greyser (2002). Their principle framework, called the ACID test, views a corporation as comprising of five identities. The framework suggests image has become more salient and that corporations should focus on the sustenance of a brand's multiple identities. The first of these identities is the 'Actual Identity of the firm'. The second is the 'Communicated Identity of the brand'. The third is the 'Conceived Identity of the brand'. The fourth identity is the 'Ideal Identity of the brand' and the fifth is the 'Desired Identity of the brand'. This framework can be seen to be able to navigate the brand through the difficulties associated with identity change, however a lack of alignment between two or more of the identities can lead to weaknesses in brand equity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002). This suggests the importance of an overarching identity of a brand to continuity and more importantly that this core identity is conveyed to consumers.

Identity is not the only ingredient making up a brand's core representation. A brand

additionally represents the attributes and positioning of a product or service of a company and that service is perceived by customers (Kilambi, Laroche & Richard, 2013). Two approaches that brands should take into consideration when it comes to positioning include brand orientation and market orientation. As stated in the work of Urde and Koch (2014), there has been a 'tug of war' on whether brands should be brand oriented or market oriented. This tension is concerned with whether the brand should be focused on its image (market) or on its identity (brand). Market oriented brands essentially focus delivering satisfaction to the consumer, and argue that the firm should go in the direction which is most profitable and suitable for the consumer. The risk that the firm faces with this approach is the possible compromise of the brand's core values.

The brand oriented approach states that the brand should be guided in its decision making by the core values within the firm, regardless of the changing values of the consumer. However, Urde and Koch (2014) found the approach should not be considered a 'tug of war' between brand oriented and market oriented, but more of a synergistic relationship between the two. This approach asks the question whether the brand is being guided by brand identity (inside out) or brand image (outside in). Without core values, the firm may lose track of what the original purpose of the brand was and focus on delivering to the consumer and lost sight of what the firm's original core value was. Urde and Koch (2014) argue that by focusing too much on internal core values, the brand loses a connection with its customers. By focusing only on their own core values, a brand can become out of touch with what is going on in the market, with how to satisfy their customer base and thus lose out on gaining market share or losing existing customers. In effect, the objective of a brand should be customer preference as long as it does not stray outside the limits of the core identity of that brand (Urde & Koch, 2014; Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2011).

Recently, literature has pointed to a new direction whereby brand core serves as a point of reference for continuity (Urde, 2015). Urde (2015) describes brand core as something which consists of the core values of the organisation and a promise constituting a single entity. This leads onto the description of a brand core as what the brand can be reduced to without losing its fundamental meaning. The promise is not limited to the short sentence that encapsulates the brand's essence. Kapferer (2012) stipulates that brand core is one corner of a triangle with the vision and the key belief of the brand making up brand identity. It is for this reason that Kapferer (2012) suggests that brand managers should use all tools at their disposal to ensure that this brand core permeates through all their marketing activities and that brand core is something that must be consistently built upon through time.

Urde's (2013) research brings to light the importance of brand core value and elements that influence its' value. The paper looks at a well-defined corporate identity is the foundation of management and the sustainable building of a brand. The article looks for a framework that suits management of corporate brands as opposed to forcing product brand frameworks to fit the context of a corporate brand. Product brand frameworks neglect internal components that have such prominence in a corporate brand. Again, this model looks at the combination of elements surrounding the brand core. The implications of this framework on management, is the identification of gaps in the components and brand core that could result in weaknesses in the brand. This framework integrates the synergistic relationship that should exist between the market-oriented and the brand-oriented perspectives.

In this new direction, Urde (2015) looks towards a means for analysing brand core over time. His work suggests that such a framework is required to satisfy three criteria. The first criterion is that the framework must be applicable to different types of brands, that it is universal. The second criterion is that the framework provides a point of reference (the

brand core itself), continuity criteria. The third and final criterion is that the framework allows adaptations and for a change to take place over time, that is the dynamic criteria. Urde (2015) states that the implementation of elements that are not core can derail a brand building process and endanger brand equity.

From his work on Volvo, Urde (2015) looks at the management of a brand core over time and focuses on communication from a rhetoric perspective. There are three perspectives in looking at a brand core from the rhetoric framework. The first perspective is logos and is concerned with relating to the issue itself and is based upon logic. The second perspective is ethos and is concerned with the credibility from the source's reputation. The third perspective is pathos and is related to making a connection to the audience through means of emotions. This is summarised in the brand core framework (*see figure 1*).

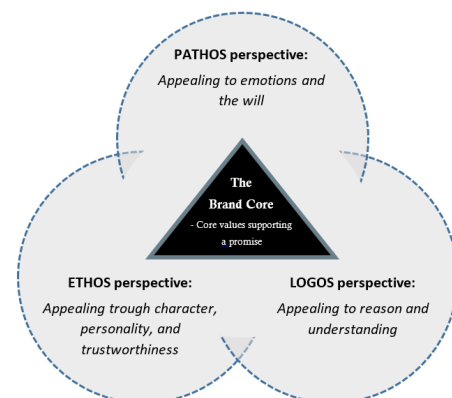


Figure 1 Brand core framework (adapted from Urde, 2015)

Urde (2015) argues that this is an appropriate framework as opposed to those that came previously, including the ACID Test (Balmer & Greyser, 2002) because it encourages the consistency of the brand's identity, communication and positioning taking into account important brand attributes such as core, reputation and track record. This alignment between communications is something which Urde presents as a problem existing in brand management.

