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COOPERATIVES COMMUNICATION THROUGH A
BRAND HERITAGE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the communication of cooperatives from a brand heritage perspective. An analysis of the current use of history as part of the external communication will be conducted with the use of literature within the field of brand heritage and brand identity.

Method: This study builds upon a case study research, with an inductive approach. Using current literature from corporate brand identity and brand heritage, three different cases have been analysed from an identity and heritage perspective. Conceptualisation is derived from the empirical evidence and current literature to reach the findings of this study inductively.

Findings: The results of this paper suggest that communication, which aims at leveraging brand heritage, should build upon three main components; mission, history and activation. An increased presence of these elements in communication has in the findings showed a positive effect on leveraging brand heritage. The results also provide support for Urde et al. (2007) five elements of brand heritage for corporate brands of cooperatives.

Limitations & Future Research: There are limitations to this paper in the form of a limited scope with only three cases and the fact that the cases are limited to cooperatives only. This article has not reached total saturation as suggested by Gummesson (2005) for validity in case study research. Future research is proposed to (1) further explore brand heritage in communication for brands in general and not only cooperatives and (2) quantitatively evaluate the presence of identity and heritage combinations effect on consumer-based brand equity.

Practical Implications: For managerial implications, this paper suggests that companies seeking to leverage on brand heritage should in their communication put emphasis on incorporating the *mission* of the corporate brand identity in combination with the *history* and *activation* of brand heritage.

Originality & Value: This paper contributes to a further understanding of communication as a principal vehicle for brand heritage, through the current literature on both brand heritage and corporate brand identity. Offering a more focused study of how cooperatives create communication that leverage on brand heritage, an originality not found in the current literature to the authors' knowledge.

Keywords: Brand heritage, Corporate brand identity, cooperatives, communication, Coop, Desjardins, Sparbanken

Paper Type: Research Paper

Introduction

This study argues that there is an emerging pattern evident in today's communication from firms acting within different industries, where an emphasis is being placed upon companies past as a part of their marketing communications. This phenomenon can be found both nationally in Sweden but also internationally. The use of history in the context of the communication has been observed previously within luxury brands. However, the phenomenon can now also be seen in new industries such as grocery retail chains and within banking. Given the great value for luxury brands to use their heritage as an important part of their

identity, the purpose of this paper is to analyse consumer cooperatives' current communication about their history and if they can have better leverage on the brand heritage through changes in the compositions of its elements. Thereby this paper will look closer on cooperatives such as Coop - a Swedish grocery retail chain, Sparbanken - three different cases of local independent savings banks in Sweden and Desjardins - a Canadian banking group.

1. Method

During our studies at the International Marketing and Brand Management master's program

at Lund University, School of Economics and Management, we became familiar with the notion of brand heritage as a deeper dimension of brands' identities. The notion evoked an increased awareness of how firms, and cooperatives particularly, use their past as a tool for communication. The understanding of this phenomena drew our attention to a few cases of cooperatives, which we aim to examine to uncover patterns and consequently try to identify *what* is communicated and *how* it relates to heritage. Using the empirical cases combined with existing literature within brand heritage and brand identity, we strive to distil new understandings on how to incorporate and leverage on heritage in communication.

This approach constitutes a case study research, where cases are used to define specific or general conclusions about a phenomenon. This research strategy allows for rich input of empirical data, which can be used inductively for conceptualization and theory generation, but can also be used to test pre-existing theory against real-world observations deductively. Case study research aims to provide a rich and complete picture of the relationship between a chain of events and its factors, using a systematic and holistic approach (Gummesson, 2005).

The methodology used in this study poses a challenge important to note, which is to get the best possible access to the phenomenon for relevance and validity. Due to the limitations of this study the authors have only gained access to the phenomenon through publicly communicated information. However, in studying the use of history as part of a company's external communication, this level of access is, at a sufficient and accepted level of validity for the method used.

2. Literature

2.1. HERITAGE BRANDS

All brands have a history according to Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007), some have heritage, but only a few has made the strategic de-

cision of using it as a competitive advantage, thus becoming a heritage brand. The past is thereby made relevant for the present and future of the brand, making it a dimension to the brand's overall identity. A key consideration pointed out by Urde et al. (2007) is that possessing heritage does not create value in itself for the brand, but it rather provides a unique opportunity for doing so. The great value in becoming a heritage brand is the distinct and hard to imitate positioning this added dimension offers the brand's identity (Urde et al., 2007). It is also important as Urde et al. (2007) mention that being a heritage brand does not stand in contrast to standing in the front line and for a brand to be perceived as modern. The utilisation of history for heritage brands lies in the opportunities to create a distinctiveness in their present positioning and also to be guiding in setting the path for the future. Heritage also contributes by further adding to both the brand's value proposition and also creates an increased depth, authenticity and credibility (Urde et al., 2007).

