

THE  
STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT:  
MASTER PAPERS

SBM

STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

MASTER PAPERS

**How is storytelling used to strengthen a brand?**

*Audrey-Ann B. Paquette, Beiyao Yang, Yue Long*

Third Edition

Student Papers

2017

September - October

# Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers

The Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is essential reading for brand strategists in both private and public sector organisations, and academics in universities and business schools.

The papers are written by master student groups and follow an international journal format. The student groups selected the topics of their papers and provided updated and relevant insights into the strategic management of brands.

The mission of Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers is to “present and develop useful tools and theories for the application in practice of managing brands, and to forward the academic field of strategic brand management.”

The intent of the series is to bridge the gap between academic teaching and research.

The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers in the course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21 – 7.5 University Credit Points; 8 weeks 50% study time), part of the master program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The published papers represent the result of the intellectual work of students under supervision of the heads of course. The content of the papers is to be read as student reports albeit the journal format. The papers are free to download and should be cited following international conventions.

## Editors

Mats Urde

Associate Professor

Frans Melin

Assistant Professor

Heads of master course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21), part of master program International Marketing and Brand Management.  
Lund School of Economics and Management

**SBM**  
STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT  
MASTER PAPERS

# How is storytelling used to strengthen a brand?

*Audrey-Ann B. Paquette, Beiyao Yang, Yue Long*

## **Abstract**

**Purpose**—This paper aims to provide insights into how storytelling can be used to strengthen a brand.

**Design/methodology/approach**—First, a literature review has been conducted, to discuss relevant theories. The concepts of branding, brand identity prism, storytelling and the four elements of storytelling were analyzed. Furthermore, multiple case studies have been conducted in order to have an in-depth insight of the brands. Finally, a new model has been created thereby resolving the research purpose.

**Findings**—Using storytelling create more authentic communication and emotional connections with the target customer and thereby strengthens a company's brand. Besides, the company needs to clearly determine its brand identity in order to effectively deliver the right message to the target customer. The storytelling model offers a theoretical and practical guide to determine how a brand's identity affects its use of storytelling. In fact, it has been found out that the role and relation between positioning, target group, characters, brand personality, the message as well as the relationship needs to be considered when it comes to storytelling.

**Research limitations**—This paper has three limitations. First, only three brand cases were developed to verify the effectiveness of the model. Second, B2B brands were neglected and lastly, this study was only based on secondary data thereby limiting the findings.

**Originality/value**—By creating a new model through the combination of the concept of brand identity prism and the four elements of storytelling, this report offers a valuable insight on how companies make use of storytelling to strengthen their brand.

**Keywords**— Brand identity, Storytelling, Brand relationships

## INTRODUCTION

### *Storytelling in branding*

Stories have always been part of people's lives and it has been seen as one way of sharing their emotions and creating links with others. It paints a picture of who people are, expressing values and culture as it is for companies (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette, 2010). With their stories, they define "who they are" and "what they stand for" (Fog et al. 2010, p.18).

Fog et al. (2010) highlights that a strong brand embeds clear solid values and creates emotion in the customer's heart. The author states that one way to express those values is through storytelling. By doing so, a brand will make its culture, history, foundation (Fog et al. 2010) and visions (Del Rowe, 2017) available to everyone. Fog et al. (2010) mentioned that this is how the brand will build an emotional bond with its customers, by telling a story based on its culture that addresses its values and emotions. In fact, branding and storytelling has the same basis: values (Fog et al. 2010). They argue that the brand is built based on its values and storytelling enables the brand to communicate them in a way for customers to understand. Indeed, a good story talks to customers' emotions and thus strengthens brands.

According to Fog et al. (2010), companies and brands direct customers in today's life through their communication. In fact, they argue that the brand's story helps people define themselves while the brand's products become the one they used to tell their own stories. It is the customer's way of communicating who they are (Fog et al. 2010). This explains why branding and storytelling are perfectly interrelated.

In today's competitive world, companies need more than just a good product to differentiate from their competitors, they need to tell a story (Del Rowe, 2017). Indeed, Bergman (n.d. cited in Del Rowe, 2017) points out that in a market increasingly driven by emotions, customers buy with their heart. Chatterjee (n.d. cited in Del Rowe, 2017) argue that it is the brand's story which drives the emotional bond between the company and the customers. The journey the customer has been following through the story results in persuasion and sometimes action (Aaker, 2017).

### *Problem discussion*

As mentioned before, a good story is powerful because it can deliver message involving feelings of affection and passion thereby building an emotional connection with the customer as well as strengthening the company's brand building (Fog et al. 2010; Malär et al. 2011). However, it is not an easy task to create content that tells a captivating, exquisite and emotionally engaging story. Research in branding has mostly focused on creating and sustaining brand equity in the long term as well as brand orientation (Kapferer, 2012; Gromark & Melin, 2011; Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2011), but scholars have neglected how to build a company's brand through storytelling. Fog et al. (2010) mentioned that storytelling is considered as an abstract concept for many companies in the society nowadays. Therefore, it is important to make storytelling tangible. This paper attempts to provide an answer to the research question based on the storytelling activities of different products and service firms. The paper

adopts the case study method and focuses on different brands who have succeeded in storytelling. The aim of the paper is twofold: first, it narrates how brands tell stories differently based on their identity, second it attempts to provide an indication of how stories can be told in order to strengthen the company's brand.