Other literature points to the same problem of alignment. Park and MacInnis (1986) state that it is the principal goal of brand management to adjust image and positioning continuously to

current market conditions in accordance with an outside in approach. Lucas (2014) emphasises the importance of consistency, when the author states that a brand attempting to do everything with its communication eventually ends up amounting to nothing. O'Loughlin and Smizgen (2007) found that a consumer receiving a mixed message leads to confusion and lacks meaning to the customer. The confusion between a mixed message internally, and eventually reaching the external market means nothing to the consumer. Every brand can be looked at from this perspective of rhetoric due to its broad applicability in brand core context. As Urde (2015) points out that Park's approach also does not take into account the brand identity and that this approach has too much of a product focus. It is our intention to apply this framework to the context of the Swedish alcohol monopoly Systembolaget.

Urde (2015) argues that a brand uses all three modes of rhetoric communication but to different extents. This can be backed up by Grau (2014) who argues that identity is primarily derived from external sources and it is in this vein that one's efforts to master one's own character can never be complete. This is particularly relevant to branding. Brands employ each of the three modes of rhetoric to different extents in order to convey their core values to customers, but it is an endless process. Rhetoric is very useful in analysing communication because of its broad applicability (Urde, 2015). The rhetoric brand core framework addresses the issue of identity that previous literature struggled with. The framework addresses this by guiding a brand toward a brand core that is considered true internally and externally whilst also promoting an aspirational identity.

Our aim is to use Urde's model to analyse Systembolaget's communication and to look at the possibility of adapting rhetoric to suit the brand of a government run alcohol monopoly such as Systembolaget.

Methodology

This study implemented a multi-method qualitative approach whereby a literature review and a documentary analysis applying rhetorical theory were used to draw findings and conclusions. The challenge for us was to find a method to describe, understand, and analyse the applicability of Urde's brand core framework responding to brand core over time for a state owned brand. Urde's framework was suggested to be universally applicable, however given how recent the framework is, it has not yet been applied to a government owned brand.

A formal review of literature relevant to the management of brand communication over time set the context for current research on brand communication and highlighted the opportunity for further research on the lines of argument of a brand surrounding its core. Rhetoric was identified as a universally understood and broadly applicable theoretical approach. It is an approach that allows for continuous analysis (over time) and doesn't limit the analysis to categorization (Urde, 2015).

The choice of a longitudinal case study method was motivated by the opportunity to study brand communication processes and its change over time (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and to align with Urde's longitudinal research on Volvo (Urde, 2015). Systembolaget has held a monopoly position in Sweden since 1955 allowing for an analysis unhampered by competitive or market influence and more focus on the way it is communicated. Additionally, being a government owned enterprise Systembolaget's transparent documentation and reporting provided an opportunity for close examination of content, historical turning points and changes in communication over time. Systembolaget also served as a brand in which the characteristics can be applied to many other brands, and in particular government run firms. Finally Systembolaget presented the opportunity to test the application of a new brand core framework on a government owned enterprise.

Following the case description, our research sought to understand if Urde's framework applied to Systembolaget, as it did to Volvo. Given both brands have a long established history (with Volvo established in 1927 and Systembolaget becoming a monopoly in 1955) we were able to apply a similar framework and implement a similar methodology. This method allowed for consistent comparison in order to draw valid conclusions about the universal applicability use of the framework. Furthermore brands can be tracked for management of continuity and change, a suggested gap in the literature (Poole & Van de Ven cited in Urde, 2015).

In the case analysis, documentation studies of multiple content and archived materials were analysed with the aim to use a variety of data sources. Yin (2014) suggested employing multiple methods of data sources for validity of a case study analysis. The findings were drawn from interviews, brand strategy presentations, annual reports, brand advertising, market research and consumer insight and analysis as well as the history of Systembolaget. The documentation method is summarized in *table 1*.

Reflecting on Systembolaget history, its changes in communication and external and internal influences, three time frames were identified (1955 – 1999, 2000 – 2009, 2010 ongoing) and aligned with rhetorical perspectives. These time frames mark significant changes in perspectives of Systembolaget. The shift in perspectives were analysed using three main approaches, all-feeding into the brand core framework.

The first approach consisted of external communication and applied rhetorical perspectives. This included a rhetorical analysis of advertising campaigns in channels such as Facebook, YouTube, television commercials (TVCs) and Systembolaget's website, as well as archival material. The second approach consisted of internal communication and brand values and how they influenced the perspectives. An audio interview with the brand manager and brand presentations validated these findings. The

third approach consisted of the positioning of the brand and public opinion. Here, market research, public opinion surveys and Systembolaget annual reports contributed to the findings.

Following the case analysis, the findings were integrated to inform the discussion and conclusion as well as managerial implications of Urde's new brand framework.

Case description

Baines and Fill describe Systembolaget as "the world's first alcohol monopoly, which remains the only retailer of alcohol in Sweden. It has a government mandate to limit the harm that might come to Swedish society from alcohol consumption." (2014, p. 4). According to Systembolaget's website the monopoly exists for the reason "to minimize both, the medical and the social harm caused by alcohol, by selling alcohol in a responsible way without profit motive" (Systembolaget, 2015a). In order to define important turning points in Systembolaget's brand strategy an insight into the history of Systembolaget needs to be considered. Therefore, Systembolaget's historical turning points will be discussed in this chapter.