2.1.1. Five Elements of Brand Heritage

According to Urde et al. (2007) there are five elements of brand heritage namely; (1) *track record*, (2) *longevity*, (3) *core values*, (4) *use of symbols* and (5) *history important to identity*, which are all guided and managed through brand stewardship. Measurement of these five elements of brand heritage reveals how high a brand's heritage quotient (HQ) is, which reflects the level of heritage a brand possesses (Urde et al., 2007).

The track record of a company relates to whether the company has delivered the brand promise and value over the years and course of its history. A consistent past behaviour builds credibility and trust for the brand in the present and infuses a confidence in its ability to continue to deliver such consistency in quality for the future. This is a reason for why heritage brands are attributed with a high degree of trust and credibility (Urde et al., 2007).

Longevity is an important factor for heritage brands and is concerned with consistency in the use of other brand heritage elements over

time. Urde et al. (2007) put particular emphasis on track record and the use of history as part of the brand, in such a way that it becomes viewed and perceived as an integral aspect of the organisational culture.

Core values can, according to Urde et al. (2007), be seen as the foundation for a company's strategy, which if consistently managed will be a part of the brand heritage. Core values that stay consistent during a longer period also shape an organisation's position and are reflected in all parts of interaction and behaviour of the organisation, both internally and externally.

The use of symbols is an aspect of brand heritage which is used to express and reflect the past in communication. The use of symbols can become an essential element of identity in the form of unique looks and logos which, when used consistently, can obtain a more profound meaning. The use of symbols also serves as a mark of identification and provides understanding for what the brand stands for and is associated with (Urde et al., 2007).

Urde et al. (2007) further elaborate on the importance of history for heritage brands, as an aspect with an impact of the organisation's current identity and guide the brand for the future. History as an element can both be used internally, to create culture, guide behaviour and act as the basis for strategic decisions, as well as externally in communication and as a tool for positioning.

2.1.2. Leveraging Brand Heritage

The five key dimensions of a heritage brand can, according to Urde et al. (2007), be put into practice in the management of brands through three steps; uncovering, activating and protecting the heritage.

The first step concerns the uncovering of a brand's heritage, which can be found in its track record since the most significant element of a brand's heritage lies within a demonstrated performance of delivering value. The demonstrated performance should ideally be a combination of both the customer-based belief about the performance and the company's ar-

ticulated statements in regards to its marketplace success. Uncovering brand heritage can also go beyond *what you do* in regard to track record and try to reveal *who you are*. The uncovering process should thus identify what company traits that have been appreciated by the customers over the years, as well as examine its origin, articulated statements and long-held agreed-upon values (Urde et al., 2007).

Secondly, the uncovered heritage elements need to be strategically selected and activated. When choosing heritage elements, Urde et al. (2007) suggest three fundamental considerations for evaluating the strategic value. One consideration is to what degree the corporate reality measures up on the five HQ dimensions. A second consideration is if the heritage has any strength in offering the company a differentiation toward competitors and third, if the differentiation can be translated into the brand's value proposition and positioning in a meaningful way. After consideration and selection of the heritage elements, they can be put into use through activation where its main vehicles are product design, communications and the brand's history itself. Communication wise, brand heritage is about lifting previous accomplishments or performance as part of the company's history in such a way that it sets the brand apart from competitors in its current position. Urde et al. (2007) express it as a translation of making history relevant to the present and future of the company, and heritage used as such does not become contradictory to being modern and up-to-date (Urde et al., 2007).

Thirdly, leveraging on brand heritage requires a systematic approach to protect the uncovered heritage. This is done through corporate brand stewardship, which is based on the notion that the brand is 'bigger' than oneself, the actual individual is only acting as a link in a long chain of people managing the brand with an aim to nurture and to pass on a stronger brand. Urde et al. (2007) emphasise the essential role of stewardship, as it is centrally placed with the brand heritage elements surrounding it. Protecting the heritage comes with challenges, since track record and longevity builds upon a long-term continuity, while the brand at the

same time needs to stay modern and up-to-date by adaptations coherent with the identity and its heritage.

