Framing the Brand

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Declaration of authorship

Abstract

This thesis is a study of two fundamentally different strategic brand management approaches through a perspective known in the social sciences as frames and framing. The project is based on the assumption that framing and branding may very well rest upon the same criteria. It is fundamental and shared across brand management theories that the outcome of a branding effort should result in a desired consumer behavior where the consumer perceives a brand favorably and prefers that brand over other brands. Research on framing has in many ways revolved around the same problematization: How to influence people's understanding about an issue, event, situation, or object. Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) achieve this through strategic framing efforts, which rest upon criteria of *context*, *credibility* and *salience* as key factors of mobilizing audiences. These uncovered assumptions and criteria of successful framing attempts, and the role context plays are then discussed up against Kevin Lane Keller's model for building Customer-Based Brand Equity, and Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron's Cultural Strategy. From a framing perspective they both deviate to different extents from the assumed criteria for successful framing. Failing to meet all these criteria, the conclusion suggests that these approaches to strategic brand management can learn from framing theory. Lastly, we suggest areas for future research, inspired by the discussion and unanswered questions uncovered through the process.

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Introduction & Problem Statement

There are numerous approaches to branding that try to build a brand strategically. The boundaries of the different views are often blurry, but what they all agree on to a certain extent, is that we consume brands for more than the functional benefits they offer. We consume brands also for what they represent in terms of for example social status, lifestyle, masculinity, and femininity (Levy, 1959; Sternberg, 1999; McCracken, 1986). For instance, wearing a Rolex watch can represent a number of different traits, where the most obvious one can be said that a Rolex is a symbol of wealth. Furthermore, BMW has been talked about as a "luxury car brand"[1] in the media, suggesting that a BMW is more than a car that has four wheels and an engine. In Norwegian and Danish media it is talked about as a "director's car", implying it is a car for CEOs and other people in top-management positions[2] [3]. Owning a BMW then can symbolize personal success.

Considering the importance of symbolism for how a brand distinguishes itself from other brands, it would seem obvious that approaches to strategic brand management should provide a clear way of building a brand so that it is perceived as something more than the product itself.

Brand strategy is about attempting to put the brand forward in such a way that consumers desire it more so than competing brands (Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1995; Holt, 2004). To discuss how this may be done, we intend to borrow concepts known in the social sciences as "frames" and "framing". Frames can be defined as the boundaries within which we

[1] http://www.dw.de/bmw-best-selling-luxury-auto-brand/a-16510066
[2] http://jyllands-posten.dk/motor/test/ECE6056301/bmw-s-direktoerbil-er-alt-for-perfekt/
[3] http://www.side3.no/motor/sa-billig-kan-du-fa-bmw/3719331.html

interpret the world that surrounds us. In our minds, we have a mental framework that enables us to understand what is going on around us (Goffman, 1974). Framing then refers to the process of understanding, and more importantly in our case – how to influence such understanding. Related to branding, we can say that a branding effort is about influencing how consumers perceive a product, and one way a brand manager can do this, is to frame the product (or what the product symbolizes) in such a way that the consumers want to purchase it. Therefore we aim to see if strategic branding theory can learn something from theory on framing.

- *Research area: What can strategic brand management theories learn from framing theory?*

One particular approach to strategic branding that has caught our interest is Douglas Holt's theory that he calls "Cultural Branding". With this, he shows with several examples how brands become symbols of "wealth" or "success", like the Rolex and BMW in the examples mentioned above (Holt, 2004). His perspective is that brands are to be treated as cultural products at the same level as music, movies, books and so on. What they have in common is that they tell stories using references acquired from culture to make it easier for consumers to interpret and identify with the end product. Holt argues that brands, just like movies for example, become desired by their audiences when they serve as social commentaries about events that are going on in the broader context of where they are being consumed (Holt, 2004).

Even though Holt's model seems convincing, it raises some questions regarding the process of strategically building "cultural brands". For example, he argues that brands are best built when tensions in society become looming, such as the financial crisis in late 2008 and its

mobilizing effects on activist groups. What he does not elaborate on is how to work more proactively with such insight. It also brings up the question if events of such magnitude are really necessary to build a brand on. Further, how does an organization know which story the brand should tell and how the brand's audience will interpret these stories? In addition, how much power does the brand manager really have of the consumers' interpretation of the brand?

Moreover, Holt has on several occasions criticized more traditional styles of strategic brand management (Holt, 2004; Holt & Cameron, 2010). He refers to these approaches as "mind-share" approaches because of their psychological orientation where brands are viewed as a set of associations in the mind of the consumer (Holt, 2004). In Holt's terms this way of building brands is reductionist in that it takes away the complexity of brand management tasks – especially the context the brand exists in. The psychological models of branding also fail to explain why brands become powerful according to Holt because they leave culture out of the equation when attempting to explain the success of brands (Holt, 2004).

One major contributor to what Holt calls "mind share" branding is Kevin Lane Keller. His argument is that brands exist as knowledge in the minds of consumers (Keller, 2013). Therefore, the goal of any branding activity is to "teach" the consumer about the brand, and attempt to associate it with benefits and attributes it is assumed that consumers desire (Keller, 1993). Keller explains that cars such as BMW are symbols of "success" because the brand is associated with "style" and "driving performance" (Keller, 2013). The amount and strength of these associations determine the brand's ability to succeed in the marketplace. This is where Keller and Holt disagree. Where Keller attributes the success of brands on their ability to occupy "space" in the minds of their consumers, Holt sees the brands in a larger cultural context where culture decides their triumph.

It is not our intention to provide a solution to this debate. Instead we wish to take a thorough look at each approach through a lens of framing. As previously stated, research on framing revolves around how we as humans understand actions of others, language, symbols, artifacts, objects, events. In addition, research on framing, and especially research on how Social Movement Organizations manage to mobilize their audiences into action seems particularly valuable. Social Movement Organizations have been studied with special regards to how they manage to recruit supporters through framing activities (Snow & Benford, 1988). Their tasks revolve around actively attempting to influence people's understanding about issues, events, actions and so forth. Therefore, it is our proposal that Social Movement Organizations and brand managers have similar challenges: The brand manager is essentially framing a product in the marketplace with the objective of influencing consumers to purchase and consume the product. It is therefore interesting to see if research on Social Movement Organizations can contribute to how a brand can be framed to appeal to consumers.

Consequentially, we have chosen the following guiding questions to discuss our research area:

- ***Q1****: What is strategic framing and how is it related to strategic brand management?*
- ***Q2****: To what extent do assumptions and concepts from strategic framing uncovered in Q1 correspond to, or deviate from*
    - *2.1: Kevin Lane Keller's "Customer Based Brand Equity model"?*
    - *2.2: Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron's concept of "Cultural Strategy"?*
- ***Q3****: What are the implications of the similarities and differences uncovered in Q2.1 and Q2.2?*

The purpose and the order of these questions have a specific and logical reasoning behind. Question 1 will set us off on a path to explore theory on frames and framing, the assumptions

behind the theories, and key concepts for how research on framing presumes actors can influence understanding. The aim is to unearth key concepts from strategic framing and relate these assumptions to branding. The answer to question 1 will then serve as a foundation from which we can discuss the two chosen approaches to strategic brand management and possible similarities and differences in questions 2.1 and 2.2.

Implications with regards to the answers of questions 2.1 and 2.2 will be discussed in question 3. Finally, with the answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 in mind, the answer to the *Research Area* will highlight possible contributions framing theory can offer to brand management theory.

Choice of theories

Framing and its relation to branding – an example

Everything we see, hear, or touch is interpreted using a number of mental frameworks in our heads (Goffman, 1974). To illustrate this, we present a situation where I want to purchase a new phone. The reason I want to have a phone is to be able to communicate while I am on the move. Maybe I also want to take pictures or play games on it. The assumption that the phone should provide me these stems from my mental framework of what a phone should do. I take it for granted. We can call these: the functional benefits the phone offers me. I am faced with two options where the phones are almost identical except for the color. One is blue, and the other is pink. As a male, would I pick the blue phone due to the assumption that blue is a more masculine color than pink? So if I use this phone I express my masculinity more so than a pink phone would do? And how did blue become a masculine color anyway?

We have just seen a very simplified example of how my framework determines how I pick a phone when faced with choice. We chose framing in our research first of all because it

is a general theory that attempts to explain how we as human beings make sense of the world around us (Goffman, 1974; Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986). In the example I pick the phone because the color blue symbolizes my masculinity more than the pink option. The functional benefits were the exact same, so the "rational" choice would be "whichever". However, the symbolic meaning of the phone changed with what kind of color it flagged. The marketer behind this is a talented one if his plan was to appeal to my sense of masculinity. He or she apparently knew that males cherish the color blue over pink and the blue one were likely to be picked by a male consumer. The marketer managed to frame the product in such a way that it seemed more appealing to me than the other, pink phone.

With this example in mind it becomes apparent that consumers judge products based on certain frameworks in their minds. But it's not so simple - that we just have a fixed individual framework in our heads to make up our meaning about something. These frameworks stem from our on-going interaction with other people (Cornelissen & Werner 2014) – the color blue did not become "masculine" out of nothing. In addition, the color blue is one but many symbols that make up our way of expressing ourselves as for example "masculine". We chose framing particularly because it provides us valuable insight into the other "side" of the equation as well. Even though it is recognized that framing is an on-going social process between actors (Cornelissen & Werner 2014), research has shown how framing can be a strategic effort to alter the perception of e.g. a cause, issue, object as well (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et.al., 1986; Fligstein, 2001). In the phone example the phone was framed as masculine through the use of the color blue. We suggest that this is where the concept of framing is related to the field of brand management. Strategic brand management is generally preoccupied with how a brand can be put forward in such a way that it becomes more desirable than competing brands.

We wish to explore the existing literature on frames and framing with the ambition to see if it can provide us with a perspective for discussion for two approaches to brand management. Throughout the literature on brands and branding it has been recognized that we use brands for more than what they give us in terms of functional benefits (Levy, 1959; Sternberg, 1999; Holt, 2004). We use brands for what they mean to us in terms of our identity and self-expression (Levy, 1959; Holt, 2004; Keller, 2013). Brand strategy scholars have for a long time attempted to come up with a way to saturate brands with meaning so that they somehow gets preferred over other brands. Often, these approaches for brand strategy are built on different foundations, and it makes it challenging to know why they argue the way they do. As stated earlier, the concept of frames and strategic framing has also been preoccupied with the construction of meaning, and how actors attempt to influence meaning construction around virtually all aspects of the world around us (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; Snow & Benford, 1988; 2000; Fligstein, 1997; 2001). Research on framing has spanned around the framing activities of markets, situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility and news (Callon, 1998; Hallahan, 1999). There are definitely more applications of the concept in the literature but the broadness of the construct is evident. Therefore it is our proposition that looking at framing and branding together could provide valuable input to the literature on strategic brand management. The selection of the analyzed branding theories will demarcate our discussion and determine the conclusion we reach, so in the following part we will show how and why we decided to focus on them.

Literature review on brands, branding, brand paradigms

The word brand comes from the Old Norse word "brandr" which can be translated as "to burn" (Keller, 2013). Historically, branding was the practice of burning the producer's mark on his or hers' produce to differentiate it from other producers. Livestock for example would

be marked with a burning-hot rod with the symbol of the owner to identify it among other livestock of the same kind (Keller, 2013).

In a similar but broader view, a classical definition of a brand suggests that the brand is linked to the identification of a product, and how the product distinguishes itself from its competitors. The brand achieves this with the use of a distinct name, logo, design or other visual signs and symbols (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as:

"A brand is a "Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.""[4]

Earlier, in 1960, the definition sounded:

"A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors"[5]

The definition is shortened down over the years, but it still tells us the same; brands are about the identification markers that separate one product from another. Terry Hanby (1999) argues against this conception of a brand stating that it is owner-oriented, reductionist, and grounded in an economic perspective on man as a rational being. Hanby also states that

[4] https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B&dLetter=B
[5] Quote taken from Hanby (1999 pp. 1), as the American Marketing Association's definition of a brand

this definition is passive and that it renders brands as a lifeless entity available to be manipulated by its owners. He then debates that there have been a paradigm change as to how academia views branding, going from positivistic thinking toward a more relativist frame. Positivism is a philosophical system that only recognizes those arguments that can withstand scientific verification, or provide logical or mathematical evidence[6]. Thereby, positivism rejects metaphysics and theism – effectively limiting the approach to branding as something tangible. Relativism is a philosophy where it is recognized that "knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute"[7].

This change in thinking made room for the "softer" concepts of social sciences and psychology to make their way into marketing and brand literature. Thus, brands meant something entirely different than what the definition above seems to imply: products turn into a brand when the product is combined with symbols, images, and feelings to produce an idea that is more than the sum of the parts (Hanby, 1999).