The state owned company Systembolaget was founded in October 1955, when a large number of provincial liquor stores were combined into a single nationwide company. After decades of minor environmental changes, the 1990s represented a tumultuous decade for Systembolaget, where serious issues with the Swedish alcohol monopoly were revealed. First, on New Year's Eve 1991, customers queued in long lines in front of lots of Systembolaget's stores in Sweden, unable to buy alcohol for their festivity. The discomposure of customers was huge and Swedish newspaper wrote about "Systembolaget's terror against its customers"(Systembolagethistoria, 2015b). In response to displeased customers and negative media the Swedish government was forced to review their Swedish alcohol policy.

Table 1 Summary of documentation

Data source	Description
Interview	<p>Interviewing Fredrik Thor, Brand Manager at Systembolaget, about how a state alcohol monopoly with a prohibition remit can possibly market itself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Marketing Case Insight: Systembolaget (Oxford University Press, 2015a)</i>
Brand strategy presentations	<p>Presentations by Systembolaget's top management at Service Design Global Conference and for SIME brand stories giving insight in the brand strategy of Systembolaget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Fredrik Thor presents key success factors behind Systembolaget's brand (SIME, 2011)</i> ✓ <i>Mia Kleregård, Head of Service, presenting a change of the Systembolaget's strategy (Servicedesignnetwork, 2014a)</i>
Annual Reports	<p>Responsibility Reports from 2002 to 2014, stating insights in Systembolaget's brand identity and its business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>This includes vision, mission, core values, mandate, key performance indicators, business performance, evaluation of communication campaigns, etc. (Systembolaget, 2014)</i>
Brand Communication Channels	<p>Strategic Communication and brand advertising showing marketing campaigns and information regarding Systembolaget and its brand positioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Advertising campaign gallery (Systembolagethistoria bild- & filmgalleri)</i> ✓ <i>Systembolaget YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/user/systembolaget)</i> ✓ <i>Official Facebooksida of Systembolaget (www.facebook.com/systembolaget)</i> ✓ <i>Official Website (www.Systembolaget.se)</i> ✓ <i>Printed ads, TV commercials (on-site and archival material)</i>
Market research in literature	<p>Research reflecting consumer behavior and alcohol consumption in the Nordic alcohol monopolies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Is alcohol becoming an ordinary commodity in Sweden? (Norström and Ramsted, 2006)</i> ✓ <i>Information on the Nordic alcohol market (Alko, 2014)</i> <p>Research reflecting internal and external effects on the business of the Nordic alcohol market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Potential consequences from possible changes to Nordic retail alcohol monopolies resulting from European Union membership (Holder et al., 1995)</i> ✓ <i>Potential consequences of replacing a retail alcohol monopoly (Norström et al., 2010)</i>
History	<p>Reflecting historical perspective of Systembolaget and giving access to archival communication material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Official Website (www.Systembolaget.se)</i> ✓ <i>Special History Website (www.systembolagethistoria.se)</i>

Systembolaget implemented self-services and added new levels of service. At the same time, the upcoming referendum on Sweden's EU membership was taking place. The European Union Commission examined whether or not Systembolaget's retail monopoly was compatible with its desired EU membership. After decades of negotiations the EU Commission noted, that Systembolaget was providing no discrimination against foreign suppliers, because of a broad product range all over the country. Nevertheless, a new licensing law, adapted to new EU regulations, had to be taken into consideration. Systembolaget lost exclusivity in sales to restaurants, and the state wholesaler lost its monopoly on importing, exporting and manufacturing of alcohol. Moreover, strong beer was allowed in Sweden for the first time. For Systembolaget, this meant major organizational changes, with a new purchasing organization and a major change in its business strategy (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b).

In the early 2000s, the next big challenge for Systembolaget arrived. In May 2003 the top management of Systembolaget themselves submitted a report to the police investigating a bribery scandal. An internal investigation revealed suspicions that store managers had been bribed by several suppliers. After two years of police investigation, a total of 92 people were prosecuted for bribery. A large number of them have been employees of Systembolaget. In a variety of lawsuits, 78 employees got fired from Systembolaget. During this scandal, it became more important than ever to reposition the brand of Systembolaget and to further meet customer needs. This bribery scandal forced Systembolaget to choose a new strategic partnership with the advertising agency, Forsman & Bodenfors. The mission was to create a stronger relationship between Systembolaget and its customers. The purpose of a new public education campaign was to rebuild trust and clearly state the purpose of Systembolaget (Systembolaget, 2014; Systembolagethistoria, 2015a; Systembolagethistoria, 2015b). Customer satisfaction level was the most important

indicator of the success of Systembolaget's service during this time period (Servicedesignnetwork, 2014a).

Furthermore, Mia Kleregård, Head of Service of Systembolaget, presented at the Service Design Global Conference 2011 a change in the Systembolaget's strategy (Servicedesignnetwork, 2014a). In 2008 the Swedish government owned pharmacy was privatized. She stated, that this influenced the thinking of the board members of Systembolaget. Reflecting the heritage of the company and the fact that the brand was government owned, the board members saw a need to change the strategy of Systembolaget to reduce arguments supporting privatization.