## **Literature review**

### *Branding*

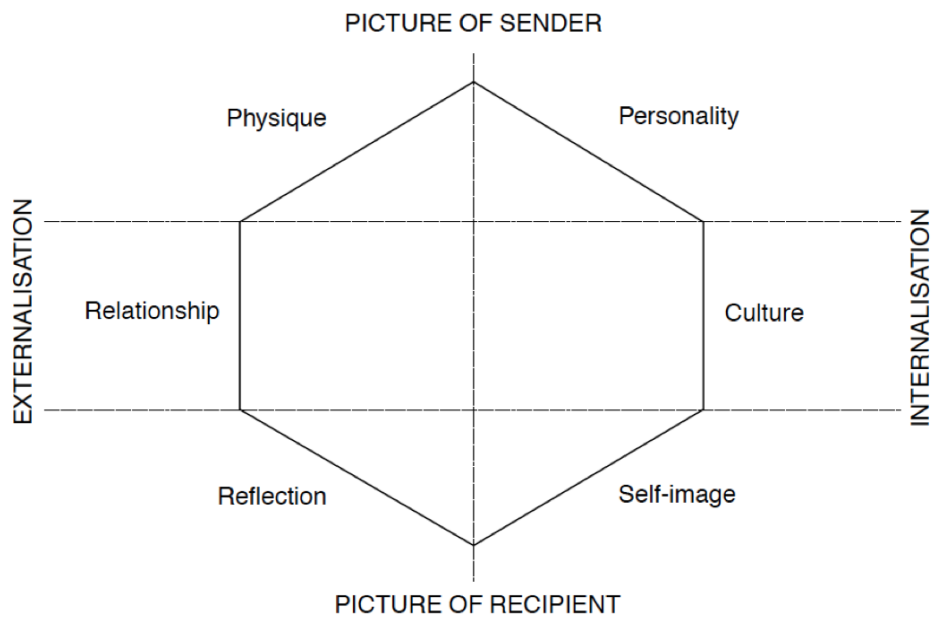
Scholars (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kapferer, 2012) define that a brand is used to differentiate a product or service of an organization from another. They concluded that such function of a brand can be exerted using one or more forms such as a name, a symbol and a design. Hatch and Schultz, (2003) consider a brand as a useful tool to represent a manufacturer's product or a corporation itself so that customers can identify the product or the corporation when making purchase decisions. However, the notion of a brand evolved over time toward the fact that a brand carries more than the information of a product, a service or a corporation (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kapferer, 2012). The additional value it carries, which is assumed to be more important, is the brand's related images and associations (Kapferer, 2012). In fact, the value of the brand is abstract and needs to be injected into the consumer's mind during communication (Ambler, Bhattacharya, Edell, Keller, Lemon & Mittal, 2002). In depth, a brand represents a mental relationship between customers and the organization, through which the promise and commitment of that organization is demonstrated (Ambler et al. 2002;

Kapferer, 2012). Kapferer (2012) describes a brand as an intangible asset that contains and could increase economic value. In this regard, branding is a process that intends to establish, maintain and strengthen aforementioned relationship through communication with the ultimate goal of realization of economic benefit (Duncan, 2002 cited in Hsu, Chiu & Tang, 2010).

In brief, branding activities enhance a brand by gaining legal protection, portraying the company's core values, distinguishing its products or services from its rivals, getting recognized by consumers and eventually obtaining a prominent position in the market (Kapferer, 2012). According to Keller (1998), perceived elements build physical contact to target markets. In fact, during the branding process, it is important to also deliver brand personality and connotations rather than merely focusing on physical attributes or benefits (Kapferer, 2012).

### *Brand identity prism*

Brands tell stories differently because they all have their own identities (Fog et al. 2010). J.N. Kapferer developed the brand identity prism in order to better explore and illustrate the deep inner inspiration of the brand by using six central dimensions. A horizontal line divides the prism into two halves which are externalization that includes factors created with the help of external stimuli or perception, and internalization which is something created within the company, and developed from internal stimuli (Kapferer, 2012). The prism is demonstrated in Figure 2.1 as follows.



**Figure 1.** Brand identity prism  
Adapted from: Kapferer, 2012

According to Kapferer (2012), physique identifies what the brand is all about, what it looks like and what it does. He also mentioned that it is the set of physical features that are evoked in people's mind when a brand name is mentioned. In addition to that, it is considered as the brand's tangible add value.

Brand personality refers to a brand that has been humanized with human personality traits such as seriousness, warmth and imagination (Melin, 2002; Kapferer, 2012). According to the research, consumers prefer to choose brands with personalities that match their own ideal characters (Aaker & Fournier, 1995) and Melin (2002) has mentioned that the way people choose brands is similar to the way they choose friends.

Culture is explained as the value or passion of brand which can

communicate its source of origin (Kapferer, 2012). It can be considered as a company's particular mindset and it is the foundation and image for a brand's external aspect (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2013). Culture reflects the company's attitudes, values, beliefs, and how it works and behaves (Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Schroder & Saltzer-Morling, 2006). According to Kapferer (2012), culture is a key element communicating and differentiating brands, for example, Nike and Adidas.

Relationship is a logical extension of brand personality (Blackston, 2000). It is what the consumers feel they get with the purchase of a product or service, in other words, it is an 'intangible exchange' beyond the transaction (Blackston, 2000; Kapferer, 2012; Ponnamp, 2007). It refers to the interactions between a brand and its consumers, and it reflects similar characteristics of human relationships

such as love, connection, interdependence, intimacy and commitment which plays powerful and important roles in building consumer loyalty as well (KWHS, 2015). To summarize, brand relationship is the mode of conduct that most identifies the brand (Kapferer, 2012).

Reflection describes how a customer is perceived by the public when using a brand (Kapferer, 2012). In addition, brand reflection is the target's outward mirror, it can be explained as when people are asked for their views on certain brands and they could answer in terms of the brand's perceived client type (Kapferer, 2012).

Self-image is the target's internal mirror which represents their attitudes toward a brand itself (I feel, I am...) (Kapferer, 2012). It describes what people say to themselves through their choice of brand which is an inner relationship people developed with themselves (Kapferer, 2012; Urde, 2013). For example, many owners of Lamborghini think they are rich because they are able to afford such a flash and luxury car.

### *Storytelling*

Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott (2001) define the term 'story' in three forms: factual report, myth based on brief and narrative. They indicate that story in narrative form describes a real or fictional event in logical order. Such type of story subjects to realism building, where descriptive languages are carefully chosen to make it sound real (Hopkinson & Hogarth-Scott, 2001). In this regard, it is easy for audiences to put themselves into characters in a story and feel empathy. Fisher (1984), on the other hand, highlights the dramatic

nature of the narrative story. He explains that a story is filled with problems pending to be solved and possibilities, raising tension all the way, until the climax. This notion also enhances the aforementioned audience's empathy to characters (Fisher, 1984).

Furthermore, Brunner (1986 cited by Padgett & Allen, 1997) introduces the concept of "the narrative mode of thought". He indicates that people tend to better understand an incident by arranging the elements of the incident in the flow of causation, conflict and resolution. The reason behind this is that ideas delivered in the narrative way are more easily learned and remembered (Brunner, 1986 cited by Padgett & Allen, 1997; Denning, 2006). These attributes make the application of the narrative story particularly appealing and thus organizations tend to adopt storytelling as a technique, presenting attractive stories to get stakeholders involved (Denning, 2006). Therefore, establishing emotional connection via empathy and delivering the brand's message effectively to stakeholders (Denning, 2006).