2.1.3. Brand Heritage in Communication

Dion and Mazzalovo (2016) studied the rearticulating of brand heritage with regards to sleeping beauty brands. They suggest three different strategies dependent on the initial reputation of the brand, the history orientation after revitalisation and the brand feature implemented in the process. The three strategies are brand revitalisation, brand copying and retro branding. The former emphasises the present and communication focus on the longevity of the brand, to make it relevant for the future. Further, Dion and Mazzalovo (2016) demonstrate that lack of reputation and brand associations leave more room for brand revitalization, due to a higher level of acceptance among consumers. However, a critical success contributor was found to be the brand's place in the collective memory. Therefore, managers should draw upon symbolic elements in the brand history when rearticulating brand heritage.

Rose, Merchant, Orth and Horstmann (2016) state that brand heritage impacts consumer purchase intentions positively. In congruence with previous research (Urde et al., 2007) emphasising the importance of consistency, Rose et al. (2016) support the assumption that a track record of consistently delivering value, increase purchase intentions. Furthermore, favourable aspects of brand heritage are perceived brand stability and originality, i.e. innovative actions. These were found to contribute to positive emotions, trust and commitment (Rose et al., 2016).

Moreover, Merchant and Rose (2013) discuss the positive emotions towards brand heritage created by advertising-evoked vicarious nostalgia, i.e. a part of history that one has not experienced. It is further argued that communication and successful advertising play a crucial role in the process of generating and increasing brand heritage. Hence, connecting a brand's history to its core values should increase the efficiency of promotion.

Further, heritage branding can achieve beneficial communication results according to Martino and Lovari (2016). Three main assets sustain this in the communication strategy; corporate anniversaries, historical archives and museums, and digital heritage. In combination, these assets provide a communication strategy difficult to imitate due to the translation of the past into the present and future through storytelling.

2.2. BRAND IDENTITY

The identity of brands lay the foundation for management and creates a platform for building brands in a long-term perspective (Urde, 2013). Different conceptualizations have emerged in how to create such a foundation for various sorts of brands (Urde, 2013; Kapferer, 2012). Urde (2013) argues that brand identity, has mostly been focusing on brands on a product level and that corporate branding has received less attention in the academic literature. A fundamental difference between product branding and corporate branding is that there is an organisation behind the corporate brand (Urde, 2013). This difference is manifested in the English language, Urde (2013) thereby point out an important distinction, which corporate brands are referred to as "they" from an external perspective or as "we" by the organisation itself, while product brands are "it" both internally and externally. This difference has far-reaching implications according to Urde (2013) as earlier brand identity models do not capture the entirety of corporate brands. Especially internal components vital to the organisation are absent in earlier models. As the focus of this paper is to examine corporate brands of cooperatives, the literature on identity will hereafter build upon the corporate brand identity matrix (CBIM) presented by Urde (2013).

2.2.1. CBIM Framework

Nine elements in a three-by-three matrix together make up the CBIM framework. The internal components of a corporate brand's identity are its (1) *mission and vision*, (2) *culture* and (3) *competence* which are found in

the bottom row of the matrix. The upper row is related to the external components, which are the (4) *value proposition*, (5) *relationship* and (6) *position*. Lastly, the middle row of the matrix is comprised of the interrelated internal-external components (7) *expression*, (8) *core* and (9) *personality* (Urde, 2013).

2.2.1.1. Internal Components

The mission & vision works together as sources of commitment and willingness to support for both individuals within the organisation as well as others externally. The mission is best described by Urde (2013, p. 751) as “why the corporation exists and what engages and motivates it, beyond the aim of making money”. The vision further builds upon the mission, in the formation of an inspiring future goal for the organisation.

Attitudes, values, beliefs and the way an organisation behaves together make up its culture. A distinct culture can set an organisation apart from competitors by reflecting this on the firm’s products, services and the communication of these (Urde, 2013).

What a firm is especially good at – based on its capabilities, process and knowledge – becomes a relative advantage to its competitors. The core competence thereby has a strategic value to the firm in carving out a competitive advantage that can be incorporated into the identity (Urde, 2013).

2.2.1.2. Internal-External Components

The *brand core* is placed in the middle of the matrix with the expression on the left-hand side and personality to the right. Putting the brand core central in the CBIM aims at emphasising its crucial role in defining the promise of the brand and the values, which sum up what the brand stands for. The brand core should in an ideal state be coherent with all other brand elements, and despite its highly condensed form still act as a basis for all strategic brand decisions (Urde, 2013).