In 2009, a strategic decision took place in order to create outstanding customer service with a goal of becoming Swedish best service brand (Servicedesignnetwork, 2014b). Additionally, in 2009 Magdalena Gerger was appointed to be the successor of former CEO Anita Steen, leading into the new era of Systembolaget's strategy (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b).

Today, Magdalena Gerger (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b) states that "having an even closer relationship towards customers feels almost like a social movement". The 2014 Social Responsibility Report (Systembolaget, 2014) states today's vision of Systembolaget, to create "a society in which everyone can enjoy alcoholic drinks with due regard for health considerations and without harming either themselves or other people". Therefore, we would like to clarify that Systembolaget's purpose is not demanding a complete abstinence of alcohol consumption. It is more or less a retail company, which tries to reduce the alcohol consumption while selling in a responsible way and educating the consumer about alcohol related effects and behaviour. Furthermore, Fredrik Thor, Brand Manager of Systembolaget, presented the key success factors of Systembolaget's brand, which are product range, service, responsibility and engaged personal (SIME, 2011).

To compare the analysis of Systembolaget's strategic communication with the changes of

Table 2 Timeline of Systembolaget communication

	Time frame 1	Time frame 2	Time frame 3
Year	1955-1999	2000-2009	2010-ongoing
Management orientation	Governmental oriented	Market oriented	Brand oriented
CEO	Harry Älmeby, Rune Hermansson & Gabriel Romanus	Anitra Steeen (1999 – 2009)	Magdalena Gerger (2009 -)
Type of in-store-service	Face-to-face service	Self-service	Outstanding customer service
Key KPI	Alcohol consumption	Customer satisfaction	Customer relationship
Historical turn points of Systembolaget's strategy			
	New Year's Eve Scandal (1991)	Bribery scandal (2003 – 2005)	
	EU regulations (1995)	Pharmacy Privatized (2008)	
	Leadership changes (1966 & 1981)	New CEO & advertising agency (2009)	

Systembolaget's brand strategy over time, the important turning points of Systembolaget's history will form three different time frames we will use to analyse Systembolaget's brand communication (*see table 2*).

Rhetorical Analysis

A brand is significant for an organization and an important part of the organizational identity (Mollerup, 2002). In order to strengthen a brand the organizational identity is an essential tool for management (Kapferer, 2012). In the case of Systembolaget, as an alcohol state monopoly, there is a lack of competitors. However research has shown that this does not decrease the value of Systembolaget's brand (Baines & Fill, 2014). As the existence of a monopoly depends on the acceptance and support of the country's population, it is even more important to satisfy the consumer demands and drive customer satisfaction (Baines & Fill, 2014). Therefore, the following chapter will analyse how successful the communication of Systembolaget helped in order to persuade their consumer. The outcome of this analysis will show how a word like

“monopoly” with next to no positive associations, can lead to a strong brand. An answer to the question of how can Systembolaget's communication encourage people to like a government owned monopoly, will be drawn by applying a rhetorical analysis.

As described in the methodology, the theory of rhetoric will be used to analyse the external brand communication of Systembolaget. The outcome of this analysis will reflect the three perspectives (logos, ethos and logos) on the brand core of Systembolaget in three defined time frames (*see table 2*). Most relevant communication data, e.g. advertising campaigns, of each time frame will be chosen and analysed from a rhetorical perspective.

Analysis of time frame 1 (1955-1999)

Key elements of the Swedish alcohol research has been conducted in collaboration with Systembolaget. One example is the APU, the major alcohol policy investigation in the 1960s and 70s, where Systembolaget gathered knowledge while contributing in several pilot projects. Systembolaget educated its customer early about how to measure customer's alcohol consumption, providing small tables in pocket format that helped people to reflect on their

consumption behaviour (Systembolaget, 2014).

One major advertising campaign in this time frame was called "Operation Vin". In 1957 Systembolaget started to educate its customers, to choose beverages with lower alcohol percentage. In this campaign Systembolaget taught its customers to drink wine instead of vodka. Posters with tips on selecting "good wines in the fifth grade" could be seen inside the shops and in magazines and Systembolaget conducted its first press conference ever. "We want to make wine accessible to all and to counter the all too common notion that it is so complicated to drink wine," explains Systembolaget's CEO Harry Älmeby in a newspaper interview (Spiritmuseum, 2004; Systembolagethistoria, 2015a).

In 1971, the responsible marketing director of Systembolaget, James Egman, presented "Spola kröken" another important marketing campaign. His campaign developed a slogan for cooperation with the army and the sports movement. The slogan of the advertising campaign meant translated: "Spola kröken – drink a little less and feel much better." The aim was to reduce alcohol consumption by encouraging people to drink more moderately and choose a healthier approach to alcohol. Famous athletes, musicians and Sweden's ice hockey national team were used for "celebrity advertising" to encourage the Swedish population to drink less. Besides this, Systembolaget's advertising showed the effects of alcohol consumption and mainly used research data to support the campaigns message (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b).

Rhetorical analysis in the first time frame shows the presence of all three modes of communication. In using "celebrity advertising" in "Spola kröken" to persuade people to drink less, Systembolaget used (ethos) to give their message credibility and emotionalised (pathos) the consumption of wine in its campaign "Operation Vin". Nevertheless, an overall focus on the persuasion mode of logos permeates all campaigns throughout this time period. Referring back to APU research findings,

showing figures about alcohol consumption and its negative effects and educating the customer to make logical alcohol related decisions clearly stands for logos, representing arguments appealing to the mind and increasing understanding (Urde, 2015).