### *The four elements of storytelling*

According to Fog et al. (2010), the four elements of storytelling serve as a guideline to develop a good story.

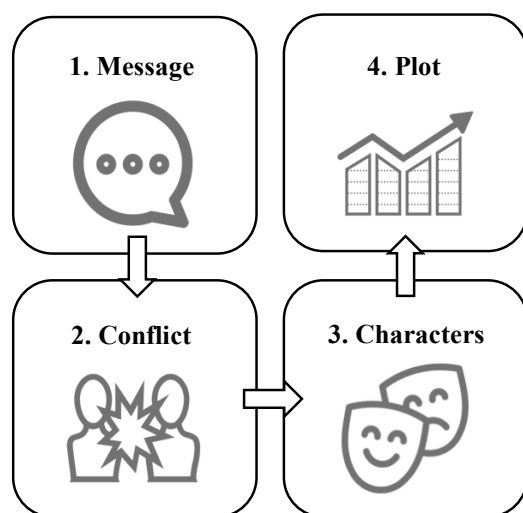
The first element is the central message or premise of the story (Fog et al. 2010). It is used as a key theme through the story and an ideological or moral expression that reflects positively on the brand (Fog et al. 2010).

The second element is the driving force, the change that disturbs the harmony of the story, the premise on which the point

can be expressed and defended (Fog et al. 2010). In fact, the conflict creates an emotional need for the person to bring back the harmony, although, this is how the message is communicated, through conflict and resolution (Fog et al. 2010).

As the third elements, characters are needed to create a conflict, unite and structure the story (Fog et al. 2010). In fact, while pursuing his goal, the main character or hero is confronted by an adversary who tries to resist his quest (Fog et al. 2010). This is the basis for a conflict.

The fourth and last element is the plot, the flow and progression of the story (Fog et al. 2010). In order to grab and maintain customers' attention, the sequence of events must have a precise structure predicting what is coming, therefore implementing the theme and tone of the story (Fog et al. 2010). Hence, these four elements of storytelling are one of the starting points to the creation of the new model.



**Figure 2.** The 4 elements of storytelling  
Adapted from Fog et al. (2010)

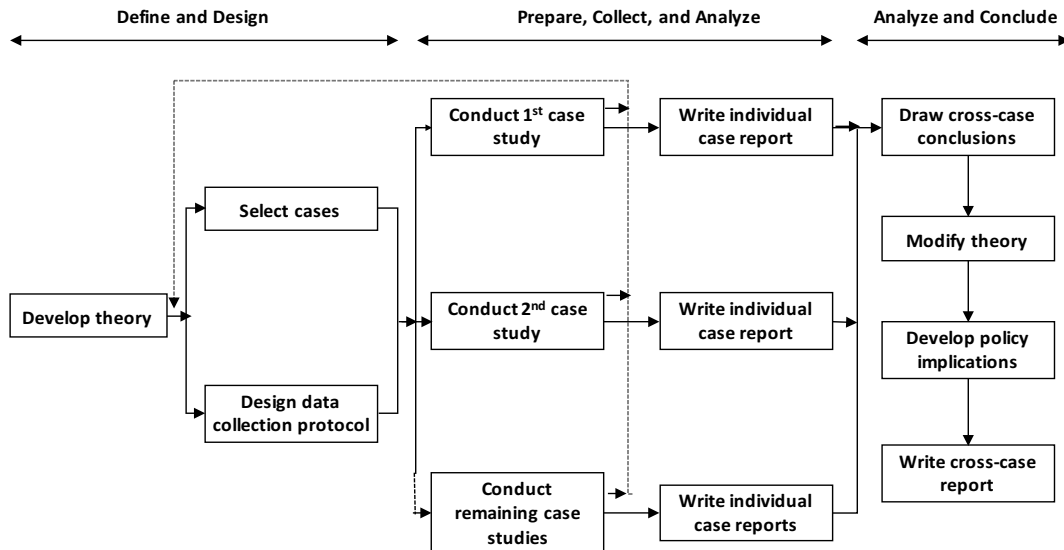
## Methodology

In this paper, literature review has been conducted by researchers in order to accomplish the purpose of engaging with and understanding the results of other studies that are closely related to branding and storytelling (Creswell, 2014). According to Cooper (2010), Marshall and Rossman (2011) as well as Creswell (2014), conducting literature review can fill in gaps, extend prior studies and also provide a benchmark framework for comparing the result with other findings. In this paper, the researchers have summarized the major studies on the topic of branding and storytelling which includes what is already known about the topic and what concepts and theories can be applied to it. In the meantime, further discussions by comparing the results of a literature review with other empirical findings have been developed as well.

The researcher's aim is to study successful brand's storytelling strategy, identify and summer up how storytelling help companies strengthen its brand. According to Yin (2014), Bryman and Bell (2015) as well as Daymon and Holloway (2011), case study is one of the most popular research designs that have been wildly used when it comes to social sciences, management, business and organizational studies. It can be divided into two types which are single case study and multiple-case study allowing researchers to gain in-depth insight into the cases (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For the purpose of having "multiple sources and multiple viewpoints; [providing] a holistic view of relationships and connections; ... [being] useful for theory building and testing" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011,



p.118), multiple case study approach has been chosen.



**Figure 3.** Multiple case study procedure  
Adapted from: COSMOS Corporation cited in Yin (2014)

As shown in Figure 3.1, the entire procedure within this paper has been divided into three parts: defined and design, prepare and collect as well as analyze and conclude. Firstly, theories of branding, brand identity prism, storytelling and the four elements of storytelling have been developed through literature review. Then, three brand cases, which are Nike, Airbnb, Dove were analyzed and developed because they were considered as successful good storytelling brands by comparison. LEGO, Virgin America and Beats' use of storytelling was also rapidly explained. Data of six case studies was collected through secondary sources such as companies' official and other online websites, journals, books and marketing boards. Secondly, Nike, Airbnb and Dove case studies are

presented and analyzed through the way of showing how brands tell their stories

differently based on their unique brand identity. Finally, a new model has been created by re-examining the discussion based on the theories and findings which further explained and concluded how storytelling can be used to strengthen a brand.

## Brands and their stories

### *Nike*

Nike is an American footwear manufacturing company (Nike Inc., 2017a). Since its beginning, Nike is selling to its customers the dream of winning and through its many campaigns, they help people trust in themselves and believe that everything is possible as long as they are determined and work for it (Fog et al. 2010).