Personality to the left-hand side is the combination of characteristics and qualities that are being assigned to the brand. Strategically selecting human traits for the corporate character

will thus allow for a coherent personality element (Urde, 2013).

The expression is described by Urde (2013) as in how the brand communicates and portrays itself, in both verbal and visual manner. The expression features can thus be both tangible and intangible. This is where the brand elements such as graphic style and logotype are found, but it can also be manifested in more subtle ways as the brand’s tone of voice (Urde, 2013).

2.2.1.3. External Components

Value proposition consists of rational and appealing arguments, with an aim to generate favourable relationships with stakeholders and positive purchase decisions from the customers. Formulating value propositions comes with its challenges, as it should clearly offer specific value propositions while at the same time being broad and coherent with the brand core (Urde, 2013).

Relationships are built and managed over time, and this element reflects on the behaviour of corporate brands with others. This is also why the corresponding internal element in the CBIM is the organisation’s culture, which sets the tone for the relationships built by the brand. As with the previous mentioned external element, corporate brands also have multiple relationships which need to be nurtured in regards to its specific audience but still maintain coherence with the brand core (Urde, 2013).

Positioning relates not to how the corporate brand is positioned, but rather to how management would like to be positioned in the market as well as in the minds of key customers and stakeholders. In the CBIM framework, it is thus about a point of reference for an intended positioning the brand wishes to achieve (Urde, 2013). This is emphasised by the diagonal corresponding element “mission & vision”, which together with the brand core constitute the strategy diagonal (Urde & Greyser, 2016).

3. Case Study of Heritage in Cooperative Communication

3.1. BACKGROUND ON COOPERATIVES

Cooperatives are businesses that are jointly owned by the members and operate after the principle “one member, one vote”. A cooperative is driven by and strives to fulfil a common purpose, e.g. economic or social, in favour of the members (European Commission, 2016). An important distinction with cooperatives is that the stakeholders are the members of the cooperative and not shareholders. Hence, the profit is shared and reinvested among the members (Cooperatives Europe, n.d.).

3.2. EMPIRICAL CASES

3.2.1. Sparbanken – Swedish Savings Bank

3.2.1.1. A Brief History of Savings Banks

Savings banks (Swedish: Sparbanken) as a concept spread throughout Europe during the early 19th century, originating as an idea from the first savings bank in Scotland 1810. The new savings bank was intended for the poor and everyday people, as banks had previously been an affair reserved for the rich and wealthy (Sparbankernas Riksförbund, 2016a). As an organisational form, they resonated well with the growing socialist ideology that spread throughout the same period. The first establishment of a savings bank in Sweden took place in Gothenburg 1820, and by the 1930's there were 789 local savings banks throughout the country (Swedbank, n.d.). The banks had a strong connection to the local countryside and its immediate surroundings, as they are a form of ‘local cooperative’ since the owners are local foundations based on the notion of reinvesting profit surplus back into the local community (Swedbank, n.d.). There are however still around 60 local savings banks in Sweden today (Sparbankernas Riksförbund, n.d.), that operate independently as ‘local cooperatives’ but all share Swedbank as a strategic partner for technical and financial solutions (Sparbankernas Riksförbund, 2016b).

The Swedish savings banks, from a case study point of view, offers a unique opportunity in analysing the use of heritage. They all share the same communicational platform through their partner Swedbank but operate independently. Thus every local Sparbank has their own but still almost identical websites with control over what to communicate, and they share the very same and similar history. From the 60 local savings banks in the Sparbanken union, three local banks have been selected to demonstrate differences in communication regarding their past.

3.2.1.2. Sparbanken Skåne

The case of this local savings bank, from the south Swedish district ‘Skåne’, is due to its scarce mentioning of their past and history. Instead, they emphasise on working from a clear philosophy, of being a savings bank present for local citizens, businesses and the community where their customers live. By this, they underline their association to the local community, by the very first sentence of the business presentation. The concluding paragraph, of the five in total, further emphasises that the bank has ‘proud roots in Skåne’ and even takes it further by asking the reader ‘Are you ready to become a Skåning?’ Meaning someone who's truly a part of the Swedish district of Skåne. The only mentioning of the bank's history comes in the second paragraph where they state that they ‘...from the start, we have more than 180 years of innovation, wisdom and development in our luggage. We are a bank that wants to move forward. A local bank...’ (Sparbanken Skåne, n.d.). This shows that they have an understanding of their history, but they comment on it more in the sense of not wanting to look old-fashioned, rather than stating that their *raison d'être* has spanned over 180 years.