Analysis of time frame 2 (2000-2009)

In the early 2000s, Systembolaget began a strategic partnership with the advertising agency Forsman & Bodenfors. The mission was to create a stronger relationship between Systembolaget and customers (ethos). A new public educational campaign was established in order to explain the purpose of Systembolaget and to react on the bribery scandal and the EU membership process. One part of the campaign was called "Brevet till Barroso". Systembolaget wrote a letter to Manuel Barroso, the European Commission President, that was signed by Systembolaget's CEO Anitra Steen and which got published as an advertising in the financial times in 2005. It contains the message that the level of Swedish alcohol consumption is low, largely due to Systembolaget's monopoly and begins with "Dear Manuel Barroso, therefore, you should seriously consider drinking less" (Systembolagethistoria, 2015a).

A campaign called "Leg under 25-kampanjen" was marketed in the second time period. To demonstrate the rigorous age control Systembolaget implements, the campaign asked customers to guess the age of another customer. Additionally, Systembolaget started to use its own employees, scientists and book writers to inform customers about what Systembolaget represents (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b). All of these actions are emblematic of the ethos perspective aiming to build trust with consumers and add credibility to the Systembolaget brand name.

In time frame 2, the Systembolaget's brand was challenged following EU regulation changes and the bribery scandal. This led to an attempt by Systembolaget to re-establish credibility. Fredrik Thor, Marketing Manager of Systembolaget, describes a shift in communication at this time in an interview where trust became paramount. The shift was

to communicate Systembolaget “as a human being” stating the benefits for both customer and society. “It should be less state owned monopoly and more like a human being” (Oxford University Press, 2015). Messages through individual highly reputed persons (e.g. employees, testimonial, CEO, etc.) and this shift in communication demonstrate the employment of ethos. Furthermore it has to be stated, that another mode, logos, remained present. The campaigns “Leg under 25-kampanjen” and “Brevet till Barroso” are both examples of logical and well-presented communication that convey Systembolaget’s main purpose. Overall this time period demonstrates ethos and logos were emphasised as tools of persuasion used to maintain and rebuild credibility while reacting to the effects of the bribery scandal and the effects of entering the EU.

Analysis of time frame 2 (2000-2009)

In time frame three, the fast growing use of digital marketing in advertising added a number of dimensions to the communication strategy. This analysis focuses on the dominant campaigns during this period. First, the advertising campaign “Vad passer till?” teaches consumers which beverages best accompany meals (logos). Second, Systembolaget’s TV commercial “Ja eller Nej” describes how best to respond to an underage drinker asking for alcohol (ethos). Third, the advertising campaign “Experterna” represents the Swedish ways of selling alcohol, emphasising that they are a not for profit brand (ethos), and save around 2,000 lives every year (pathos) (Systembolaget, 2014; Systembolaget, 2015a; Systembolaget, 2015b). These examples demonstrate the employment of all three modes of persuasion, used to communicate the brand core, responsibility.

Following the privatization of Sweden’s state owned pharmacy in 2009, Systembolaget made a strategic decision to create outstanding customer service with a goal to become Sweden’s best service brand (Servicedesignnetwork, 2014a). Today, Magdalena Gerger (Systembolagethistoria,

2015b) states that “having an even closer relationship towards customers feels almost like a social movement”. This shift suggests that Systembolaget’s communication started to put more emphasis on pathos. However all three modes are evident in the communication and are even reflected in today’s customer promises (*see figure 2*).

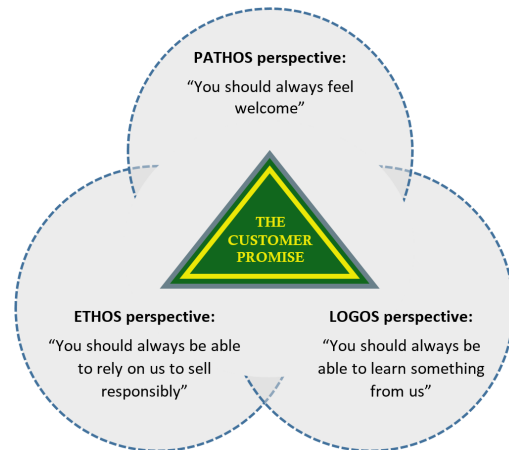


Figure 2 Systembolaget’s three customer promises (Systembolaget, 2014) reflect the three pillars of persuasion

Evolution of Systembolaget’s brand over time

The state owned company Systembolaget was founded in 1955. Its core value responsibility, “runs like a red thread” through Systembolaget’s history (Systembolaget, 2014). The social mission, to sell alcohol without a profit has supported the core value over time (Systembolagethistoria, 2015b). The interpretation, understanding, and communication of Systembolaget’s brand has changed, but the brand core has remained consistent, despite internal and external influences. *Table 3* shows the shift in communication, while presenting different emphasis on the three rhetoric perspectives, and simultaneously adding value to the brand core “Responsibility” over time.