“Worth should outshine color”, this is

the basis for Nike's very powerful Equality campaign (Business Insider, 2017). Released in 2017, the black and white video narrated by Michael Jordan shows ghetto subculture athletes playing sports as well as professional athletes such as LeBron James and Serena Williams (Nike Inc., 2017b, Nike, 2017). The aim of the video is to demonstrate that equality outside the field is not the same as inside. In fact, through this campaign the company "encourages people to take the fairness and respect they see in sport and translate them off the field" (Nike News, 2017). Their goal is to inspire people to take concrete actions in their communities (Nike News, 2017).

With this campaign, Nike offers more to athletes than simply sportswear, they connect with their audience by inviting them to participate in a collective movement by wearing Nike clothes or by following the campaign on social media (Marketing Insider Group, 2017).

### *Airbnb*

Airbnb is an online community marketplace for people leasing or renting unique short-term lodging around the world (Airbnb, 2017a). In fact, it is a platform that solves traveler accommodation problems (Airbnb, 2017a).

In 2014, Airbnb designed a guest's story using an entertaining animation (Airbnb, 2014). The story was about a girl who took her father to Berlin after the fall of the Wall in order to show him how vibrant the city had become. The whole story demonstrated human connection and the sense of belonging as a global citizen (Airbnb, 2014). Through the approach of storytelling creating the

heart-warming animation "Wall and Chain", Airbnb develops the concept that people from every corner of the world can "belong anywhere" (Shorty Awards, 2017; Airbnb, 2017c). This campaign was introduced during the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall which encouraged people from worldwide to open their places therefore further breaking down the walls that divide people for the purpose of having a better connection globally (Shorty Awards, 2017; Airbnb, 2017c).

### *Dove*

Dove is a personal care brand focusing on 'real people' (not supermodels) and their own real-life stories (Unilever, 2017). In 2004, the brand started the Real Beauty campaign by using the storytelling approach with the goal of giving all women the opportunity to realize their personal beauty potential as well as to make them gain better self-confidence (Unilever, 2017). One of the stories explores the gap between how people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. In the story of "Beauty Sketches", Gil Zamora, the FBI-trained forensic artist draws two portraits of each woman based on their own descriptions as well as a stranger's observations (Dove US, 2013). The results are surprising. In fact, the portraits described by strangers are always prettier than the ones described by women themselves (Dove US, 2013). This proves that a high percentage of women are having doubts and concerns about their appearances. However, they are more beautiful than they believe (Dove US, 2013).

## *LEGO*

The LEGO Group produces toys based on the philosophy of learning and developing while playing (The LEGO Group, 2017). Since its creation, LEGO believes that playing is a key element in the growth and development of children and that their toys can stimulate imagination, emergence of ideas and creative expression (The LEGO Group, 2017).

The LEGO movie reminds people that they already were dreamers and that it is still possible to do so (Mckendy, 2017). LEGO provides people the pieces which give them the possibility to build and tell their own story (Mckendy, 2017). Indeed, through its movie, LEGO expresses three important messages. First of all, there is a 'builder' in everyone, we simply need to believe in it. Secondly, the limit is our imagination and finally, we are never too old to create magic (Sheridan, 2017).

Through the use of storytelling, LEGO goes beyond simply selling blocks, they sell possibilities. In fact, LEGO knows and understands their purpose: challenging the mind of young and older people to imagine, create and go further than what they thought they could do (Sheridan, 2017).

## *Virgin America*

Virgin America is a low-cost carrier that distinguishes itself from typical low-cost airlines by setting up In-Flight Entertainment (IFE) system, utilizing technologies to adapt to the global trend of online socializing (Chiang & Armstrong, 2004). In addition to traditional enjoyment of a range of music, films and television entertainment, IFE provides online

chatting service with cabin crews and among passengers, as well as meals on demand function that passengers can simply touch on screens.

To create awareness of these specialized services, Virgin America established a 5-hours-and-46 minutes-long fiction movie simulating a flight experience (Virgin America, 2014). The characters of the movie are dummies flying from Newark to San Francisco with a made-up airline called 'BLAH' (Virgin America, 2014). This nearly-6-hour flight is an upsetting experience where the passengers have to tolerate baby crying and fiddling as well as horrible crew services with lack of space for stretching between seats, food nor entertaining facilities (Virgin America, 2014; Nudd, 2014). The movie caught huge attention from the public who were resonated by the exaggerated reflection of low-quality services of some airlines. A clear message has been delivered to the audience that Virgin America provides better services and facilities compared to its rivals. "If you wouldn't sit through the entire film, why would you pay money to experience it in real life?" Said Virgin America. (Nudd, 2014)

## *Beats*

Beats by Dr. Dre (Beats) was founded in the attempt to bring the solution for privacy and earphone quality problems in the industry (Helm, 2014). Unlike traditional headsets, Beats' product is designed to magnify the playback effect of pop music and to serve fashion purpose using decorative features, which caters to young consumers who are keen for sports and pop music (Klara, 2017).

In 2015, Beats launched the campaign "The Game Starts Here" featuring the

mental development of the players before entering the game (Naidu, 2015). One of the stories published in this campaign starred Chris Robshaw who was undertaking the responsibility to raise national glory (Naidu, 2015; Strategy [International], 2016). At the three stages of the film, the rugby field, the gym and the change room, Chris prepares for the game by sharpening skills and techniques, improving his physical stamina and managing stress (Beats By Dre, 2015). The music played via Beats' headphone is what resolve the tension and relieves him from the pressures (Beats By Dre, 2015). At the end of the film, Chris managed to reply to the sharp questions from journalists peacefully (Beats By Dre, 2015).

The story shapes tense and patriotic emotions among players and audiences, while successfully stimulating the compassion of sports players who have been in captain position by recognizing their additional efforts on the development of leadership skills as well as rugby skills (Naidu, 2015). Beats' story brings back consumers' memories and emotions of the time they struggle to overcome pressures; on the other hand, consumers who were undergoing struggles were encouraged and motivated (Naidu, 2015; Strategy International, 2016).

## **Theoretical Application**

### *Nike*

Since its beginning, Nike is recognized through its very well-known swoosh printed on every product. Its flagship stores are also an excellent representation of the brand qualities. Concretely, the swoosh represents a trendy, modern, sensible and engaged

brand but it is also associated with important athletes such as Michael Jordan. Such associations help consumers identify with the brand. But what ties all these consumers together is Nike's combative "solo willpower" stating that many people recognize they can only rely on themselves (Holt & Cameron, 2010). Nike connects with these people in different ways such as through their many campaigns and sponsorship. Also, Nike's Greek name symbolizing victory connects with particular cultural values and the admiration of human effort (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, Nike's customers are perceived by others as belonging to a stylish sportive society. On the other hand, when these customers wear Nike sportswear they see themselves as being cool and athletic. They feel like winners able to "do it" but also as being able to overcome society's inequalities. In fact, through its athletic lifestyle and involved in its community identity Nike gives athletes the power to unite together and inspire change (Nike Inc., 2017b).