Sidney Levy, already back In 1959, realized that brands had more to them than just identifying markers ready to be manipulated by its senders. He argues up that customers choose products, not necessarily based on the product's functional attributes, but because of the ideas, feelings, and attitudes they have towards it. He also calls for utilizing qualitative research to uncover these feelings, breaking with the notion of man as a rational choice maker. Thus, one can say that Levy too, was viewing brands through a relativistic standpoint.

The brand is complex phenomenon, and attempting to fit it into a single definition seems futile. As Maurya & Mishra (2012) argue that although brands have been widely

[6] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/positivism?q=positivism
[7] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/relativism

discussed and debated in the academic world, a common understanding on a brand has not been made among the experts. “Each expert comes up with his or her own definition of brand or nuances of definition” (Kapferer, 2008 pp.9).

Along with these attempts to define a brand, the literature also proliferates into different types of brands, such as “product brands” and “corporate brands” (Hatch & Schultz, 2008), “Iconic Brands” and “identity brands” (Holt, 2004), and “service brands” (Heding et. al., 2009) to name a few. Consequently, the approaches to build brands are different as well. Keller (2009), inspired by cognitive psychology (Heding et.al., 2009) promotes the use of his “Brand Resonance Pyramid” to build what he calls strong brands. Holt (2004) and Holt and Cameron (2010) argues that context, in the form of culture, is imperative in order to build “Iconic Brands” using what they call “Cultural Strategy”. Hatch and Schultz (2008) advocate the careful alignment of Strategic Vision, Organizational Culture, and Stakeholder Images in their VCI framework for corporate branding, effectively including the whole enterprise in addition to the external stakeholders in the brand-building process. Nevertheless, what they all strive for is to strategically achieve a scenario where consumers prefer one brand over the other brands in the same product category, or in other words, gaining and sustaining competitive advantage.

As briefly touched upon earlier, the branding literature can be categorized into paradigms. Hanby (1999) separates between the positivistic and the relativistic paradigm. Similarly, Allen, Fournier & Miller (2006) recognizes two paradigms: *received and emergent.* The *received* paradigm constitutes a view that is grounded in the disciplines of psychology and information economics. In this view, the brand resides in the mind of the consumer as a cognitive knowledge structure of brand relevant information. In what they call the *emergent paradigm*, brands are viewed as socio-cultural creations shared in the marketplace, and not

psychological entities that exist in the minds of consumers. Here, brand meaning is not drawn from the product or individuals, but from the context that the brand exists in (Allen et. al., 2006).

Louro & Cunha (2008) splits the literature in four paradigms: *product, projective, adaptive, and relational*. The *product paradigm* reflects a product-centered approach to brand management; thus, the product and its benefits are the key to a strong brand. The *projective paradigm* is seen as an extension of the product paradigm, where it becomes important to project and communicate a coherent brand identity. It is assumed that the brand has an identity, and this is built up with four components: corporate identity, organizational identity, image and reputation (Heding et.al. 2009). The *adaptive paradigm* emphasizes the consumer as the source for brand meaning, where the power of the brand resides in the minds of the consumers. The *relational brand management paradigm* of Louro & Cunha conceptualizes brand management as a dynamic process where the interaction between brand value and brand meaning on a strategic level results in a strong brand through a meaningful relation between customer and brand.

Heding et.al. (2009) lists seven approaches to brand management within Hanby's (1999) paradigms; *the economic approach, the identity approach, the consumer-based approach, the personality approach, the relational approach, the community approach, and the cultural approach*. However, as Heding et.al. mention, these approaches are integrated in many of the frameworks that exist in brand management literature, and this integration tend to blur the differences between the approaches.

The different divisions of paradigms have a lot in common. The similarity between Hanby's and Allen et.al.'s concepts are evident, as the positivistic can be said to contain the same ideas as the received, while the relativistic reflects the emergent. With Louro & Cunha

we can place the product-, projective-, and the adaptive paradigm into a positivistic, or received frame, and the relational brand paradigm within the relativistic, or emergent paradigm. Due to time and resource constraints, we will operate in this thesis with only two of these "schools" of thought on branding literature. We find it fitting to use Allen et.al.'s (2006) concepts of received and emergent paradigms as we believe that these two encompass the major approaches to branding we intend to cover.

In this introductory segment of the thesis we have touched upon briefly the evolving literature and schools of thought on brands and brand management. We have discovered that brand management literature can be classified in paradigms based on what scientific roots they have evolved from. The received paradigm, which can be said to encompass the "traditional" approaches to branding, has predominantly psychological and economical roots. The emergent paradigm is grounded in and inspired by social science (Allen.et.al.,2006). Later on, we discuss two approaches to strategic brand management rooted in these scientific backgrounds. As a representative for the received view we have decided to choose the concepts of "Customer Based Brand Equity", "Brand Positioning" and "Brand Pyramid" developed by Kevin Lane Keller. As a representative for the emergent view we have selected Douglas Holt's concept of "Cultural Branding" as Holt on several occasions (Holt, 2004; Holt & Cameron, 2010) has criticized (among others) Keller 's conceptualizations of strategic branding and thus serves as an antipode of "traditional" brand management. Douglas Holt thoroughly examines how to exploit the role of context/culture while striving to guide the perception of the consumers. He creates a seemingly simple, clear strategy to understand how to influence what a product means to its consumers.

Reflections on the relevance and quality of the literature used

In a thesis such as this, where we attempt to put two different streams of literature "up against" each other it is imperative that the sources of the literature hold a high relevance and quality. Therefore we strived to use peer-reviewed academic articles that are published in well-known academic journals to ensure that the quality of the literature we review holds a high standard. As for the two branding approaches we have used both peer-reviewed articles and books Keller, Holt, and Holt & Cameron have authored. Books might not go through the same rigorous reviews as articles published in academic journals do, but the fact that these books, and especially Keller's "Strategic Brand Management" is used widely at business schools around the world should support the quality of his work:

"Professor Keller's textbook, Strategic Brand Management, has been adopted at top business schools and leading firms around the world and has been heralded as the "bible of branding." This exploration of brands, brand equity, and strategic brand management combines a comprehensive theoretical foundation with numerous techniques and practical insights for making better day-to-day and long-term brand decisions"[8]

It has occurred to us that this text might be authored by Keller himself. However, we assume that Dartmouth College as a world-renowned Ivy-League[9] university vouches for the content published by their employees. Moreover, Keller is the recipient of several awards for

[8] http://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/kevin-lane-keller/about-kevin-lane-keller
[9] http://dartmouth.edu/dartmouth-glance

his work[10], and his 1993 paper "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity" which a lot of his later work is grounded in won the Harold H. Maynard Award from the American Marketing Association in 1993[11]. This award *"Recognizes the Journal of Marketing article that makes the most significant contribution to marketing theory and thought within the calendar year"*[12]. Thus, we deem Keller's relevance and the quality of his work sufficient for this thesis.

Additionally, Douglas Holt's book "How Brands Become Icons", and Holt & Cameron's "Cultural Strategy", are widely cited in the branding literature (Allen et al., 2006; Heding et.al, 2009; Keller, 2013), along with the books being part of the curriculum of the courses "Managing Organizational Identity", and "Strategic Brand Management" at Copenhagen Business School. Moreover, the books have been praised with positive reviews from Harvard Business Review[13]. Taken together, this works as a stamp of quality adequate for the purposes of this thesis.

Delimitations and structure

Even though a Master's Thesis is a project of a big magnitude there are still limitations as to what we are able to and aim to cover. First and foremost our delimitations revolve around the amount of approaches to brand management we bring forward. There is a tradeoff between width and depth, so in order to get sufficient depth of the brand approaches in our analysis we have constricted us to two of the approaches.

[10] http://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/kevin-lane-keller/curriculum-vitae
[11] https://www.ama.org/publications/JournalOfMarketing/Pages/HaroldHMaynardAward.aspx
[12] Quote from https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/AMA-Awards.aspx
[13] http://blogs.hbr.org/2010/12/pat-boone-has-a-cultural-strat/

We touch upon a wide range of relevant literature related to both framing and branding, including the theories of sensemaking (Weick, 2001), the process of identity construction (Berger 1967, Kenny, Whittle & Willmott, 2011), meaning transfer models (McCracken, 1986), and symbolism (Goffman, 1974; Sternberg, 1999). Most of these theories contribute to the concepts of framing and strategic brand management, but we will not particularly focus on them to avoid disrupting the purpose of the thesis. Our impression is that discussing the questions of for example how identity is constructed, or how the meaning transfer takes place from products to consumers, does not fit the focus of this particular master's thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to look at what research on strategic framing, or more specifically theories on Social Movement Organizations and the theory of Fields have uncovered and put these perspectives up against Keller's and Holt & Cameron's concepts of strategic branding. Therefore we will start by providing a thorough literature review of framing that will form the basis of discussion of the two branding approaches. We will guide our focus to the most relevant theories trying to uncover how to influence others' perception strategically. Our point of departure is Cornelissen and Werner (2014) because their literature review offers one of the most recent overviews of the different levels and sub theories within framing. The aim is to show the way framing explains the boundaries in which meaning making takes place and how it suggests framing to be of a strategic character in order to influence meaning making.

The next step is to examine the brand management way: we will introduce two distinct theories from the strategic branding literature and narrow our focus on their effort to influence people's understanding of the brand.

After the branding theories are examined we point at the differences in their focus in the discussion part of the thesis, and seek possible strength and weaknesses through the lens of strategic framing. We strive to conclude by finding the parts where framing can contribute to the above-mentioned strategies and suggest directions for future research.

Literature review on framing

The potential of framing

As an academic discipline, marketing and branding belongs under the more general theoretic fields of economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and the humanities - mixing and matching knowledge from these areas of study to fit the specific tasks of branding and marketing (Holt, 2004; pp. 229). Good theories are rarely stumbled across from the top of our heads; rather they are informed by the academic umbrella from where they originate. These theories are then used as a "flexible tool kit" (Holt, 2004; pp. 229), pulling out the relevant material and molding them to fit the issue at hand. What we hope to achieve by bringing sociology into the picture is for us to be able to look at branding from a different perspective. The ultimate goal of any marketing or brand strategy is to make the potential customers to behave in a certain way - namely to buy the brand. The literature on frames and framing, pioneered by Erving Goffman and further developed by scholars interested in how we as humans construct meaning as individuals and groups of the events and interactions we are exposed to seems promising. Especially interesting is the research that has been conducted on how actors attempt to influence other actors' perception of events, issues, and so on. Our hope is that this particular stream of academic literature can enable us to see how brands, in sociological terms, influences and encourages people to buy the brand. There is a possibility that by looking "up" from the disciplines of marketing and branding to the academic fields

that inform them - in this case the social sciences - that we can utilize concepts and thoughts and then bring them "back down" as valuable additions to the marketing and branding literature.

First we will present perspectives on frames and framing because the construct has been applied in different settings and situations, depending on the "level of analysis" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Thus, framing research is not "unified" into one definition or applied to one particular type of research, and the result of this is that there is a debate about where frames exists, where they originate, and what significance context has on frames and framing.

Perspectives on frames and framing

As a concept, frames are "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman, 1974), that enable people "to locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences within their life and the world around them. Frames function to render events meaningful, and to organize action and experience, both individually and collectively (Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford, 1986). From this we can explain that frames are boundaries within which people make sense of events and experiences. If an event is not part of a specific person's "framework of understanding", then that event will not be rendered as meaningful. One obvious example of this is the celebration of geographically- or religious-specific ceremonies such as Christmas, Ramadan, thanksgiving, or children's parades on the May 17th celebration in Norway. These celebrations are meaningful in some cultures, less, or not meaningful at all in other cultures.

Thinking about frames as "schemata" suggests that frames exists in our heads, that they are of a psychological character, and that they function as "cognitive shortcuts" to explain the question "what is going on here?" (Gillan, 2008). In a similar vein, Oliver & Johnston (2000) suggests that frames are located within the "black box of mental life" that

influences our interpretation of individual experience. Rettie (2004) argues against this view of frames, claiming that they are not mental objects, but concepts used to decipher what is happening around us. Frames provide us with context, which enables us to interpret events we are exposed to. An example of such context could be the different tone and language of a conversation between a student and his/her supervisor, contra how this interaction would play out if the conversation were between two students. The theme of the conversation could be the same, but the context changes, and probably so do the language and tone. Now we are describing context as a frame, in accordance with how Rettie (2004) writes that frames are socially shared and culture specific. Van Gorp (2007) states that frames seem to exist everywhere, but no one knows exactly where they begin, and where they end. He suggests treating frames on their own terms, disconnected from the individual and instead emphasize their connection with culture. Here, he refers to culture as an organized set of beliefs, codes, myths, stereotypes, values, norms, frames, and so forth that are shared in a group or society. Entman (1993) notes that culture is the stock commonly invoked frames that can be defined as a set of common frames demonstrated in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping. Further, Van Gorp argues that the individual is not able to change these cultural phenomena, and thus frames are largely situated external of the individual (Van Gorp, 2007).