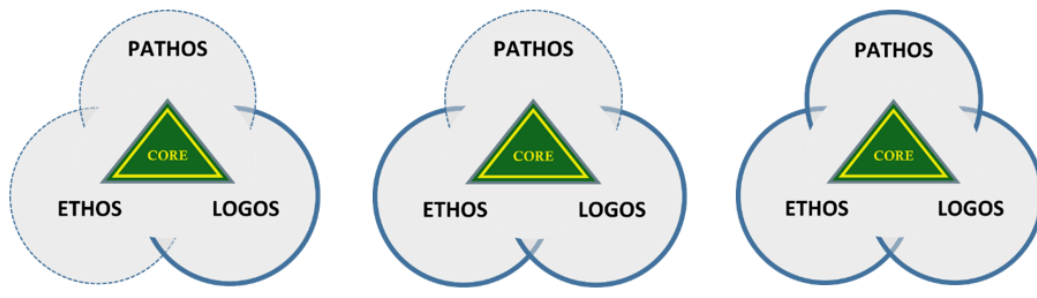
Table 3 Shifting perspectives on the Systembolaget brand core

Time frame 1	Time frame 2	Time frame 3
Responsibility through logical and well-presented communication using research and education (logos)	Responsibility through building character and credibility, acting as a human being (ethos) while communicating brands main purpose (logos)	Responsibility through the definition of brand promises: You should always feel welcome (pathos). You should always be able to learn something from us (logos). You should always be able to rely on us selling responsible (ethos).

Strategic brand changes influenced by external and internal forces

New Year's Eve Scandal (1991)
EU regulations (1995)

Bribery scandal (2003 – 2005)
Pharmacy Privatized (2008)
New CEO & advertising agency (2009)



Discussion & Conclusion

Our research supports the universal adaptability of Urde’s brand core framework when applied to the state owned enterprise Systembolaget. As was the case with Volvo, the brand core of Systembolaget appeals to the audience via understanding, interpretation, and communication from rhetorical perspectives over time. The findings support a variance of communications on the brand core value while also allowing consistency in the brand core. The analysis supports the premise that rhetoric has great analytical capabilities that have not yet been exploited in strategic brand management and specifically a brands communication.

Despite shifts and changes in the ‘which and way’ of rhetorical perspectives over time, for Systembolaget the brand core remains strong

throughout. In 1955 the brand promise was to sell responsibly to the people of Sweden and still in 2015 the brand promise remains to sell alcohol responsibly. “Responsibility for public health, runs like a red thread through Systembolaget’s history” (Systembolaget, 2014, p. 1). This consistency over time is a sign of strength in Systembolaget brand and arguably a key factor in the widespread respect and acceptance of the brand. These findings are consistent with Urde’s (2015) research in which he emphasises the value in having a single brand entity when it comes to brand management. The adapted brand core framework, showing the perspectives on the Systembolaget’s core value is visualised below (see figure 3).

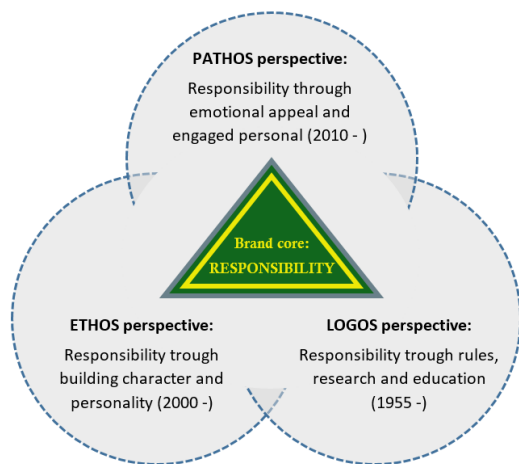


Figure 3 Perspectives on the Systembolaget's core value 'Responsibility'

Similarly our research supports Urde's (2015) rhetorical instruction to include all perspectives, logos, ethos and pathos respectively when communicating the brands representation over time. Systembolaget takes a very similar route in its method of persuasion to that of Volvo. Stage 1 consisted of the logos way of persuading. Both Volvo and Systembolaget put emphasis on the presentation of information and benefits of the brand by communicating the Unique Selling Proposition and positioning of the brand to the consumer. In Stage 2, Volvo and Systembolaget both put a focus on ethos in their brand communication. This consisted of building trust over time to be seen as a credible brand. In Stage 3, both brands put an emphasis on the third perspective, pathos. This stage consisted of putting emphasis on emotionalising the brand to gain brand loyalty and to create a relationship with the customer. While rhetoric includes all three perspectives, the balance of these perspectives shifts and changes over time. It can be argued that there may be a general line of argument, brands are most likely to use over time. A visualisation of this argument can be found in *Appendix 1*.

As a result of our analysis, we identified certain relationships existing between the three perspectives, including some dependencies. For example, Systembolaget relies on positive public opinion in order to exist as a government run monopoly. In other words, ethos, or credibility of the Systembolaget brand is crucial to its survival. Thus, if

Systembolaget were to use pathos in its brand communication without having a strong base of credibility, the brand would be tarnished. This is exactly what happened in the case of an Irish banking institution. The bank attempted to forge an emotional connection between customers and the brand (O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2007). This communication was something which did not resonate with customers as a result of a lack of trust in the brand (ethos) after the financial crisis. Members of the Irish public went on to describe these institutions as a "necessary evil" (O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2007). This example demonstrates that it is not effective for a brand to use emotional advertising (pathos) without having first built up credibility in the brand (ethos). In an article, Hartelius and Browning (2008) highlight this relationship by stating that if a source's ethical appeals resonate with the audience, so too will the substantive claims and initiatives. However, the authors highlight that if the source's credibility fails to persuade the audience, the source will have little impact as an influencer. A visualisation of possible dependence of persuasion perspectives can be found at *Appendix 2*.