Through Nike's athletic lifestyle and involved in its community identity, the Equality campaign presents sports as strong equalizer (Boren, 2017). In fact, the characters of the story, ghetto subculture athletes are facing an important battle against inequality experienced outside the field. Indeed, the story starts by presenting a place of fairness and mutual respect, the field, and states that here, athletes are defined by their actions (Nike, 2017). Throughout the story, images of athletes painting white lines of fields and courts are shown. The story ends with the song "A Change is Gonna Come", a gathering of people supporting a basketball game and the words "Equality has no

boundaries” written in white (Nike, 2017). In order to strengthen the customer’s impressions and relationship with the brand, the Nike logo is shown in the lower corner, on the athletes’ sportswear and at the end of the video.

### *Airbnb*

The icon of Airbnb was formed as an upside-down heart or a paper clip symbol, which also looks like the letter “A” and it was designed to represent the founders as well as the community which stands for four things: people, places, love and the “A” of Airbnb (Chesky, 2014; Brand New, 2014). Airbnb has a worldly, hospitality, happy, adventurous and active personality based on the perceptions and opinions of the users (travelers) who are active in the online community. The brand was originally founded by friends offering air mattresses in San Francisco which represents a hospitality brand culture (Airbnb, 2014). Later on, Airbnb has cultivated a neighbor-to-neighbor and citizen-to-citizen relationship on a global scale based on their mission of “belonging” (Bonchek & France, 2016; Chesky, 2014). The brand reaches out and connects with their customer expressing that they are the best travel partner. In the meantime, the customers are always welcomed and would be able to feel like being at home no matter where they are through the use of Airbnb (Poteet, n.d.). Airbnb is an adventurous brand that allows people to travel like locals no matter where they are. In fact, many people feel more connected to the world and the community they are exploring while traveling with Airbnb (Poteet, n.d.; Chesky, 2014; Airbnb, 2014).

Considering Airbnb’s identity “belong anywhere”, an instant and memorable story of “World and Chain” was told through their story. By analyzing the story described above it can be seen that heartwarming and amazing message has been delivered that all seven billion people in the world could be connected together and “belong anywhere” through the use of Airbnb. The characters in the animation are 1) a girl who is also the storyteller; 2) her father who is a guard on the west side of the Berlin Wall; and 3) another person who is guarding the East. The characters also represent the Airbnb platform, the traveler and the host. The conflict of the story is people living in each side of the Wall who holds different values, beliefs and lifestyles after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Her father, who lives in the West, is more feudal and rigid and had psychological barriers throughout his life while the guard who lives in the East is more open-minded. The story progresses through the first-person point of view along with different music rhythms from slow and heavy to light and joy. Eventually the conflict resolves encouraging everyone to open their door to the world and further break down the walls that divide them (Shorty Awards, 2017). At the end of the story, the logo and mission have been shown, which deepens the audience’s impression of the brand. Through this real-life story that tells about connection, family, and being a global citizen, Airbnb creates an emotional connection as well as builds a strong relationship with customers which strengthens Airbnb’s identity perfectly.

### *5.3 Dove*

Dove’s identity is represented by clear and soft colors which are blue and white as well as a slight golden Dove logo

while soft shapes and pastel colors form the product's appearance (Unilever, 2017). It is a brand that has a soft, gentle, mild and friendly personality aiming to promote self-esteem to women and challenge stereotypes. It is also a brand with a down-to-earth culture which only focuses on 'real women'. Besides, Dove believes true beauty is to feel the best version of the people themselves, and not something related and defined by the shape of the body, skin color or age (Unilever, 2017). Based on the "real beauty campaign", Dove suggests a peculiar relationship encouraging people to feel real beauty and help them to build self-esteem ("you are more beautiful than you think") (Dove US, 2013). Speaking of reflection, people would think themselves as gentle and who are willing to take care of themselves. When it comes to self-image, people normally hold the opinions that they are natural, beautiful, confident and inspired while using the product.

Dove differentiates its brand from others based on its special and unique brand identity which is to be authentic, unique and real. Through the story of "Beauty Sketches" a message of "feeling the real beauty" has been delivered. The main characters are those women who think they have imperfections and their self-doubt is their daily facing conflict. The story is proceeding with captivating music hoping audiences will be able to see themselves in those women because having doubts with one self's appearance is a universal feeling that everyone may experience (522 productions, n.d.). Dove sells soap, a product that is used in people's daily life and that has no certain connection with the story mentioned above. However, Dove managed to create an emotional

linkage between the product and the customers by making people recognize they are worth feeling beautiful and cared by Dove and its soap.

## **Discussion towards a new model**

The aim of this paper is to address how storytelling strengthens a brand. The literature review confirmed that both Kapferer's brand identity prism and the four elements of storytelling are useful models but they are limited in their ability to explain the link between a brand's identity and the stories it tells. Kapferer's brand identity prism does not take into consideration the brand's storytelling while the four elements neglect the importance of the brand's identity. Therefore, a theoretical gap needs to be filled and the literature relating to the brand's identity and the four elements of storytelling propose a solid basis from which to draw in the development of the new model proposed in this article.

## **A new model: The storytelling model**

The six elements of the storytelling model in Figure 1 explain how the use of storytelling strengthens a brand. The model starts with the brand's positioning, which means highlighting the brand's unique characteristics, those who differentiate it from the competition and attracts customers (Kapferer, 2012). When positioning a brand, an important aspect considered as a differentiator point is the target group (Kapferer, 2012). Especially when telling a story, it is essential for the customers to be able to identify with the characters in order to get personally involved in the brand's

story (Fog et al. 2010). This occurs when they recognize a part of them in the characters (Fog et al. 2010). Hence, it is of importance for the brand of keeping in mind their target customers, as they need to be capable of identifying with the hero and the conflict of the story (Fog et al. 2010).