3.2.1.3. Sparbanken i Karlshamn

This local savings bank demonstrates a case of a bank with a firm understanding of its identity, but regards their history as secondary and communicates it as a declaration of the owner structure over the years. The initial company presentation starts with expressing that their

fundamental values come from the savings bank movement which is built upon the notion that individuals and society benefit from saving. They comment upon their position in the marketplace as being an independent savings bank, offering a unique opportunity to be a bank with local involvement and engage in sustainable banking services in the local area. By vision, they aim to be the leading bank in their local area and to be the obvious financial partner for citizens and society. For the business idea, they shall through strong local office network and a complete financial service offering give their customers a personal bank service of high quality. Sparbanken i Karlshamn also presents three strongly emphasised words that they elaborate on, which could be regarded as their core values; close (to services and offices), good (on all levels) and helpful (for society). Their communication about their history comes with a subtitle 'we have been around since 1829', but their three sentences paragraph only states that they were founded in Karlshamn 1829, did a fusion with two other savings banks in 1966 and further did an acquisition 1998. Lastly, they mention that they celebrated their 185th anniversary in 2014 (Sparbanken i Karlshamn, n.d.).

3.2.1.4. Sölvesborg-Mjällby Sparbank

This case is the savings bank that integrates its heritage in the communication to the largest extent. An excerpt from their company presentation preamble reads as follows; 'We have for 175 years been working for a better life in our neighbourhood together with our customers. It is what we call to have a heart in the district, and we want to continue with this for at least another 175 more years'. This is an excellent example using history in creating a unique present positioning while at the same time looking towards the future. They retell interesting anecdotes from their initial years and then turns to talk about the present and where they are now. In doing this, they state that they are a local bank with the ambition to continue to manage their origin and by this, they want to continue to be a bank for everyone, with their heart in the local district and community (Sölvesborg-Mjällby Sparbank, n.d.).

3.2.2. Coop – A Grocery Retail Chain

Coop was established in 1899 (Coop, 2015). Currently, Coop consists of 659 stores and is the only cooperative grocery retail chain in Sweden. The ownership is shared between 3,4 million members in 32 consumer associations. The ideology of Coop is to create financial benefits for the members and through consumption allow them to contribute to sustainable development for people and the environment. Being a consumer-owned cooperative, Coop strives to be in congruence with the priorities and demands of the members (Coop, n.d.a).

Coop has struggled with finding their identity and a good position in the marketplace, thus not delivered excellent financial result and has sometimes been described as confused and lost (Spängs, 2014). However, the cooperation has since 2014 started the journey of bringing the brand's heritage and the mission of their founding idea back into the brand platform and using this to look forward towards the future by strategically planning and setting up goals. The company's vision is to be acting as they describe it themselves 'the positive force within the Swedish grocery retail sector' which has been the central message in communications during the past few years (Coop, n.d.b).

The strongest example of leveraging on their heritage is in the communication campaign "Welcome back" made by Coop. In the campaign, the company addresses the fact that their organisational belief is that a grocery retail chain, which stands on the side of the customers is needed and when required, dares to be uncomfortable. The communication presents the reason for the cooperative's founding, which was a reaction to the fraudulent sale of diluted products. To get pure and genuine food at reasonable prices, consumers joined forces and created customer-owned cooperatives. These small units later merged and became one large grocery retail chain, where customers' interest always was put first (Coop, n.d.b).

The campaign further walks consumers through the history of Coop and highlights

some past decisions which embody "putting customers' interest first". For example, the company themselves started producing margarine, to circumvent the current cartel formation in the market for margarine (1909), introduced a declaration of contents on products before the law required it (1946) and introduced date marking on products (1963). Further, as a response to consumer requests Coop launched a range of organic products (1986) and in 2002 they were first with solely selling free-range eggs (Coop, n.d.b).

An aspect of the commercial that is of particular interest is that Coop themselves recognise and directly address in the campaign, the fact that they somewhere along the way got lost, forgot their mission and reason for existing - the company tried to act like every other grocery retail chain. Their new strategy builds, yet again, on their old mission and focuses on doing what is best for their customers, even if it involves to stir up the emotions of actors within the food industry (Coop, n.d.b).