As we can see, and as Gillan (2008) suggests, there is an ongoing tension in the framing literature between conceiving of frames as collective-linguistic or individual-cognitive processes. Where on one side, academics oriented towards psychological analyses tend to emphasize the cognitive, other scholars tend to present frames as linguistic, rooted and constituted in social interaction. This divide is also discussed by Benford & Snow (2000), where they argue that treating frames as schemas runs the risk of overlooking the interactive

constructionist character of frames and framing. They further write that frames and schemata are not two different names for the same phenomenon, but rather that frames are *"the footing in which the schemas are aligned"*. This very alignment happens through the social interaction of two or more individuals (Benford & Snow, 2000).

In their review of the frame and framing literature, Cornelissen & Werner (2014) argues that the framing construct varies depending on the level of analysis applied. Up until now, we presented frames as cognitive schemata, and frames as context, herein cultural phenomena. Cornelissen and Werner divides framing research into three different levels of analysis: micro, meso, and macro.

At the micro level, framing research has been occupied with looking at the priming and activation of knowledge schemas, and how these guide perceptions and actions in context. The meso level research has focused on how strategic actors attempt to frame courses of actions and social identities in order to mobilize other actors to follow, through the use of language and symbolic gestures. At the macro level, research is focused on how broader cultural templates of understanding become institutionalized and guide behavior in social context through providing abstract scripts and rules (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). It is important to note that this separation is somewhat artificial, as research tends to cut across the levels described (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014).

Micro perspective

Rather than focusing how meaning is socially constructed, research within the micro perspective on framing tend to focus on accessing cognitive frames in the individual, treating frames as knowledge structures ready to be accessed (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). This access and the consequences of it can be referred to as priming effects. Priming means in short terms how a cognitive frame is activated as a knowledge structure, and the speed at

which it is accessed (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Here we can refer back to frames as cognitive schemata that resides in our minds as individuals, and that our perceptions, judgments, and actions are guided by these. The micro perspective downplays the importance of how frame based meanings are socially constructed and negotiated, rather than simply tapped into and accessed. This is not to say that framing from a broader, socially constructed perspective does not incorporate priming effects. The interpretation of a text could very well trigger the retrieval of cognitive frames. However, the micro-meso-macro distinction provides important differences in how knowledge schemas are activated at the individual level and how meaning is constructed and negotiated in social settings through interaction and communication between people (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014).

Meso perspective

Research at the meso level of framing has traditionally revolved around the meaning construction within defined social groups. An example of a group of this kind could be how meaning is constructed in the workplace of an organization, and how frames and framing attempts influence the organization. At the meso level, human behavior us thought to be a consequence of how people interact, and use language and symbols to create meaning. Major streams of research within the meso perspective has revolved around how managers attempt to influence or shaping the frames of their peers in an organization in change processes, where the goal is to gain support and acceptance for the change initiative (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). This concept of frames has also been called boundaries (Hernes, 2004), where he identifies three particular kinds of boundaries: cognitive, social, and material with regards to how these shape the sensemaking process of an organization. The cognitive frames are those that incorporate ideas and understandings that guide organized actions. The social frames are the social bonds that tie organizational members together. Material frames are the tangible

features of the organization, for example buildings and equipment, but also the rules and regulations the organization and its members are obliged to follow (Hernes, 2004). The influencing character of a leader or manager's message in this context depends on his or her ability to play within these frames. Such a process has been called "Sensegiving" (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), others use the term "Mise-en-sens" (Corvellec & Risberg, 2007) to explain how to influence the context that sensemaking occurs in. Corvellec and Risberg (2007) argue against the notion of sensegiving, stating that for one to be able to give sense, sense must exist beforehand, and that it can be given to others that don't have this sense. Instead, they use thought of "mise-en-sens", or "setting the stage" to illustrate how frames and context can be used to alter the outcome of sensemaking.

Another field that has emerged from the meso level analysis is how social movements strategically work to gain support and mobilize their audiences (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; see e.g. Benford & Snow, 2000).

The breadth of the framing construct at the meso level demonstrates its versatility to be applied in research of a number of settings. It also provides hints on how to frame an organizational change (Hernes, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), and how a Social Movement Organization is able to gain traction and mobilize its audience (Benford & Snow, 2000). Research at the meso level has a tendency to focus on outcome of framing attempts, rather than how framing is an ongoing process of meaning construction. Thus, it runs the risk of blinding researchers to the negotiations of meaning that happens before a frame might emerge, and before the meaning of a collective group might converge around a frame (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Therefore, we now move on to a wider perspective of framing; the macro perspective.

Macro perspective

Research at the macro level acknowledges the social-cultural web that surrounds us as human beings, and how this web directs our impressions and our meaning construction. This stream of literature has dealt with the institutionalization of ideas and knowledge in addition to the creation and institutionalization of markets. The strength of the framing construct in institutional theory is its ability to both capture how meaning structures are institutionalized, and explaining how a macro structure influences actors' motivations, cognitions, and discourse at the micro level (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Cultural frames allow us to construct meaning and organize experience at the micro level, while at the same time give us clues for social and cultural change at the macro level. These frames can be questioned, transplanted, and changed when actors apply them in context and break with convention collectively (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014).

When describing frames at the macro level, we mean that frames operate as a collective backdrop, which guides our collective perceptions of the world around us. Cornelissen & Werner (2014) writes about this as institutional logic, meaning that the cognition and behavior of us as humans are decided by a broader set of belief systems. The thought that frames are institutionalized implies that they are taken for granted across a social group, and that they organize social and cultural experience (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). There is, however also literature on macro frames that emphasize human agency, suggesting that the institutionalized frames are not necessarily unmovable, and that they are subject to dispute, contests, and settlements through the interactions of actors in society (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). Thereby, it is acknowledged that actors on the micro level are able to challenge (or protect) the status quo through framing contests and discourse. Also, it allows institutional scholars to see how these contests relate to macro level social and economic situations. (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014)

Framing as process

The notion of framing refers to the processes by which actors attempt to influence the interpretations of reality among various audiences (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005). An important point in social constructivism is that human behavior is thought to result from how people interact and use symbols to create meaning (Hallahan, 1999). Hallahan (1999) states that reality is not "objective"; rather it should be regarded in connection with social interaction. Reality then, is "social reality" (Hallahan, 1999). Framing in Hallahan's perspective is explained as the social construction of reality, and how social actors part-take in this reality construction. Behavior is then thought to take place in this "social reality" (Hallahan, 1999).

Framing also refers to the behavior by which people make sense of daily life and the events and impressions that confront them (Oliver & Johnston, 2000). Thereby, we are all framers, and "framee's" in that the social interactions that we are part of, and the world around us constantly frame us, and we frame it back.

Framing is the activity that organizations, or communication managers undertake when they try to influence their audience's interpretation of a brand. For example, Hallahan (1999) states that public relations workers have been called names such as "image-makers" and "spin doctors", and that these labels portray their important role in constructing social reality. Framing is a critical activity in the construction of social reality because it assists in the shaping of perspectives through which people interpret the world around them.

Drawing further on the public relations example, Hallahan (1999) explains that the objective of PR agents is to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations between organizations and their audience. Thus, the establishment of common "frames of reference" about topics or issues of mutual concern is a necessary condition for effective relations to be established (Hallahan, 1999).

Framing can be viewed as a metaphor of a picture frame (Hallahan, 1999). The role of a picture frame is to limit the subject matter in the picture, in which the artist (the framer) has decided what is included, excluded, and emphasized. Therefore, we can say that framing involves processes of inclusion, exclusion, and emphasis (Hallahan, 1999). This is in accordance with what Entman (1993) says about how framing involves selection and salience. For Entman, framing is to select some characteristics of a perceived reality and make them more prominent in a communicating text in such a way that it defines problems, promotes causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or a solution to the problem (Entman, 1993).

Framing is an attempt of limiting or defining the meaning of a message by shaping the reasoning individuals make about the message (Hallahan, 1999). What this means is that the sender of the message attempts to frame the message in such a way that it is first and foremost understood, but also important is the interpretation of its receiver. The senders of a message can then be viewed as "framers". The goal of the framers is to create bias in the cognitive processing of information that happens in individuals when they receive the communication from framers. A very simple example of this can be the old optimistic versus pessimistic spin on the saying "the glass is half empty" or "the glass is half full". The objective content of the message is the same if we can say there is 25cl of water in a glass that can contain 50cl. However, the difference is between the word "empty" vs. "full", where full is believed to have a more optimistic, and thereby positive meaning compared to the word empty.

The central idea of Hallahan is that framing revolves around contextualization. The role of framing is to put information into a context to establish frames of reference so that the audience can evaluate the information, comprehend meanings not directly stated, and take action. It is imperative that the message consists of enough clues so people can make sense of the message (Hallahan, 1999). Entman further states that texts can make bits of information

more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols (Entman 1993). It becomes clear that texts, or messages, or whatever type of communication that goes on comes in a "package" of frames, symbols, metaphors, catchphrases and so on (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2007). This package consists of a central, organizing idea, or frame, that enables people to make sense of the message. In addition, the package contains a number of symbolic properties that positions the frame and make the message comprehensible as a whole with a metaphor, catchphrase, or other symbolic device (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

It becomes apparent that the way a message is framed will determine how an audience reads and interprets the message. It is then important for the sender of a message to understand his or her audience's frames of reference so they not only understand what the message says, but also that they interpret its meaning in a way intended by the sender. There is a promising stream of research within framing that revolves around how a framing attempt can be "strategic" – which implies that some sort of goal orients the framing effort. Actors may work strategically alter other actors' interpretation of an issue, text, object, or brand.

Strategic framing

When we say strategic framing, we mean strategic in a sense that there is a deliberate attempt to frame a brand for example so that consumers would want to purchase it. This means that the brand manager has to influence the consumers' perception of the brand, and since framing theory tells us that this perception comes from the consumers' frames, the brand manager must frame it in such a way that it becomes desirable. In this forthcoming section of the paper, we would like to discuss how framing theory tells us interpretation can be deliberately influenced. We have put special emphasis on research done on how Social Movement Organizations manage to mobilize audiences to follow their causes as extensively researched

by Robert Benford and David Snow (cf. Snow et.al., 1986; Snow & Benford, 1988; Benford & Snow, 2000), and the concepts of field theory and "social skill" as presented by Neil Fligstein (cf. Fligstein, 1997; Fligstein, 2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 2001).

Social Movement Organizations

In their research on Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), Benford and Snow (2000) have uncovered how SMOs or activists frame their causes through "Collective Action Frames". The function of these collective action frames is to simplify and condense aspects of the world around us, and to mobilize potential supporters, gain bystander support, and demobilize potential opposition. The SMOs do this by employing what is called "frame alignment processes" (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et.al. 1986). Civil- and animal rights groups are traditional examples of SMOs.

In order to frame causes through collective action frames, the SMO relies upon three key tasks of framing in the frame alignment process: Diagnostic framing, which identifies the problem, and points out the responsible parties; Prognostic framing, which involves the articulation of the solution of the problem; and Motivational framing, which serves as a "call to arms" of provides a rationale for engaging in collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Some collective action frames are better mobilizing their target groups. According to Benford and Snow (2000), there are two factors that account for the variation of frame resonance: "credibility" of the frame put forward and its relative "salience".

The credibility of any framing is dependent on three factors (Benford & Snow, 2000): "Frame consistency", "empirical credibility", and "credibility of the frame claims makers". Frame consistency refers to how congruent an SMO's articulated beliefs and claims are with its actions. Empirical credibility revolves around how the framings of the SMO fit in the world - are these framings (claims) empirically verifiable? The third, and final factor on

framing credibility is the perceived credibility of frame articulators. It is a fact that in the social psychology of communication those speakers who are regarded as more credible are generally more persuasive (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Aronson & Golden, 1962; in Benford & Snow, 2000). Hypothetically, the greater the status or perceived expertise of the frame articulator, the more plausible and resonant the framing will be perceived from the perspective of its audience (Benford & Snow, 2000).

In addition to issues of credibility, the resonance of collective action frames is affected by its salience to targets of mobilization. Snow & Benford (2000) lists three dimensions of salience: "centrality", "experiential commensurability", and "narrative fidelity".

Centrality refers to how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas associated with movement frames are to the lives of the targets of mobilization. Hypothetically, the more central or salient the beliefs, ideas, and values a movement brings up to its mobilization targets, the greater the probability of mobilization.

Experiential commensurability deals with the extent to which movement framings are congruent with the personal, everyday experiences of its targets of mobilization. The thought is that the closer the framing lies to the lives and experiences of its mobilization targets, the more resonant the framing will turn out. On the other side, if the framing is too abstract and distant from its target audience, the framing attempt has less probability to attain support.