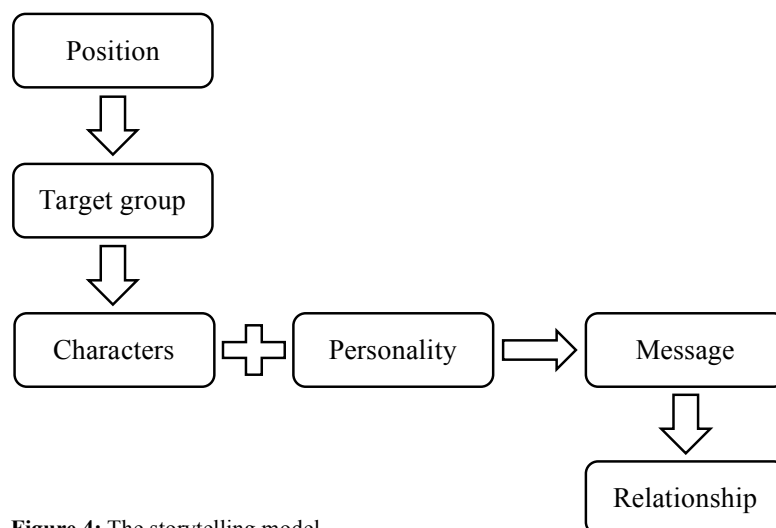
Furthermore, it is important that customers relate to the brand's personality as well. In fact, by permitting customers to identify with it or projecting themselves into it, the brand achieves a psychological purpose (Kapferer, 2012). Therefore, by combining the story's characters and the human traits associated with the brand, the story's message is developed. Indeed, the brand's message is the external manifestation of its internal substance, what it values as well as its feeling of what is right and wrong (Kapferer, 2012; Fog et al. 2010). Essentially, the message the brand expresses reflects the cause it defends or the experience they are offering to customers (Fog et al. 2010). This is a way of humanizing the brand. In fact, people build relationship with another person, not with products (Kapferer, 2012). Hence the importance of the brand's personality reflecting how customers choose a brand in the same

way they choose friends (Kapferer, 2012).

Indeed, through a strong message expressing a cause appealing both to the brand and to the customers as well as characters to which they can identify a strong emotional bond is created between the brand and its customers. In fact, customers build relationships with brands the same way they do with other human beings. They approach each other through their own stories, from which trust is built (Fog et al. 2010). These emotional bonds are the foundation of strong brands, while good stories connect people together and talk to their emotions (Fog et al. 2010). This is why companies are able to define in what way they can build the first connection with their customers by understanding what drives, influences, motivates, worries and inspires them (Zuehlke, (2016). Indeed, customers will be willing to do business with a trusted brand representing a source of content that educates, inspires and provokes reflection (Zuehlke, 2016).

*Applying the model through case*

The three cases illustrate how these brands' identity is used to tell different stories.



**Figure 4:** The storytelling model

## *Nike*

Nike is a premium athletic lifestyle brand that puts its community at the center of its actions and impacts young athletes by offering them the inspirational coaching they need to follow their dreams (Holt & Cameron, 2010). This positioning is directly relating to one of Nike's target group: young athletes. In fact, Nike's crusaders are the youth subculture living in the ghettos, those who have been left behind by capitalism (Kapferer, 2012). Life is harder for this young group and they can only rely on their "solo willpower" to succeed (Kapferer, 2012). Sport is their escape (Kapferer, 2012). Indeed, this target group can easily recognize themselves in Nike's Equality campaign presenting young and old ghetto subculture athletes. They can also identify themselves with Nike's trendy, modern, sensible and engaged personality represented by athletes such as Michael Jordan who symbolizes the brand and incarnate its values. Moreover, Michael Jordan is the narrator of the Equality campaign video, which puts even more impact on the message Nike wants to convey (Nike News, 2017).

Through this campaign, Nike wants to "encourage people to take the fairness and respect they see in sport and translate them off the field" (Nike News, 2017). In fact, according to Nike (2017), athletes are seen differently on the field and the bound and equality formed there should be the same outside the field. Indeed, on the field, heroes are defined by their performance and not their skin color or religion and Nike want this mutual respect to be seen outside the field as well (Nike, 2017). Nike states

that equality should not be restricted to the field's boundaries and that everyone should have the same opportunities and chances (Nike, 2017). Through this message, Nike uses the power of sport to make equality progress both on the field as and outside the field (Nike Inc., 2017a). In addition to the Equality video, Nike created a collective movement including partnership and implication on social media to have a concrete and direct action on youth (Nike News, 2017). By stimulating them to fight to exceed themselves and turning their back to the national constraints of race and culture they create an emotional bond with the young ghetto subculture athletes (Kapferer, 2012). These athletes feel their cause has been understood, they feel supported and they are inspired by a model to follow. This is how Nike created a relationship with the young ghetto subculture athletes, by encouraging them to strive for equality. Nike's Equality story talked to the youth's emotions and as stated by Fog et al. (2010), an emotional connection with the customers is what builds a strong brand. Through the use of storytelling and by creating strong relationships with its customers, Nike increases its brand awareness, creates positive emotions and images as well as driving customer behavior to act against inequality and eventually buy its products. Nike is a strong brand that has a purpose, impacts its community and brings value to the world.

This case demonstrates how Nike's athletic lifestyle and involved in its community identity engaged its customers through the Equality campaign. The young ghetto subculture athletes grasp Nike's values and the message they want to express and they



empathize with the brand (Fog et al. 2010).

### *Airbnb*

Airbnb is a beloved hospitality brand with accommodation offered around the world. This positioning clearly indicates its target customer: travelers who are hunting for accommodations. More than that, Airbnb differentiates and stands out from the traditional hotel accommodation due to the reason that it put generalist hosts and travelers together at scale by offering global peer-to-peer lodging rental via online community networks. It is a special brand because it has a highly engaged community and the brand is actually run by its worldwide customers. By differentiating itself from the competition, Airbnb is not just simply targeting people who are looking to rent their houses but something more, their home, it is all about a sense of belonging. In fact, it targets people who travel out and want to feel home, as well as people who are open to make friends and want to eat, live, experience like a local.

By identifying its positioning and target group, a clear brand identity can be delivered when the brand is telling the story. As mentioned before Airbnb is an online community where people can share their travel experiences and ideas. Therefore, stories shared by the individuals in the community were chosen to be used. In this case, everyone can be the characters in various Airbnb's stories and therefore be personally involved in the brand's story. In the animation of "Wall and Chain", the characters are 1] a girl who is an Airbnb guest; 2) her father who was a guard on the west side of the Berlin Wall; and 3)

another person who was guarding the East therefore respectively representing the Airbnb platform, the traveler and the host. By combining with the worldly, hospitality, happy, adventurous and active brand personality, a message of belonging anywhere has been delivered.