The case of Coop shows a previously confused and lost company that has now put effort into taking an approach of incorporating their heritage, enhancing important parts of history and their track record to create a competitive advantage and differentiate themselves in the marketplace. In regards to literature on brand heritage, one key pillar that decreases Coop's HQ is the longevity aspect as they have not been consistent over time in their use of history as part of their identity.

3.2.3. Desjardins – Canadian Credit Union

Desjardins is a cooperative financial institution in Canada, established by Alphonse and Dorimène Desjardins in 1900. Due to years of economic crisis and the problem of loan sharking, Alphonse Desjardins studied European bank cooperatives to implement a sustainable solution for his nation. His aim was to contribute and improve the well-being, both economic and social, for individuals and the society. Currently, Desjardins group consists of a broad network of bank offices, Desjardins Business Centres and around 20 subsidiary companies. As a cooperative, each institution

strives to fulfil and protect the needs of the members in compliance with the founder's philosophy (Desjardins, 2016a).

Desjardins is clearly a brand with heritage, and when examining their communication, they demonstrate high measurements on each of the five elements of brand heritage. On the company's website, the consumer can visit a digital museum and get a virtual tour of the company history. By emphasising important events and developments in the past, Desjardins highlights their track record, longevity and core values. They stress the importance of the founders' mission to contribute to the wellbeing of communities and the historical events that led to the creation of a cooperative financial group. Except for the digital museum, consumers can visit the exhibition "The Legacy of a Couple" at Maison Alphonse-Desjardins where the Desjardins couple lived. The exhibition displays the main events of their lives and the history of the cooperative Desjardins through photographs and artefacts (Desjardins, 2016b).

The heritage is further communicated through advertisement, where mainly two commercials fall within the interest of this study. One of the commercials is called "115 years of innovation at Desjardins". It demonstrates how the company from 1900 until 2015 has contributed with innovations for the society and the members of the cooperative. For example, the initial establishment of a new cooperative savings and credit model is brought forward (1900), the concept of family insurance (1953), financial education of members (1963), and being the first financial transaction site in Quebec (1996). Further, Desjardins display that they are responsive to the technological trends of today's society and is at the forefront of digital solutions in the financial sector (Desjardins, 2016d). Hence, reactivating the history and longevity of innovations into the present to be relevant in the future. As argued by Rose et al. (2016), leveraging on originality, i.e. innovation, and consistent performance create positive emotions, trust and commitment and increases brand heritage.

The second commercial examined is "Desjardins: A Canadian Success", which tells the story of the founder, Alphonse Desjardins, and his crusade toward a better society (Desjardins, 2012). The communication in this commercial is more emotional and storytelling, with a focus on the core values and the personality of the brand. One could argue that this commercial works as an excellent example of how to connect brand heritage with the corporate brand identity as it connects the brand's history to its core values, which is demonstrated effective by Merchant and Rose (2013).

The brand element use of symbols, is applied in various forms by Desjardins. First and foremost, Desjardins logotype has developed throughout its history from the first three letters CPD (Caisse Populaire Desjardins) to the current logotype. In 1960-1977 a coat of arms consisting of maple leaves and a bee represented the logotype, communicating the Canadian origin and cooperative action. The use of coats of arms, i.e. heraldry, employs richness and a high level of codification (Mollerup, 2002). The succeeding logotype was reformed to a bee in a honeycomb cell surrounded by a hexagon, where each side of the hexagon symbolises the components of the Desjardins Group. In 1998 the current logotype was developed consisting the hexagon, the bee and the brand name. Except for the logo, the use of symbols has for example been implemented in the communication through portraits of Alphonse Desjardins and the symbol of the Desjardins Building (Desjardins, 2016c). Following Dion and Mazzalovo (2016) and Urde et al. (2007), the use of symbols provides for increased brand heritage, which can be supported by the fact that in 2002, a study revealed a 95% spontaneous recognition of the Desjardins logotype in Quebec (Desjardins, 2016c).

Desjardins has the prerequisites to become a heritage brand, it must, however, be a strategic decision taken by the cooperation to position themselves (Urde et al., 2007). By leveraging on their history and longevity in all of their communication, the brand could to a greater

extent be perceived as a reliable company increasing consumer trust and commitment (Rose et al., 2016).