Narrative fidelity is the extent to which the claimed framings are culturally resonant. This means that the proffered framings resonate with the target's already familiar cultural narrations. These can be called "myths" (Campbell, 1998 in Benford & Snow, 2000), "domain assumptions" (Gouldner, 1970 in Benford & Snow, 2000), or "inherent ideology" (Rudé, 1980, in Benford & Snow, 2000). When the framing attempt corresponds with the already existing myths, domain assumptions and/or the inherent ideology, the prospect of the

framing attempt's ability to mobilize its audience is increased. It is at this "level" the framing can be said to have narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984 in Benford & Snow, 2000). Benford and Snow (2000) mentions narrative fidelity as "cultural resonance" and one can assume that this is an umbrella term for how a framing attempt plays on already existing myths, ideology, or domain assumptions. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) also uses the term "cultural resonance" to explain how frame packages that include familiar cultural symbolism are more likely to resonate with audiences. At the same time they point out that not all symbols are equally potent with regards to mobilization prospects. In their writings about the potential for resonating frame packages they note that those who fall in line with a larger cultural theme have the ability to make the frames put forward more familiar and natural (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The extent to which the frame author manages to bake familiar myths, ideology, symbols into the proffered frame will determine its outcome with regards to its potential for mobilization (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

Benford and Snow (2000) suggests that frames are developed, generated, and elaborated through three sets of overlapping processes that they call discursive, strategic, and contested. Discursive processes refer to how frames come into existence through people engaging in interaction in forms of talk and conversations. Contested processes relate to the thought that all social movement frames are essentially "competing" with other frames in society at large. The fact that social movements exist at all, reflect that there are differences among people regarding the meaning of one or more aspects of reality. This means that activists are not able to construct and impose on their audience whatever reality they can come up with. There are a variety of alternative realities, or frames, that contest or support the claims made by the frame articulators. The final process is the strategic process related to movement framing. Using the word strategic framing entails that there is a deliberate process,

oriented by some sort of goal, that suggests that frames are developed and deployed to serve a purpose for a party in the interaction (Benford & Snow, 2000). This is what is called "frame alignment processes" in Snow et al (1986). These processes are divided into four distinct strategies: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Snow et.al, 1986). The underlying assumption is that these alignment processes are necessary ingredients for mobilization to happen (Snow et.al., 1986). Their purposes and uses will be described in the following segments.

Frame bridging is the linking of two ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem. What this means is that the SMO links its frames with already existing frames that are formed in public opinion preference clusters (Snow et al, 1986). These clusters of opinion are shared beliefs or values for example, that are not yet mobilized, or they lack an organizational base to mobilize from. Thus, by linking the frames of the SMO with these "untapped opinion clusters" there is a chance to mobilize the actors within this cluster. An example of this could be how a politician running in an election mobilizes his or her potential voters through linking their frames with the frames of the public.

Frame amplification entails the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that carries a particular issue, problem, or event. Because the meaning of events and their connection to one's life situation if often clouded by indifference, deception or fabrication by others, and by ambiguity and uncertainty (Goffman, 1974 (in Snow et al, 1986)) support and mobilization is often dependent on the SMO's ability to clarify and invigorate a particular frame (Snow et al, 1986). A framing attempt's ability to resonate with its audience is contingent upon to which extent the frame taps into existing cultural values, beliefs, narratives, folk wisdom and so on (Benford & Snow, 2000). Therefore, the amplification of

the “correct” values for example, is critical for the frame to resonate. Gender roles can be used to explain how frame amplification happens. Especially when a gender behaves in a way that is perceived as uncommon, or provocative in the context the behavior takes place. A boy wearing a skirt may hear the message: “you can’t wear a skirt, because skirts are feminine” from others. This suggests that there are common held beliefs that there is a certain way a boy should dress in the culture the boy exists in, and that these beliefs are amplified to the boy when he endeavors outside the limits of behavior appropriate for boys.

Frame extension is a situation in which an SMO finds that to enlarge its pool of supporters, it may have to extend the boundaries of its original framework. What this means is that the SMO has to encompass interests or points of view that are subsidiary to its main objectives, but of considerable importance to its potential supporters (Snow et al, 1986). An example could be how companies are increasingly “marketing” their CSR initiatives. These sustainability and environmentally friendly frames are subsidiary to the company’s main objective, which is to sustain a healthy balance sheet and generate a return on investment for their shareholders.

Frame transformation refers to changing old understandings and meanings and/or generating new ones. Goffman (1974 in Snow et al, 1986), refers to this as “keying” which entails the redefinition of activities, events, and biographies that are already meaningful within some primary framework. Frame transformation happens when these activities, events, and biographies are interpreted in a different framework (Snow et al, 1986). In this scenario these events are then “seen as something else” by its participants. Religious “epiphanies” have been used as examples for how frame transformation happens (Snow et al, 1986). When people see the world in “new light” their world-view changes, because the frames they use to perceive is transformed.

Contextual constraints and facilitators for framing attempts

The frames people use to make sense of their reality are not static. They are always being negotiated, reproduced, contested, transformed and/or replaced during the course of social movement activity (Benford & Snow, 2000). Thus, framing is a dynamic process that does not occur in a structural or cultural vacuum. Framing processes are influenced by a number of components of the socio-cultural context in which they are rooted (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Although there are seemingly an endless amount of factors that affect framing processes, the literature points to three particularly important ones (Benford & Snow, 2000): Political opportunity structure which deals with how framings change when politics change; Targeted audiences, where it is pointed out that the target of a message can influence the form and content of the message; and Cultural opportunities and constraints which is related to the concept of narrative Fidelity and "cultural resonances" that we briefly mentioned earlier.

Framing cannot be adequately understood if it isolated from the broader, enveloping contexts in which the framing process take place. Decisions, discussions, and action are all processes that take place in a given context – they are embedded in a broader set of beliefs, values, ideologies, myths, and narratives, termed "cultural materials" (Snow, 2004). In addition, there are actors within these contexts, with their own and collective interests (Snow, 2004). To understand this dynamic, we now turn to the concepts of "field frames" and actors within these fields as per the thoughts of Neil Fligstein.

The concepts of fields and "social skill"

The term "field frames" (Fligstein, 2001), can be explained as temporary agreements that form the basis of new practices, organizational forms, and market categories (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). They are also discussed as "discursive fields" (Steinberg, 1999 in Snow, 2004): where they are articulated as "the broader enveloping context in which those

(movement) processes are embedded". Discursive fields are then the broader context in which discourse takes place, and seems to fit with Fligstein's concept of fields. Fligstein (2001) treats fields as situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-á-vis one another. These situations of interaction can in some cases lead to a field frame, or parts of a field frame becoming institutionalized - i.e. where the interaction produces stable rules that in turn decide the behavior of actors within the field (Fligstein, 2001). Thus, fields can evolve from a discussion around a subject that concerns the actors within the field, to an institutional set of guides or rules that govern behavior when the discussion settles, and the field becomes institutionalized (Fligstein 2001; Cornelissen & Werner, 2014).

Fields do not exist alone; rather we are surrounded by a multitude of fields. According to Fligstein & McAdam (2011) they can be likened to a Russian doll: open up a field, and it contains a number of other fields. This metaphor also suggests that fields have hierarchies: the biggest doll represents the strongest, or most institutionalized parts of a field. Think of a university class, for example. One of the "lowest" forms of fields is the mentioned school class with their elected president. The field of this particular school class is surrounded by the fields of the different classes that exist in the school. They may be similar within their own faculty, but may vary significantly if we take the case of a theoretical physics class versus a business class. Together, all these faculties are governed by some form of school board, which is again ruled by a state school board. All these levels represent fields that the actors operate in. In a stable situation, identities are established, power is distributed, rules are laid, and behavior is guided. Sometimes, though, fields change. A change in one field creates a ripple effect throughout the other fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). Sometimes, this ripple effect may be strong enough to disrupt other, adjacent fields. This is a process that happens through frame contests (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014), where actors within the field start to

question and challenge the situation they find themselves in (Fligstein, 2001). These contests can end up in what is referred to as field crises by Fligstein (2001) and their consequence is that a field may change, or even disintegrate as interaction heats up, and new order and meaning contests arise.

Fligstein & McAdam (2011) argues that fields can be named as "Strategic Action Fields (SAF)", and that these are the fundamental units of collective action in society. They define SAF's as: "A strategic action field is a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules." (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011)

They call it strategic, because the field is open for actors (collective, or individual depending on the field's size) to influence through what they term "social skill" (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011; Fligstein, 1997, 2001). The actor that possesses this skill becomes especially relevant in times of field crisis because of their ability to mobilize support from other actors in the field, and to utilize the field crisis to get a strategic advantage over other actors involved in the contest.

One very important aspect of social skill is that the actor is not only concerned with what is best for directly him/her, but they are able to " get outside of their own heads" and take the roles of others and work to find a collective definition of interest. This means that skilled social actors are not only self-interested and they don't set their fixed goals. They study their context and use their understanding in particular situations to provide an interpretation of those situations and frame courses of action that appeal to other actors with different interest. This social skill allows the actors to empathetically make sense of the thoughts of others, instead of just trying to force their own perspective to persuade. This

leaves us the question; how can one successfully manage other actors' perception? Fligstein (1997) has collected a number of important tactics that socially skilled actors use:

One of the most common tactics is "Agenda setting". It is the act of convincing the other actors that the terms and agenda of the discussion is their interest. It is easier to control the outcome of the discussion once the terms are fixed.

Socially skilled actors apply "Bricolage", which means that they are prepared to tinker their course of actions according to the given circumstances. They understand the ambiguities in the context and use their flexibility in a sense of taking what the system gives, even if it wasn't part of their original plan.

They also sell or share overriding, dominant values that everyone can accept or values that would benefit the others in some way. It becomes then necessary for social actors to link the broader frames to others' existing conceptions of interest. The broader the shared values are, the more members can they encompass.

The actors with social skill are excellent in "Brokering". They present themselves as neutral and show a mediating role. Besides they actively sell a group identity and make that identity appealing by convincing the "audience" that they are not self-interested and that the audience can personally gain by joining their side.

They operate with a convincing portfolio of ideas, visions, and courses of actions simultaneously, because even a few successful ideas can convince the audience. The audience will not remember the rest of the actions, especially if the skilled actors manage to convince others that their visions can become real.

Socially skilled actors make others believe, they are in control by setting up situations where those can feel in the lead. Isolated groups are easier to convince to join a common case, if they feel that it is was their original idea to start the case.

Social groups with widely different preferences mean major challenges for the skilled social actor; they are obviously harder to convince for collaboration. Creating a common collective interest and identity helps to ease the differences amongst them. Fligstein (1997) suggests starting alliances with the outliers of the social groups, especially those with few other options. Once these isolated actors reach agreement and construct a collective identity they will be able to attract other actors and groups. The socially skilled actor plays the role of a node in the network.

Social skill involves the cognitive ability to read people and environments, framing lines of action and successfully securing cooperation of people in the service of these action frames. It is important that these frames attract varying groups, and offers other actors identities (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). In times of field disturbance socially skilled actors will either defend the status quo if they are members of the incumbent power base of a field (such as the state school board in the example further up), or challenge it if they find themselves in a marginalized position in the field. If a frame contest is started in this university environment, opportunities to challenge the status quo arises in what is termed "political opportunities" (Fligstein, 2001).

To summarize on the subjects of fields and socially skilled actors we can say that we find ourselves living in, being architects of, and being influenced by social orders (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011). We can call these orders strategic action fields in the way that they are up for negotiation, and in times of turmoil, opportunity for a change in them arises. In order for an actor to challenge a field he or she needs a "social skill set" in order to mobilize support for an alternative frame concept within the field. The socially skilled actor frames "stories" that help to gain support from people in their group that appeal to their identity and interests,

while at the same time these stories can be used to frame actions against opponents (Fligstein, 2001).

Key takeaways from framing theory and application to brand management

In this preliminary discussion we wish to relate the material we have just covered to strategic brand management. We go at this with the proposition that strategic branding, like strategic framing rests upon the same mechanisms and it is dependent on the same factors. Thus, we will distill the lessons learned from framing to suit the purpose of this paper: to see if theory on strategic brand management can learn something from framing theory.

Benford and Snow (2000) have pointed out that the possibility of frame resonance rests upon a number of things: contexts that facilitate or constrict framing attempts, issues of credibility and salience, and frame development processes. Frame resonance as we understand means the success of the framing attempt in terms of mobilizing audiences. The framing has reached close correspondence with its audience, prompting them to accept and follow the frame put forward by its claimsmakers. Cornelissen and Werner (2014) has pointed out that research on meso-level framing, herein SMOs are somewhat preoccupied with factors of influence and outcomes of framing attempts. Thus we have turned to Fligstein to understand how frames are developed in fields, and how actors organized within these fields utilize a "social skill" to alter the meaning making of others. Fields then, illustrate how the world "works" in terms of the circulation of meanings between actors, and between fields horizontally and vertically. Theory on Social Movement Organizations suggests important hints about tactics and factors that influence the outcome of framing attempts. So, what does this entail for a brand? In the upcoming section we will discuss some of the assumptions that were inspired by the literature review on frames and framing. We will put up a few "ground

rules" here for how brands exist in fields of frames, and how the meaning of a brand can be influenced.