According to the story, audiences especially those who hold conservative values could reflect themselves as the father in the animation; and people who are more open and willing to share their home would reflect themselves as the host. Resulting in a more open-minded father and a host making people life's better, an emotional connection and further relationship has been built, which motivates and reminds people to travel with Airbnb if they want to live more valuable and exciting experiences. Besides, it also encourages everyone to open their door to the world and further break down the walls that divide them. In this case, Airbnb left a brand impression on people's mind through the way of delivering message involving feelings of affection and passion, thus strengthening the company's brand building.

### *Dove*

Dove is a premium beauty care brand promoting self-esteem and encouraging women to accept themselves how they really are. Doing so, their target group is mature women who have personal doubts but want to take care of themselves. Therefore, considering that the majority of women in society do not have a positive image of themselves, the "Beauty Sketches" campaign characters represent those 'real women'. Thus, women would be able to resonate themselves through the story and thereby seek toward more self-confidence.

When developing the scenes, Dove articulates that what the brand brings to customers is beyond the physical benefit, but also the mental value of self-confidence and empowerment stimulated when using the products. Regarding this, with its mentor and supporter personality, Dove wants to send women a clear message: they are prettier than they think. As a result, by helping women realize their true beauty and make them feel more comfortable with their physical appearance, Dove creates an intimate relationship with their target group. Dove helps these women identify and evaluate themselves in a more positive way, therefore creating a sentimental connection between the brand and its target group. Thereby, they become more involved with the brand and their perception are enhanced. Thus, the brand is strengthened.

### **Managerial implications**

This study presents six elements managers need to develop and relate in order to efficiently use storytelling and positively impact their brand. This model can also be used by managers when developing a story in order to confirm how and to what extent is the story connected to and representing their brand identity. This will help confirm the story represents the brand's values and premise and therefore sends the right message to the right audience.

### **Conclusion**

Reflecting on the case studies, the brand's identity combined with its four elements of storytelling clearly express how they use storytelling to strengthen their brand. In fact, the way identity is used to tell a story varied among the case

brands but it was an essential starting point for all of them. The storytelling model demonstrates how determining its identity is crucial for a brand to effectively deliver a strong message to its target customers and therefore move closer to its marketing objectives.

When determining its positioning, an important differentiator point is the brand's target group. In order to fully understand the brand's story, it is essential for this group of customers to recognize themselves in the characters. It is also important for the target group to be able to identify with the brand or project themselves into it through its personality. Thus, by combining the story's characters and the personality of the brand, the story's message is developed. Indeed, through a convincing message reflecting the conflict faced by the characters, a strong emotional bond is created between the brand and its customers. This relationship will engage customers in brand experiences that increases trust, improve loyalty, build affinity and make them want to connect with the brand (Del Rowe, 2017).

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that it has only been conducted by analyzing three examples. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate if the concept we developed, relating the brand's identity and its four elements of storytelling applies to other brands. Yet another limitation is that this study neglected B2B brands, therefore it would be interesting to see if the storytelling model also applies to these companies and if the six dimensions we identified are also significant to B2B brands. A third limitation is that this study is only based on secondary data. In this context,

it would be worthwhile to extend research to primary data such as conducting interviews and market research. This could add interesting insights to the relationship between storytelling and the power of brands.

## REFERENCE LIST

Aaker, J. (2017). Harnessing the Power of Stories, Lean In, Available Online: <https://leanin.org/education/harnessing-the-power-of-stories/> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Aaker, J. & Fournier, S. (1995). A Brand as a Character, A Partner and a Person: Three Perspectives on the Question of Brand Personality, *Advances In Consumer Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.391-395

Airbnb, Inc. (2017a). About us, Available Online: <https://www.airbnb.com/about/about-us> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Airbnb, Inc. (2017b). Travel Stories, Available Online: <https://www.airbnb.com/stories> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Airbnb, Inc. (2017c). Airbnb in Berlin, Available Online: <https://www.airbnb.com/berlin-economic-impact> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Airbnb (2014). Wall and Chain: A Story of Breaking Down Walls, [vedio online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpA dyFdE3-c> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Ambler, T., Bhattacharya, C.B., Edell, J., Keller, K.L., Lemon, K.N. and Mittal, V. (2002). Relating brand and customer perspectives on marketing management. *Journal of Service Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp.13-25

Apple, Inc. (2017). People Aren't Hearing All the Music. Available Online: <https://www.beatsbydre.com/company/aboutus> [Accessed 26 September 2017]

Ashraf, S. (2016). 7 Incredible Examples of Brand Storytelling on Social media, Available Online: <https://locowise.com/blog/7-incredible-examples-of-brand-storytelling-on-social-media> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Beats By Dre. (2015). Chris Robshaw in The Game Starts Here - Beats by Dre | Rugby [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXCclK8pEIM> [Accessed 26 September 2017]

Blackston M. (2000). Building Brand Equity by Managing the Brand's Relationship, *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. 40, no. 6, pp.101

Bonchek, M. & France, C. (2016). Build Your Brand as a Relationship, *Harvard Business School Publishing*, Available Online: <https://hbr.org/2016/05/build->

your-brand-as-a-relationship [Accessed 16 October 2017]

Boren, C. (2017). Nike ad sends serious message about equality, opportunity and discrimination, *The Washington Post*, Available Online: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2017/02/12/nike-ad-sends-serious-message-about-equality-opportunity-and-discrimination/?utm\\_term=.4609265cb4c9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2017/02/12/nike-ad-sends-serious-message-about-equality-opportunity-and-discrimination/?utm_term=.4609265cb4c9) [Accessed 18 October 2017]

Brand New (2014). New Logo and Identity for Airbnb by DesignStudio, Available Online: [https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new\\_logo\\_and\\_identity\\_for\\_airbnb\\_by\\_designstudio.php](https://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/new_logo_and_identity_for_airbnb_by_designstudio.php) [Accessed 16 October 2017]

Brenner, M. (2017). 6 Examples of Genius Brand Storytelling You Have to See. Available Online: <https://marketinginsidergroup.com/content-marketing/6-examples-genius-brand-storytelling-see/> [Accessed 25 September 2017]

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2015). *Business research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Chesky B. (2014). Airbnb blog, Available Online: <http://blog.atairbnb.com/belong-anywhere/> [Accessed 16 October 2017]

Cooper, H. (2010). *Research synthesis and meta-analysis: A step-by-step approach* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design : qualitative, quantitative, and mixed*

*methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage

Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications*, New York: Routledge

Del Rowe, S. (2017). Marketing Needs a Story to Tell, *CRM Magazine*, vol. 21, no. 2, p.20-23, Available through: LUSEM Library website <http://lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Denning, S. (2006). Effective storytelling: strategic business narrative techniques. *Strategy & Leadership*, vol. 34 Issue 1, pp.42-48

Dove US. (2013). Dove Real Beauty Sketches: You're more beautiful than you think, [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Fisher, W.R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communications Monographs*, vol.51 no. 1, pp.1-22

Fog, K., Budtz, C., Munch, P. & Blanchette, S. (2010). *Storytelling: [Elektronisk resurs] Branding in practice*. Berlin, Heidelberg : Springer Berlin Heidelberg

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2001). Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand. *Harvard business review*, vol. 79, no. 2, pp.128-134

Holt, D. & Cameron, D. (2010). *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to*

- Build Breakthrough Brands, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Hopkinson, G.C. & Hogarth-Scott, S. (2001). "What happened was..." broadening the agenda for storied research. *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol.17, no. 1-2, pp.27-47
- Hsu, T.H., Chiu, Y.T. & Tang, J.W. (2010). An Evaluation Model for Selecting Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies for Customer Relationship Management. *Marketing Intelligent Systems Using Soft Computing*, pp.227-254
- Jo Hatch, M. & Schultz, M. (2003). Bringing the corporation into corporate branding. *European Journal of marketing*, vol.37, no. 7/8, pp.1041-1064
- Kapferer, JN. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*, London: Kogan Page
- Keller, K.L. (1998). Branding perspectives on social marketing. *ACR North American Advances*.
- Keller, K.L. & Lehmann, D.R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing science*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp.740-759.
- KWMS, 2015. Brand Relationship, Online Available: <http://kwhs.wharton.upenn.edu/term/brand-relationship/> [Accessed 12 October 2017]
- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D. & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 75, no. 4, pp.35-52
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research*, Los Angeles: Sage
- Mckendey, A. (2017). The Lego Movie: The Greatest Brand Story Ever Told, web blog post available at: <https://andymckendry.com/2017/04/04/the-lego-movie-the-greatest-brand-story-ever-told/> [Accessed 1 October 2017]
- Melin, F. (2002). The Brand as Value Creator, PhD thesis, Strategic Brand Management Program, Lund University, Available Online: [https://liveatlund.lu.se/departments/BusinessAdministration/BUSN21/BUSN21\\_2017HT\\_\\_-99\\_\\_/\\_CourseDocuments/Melin%20\(2002\)%20Branding%20-%20a%20value%20creating%20process.pdf](https://liveatlund.lu.se/departments/BusinessAdministration/BUSN21/BUSN21_2017HT__-99__/_CourseDocuments/Melin%20(2002)%20Branding%20-%20a%20value%20creating%20process.pdf) [Accessed 12 October 2017]
- Nike. (2017). Nike, [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43QTjFCPLtI> [Accessed 25 September 2017]
- Nike, Inc. (2017a). On Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day Nike Announces New Partnerships to Promote Equality in Communities across the U.S, *Business Wire*, [Press Release], Available through: LUSEM Library website <http://lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 25 September 2017]
- Nike, Inc. (2017b). Nike Uses Power of Sport to Stand Up for Equality, *Business Wire*, [Press Release], Available through: LUSEM Library website

<http://lusem.lu.se/library> [Accessed 14 October 2017]

Nike News (2017). Nike Uses Power of Sport to Stand Up for Equality. Available Online: <https://news.nike.com/news/equality> [Accessed 25 September 2017]

Nudd, T. (2014). Ad of the Day: Virgin America's 6-Hour Preroll Ad Is Creepy, Warholian and Sort of Brilliant, Available Online: <http://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/ad-day-virgin-americas-6-hour-preroll-ad-creepy-warholian-and-sort-brilliant-160775/> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

O'Brien, K. (2017). Nike's 'Equality' campaign takes a stance on diversity and opportunity. Available Online: <http://www.businessinsider.com/nikes-equality-campaign-takes-a-stance-on-diversity-and-opportunity-2017-2> [Accessed 25 September 2017]

Padgett, D. & Allen, D. (1997). Communicating experiences: A narrative approach to creating service brand image. *Journal of advertising*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp.49-62

Ponnam, A. (2007). Comprehending the Strategic Brand Building Framework of Kingfisher in the Context of Brand Identity Prism. *The Icfai Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 4, no.4, pp.63-71

Poteet, J. (n.d.). Brand Positioning 101: How to differentiate your brand for growth, A hospitality case study with industry players Airbnb and Generator Hostels, Available Online:

<https://medium.com/tradecraft-traction/brand-positioning-101-how-to-differentiate-your-brand-for-growth-6f5f52defd9e> [Accessed 16 October 2017]

Schroder, J.E. & Saltzer-Morling, M. (2006). *Brand Culture*, London: Routledge

Sheridan, M. (2017). The Best Example of Brand Storytelling Ever: The Lego Movie, web blog post available at: <https://www.thesaleslion.com/brand-storytelling-example-lego-movie/> [Accessed 1 October 2017]

Shorty Awards. (2017). Wall and Chain: A True Story About Belonging by Airbnb, Available Online: <http://shortyawards.com/7th/wall-and-chain-a-true-story-about-belonging-by-airbnb> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Unilever. (2017). Dove, Available Online: <https://www.unilever.com/brands/our-brands/dove.html> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Urde, M. (2013). The corporate brand identity matrix. *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 20, no. 9, pp.742-761

Urde, M., Baumgarth, C. & Merrilees, B. (2013). Brand orientation and market orientation—From alternatives to synergy. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 66, no. 1, pp.13-20

Virgin America. (2014). Virgin America, [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsMZRI71Zo4> [Accessed 24 September 2017]

Yin, R.K. (2014). Case study research: design and methods, London: Sage

Zuehlke, L. (2016). Brand Storytelling: Elevate Your Organization's Story to Inspire Engagement and Invite Action [pdf], Available at: <http://www.piercom.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Brand->

Storytelling-Report-Lara-Zuehlke-2016-1.pdf [Accessed 24 September 2017]

522 productions. (n.d.). Lessons from Dove: Use Inspired Storytelling for Video Marketing, Available Online: <http://www.522productions.com/lessons-from-dove-use-inspired-storytelling-for-video-marketing> [Accessed 16 October 2017]