4. Discussion

The mission of Sparbanken builds on the people's movement associated with the social ideas and ideology that emerged during the same period, which still today translates into a distinct positioning; to take into account and protect the interests of consumers. Sparbanken Sölvesborg-Mjällby especially, turned their 175 years of history to instil trust and credibility but at the same time making it relevant for the present positioning and as guidance for the future. An interesting observation is that they did not sacrifice any of the local association by incorporating their history, but on the contrary had the heritage to support their localness and identity further.

The case of Coop further supports the importance of the corporate mission being vital to the communication, but it also demonstrates a case where a company can *through* their history rearticulate their corporate brand identity. Their campaign "Welcome back", shows a good case of using heritage and history to differentiate themselves in the present market as well as reassuring that they intend to focus on their mission also in the future. A noteworthy and interesting aspect of the commercial is that they transparently recognise that the company had lost its way for a while, but that they now have found their mission again. This recognition demonstrates a change in the personality and expression of the brand. The tone of voice constitutes an open and honest way of asking for customer's trust and resonance with the brand's mission. However, the credibility is still perceived weak due to lack of longevity and track record, but it will provide benefits if this image is continued to be consistently managed and maintained.

Out of the cases, Desjardins is the one with the highest HQ as they measure well on all five elements of brand heritage. They have an excellent track record and make good use of other brand heritage elements over time, thus

possess a consistent longevity. The use of symbols connects both to history, origin and represent the six components of their business operation. The company express their core values and especially bring forward history as an important part of their current identity. A relatively good activation of the heritage is also evident, as it is being used in both commercials as well as being allowed considerable attention in the online communication of the website. Something unique for Desjardin among the examined cases is the importance placed upon the founder's mission and historical events, expressed through an online digital museum and even the use of a physical tour guided exhibition, linking the founders' and the company's history as a way to highlight its more profound meaning of existence.

4.1. COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY

As discussed above, the most recurring element of the corporate brand identity is the communication about the company's mission. Urde (2013) describes the mission as vital to the corporate identity, which constitutes the organisation's reason for existence beyond making money, and also what engages and motivates it. From the discussed cases it is evidently the part of the identity that most easily can be incorporated and contribute to leverage on brand heritage. Further, the mission also defines what engages and motivates the organisation, and that is particularly interesting from a communication aspect. Sinek (2009) develops on how the "why" of both leaders and organisation is what creates resonance and inspire, especially in communication. The idea of Sinek holds that people 'don't buy *what* you do, they buy *why* you do it' (Sinek, 2009, p.137). Partly this is a result of biological reasons, as what relates to the critical thinking part of the brain, the neocortex. Why we do things relates to emotions found in the deeper limbic system (Sinek, 2009), according to Kahneman (2011) emotions can be found in the faster system 1, that more often than analytical system 2 affect our behaviour. As described by Urde (2013) the vision builds upon the mission, and they are together sources of commitment and willingness to support. The

mission is also the corresponding brand identity element of the intended position of the firm that together with the brand's core constitutes the strategy diagonal (Urde & Greyser, 2016). In the findings from the communication of the cases combined with literature, an important part of this paper's findings supports the fact that including the identity's mission is beneficial in communication, to leverage on brand heritage.

4.2. HISTORY IN COMMUNICATION

The examination of the three different cases has displayed that each cooperative mention history in their communication to some extent, some more efficient than others. Desjardins is the cooperative that expresses their history the most in their communication and who leverage on longevity. However, in none of the cases examined, the cooperation communicates their history as a main, and direct reason to become a customer. Using history as part of the identity (why) the company will develop a value proposition and positioning that is hard to imitate. According to previous research (Martino & Lovari, 2016; Merchant & Rose, 2013; Urde et al., 2007), the use of history in communication increase brand heritage as it demonstrates stability and can lead to increased trust and commitment, traits that are especially desirable for the cases studied. For Sparbanken and Desjardins, being financial institutions, stability and trust is key. If history were to be strategically implemented in the communication, to especially stress the company's track record and longevity, this would help achieve brand heritage and create positive emotions toward the brand. According to Urde et al. (2007), a company lacking longevity, like Coop, can still build it over time. Hence, communication can ultimately contribute to building up longevity and position the organisation as a heritage brand over time. "The principal vehicles for activating a brand's heritage include product design, communications and the brand's history itself" (Urde et al., 2007). Further, to connect the history to the brand's core values will increase the effectiveness of the communication as it emphasises the mission and the 'why' of the company.