We found that brand core framework was appropriate for the context of a government owned alcohol monopoly through a longitudinal case study. This longitudinal case study took place while Systembolaget underwent changes with influence of internal and external factors. We analysed the content based on its changes through the rhetoric perspectives of ethos, logos and pathos. *Figure 4* gives an overview of the tools Systembolaget uses in order to persuade their customer.

PERSUASION		
ETHOS	LAGOS	PATHOS
<p>Representing credibility and ethical appeal</p>	<p>Communicating logical and well-presented</p>	<p>Appealing to audience's emotions</p>
<p>"Rely on our responsibility"</p> <p>Internal human faces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees as experts in different fields¹⁾ • TOP Management²⁾ <p>Client testimonials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers³⁾ • Scientists⁴⁾ • Journalists⁵⁾ • Doctors⁶⁾ • Book writers⁷⁾ • Students⁸⁾ • Annual alcohol conference speakers⁹⁾ <p>Titles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best service in Sweden¹⁰⁾ <p>Success stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History / Heritage¹¹⁾ • Customer satisfaction¹²⁾ • Alcohol consumption¹³⁾ <p>Transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports, Selection process, Alcohol conference etc.¹⁴⁾ <p>Personal anecdotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling responsible (rigorous age control)¹⁵⁾ • Passionate leadership¹⁶⁾ <p>Professional looking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniforms of in-store-employees¹⁷⁾ 	<p>"Learn from us"</p> <p>Facts / Figures / Data / Statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce alcohol consumption¹⁸⁾ • Fewer alcohol related problems / harms¹⁹⁾ • Safe lives²⁰⁾ <p>Tone of Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human to Human²¹⁾ • Interactivities / Games etc.²²⁾ <p>Education / Inspiration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it affect training²³⁾ • Combustion of alcohol²⁴⁾ • Combine beverages with meals²⁵⁾ • Information on alcohol²⁶⁾ • Completely Abstain²⁷⁾ • "Promillekoll" App²⁸⁾ <p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Profit / Not buy more that have in mind²⁹⁾ • Sustainability³⁰⁾ • Sustainably alcohol production³¹⁾ • Social Responsibility³²⁾ • Ecological³³⁾ • Ethical³⁴⁾ 	<p>„Feel welcome“</p> <p>Positive Emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding Customer Service³⁵⁾ • Feel proud of making a difference³⁶⁾ • Stories behind products³⁷⁾ <p>Negative Emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show bad affects³⁸⁾ • Link to family situation³⁹⁾ • State figures of death, addiction, etc.⁴⁰⁾ <p>Stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Kids have parents who drink to access"⁴¹⁾ • „Effects of buying your younger sister alcohol"⁴²⁾ • "Resist when teenager asks for alcohol"⁴³⁾ <p>Images:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature⁴⁴⁾ • Family⁴⁴⁾ • Healthy⁴⁴⁾ • Ecological⁴⁴⁾ • Modern / Comics⁴⁴⁾ <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of background Advertising music creates different feelings (dramatic, happy, etc.)⁴⁵⁾ <p><i>*See appendix for references</i></p>

Figure 4 Overview of Systembolaget's tools of persuasion

In the article by Urde and Koch (2014), the authors' focus on the synergistic relationship that exists between market oriented and brand oriented brands. Our research reinforces the theory that a synergistic relationship should exist between these two approaches when building a brand, with the brand core focused in the middle. However, as a result of the case of Systembolaget, we found that it is also important for a brand to take into account external and internal forces during the brand building process. As stated already, the construction of identity is an ongoing process, something that is never ending (Grau, 2014). Urde and Koch (2014) state that identity is an approach that brands take when looking at themselves from a brand-oriented perspective. However, from the point of view of Grau (2014), identity is constructed from external sources. This reinforces the fact that, in the context of the framework, the brand core is relative to both the internal and external environment of the brand. External and internal forces have an influence on the communication of the brand core's communication, whether it emphasises ethos, logos or pathos. It can be seen, as a result of the analysis that the communication of the brand core changed based on certain internal and external factors that were taking place.

The uniqueness of the case of Systembolaget, as a government owned monopoly is something that highlighted the importance of internal and external forces and their effect on the brand core communication of Systembolaget. These dimensions were brought to light in longitudinal case study of Systembolaget. The analysis revealed allegations that were released to the public about corruption in Systembolaget. As a result of this allegation, something which could damage the credibility of the brand, Systembolaget adjusted its communication accordingly. This change in a communication comprised of more of a focus on the ethos method of persuasion. This was done in an attempt to restore credibility in the brand. The uniqueness of the Systembolaget case is that, as a government owned alcohol monopoly, the brand needs public support in order to remain.

However, it is important to clarify that this added dimension to the framework can be applied in many instances. In managing its communication our research suggests that a brand must not only adopt the three rhetorical perspectives, but also adapt these perspectives according to the external and internal influences. The following *figure* visualizes the added dimension to the brand core framework from Urde (2015) and represents the key finding of this research paper.