First and foremost, we assume the brand to be a participant in the field. When people use the brand as a symbolic device for self-expression in the field, the brand holds some form of symbolic value that one actor can use to express his belonging in a given field. In our introduction we pointed out that BMW's are talked about as "directors' cars" in Norwegian and Danish media. Here, the collective frames of the actors in the fields, or "field frame" is thought to accept this particular car as a symbolic device that people use to show that they are successful in this realm. This particular brand might not hold the same value in another field though, as the frameworks judging its symbolic value are different in other fields. According to framing theory this happens through processes of discourse and contest. The brand can be assumed to hold this position in relation to competing brands. Somehow this brand has managed to get into a position where consumers embrace its symbolic properties and use it as part of their own self-expression. The usage, or consumption of the brand is part of the discursive element of how this particular brand has achieved its position. Also part of the discursive element is how the brand is put into the field by the organization behind the brand. The organization is part of the discourse in how the brand is communicated through advertisements, for example. The key for the brand manager is to put the brand into the field discourse, but how can he or she do this?

In our review of the literature on SMOs it became clear that the success of framing attempts rests upon factors of credibility and salience. In terms of credibility, the key to a framing attempt's probability of resonance rests upon the credibility of the frame claimsmaker, the consistency between the framing and the organization's actions, and the

empirical credibility of the frame put forward. It becomes clear that in order for the actor who attempts to frame something, he or she needs the credibility to do so.

The credibility of the frame claimsmakers is important, because we tend to listen to people or organizations we find trustworthy and knowledgeable. If Lada suddenly were to frame themselves as director's car along the lines of what BMW and Mercedes does, we can assume we would have a hard time taking them seriously. Lada has not "earned the right" of claiming themselves as such yet. There are however a number of ways they could do this. In SMO literature it is suggested that this aspect of credibility can be alleviated with associating the SMO with authoritative figures on the issue raised. Respected doctors could be a way for an SMO to gain credibility if they raise issues rooted in medicine and health concerns. From a strategic brand management perspective, the use of endorsers is popular to increase the credibility of the brand. Brands can use spokespersons or celebrities as sources of increased credibility (Keller, 2013).

Consistency between actions and frames refers to how the SMOs' frames and actions are consistent. It is important that the organization "talks the talk, AND walks the walk". Anyone can say anything, but going through with it takes more. If there is a fit between the talk and the actions, credibility is assumed to increase. In branding terms, an example could be how organizations and brands are increasingly becoming aware of, acknowledging, and initiating actions related to their social responsibility. In today's world, this is what is known as Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives where sustainability, labor rights, and business practices are becoming increasingly important. Consumers have become more aware of, and put more emphasis on what the company behind the brand is doing in these matters, and are not afraid to call out companies when there is a discrepancy between what is said in fancy CSR reports, and what is done out in the real world.

Empirical credibility of the frame refers to whether the claims put forward are empirically verifiable. Does the frame fit with real-world events? Would the "occupy Wall Street" movement garner mobilization if there were no financial crisis? From a brand perspective, this becomes less easy to relate, as brands can put forward a number of "realities". What we can learn from this though, is the notion that the realities the brand puts forward need to fit with the realities it is being deployed in. - it has to be believable.

In terms of salience, the SMO literature breaks also this down into three dimensions: centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity. The umbrella "salience" here refers to how the framing can be made prominent, as its aim is to mobilize followers, and cancel out counter-framings.

Centrality refers to how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas associated with the movement frames are to its target audience. It is assumed that the values associated with SMOs should correspond and be aligned with those of its constituents (Snow & Benford, 1988). For example, a peace movement is likely to promote values such as sanctity of human life, peaceful coexistence, and preservation of species (Snow & Benford, 1988). These are values most people could identify with, but the relative salience of these values when compared to other values in the larger belief system determines their "importance", and thereby their ability to inspire mobilization. Snow & Benford (1988) assumes the existence of a "belief/value hierarchy", where some values are more likely to correspond with potential constituents than others. The notion of brand values is prevalent in branding literature (Hatch & Schultz, 2008; Keller, 2013; Kapferer, 2008). It is noted that the brand's values are part of what differentiates it from other brands, but the treatment of "brand values" are different. Hatch & Schultz (2008) argue that the values of a "corporate brand" stems from the organization's inner culture. Somehow, it is thought that the values a brand communicate

stems from the corporate culture it was "born in" (Hatch & Schultz, 2008). Hatch & Schultz also make a point of aligning these values with those of the external stakeholders of the company in their VCI framework – which corresponds to a degree with how research on SMOs has uncovered that the values of the organization and its audience should be aligned. (Snow & Benford, 1988)

In terms experiential commensurability it is assumed that the closer the framing corresponds with the everyday lives of its target audience, the greater the chance for the frame to resonate. The framing is supposed to ease troublesome situations or events for its audience (Snow & Benford, 1988). The framing should alleviate ambiguity about what is going on, and provide clarity in what actions to take. Therefore, we assume that the brand can play the same role: The brand must be framed along the lived, everyday experiences of its consumers, provide clarity where there is ambiguity, and provide solutions to troublesome situations or events. We assume that a brand can do this by marketing the functional benefits of the product. A computer is designed to ease the everyday struggles of a student for example. Projects and papers are incredibly easier to do now than they were in times without laptops to help out. But as it is known, the brand is so much more than this. As stated in the introduction to this paper, the brand works as a vessel of self-expression as well (Levy, 1959). Therefore, the troublesome situations, events, or ambiguity of consumers can be likened to how consumers are assumed to crave symbols of self-expression to show belonging to, or distance themselves from certain groups. The brand must be framed to remedy this as well as the functional properties of the product. The way this is done is through what is termed narrative fidelity in the SMO literature.

Narrative fidelity is the extent to which the story or theme of the frame fits the audience's existing cultural narrations in terms of symbolism, myth, ideology and so on. It is

assumed that a framing attempt is more likely to achieve a desired outcome if it is accompanied with familiar cultural themes. In other words, the framing attempt is presented as a story that fits with overarching myths, symbols, and themes already existing in the context it is told in. Snow & Benford (1988) lists examples of how Reagan portrayed Russia in his campaigns as the "bear in the woods", playing on already familiar symbols to underline how Russia was an unpredictable aggressor. Similarly, we see often that pro-American messages utilize the bald eagle, as it has become a symbol of USA and patriotism. This use of familiar symbols and stories is thought to enhance the framing's chance of resonance, and we assume that the same is true in brand management. To resolve issues of salience, we assume the brand needs to present itself with values and ideas that are central to its audience, place itself as a solution to the lived, everyday concerns and ambiguities of its consumers, and tie all this together with a story that incorporates familiar cultural symbolism. What we still miss though is how do we know which values to promote? How do we reduce ambiguity and frame along the everyday, lived experiences of our consumers? And how do we know which symbols to front, and which myths or stories to tell?

It becomes clear that the frames put forward need to be aligned with those of the audiences as well (Snow et.al., 1986; Benford & Snow, 2000). Frame bridging, extension, amplification, and transformation are examples we listed as "strategic alignment processes" of framing efforts done by SMOs. We can hypothesize that these are also relevant for branding, as the frame used to "sell" the brand can be bridged with the frames of the consumers. In addition frame amplification can entail the clarification, invigoration, and embellishment of beliefs and values. Thus, a brand intended for a certain market segment can amplify the beliefs of what it means to be a man, for example.

According to Fligstein the framers need a particular skill set to succeed, and he calls it "social skill". The socially skilled actor is able to read contexts and people and utilize field disturbances and people's desires to mobilize support. As we mentioned in the literature review the socially skilled actor does not only act in his own interests, but is able to put him- or herself in others' situations and thereby figure out how to frame issues within the field to garner support. A series of tactics we have covered earlier can be employed by the socially skilled actor to frame causes of action to either protect the status quo, or challenge it. These tactics include agenda setting, bricolage, value share, brokering, convincing portfolio, and image of control.

It is our proposition that this is a vital skill for a brand manager as well. Being able to tap into people's concerns and desires and alleviate these with symbolic meaning is crucial with regards to the brand's role as a vessel of self-expression. It is assumed that the socially skilled actor is aware of these desires and which symbols or myths his or her potential constituents need in the field that they exist in. But not only on an actor-to-actor basis; the socially skilled actor is also able to read the context he or she, along with other actors exist in. As we previously covered in the literature review, fields are not always stable, and suddenly they can change in what is termed "field crises" where reframings occur, and thus the potential significance of new symbols, myths arise. This is a situation where the socially skilled actor is able to read and interpret the disturbance, and take charge in the reframings to alter the outcome and perhaps the emergence of a new field. If – as Fligstein proposes - the socially skilled actor is able to identify disturbances in fields, where new meanings arise, the interpretation of symbols, myths, stories, and we assume also brands change, then it is our impression that the skill set of the socially skilled actor is of utmost importance in brand management.

What strategic framing is, and how it is related to brand management

After having discussed and related the framing theory to strategic brand management we feel necessary to give answer to our first guiding question:

What is strategic framing and how is it related to strategic brand management?

At the outset of this thesis we proposed that strategic framing had commonalities with strategic branding in terms of what is assumed to be the objective of these strategic activities. In framing terms, we have covered how Social Movement Organizations are able to rally support for their causes. Research on SMOs has uncovered what kind of tactics they use, what criteria affect the outcome of framing attempts, and what the role of context is. It is our argument that even though brand management may not be primarily occupied with rallying audiences to follow specific causes, the success of a strategic branding effort may very well rest upon the same factors that framing attempts do. Seeing as we use our frames to "judge" if brands are relevant for us, just like our frames help us give answers to everything that goes around us, the concept of framing is relatable to strategic brand management. With these assumptions from framing theory we can propose that a brand will make sense to us if it comes as a "frame package" that fits with our personal frames, and the context that it is being framed in. The brand must be credible to us, it must heighten its salience through communicating its values, it must be designed to resolve our ambiguities and everyday issues or problems, and it should make use of relevant cultural symbolism such as symbols, myths stories and so on. It is also recognized that a brand's meaning may change as context changes. Therefore, the criteria of credibility and salience, the "stability" (or "instability") of fields, and the skill set to interpret context and people are concepts we deem important to branding as well.

Now that we have these criteria and assumptions in place, we turn our attention to two approaches to strategic brand management. The first is a representative for what Allen et.al., (2006) call the received paradigm; Kevin Lane Keller and his concept of "customer based brand equity". Thereafter, we move on to the "emergent paradigm (Allen et.al., 2006), and present Douglas Holt's philosophy on Cultural Branding. We will present these two distinct perspectives to strategic brand management with the aim to see how they fit with the assumptions that our review of framing literature has inspired.

Strategic branding in the received paradigm

Earlier we mentioned how the literature in this paradigm places the brand in the mind of the consumer, and that it was grounded in information economics and consumer psychology. Within these thoughts it is assumed that managers have control over the brand image creation to such an extent that they are able to make sure that the knowledge of the brand that resides in consumers' mind is the intended meaning for the brand (Allen et.al., 2006). Brand positioning theory allows the manager to select specific associations to emphasize in this knowledge web. The brand's associative web is assumed be decompositional so that individual brand associations can be highlighted. The brand manager's ability to position the brand in a competitive context of products and to give the brand uniqueness based on the associations is imperative over everything else. Simplicity, congruity, coherence, and consistency are encouraged when developing the selling proposition (Allen et.al., 2006).

Brand Strategy as conceptualized by Kevin Lane Keller

One of the major scholars within cognitive-psychological branding is Kevin Lane Keller (Allen et.al., 2006) Keller is E.B. Osborn Professor of Marketing at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College. He is one of the most influential and widely cited scholars of

marketing and branding[14], and his approach to branding is known as "customer based brand equity" which he builds with "the brand pyramid", which we will explore over the next pages.

How the brand works, according to Keller

Keller conceptualizes the brand as residing in the minds of consumers as knowledge structures (Keller, 1993; 2013). Inspired by a psychological concept called the "associative network memory model", in which memory is seen as a network of nodes and connecting links where nodes represent stored information or concepts (Keller, 2013). The links in this concept represent the strength of the associations between the nodes. Any type of information the consumer is exposed to - whether it is verbal, abstract or contextual can be stored in the memory network.

Keller argues that brand knowledge works as a node in this memory network to which a variety of associations are linked (Keller 1993; 2013). The aim for Keller then is to firmly establish the brand knowledge node in the mind of the consumer to create awareness, and link it with other nodes in the memory to associate the brand with attributes and benefits to create a brand image (Keller, 1993). Taken together, the two concepts of awareness and brand image result in brand attitudes - the overall evaluations of the brand (Keller, 1993).