This could be communicated using the three assets of the heritage branding communication strategy; corporate anniversaries, historical archives and museums, and digital heritage (Martino & Lovari, 2016) to transfer the track record and longevity in the present and future.

4.3. ACTIVATING BRAND HERITAGE IN COMMUNICATION

Urde et al. (2007) point out three important considerations when selecting heritage elements to activate. How the corporate reality measures up on the five HQ dimensions, if the heritage hold strength in differentiating the company from competitors and if the differentiation can be translated meaningfully in the marketplace as part of the brand's value proposition and positioning. Communication for the cases of this paper supports the importance of these aspects. In the case of Coop, there are weak measurements on the longevity element affecting the outcome of their effort on incorporating brand heritage, which will improve after prolonged use of other brand heritage elements. In the case of Sparbanken and Desjardins, the differentiation strength and how heritage can be meaningfully translated into customer value, becomes an important aspect. What both Desjardins and Sölvesborg-Mjällby Sparbanken have done is using the *past* to define their *current* position, in such a way that it also guides them for the *future*. These three aspects of time, if used correctly is part of what gives brand heritage its strength. Within organisational theory, there is a term called path dependence, just put as the decisions and possibilities a firm has at any given moment, is dependent upon decisions made in the past, although the old decisions are no longer relevant (Sydow, Schreyögg & Koch, 2009). In the activation of brand heritage, it could be argued that different combinations of strategically selected parts of a firm's history will create different current positioning and differentiation, as well as affect the future path of the company. By this, the selection, strength and the translation into meaningfulness of a brand's heritage will play a major

role in leveraging on heritage through communication.

4.4. BRINGING IDENTITY & HERITAGE TOGETHER THROUGH COMMUNICATION

In summation of the discussion, this paper suggests that the corporate brand identity element, *mission*, should together with the brand heritage aspects *history* and *activation*, be used by corporate brands to leverage on their brand heritage in communication. These three points, bridges the identity and brand heritage of a company into a meaningful and communicable message. If used correctly, such communication can create a distinct positioning based on heritage, which is hard to imitate by competitors. These three aspects to work together can be seen in figure 1.

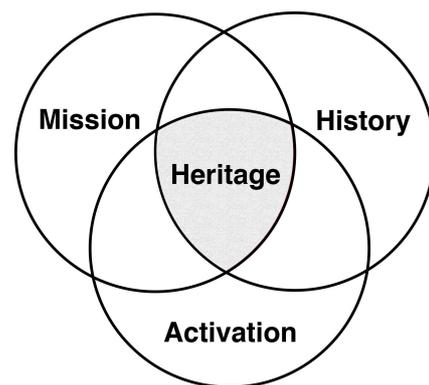


Figure 1. Communication elements for corporate brands to leverage on brand heritage

5. Theoretical Contributions

This paper has examined the use of brand identity and brand heritage in communication for cooperatives. The theoretical contribution is twofold; firstly, this article supports the importance of all five brand heritage elements presented by Urde et al. (2007) in the communication of brand heritage for cooperatives. Further has this paper identified *history* and *activation* to be value-adding components of leveraging on brand heritage through communication, which is a principal vehicle for brand heritage (Urde et al., 2007). Secondly, the mission of corporate brand identity has been

found to be commonly used in communication aimed at leveraging on brand heritage. From a literature standpoint and the observations made in the cases of this paper, there is support for the fact that including the mission does contribute to leverage on brand heritage through communication, as this offer a 'why' and more profound meaning to the organisation's reason for existence.

6. Managerial Implications

From an administrative perspective, this paper offers a demonstration of how cooperatives have used brand heritage in their communication. From this, a suggestion has been made on which components should be included for communication to leverage on brand heritage, as seen in figure 1. Thus, this paper suggests that in the creation of communication, which aims at leveraging on brand heritage, key components to incorporate for managers is the mission, history and activation.

7. Limitations

Regarding limitations, it is important to mention that the authors of this paper have a humble understanding of the fact that the chosen method in combination with the limited scope of this article, has only scratched the surface on the incorporation of brand heritage in communication. The study also relies on cooperative cases solely, and although it is the authors' assumption that this can be generalised to other corporate brands, there is no further support for this. This research should be seen as a first step and indication of direction for future research to build upon, with an aim to further (1) explore brand heritage in communication for brands in general and not only cooperatives and (2) evaluate the presence of identity and heritage combinations effect on consumer-based brand equity.

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