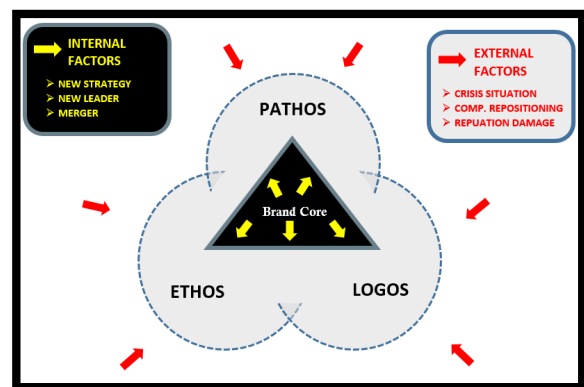


Figure 5 Adding internal and external forces to the brand core framework (*own visualization*)

Limitations & Research Implications

A limitation of our research was that rhetoric is more or less a subjective form of qualitative analysis that can lead to inconsistencies in its use as a measurement tool if not used systematically. Secondly, we didn't have access to internal Systembolaget insights and relied on the transparency of the internal communication. Thirdly, we are not native Swedish speakers and heavily relied on translation of content.

For Systembolaget, it could be argued that the emphasis on ethos in its communication is more important than the emphasis on pathos. This question warrants further research into a way of measuring an optimal balance of the three perspectives. A visualization of this further theoretical research can be found in the *Appendix 3*.

Our findings suggest that over time two brands followed a similar route where the emphasis began with logos, then as the brand developed

the emphasis was shared between logos and ethos and then once a brand is whole and communicating effectively it employed all three perspectives equally in its communication. This brings to question whether or not this sequence is true to all brand communication development or whether it is only true for our specific cases (Volvo and Systembolaget).

Our findings also raised questions relating to the interaction and relationship between the three modes of communication. For example should some types of brand preference ensure ethos is emphasised before it can apply pathos, or is there instances where pathos can be used as a form of persuasion directly?

This paper has three theoretical contributions to the literature regarding brand management.

First, the study contributes by showing the broad applicability of brand core framework. Our study shows that the brand core framework does not only apply to private owned enterprises, but also to government owned businesses, such as the case of Systembolaget. The branding of such a company is of great importance with the risk of privatization always present. The brand always needs public support in order to remain.

Second, the study emphasises rhetoric as a suitable theoretical framework to analyse a brand core's communication. In this regard, it relates to the work of Urde (2015), viewing the brand's core from the three perspectives, ethos, logos and pathos. It is through these perspectives that all methods of persuasion are taken into account while the communication also remains consistent to brand core.

Third, our research suggests that management of a brand must not only consider the three rhetorical perspectives but should also adapt these perspectives according to the external and internal influences.

This paper has four practical implications.

Firstly, there are great opportunities to implement strategic communications using rhetorical perspectives. As shown in the research, rhetoric takes into account the brand

core and identity while also using various modes of appeal that resonate with the customer on different levels.

Secondly, the communication of brand core is just as important for a monopoly as it is for a non-monopoly. While a monopoly avoids some threats and weaknesses that a private enterprise might encounter, a monopoly faces different challenges. These challenges (including the threat of privatization for Systembolaget) emphasise how communication of the brand to the customer is just as important for a monopoly as it is a private enterprise.

Thirdly, our research shows that a defined and consistent brand core is crucial for the continuity of a company's brand communication over time. The research shows that, despite changing perspective as regards rhetoric (e.g. ethos to pathos), it is essential that the brand's core to remain consistent. This is important in order to build the brand so that it has meaning.

Fourth, the modes of appeal are not necessarily used to the same extent. Although all communications include all three modes of persuasion, emphasis is put on some modes more than others, depending on the communication.

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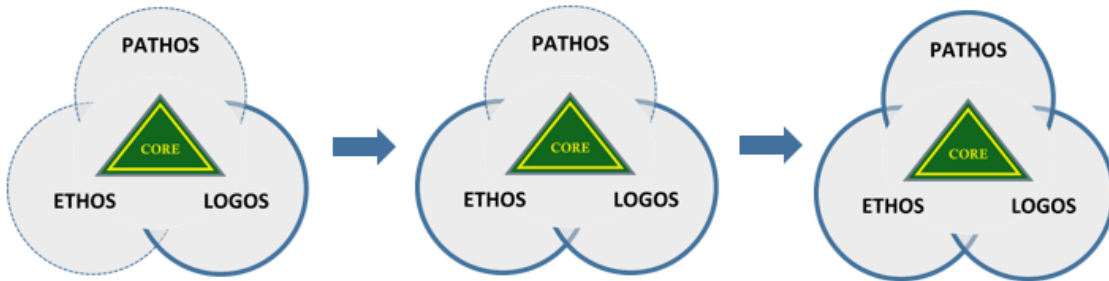
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Appendix

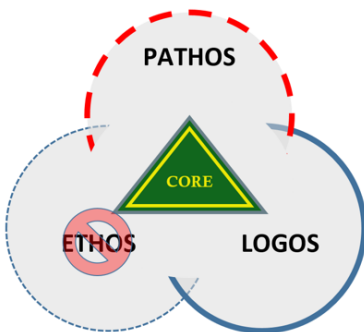
Appendix 1: Visualisation of general brand communication pathway over time

“There may be a general line of argument, brands are most likely to use over time”



Appendix 2: Visualisation of dependence of brand persuasion perspectives

“Some brands persuasion pillars may be dependent on another perspective”



Appendix 3: Visualisation of outcome of objective brand rhetoric analysis

“There may be a possibility to calculate the different extends of each brand persuasion perspectives”