Brand knowledge is thought to be composed of the two elements of brand awareness and brand image (Keller, 2013). Here, brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node, or memory trace, and it is reflected by the extent to which the consumer is able to identify the brand under different conditions. Keller (1993) splits awareness into two subcategories, which he calls "brand recognition", and "brand recall". Brand recognition

[14] http://faculty.tuck.dartmouth.edu/kevin-lane-keller/about-kevin-lane-keller

relates to the consumer's ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. Brand recall relates to consumer's ability to retrieve the brand from memory when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of non brand-specific cue. Brand recall requires that the consumer successfully remembers and is able to retrieve the brand from memory (Keller, 1993).

The other component of brand knowledge is brand image. A necessary condition for the creation of brand image is that a brand node has been established in memory through raising awareness (Keller, 1993). The nature, or prominence of that node we assume, should affect how easily other kinds of information can become attached to the brand in memory. Keller defines brand image as "*consumer's perception about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory (Keller, 2013 p. 72)".* Brand associations are the other informational nodes that become connected to the brand node in memory, and these contain the meaning of the brand (Keller, 1993). There are different types of associations, and Keller (1993) focuses around three types distinguished by their level of abstraction; attributes, benefits, and attitudes.

Attributes are here thought of as both product-related, and non-product related. The product related attributes relates to the physical aspects of a product, whereas the non-product attributes are defined as external aspects of the product. These include price information, packaging and product appearance, user imagery, and usage imagery (Keller, 1993).

Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes. Keller splits benefits into functional, experiential, and symbolic categories. The functional benefits are the innate advantages a product gives the consumer and usually correspond with the product related attributes. These benefits are commonly linked to fairly basic motivations such as physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1970 in Keller, 1993). Experiential benefits

revolve around how it feels to use the product and also usually correspond to the product related attributes. These benefits are meant to satisfy experiential needs such as sensory pleasure and cognitive stimulation (Keller, 1993). Symbolic benefits are the more extrinsic advantages related to product consumption. These benefits are thought to remedy needs for social approval or personal expression and the consumer's self-esteem (Keller, 1993).

Brand attitudes are defined as the overall attitudes consumers' have toward the brand. The attitudes are important, as they are believed to form the basis of consumer behavior. Keller (1993) treats brand attitudes as a function of the attributes and benefits that are salient for the brand, and we assume that by this he means attitudes are the sum of the perceived attributes and benefits for the consumer.

It is not enough to build any associations for the brand. In Keller's (1993) terms, the associations need to be favorable, strong, and unique. In Keller's (2001) terms, the order of the association-features is changed to strong, favorable, and unique, and Keller makes a point of this re-ordering: it does not matter how unique a brand association is if it is not favorable, and it does not matter how favorable an association is if it is not strong (Keller, 2001). Strength here refers to how strongly the brand is identified with the associations. Favorability deals with how important the brand associations are for the customers, and the uniqueness dimension reveals how these associations are unique for the brand (Keller, 2001).

Keller treats brands with the assumptions that they exist as nodes in memory with which other nodes can be attached. Thus, the focus of Keller in building brands start with building knowledge structures in the minds of consumers so that they react favorably to marketing activity for the brand (Keller, 1993). Keller (1993; 2013) calls this building "consumer based brand equity (CBBE)". Keller devised a definition of CBBE as a response to the many different conceptualizations and definitions that have been used to describe "brand

equity" in academia and practice (Keller, 1993). He defines CBBE *as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand (Keller, 2013).* Because of the somewhat complex nature of the definition, Keller sees the need to break it down into three key ingredients. The first is "*differential effects"*, which means that brand equity arises from differences in consumer response - the premise of this is that consumers react differently to the marketing of a brand when compared with the response to the same marketing of a fictitious or unnamed version of the product (Keller, 1993). Consumers may be willing to pay more (differential effect) for product if the right brand name is on it (Keller, 2013). The second is "*brand knowledge"*, which means that the differences in the first step are a result of consumers' knowledge of the brand. Brand knowledge here is the same as described earlier: awareness and image, and the differential effect is thought to be a result of brand knowledge. The third is *"consumer response to marketing"*, which make up brand equity are reflected in how consumers react to brand marketing in the form of perceptions, tastes and behavior (Keller, 2013).

Branding for Keller is about creating differences (Keller, 2013). He argues that fundamentally, branding is all about endowing products and services with the "*power of brand equity"*[15]. The sources of this equity are the concepts of "brand awareness" and "brand image", which as described above make up "brand knowledge". To do this, he has manufactured three interconnected models that he calls *"the brand positioning model"* which describes how to establish competitive advantages in the minds of consumers in the market;

[15] Keller (2013) uses the terms "brand equity" and "customer based brand equity" interchangeably. We assume though, that he refers to his concept of "customer based brand equity" throughout his text due to his efforts in defining it and conceptualizing it. For the sake of clarity, we will refer to it as CBBE.

"the brand resonance model", which tells how to use the competitive advantages to create intense, active loyalty relationships with consumers; and *"the brand value chain model"*, which aims to provide a means to track the performance of the brand (Keller, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, we will focus our attention to the first two, as the tracking and measuring of brand performance lies outside the scope of this project.

Brand positioning

Brand positioning requires the task of defining the desired or ideal brand knowledge structures and establishing what is called points of parity, and points of difference to establish brand identity and brand image (Keller, 2013). According to Keller (2013), positioning is at one of the most important parts of marketing strategy as it is the groundwork of what makes the brand different and desirable to consumers by occupying a unique and valued place in their minds.

The process of positioning the brand starts with establishing a "frame of reference" with the thought that this frame will signal to the consumers the goal they can expect to achieve by using the brand (Keller, 2002). Choosing this frame is important, as it dictates what associations will work as points of parity, and what points of difference for the brand (Keller, 2002). The main objective in establishing frame of reference is to put the brand into a category where other brands may or may not be (Keller, 2013). For example, Coca Cola's frame of reference could be "thirst quenching product", "soft drink", "carbonated soft drink", or simply "beverage", and so on. This example also shows that brands can have multiple frames of reference, as pointed out by Keller (2013). Finding the right one is key because it will tell the consumers what the brand is supposed to do for them (Keller, 2002; 2013).

Points of difference (POD) are defined as attributes or benefits that consumers strongly associate with the brand, that they deem favorable, and that they think they will not

find in another brand (Keller, 2013). These points are classified as either performance related or imagery related (Keller, 2013). The performance related POD's are pretty self-explanatory: they revolve around the actual product and its performance in terms of reliability, durability, functionality and so forth (Keller, 2002). Brand Imagery is typically established by depicting who uses the brand, and in what circumstances (Keller, 2002). To function as a POD, consumers will have to believe that the attribute or benefit is important, that the company is able to deliver it, and convinced that no other company can offer it to the same extent.

Points of parity (POP) are associations not necessarily unique to the brand and might even be shared with other brands in the marketplace (Keller, 2013). There are three categories of POP's: *"Category POP's"*, which are those conditions the brand must have to be perceived as a member of a given category; *"Competitive POP's"*, are the associations designed to negate the competition's POD's; and *"Correlational POP's"*, which state that a brand's POP's and POD's should be correlated and not "self-contradicting": Keller (2013), states that it is hard for a brand to be perceived as good at one thing while at the same time be seen as good at something else. For example, consumers may find it hard to believe that a brand can be "inexpensive", and at the same time "of the highest quality" (Keller, 2013).

The final position task is the articulation of a "brand mantra" (Keller, 2013). This is regarded as the "heart and soul" of the brand and is ideally a three to five word phrase that should communicate the indisputable essence or spirit of the brand positioning and the brand values (Keller, 2013). These mantras communicate what the brand is, and what it is not through three modifiers: brand functions; descriptive modifier; and emotional modifier (Keller, 2013). Keller uses Nike's brand mantra "authentic athletic performance" where authentic is the emotional modifier, athletic is the descriptive, and performance is the brand

function. Therefore, the brand mantra signifies what the brand is supposed to represent (Keller, 2013).

The Brand Resonance Model

The "brand resonance model is a framework that can be used as a guide to create intense, active loyalty relationships with customers. According to the model, brand building contains four steps: (1) establishing brand identity, thus establishing deep and broad brand awareness. (2) Creating the appropriate brand meaning through brand associations. (3) Prompting positive brand responses, and (4) building brand relationships with customers that are characterized by strong and active brand loyalty (Keller, 2013).

The most valuable building block, "Consumer Brand Resonance" only occurs if the other brand building blocks of the pyramid are established. Thus, brand building is viewed as a ladder where each step of the ladder is dependent upon the successful completion of a previous step (Keller, 2001). First, identity is established to ensure that customers associate and identify the brand within a product class or customer need. Second, linking the brand to a number of tangible and intangible associations creates meaning for it among its customers. The third step is to stimulate the proper responses to this brand identity and meaning, and the fourth and final step is to convert responses from the third step to create active and intense loyalty between brand and customer (Keller, 2013). These four steps can be achieved through the six building blocks of the brand pyramid. This pyramid is also sequential, meaning that we start at the bottom and work our way up to a "strong brand" (Keller, 2001). This process starts with "Brand Salience"

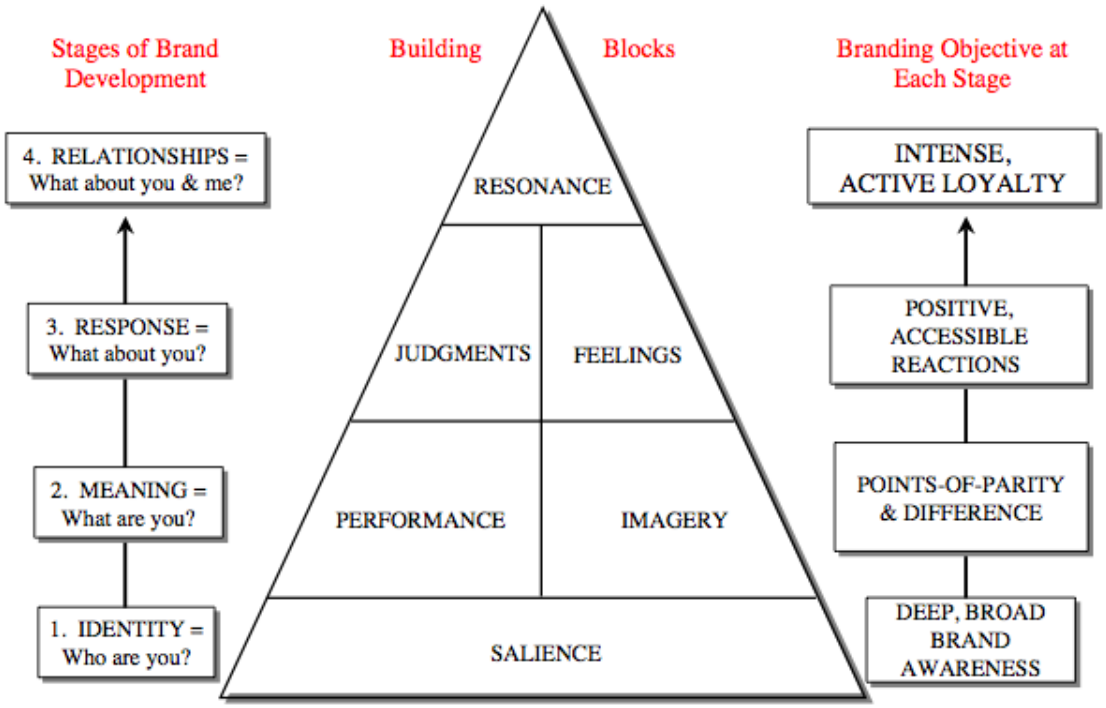

Figure 1 CBBE Pyramid (Keller, 2009)

Brand Salience

Brand salience refers to aspects of customer awareness of the brand. How often will a customer attribute the brand to a specific category? To what extent is the brand recalled and recognized? What types of cues and reminders are necessary for this to happen? Brand awareness can be distinguished along two dimensions – depth and breadth (Keller, 2001). Depth of brand awareness refers to how easily a customer can recall or recognize the brand. Breadth of brand awareness refers to whether the brand comes to mind in a range of purchase situations for the consumer. A brand that achieves high salience scores high on both these dimensions, which mean consumers think of the brand in a variety of settings (breadth) and that it receives serious consideration for purchase. Thus brand salience is important to make customers aware that the brand is "out there" for them to purchase. In some instances brand salience alone is enough for certain "low-involvement" products where customers either do

not care about the product, or when customers don't know or lack expertise about the other brands in the category (Keller, 2001). To build a stronger brand (a brand with high CBBE), though, the brand manager will have to incorporate meaning into the brand, so this is the next step of the brand-building ladder.

Brand Meaning

Brand meaning involves establishing a brand image, meaning what the brand is characterized by and should stand for in the minds of its customers (Keller, 2001). Brand meaning can be broadly evoked through both functional and performance related aspects and abstract imagery associations. The product itself is at the heart of brand equity as the main experience the customer has with the brand is through interacting with it. The product's ability to perform to expectation is crucial for it to be successful. The other source of meaning for the brand revolves around brand imagery; how the brand seeks to meet customers' psychological and/or social needs. Imagery refers to the abstract associations of the brand, rather than what the customer think the brand functionally does. Keller (2001) lists four categories of intangibles that can be linked to a brand:

User profiles – which refers to who uses the brands, and results in a profile of the customers that actually use it, for example a brand is deemed popular because many people use it, or the brand is popular within a distinct user group such as celebrities, enticing "regular" people to use the same brand.

Purchase and usage situation – where and how the brand is bought and consumed creates associations with the brand.

Personality and values – brands may take on personality traits and values similar to what people have. It can often be related to usage imagery, but tends to convey much richer

and contextual information. Keller lists five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness.

History, heritage, and experiences – brands can take on associations with their past endeavors if such events exist in the brand history. If the brand refers to its historical accomplishments, these previous feats may sometimes share similarities with those of their customers.

The key criteria for brand meaning revolve around three dimensions: strength, favorability, and uniqueness. Strength refers to how strongly the brand is identified with the associations. Favorability deals with how important the brand associations are for the customers, and the uniqueness dimension reveals how these associations are unique for the brand. Keller argues that to create brand equity, the associations of the brand must be strong, favorable, and unique and it has to be in that order as well. *"It does not matter how unique a brand association is unless the customers evaluate these associations favorably, and it does not matter how desirable a brand association is unless it is sufficiently strong so that customers actually recall it and link it to the brand"* (Keller, 2001 p12).

Brand Responses

Brand responses stand for how customers respond to the marketing activities, and the brand itself. What customers think and feel about the brand is central here, and this can be exemplified through brand judgments, and brand feelings.

Brand judgments focus on customers' personal opinions and evaluations regarding the brand. It involves how customers add up all the different imagery and performance related associations for the brand to come up with a judgment of it. Four types of judgments are particularly important, and in the following order (from most to least important): Brand quality, Brand credibility, Brand Consideration, and Brand superiority.

Brand feelings relates to the customers' emotional responses to the brand. These feelings can either be positive or negative, and there are six important types of brand-building feelings: Warmth, Fun, Excitement, Social Approval, and Self Respect. Needless to say, positive feelings toward a brand is what a brand manager should aim for (Keller, 2001)

Brand Resonance

Brand resonance, which is the top of the pyramid, is the ultimate customer-brand relationship level. It refers a type of relationship where customers are "in synch" with the brand, meaning that there is a deep psychological bond between brand and customer that makes customers loyal and active participants in the relationship. Brands that successfully reach this point can count on their customers to repeatedly buy their products, seek out brand information and attend events. Brand resonance can be broken down in four categories (Keller, 2001)

The first is Behavioral loyalty, which relates to the amount of repeat purchases, and/or how much customers purchase from the brand.

The next category is Attitudinal attachment, in which customers buy a brand not only because they have a positive attitude toward it, but also because the brand means something special to them in a broader context. A personal attachment can make the customer refer to the branded product as their favorite possession, and they may state that they love the brand.

Sense of community – loyal users of the brand may form communities to create a sense of affiliation with a social group consisting of users of the brand (Keller, 2001). These communities can function as forums where they form a shared consciousness, rituals, and tradition, and discuss the brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Active engagement, which is perhaps the strongest indicator of brand resonance, is when customers invest time and money into the brand beyond what they did when they first purchased the brand. Related to the previous point, customers become representatives or

ambassadors of the brand, actively take part in the brand building and brand community (Keller, 2001). A modern example of this is the term “fanboy” which people use to describe ambassadors of brands in the media today. “Fanboys” or “fangirls” actively participate in online debates arguing for their brand versus “fanboys” that are on the opposite side. Recent (and probably still ongoing) examples of this debate are Apple versus PC, or iPhone versus Android, and Xbox versus PlayStation.

Brand resonance can be characterized along dimensions of intensity and activity. Intensity relates to the strength of the attitudinal attachment and sense of community. Activity refers to how frequently the user buys the brand, and actively engages with it separate from a purchase situation (Keller, 2001)

The basic premise for the CBBE model is that the true measure of the strength of the brand is dependent upon how customers, think, feel and act with respect to the brand. Achieving the highest point of brand strength, brand resonance, requires triggering proper cognitive evaluations and emotional reactions to the brand from the customers. These evaluations and emotional reactions, in turn, require an established brand identity and the creation of the right meanings for the brand. The key point in the CBBE model is that the power of the brand resides in the minds of consumers (Keller, 2001). It is through their learning and experiences with a brand that they can end up thinking and acting in such a way that the firm can capitalize on its brand equity (Keller, 2001).

"Emergent Branding Approaches"

The main underlying assumptions of the emergent paradigm

Before we elaborate on our second selected brand management theory: Cultural Strategy, we wish to explain the underlying assumptions of the paradigm that it belongs to. It significantly differs from Kevin Lane Keller's traditional or received brand management view.

Consumer psychologists like Kevin Lane Keller made important contributions to brand management research in shaping the consumers' interpretation of brands (Allen et al., 2006). The following branding approaches named emergent by Allen et al. (2006) focus more on the meaning making process of consumers, and the brands' role in this meaning making. These theories try to explain the way consumers interpret the brand and use the brand meaning in their everyday lives. The theorists also aim to carry the learnt lessons over to the practice of strategic brand management and thereby support brand building with their explanation and guidance.

This part of the thesis is organized as follows. First we will shortly introduce the most relevant emergent branding research on how consumers interpret brands and how the changing consumer behavior affected this interpretation. After that we guide our focus on the second selected brand management theory that aims for understanding and strategically influencing the consumers' perception of brands.

As opposed to the received theories the emergent paradigm focuses not on the management of brand information and knowledge but on the control over the processes of brand meaning making. According to this alternative view brand meaning is not drawn from the product itself and doesn't reside constantly across individuals' mindsets, but it is rather dynamic and it is derived from its context (Allen et al., 2006).

The idea that brands carry symbolic meaning besides their actual functionality is not new. Sidney Levy emphasized the importance of this characteristic of brands already in 1959. The article 'Symbols for Sale' - although more than 50 years old - is an excellent departure point for a better understanding of the symbolic aspects of branding (Levy, 1959). According to Levy the growing product diversity have an impact on consumer motivation; consumers buy the things also for what those products mean to them, not just because of their functional benefits. Services and products are also bought partly to mark a particular social position, desired or possessed already by the consumer. Socially defined particular lifestyle or taste can be perceived as a complex system of symbols that signals the (inner) attributes of a person depending on for example the car, book, phone, cloth or liquor one consumes (Levy, 1959).

Levy also highlights the role of the changing context in meaning-making process:

"Every so often there comes along a new symbol, one that makes a leap from the past into the present and that has power because it captures the spirit of the present and makes other on-going symbols old-fashioned.' (Levy, 1959)

In the evolving marketplace consumers have become more and more focused on what brands offer beside their basic utility (Ravasi et al 2008, Garsten, 2004). They interpret brands partly as communication tools; the consumption of different products (for example food, beverages, sport events, consumer electronics and clothing) provides means for expressing personality and creating a social identity (Du Gay 1995; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998; Belk, 1988).

The emergent view in branding literature favors the symbolic aspects of consumption: the meanings that people value in their lives, the creation and the "transfer" of

this meaning, and foremost how strategic brand management benefits from these aspects to answer consumers' needs.

Grant McCracken (1986) examines the mechanism of meaning transfer and created a simple model to describe how brands absorb meaning from their context and then share this meaning with the consumers. According to him, we consume often with the aim of cultivating what is otherwise beyond our grasp. Brands serve as bridges to human desires. For example if a consumer is seeking a particular lifestyle, or just an emotional condition, the possession of particular products will help him/her to reach it, as the meaning of the product is socially constructed and understood as the symbol of a condition or lifestyle (McCracken, 1988, 1990; 2005). Therefore brands can exploit (or satisfy) individuals' moments of irrational, compulsive consumption, caused by the desperate effort to claim certain meanings that represent specific ideology[16] (McCracken, 1988).

Creating meaningful products is not unique for the 21st century. According to Sternberg (1999) what's new is the way the symbolic meaning is linked to the brand. He calls it the "fabulous style of assembling iconicity", because the meaning is linked through narratives or stories. Icons have been produced before but in recent decades they are continuously created, edited, redefined by the media industries and they gain source material from a wide, often global cultural stockpile with stories. This source is to be found in foreign and domestic culture, fictional-, music- and cinematic culture, documentary and cartoon celebrities, bits of science and history, and current events. He uses the term icon in general for all commodities (e.g. objects, experiences, persons) that obtain extra value by a commercial

[16] We use the term "ideology" as set of ideas, goals and expectations proposed by the dominant class of a society to all members of this society.

theme, a modified, added meaning. When the ability to express that theme, that story[17] dominates its value, it becomes an icon (Sternberg, 1999). One of the most important industries creating this "fabulous" core of the economy is the movie industry. It produces numerous realms, which later can be used as reference point for products, thereby making them meaningful for the consumers.

Sternberg (1999) recognized that the challenge of creating meaningful brands is to find the relevant and popular themes. While looking for a spontaneous, authentic and popular theme, or looking for the right fabula in order to stage a buzz, it is easy to miss the "next big hit" or to be late with executing a great idea based on the collected bits of story ideas. Therefore companies rather engage with the production of multiple themes, or they map the cultural world to obtain (or buy) characters, or whole (e.g. historical) stories that are already desired by consumers (McCracken, 2006; Sternberg, 1999).

The above mentioned theorists of an emergent approach encourage researchers to look beyond the study of individual consumption and examine consumer behavior in cultures and social collectives (Allen et al., 2006). They find it crucial to uncover the social processes of "meaning making" that determine how various consumer groups interpret and use different brands.

Our research focus directs us to discover what organizations should do to build or change the consumers' perception of a brand. We chose to discuss the theory that is called Cultural Branding by Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron (2010), because they attempt to create a seemingly simple and clear strategy to make brands appealing to consumers. The

[17] Sternberg (1999) calls this story a "fabula"

theoretical foundation of the strategy (Holt, 2002b, 2004, 2005) has similar assumptions to that of emergent branding approaches.

Holt (2004) encourages the investigation of symbolic and contextual aspects of consumption. He strives to fill the brands with symbolic meaning that is desired by the consumers. His Cultural Branding theory focuses on the underlying mechanisms of how the consumers make sense of the brand. He is mainly interested in brands whose market value is based on their ability to accommodate a symbolic meaning, because these brands fit the consumers' intention to construct and express their identities more so than other brands (Holt, 2004).

Holt differentiates his model from Keller by stating that Cultural Branding does not persuade consumers to purchase by creating links between benefits and the products. The brand acts as an author of stories to address contradictions in society. The success of the brand depends on the content of these stories. The right content can make the brand an icon that is a respected symbol of an ideology and/or a movement desired by consumers. (Holt, 2004, 2005)

In the next part of the thesis we present Holt's understanding of icons and the advantage and process of embedding brands in stories.

"Cultural Branding" by Douglas Holt

The principles of Cultural Branding

Icons in Cultural Branding

The main purpose of Cultural Branding is to build iconic brands that function just like cultural icons. Holt describes cultural icons as exemplary symbols; they can be persons, objects, places or anything that can represent important ideas for society. Originally these ideas and

cultural habits were communicated and inherited through rituals (mostly through religious rituals in the pre-modern age). Today the way they are diffused has changed with the spread of new forms of mass communication, but their representative role of icons has remained exactly the same. (Holt, 2004)

Icons already represented ideas in the antiquity and their stories explained cultural and social phenomena and historical events. However, the myths and their respective icons of the modern age are shared through new channels e.g. films, books, magazines, television, journalism and advertising. They stand out from the content that is usually produced through the industries above because icons represent a particular story, an "identity myth" that carries a symbolic value to the society or to a group by addressing the needs, fears and ideas of people. (Holt, 2003b)

"Iconic brands"

Iconic brands work in a similar way than any other icons; like Madonna, James Dean or The Eiffel Tower: they all represent ideas that people wish to identify themselves with (Holt, 2004). These brands have their strength in integrating themselves in culture, and they can perform it better than their competitors. They promote storied products, and therefore when the customers buy and consume the product or service they also embrace the brand and the myth that the brand represents (Holt, 2003b).

The strength of Iconic brands

The brand's health and value is determined by four measures according to Holt's article 'Brands and Branding' (2002b): One could monitor the loyalty behavior of the customers, but that alone is often misleading because the purchasing behavior depends on multiple factors. It is also common to research the attitude towards the brand by different feedback mechanisms, or measure their effect on their consumer relationships. This latter technique is showcased by

Fournier's study: 'Consumers and their Brands' (1998), which applies modified life-history case studies to analyze the purchasing behavior. Holt names the ultimate measure as equity, and explains it as the price at which consumers are indifferent between the brand and its competitors.

In Holt's view the brand is the culture of the product, and its value can contain 4 main components (see figure 2). Even though particular brands are built up of a combination of these, only one or two component is mostly the driver of success (Holt, 2002b):

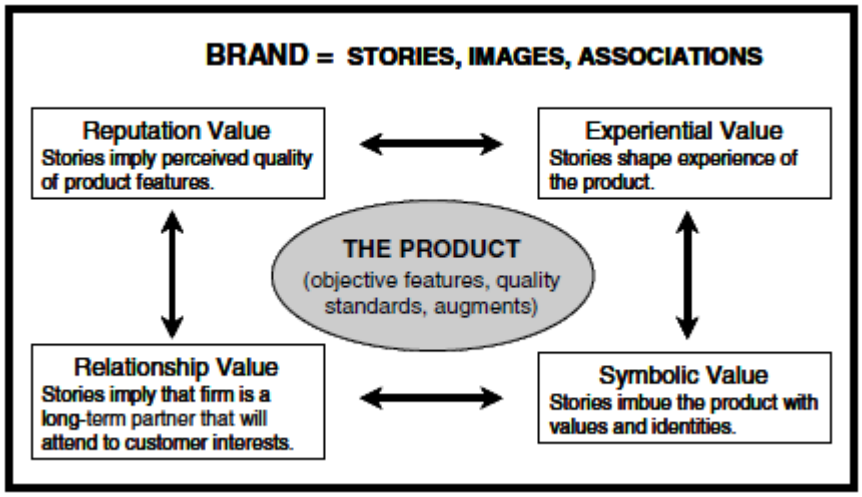

Figure 2: Four Components of Brand Value (Holt, 2002b)

- Reputation value: described as the effect on perceived product quality
- Relationship value: determined by how the brand shapes its customer relationships
- Experiential value: result of the frames that brands put forward to increase the consumer experience
- Symbolic value: the power to express and represent different values and identities

Brands offer three types of symbolic value: Consumers can benefit from a cultural artifact when experiencing its values, themselves; brands can be used as a social status claim; and they contribute to the consumers' identity creation and expression.

Why do iconic brands like Apple or Coca Cola become so powerful according to Cultural Branding? How can they keep their thriving equity for years, and millions of customers who are dedicated to the products and to what the products represent?

The answer according to the cultural approach is to be found in the above-mentioned symbolic value. In the view of this approach the storyteller (the brand) is an "identity brand" and it carries cultural meaning, which is valuable for the society (McCracken, 1986). An identity brand's main value for the customers derives from its identity value, which is the "equity" that reflects the brand's contribution to the self-expression of the consumer. The brand becomes more powerful to attract and mobilize consumers when its meaning fits (resonates) with collective identity projects of a given time (Holt, 2004).

The iconic brands have the strongest equity and stand out amongst other identity brands, because they are the most successful in contributing to consumer identity construction. They are capable of addressing the most important concerns of their time, and they perform it more charismatically than the competitor brands. (Holt 2003a)

Not all the brands are equally "interested" of reaching an iconic status. Holt states (2004) that brands classified into business-to-business, low-involvement, and highly technical categories are amongst the cases where identity value is less important in general. There are exceptions from this view as well and also more and more hybrid strategies. Hybrids combine the focus on excellent product quality reputation with the advantages of having a powerful myth through Cultural Branding. BMW is an example of this strategy, as many other brands in the automobile industry (Holt, 2004).

Cultural Branding fits particularly well with brands selling ego-expressive products in categories like entertainment, clothing, food, beverage, beauty, and home décor. In these cases the competition is fierce and quality, trust, and distinctive special benefits do not mean

the most significant advantage over the other brands (Holt, 2004). If we take the beer industry as an example: obviously beers taste differently and have distinctive types, but they all can't be brewed differently and the number of actual brands outnumbers the quality levels of the brands on the market. The consumer decision is made based on the myth or the story behind the actual bottle of beer (Holt, 2004).

The reason these brands are strong is not just because of the positive perception in the eyes of each individual consumer. What really makes them exceptionally powerful is the collective nature of the perceptions. The myths consist of characters, and plots and our imagination creates a collective understanding from the different perceptions and views through communication and everyday social life. That is how every brand is created, before that it is seen as only empty logos and names (Holt, 2003b). After a myth is created, everyone treats it as a shared truth (Holt, 2004).

In Holt's view the authors of the myth can be classified into 4 types: companies, culture industries, intermediaries (e.g. salesmen and critics) and the customers themselves (forming communities in more and more cases). The stories are co-created by them and often one or two of these authors can have stronger effect on the myth than the rest. (Holt, 2003b)

The key in the value of the brand is the myth after all (Holt, 2004). The power and the communication of the represented ideas matter most, that's what makes them attractive to the customers. We will present below Holt's view on how to choose the ultimate myth to create an iconic brand and how can a particular story be evaluated.

The market of the competing stories is referred to as "the myth market" by Holt (2004), and it has its own unique structure with special players connected to story creation and sharing. Central to the myth market model are the cultural tensions; these anxieties are

what identity-brands and therefore iconic brands seek to resolve. The tensions arise as a result of a contradiction between the citizens' identity and the national ideology (Holt, 2004).

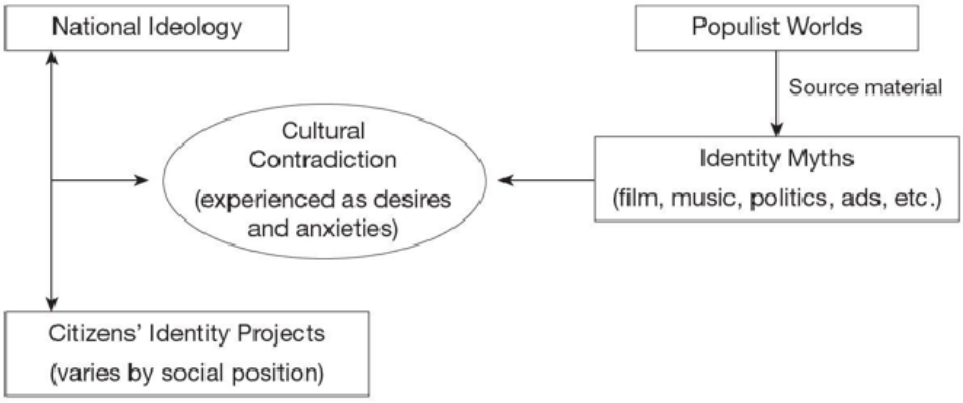

Figure 3: The Structure of Myth Markets (Holt, 2004)

The national ideology is the strongest root of demand for myths. It is a system of ideas that connects everyday lives of the citizens of a nation; their own needs, thoughts and their ideals with those of the nation. It gives guidance how to live life and serves as a role model for what is just and what is right. Nations have their own set of values and their citizens must adjust and identify with these sets of rules and ideas. The citizens must accept and develop them, but good citizenship can't be taught by a textbook, people have to experience and embrace it as a group identity, just like in the case of religion or ethnicity. The description above means that every nation can have its own ideology, but they have some in common as well, usually circling around individual success and manhood (for example an ideology can tell that anyone who trains hard can be a healthy and fit citizen). (Holt, 2004)

The tensions arise when the individual's identity contradicts with the existing national ideology. Simply because one is born in the USA or in Denmark, s/he will not necessarily be able to inhabit the national ideology. The circumstances in life can deprive citizens from reaching the identity that fits the ideology of their context. If these two ideas don't match,

then the individuals create desires to reach the demanded standards. If the anxiety lasts they can turn to a myth that eases the tensions between the contradictions. (Holt, 2003a)

National identity is becoming important in all contexts as the nation and companies are getting more and more interdependent. The myth markets are continuously changing themselves because there are always new contradictions evolving and fading with the new national ideologies (Holt, 2004).

Creating the myth

Consumers look for new values that can be integrated in their lives as discussed above because they wish to make sense of the cultural context that they live in. An opportunity for this is provided by brands that are capable of representing these desired values. The brands need the appropriate material to create their own narrative, the myth.

A brand's main aim is therefore to benefit from a myth market, and according to Holt (2004) they should look specifically into 'populist worlds' for multiple reasons. These cultural hubs express distinctive ideas and they are authentic in their communication. These disruptive ideas can provide source for building the brand myth. Consumers can embrace the ideas of populist worlds voluntarily and without any additional political influence. (For example the purpose and values of 'The Human Rights Campaign' is rarely in question because we know they act on their belief rather than – commercial interest). Troubled neighborhoods, underground communities and subcultures are great examples of where these populist worlds exist. If a brand is linked to a populist world they become more relevant to the consumer because they are perceived more credible than a product or service filled with 'only' commercial interest. Successful brands are often inspired by and borrow from the other cultural products like music, books, television, and magazines because they all express own authentic distinctive ideology (Holt, 2004).

Holt (2004) suggests that it is extremely important to share an authentic story, because that gives credit to the myth and the brand. The consumers can believe that what they experience is not entirely fiction:

"[…] to be authentic, brands must be disinterested; they must be perceived as invented and disseminated by parties without an instrumental economic agenda, by people who are intrinsically motivated by their inherent value."(Holt, 2002a. p.83)

In Holt's quote above there are some recurring criteria of being authentic: The brand is authentic if the receivers of the myth participate voluntarily and not because it is forced on them. The brand and all of its activities and values must be perceived as unattached to politics and commercial interests. This means that the more visible or obvious the commercial agenda is, the less likely it is that the brand achieves an iconic status. Holt shows numerous case examples in his book, "How Brands Become Icons" (2004): the harder the company tries to sell a specific product, the less successful their efforts are. As soon as these brands switch advertisement technique where they don't emphasize the reasons for customers to pick their product they are perceived more authentic and more sympathetic.

Authentic stories probably seem hard to establish, but they are definitely impossible to copy. The imitations or "copycats" have no chance in the competition for greatness. A good example found by Holt (2004) is Mountain Dew (MD) against Coca Cola's brand 'Surge'. Surge was introduced to the US market in 1996 to compete with MD, but faded into oblivion fast, while the authority of MD remained unquestioned. Surge tried to claim similar attributes and benefits to MD, but it didn't succeed. The consumer's historic dependency of myths plays an important role in building a strong brand because the brands that already provided identity

value to the society are granted with authority. If Mountain Dew already conquered the 'slacker version of the wild man' narrative successfully, then Surge would face a hard time selling itself as a new ambassador with similar or same adjectives or benefits. Instead Holt (2004) suggests leaving the orthodox path, and looking for a new cultural opportunity, and incorporating a myth that is not used by other brands.

We have presented the basic terms and the underlying mechanisms of Holt's Cultural Branding, but the focus of the thesis guides us to examine his strategic view, to see how Douglas Holt suggests a brand is built "culturally".

How to build strong brands?

In order to generate an authentic, powerful and innovative myth a brand should look for social disruptions that give new ideological opportunities. Disruptions are major changes in the contextual environment that change the general consensus and in some cases even national ideologies (Holt 2004). Examples can be the recent financial crisis or the spread of Internet usage.

In other words, the social disruptions provide ground for cultural innovations. Cultural innovation means the possible breakthrough based on the change of ideologies resulted from major historical events. This type of innovation allows the brand to break out of the dominant or orthodox market competition, and create a "new" market place.

Ignoring the cultural context prevents the brand to exploit the change of ideologies and it can result in cultural orthodoxy (Holt, 2004). Cultural orthodoxy is the dominant cultural expression of a given time and product category that is expressed by competitors. If brands compete to outdo the other in the same set of benefits, they end up fighting over tight margins with small incremental changes. Mass marketing also produces cultural orthodoxy, because it often dictates the production of goods with marginalized risk taking, easy interpretation and

conformity (Holt, 2002a). If a brand aims to succeed it should avoid mimicking the orthodoxy and looking for smaller and smaller niche markets by functional improvements. Demand is generated for a better ideology behind the expressions, and it comes from cultural change, therefore improving only the ways of function can't help the brand to innovate (Holt, 2004).

Cultural Strategy answers the need for a guide to identify and exploit the ideological opportunities according to Holt and Cameron (2010). This strategy directs the cultural innovation and the response to cultural disruptions by locating the origin of the cultural change and finding the right expression to answer identity ambiguity. The main aim of the strategy is to respond to the discovered opportunities with authentic content, specifically tailored for the given disruption.

Cultural Strategy

In the next paragraphs we will introduce the steps of the Cultural Strategy (Holt & Cameron, 2010), and show the essence of its attempt to build an iconic brand. Our aim is to be able to shed light on possible deficiencies and strengths of Holt and Cameron's (2010) model later in our discussion.

Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron fashioned a 6-stage model to make cultural innovation a systematic pursuit (Holt & Cameron, 2010). The strategy doesn't work in a single linear process, but with continuous iterations, ongoing analysis and moving back and forth in the stages:

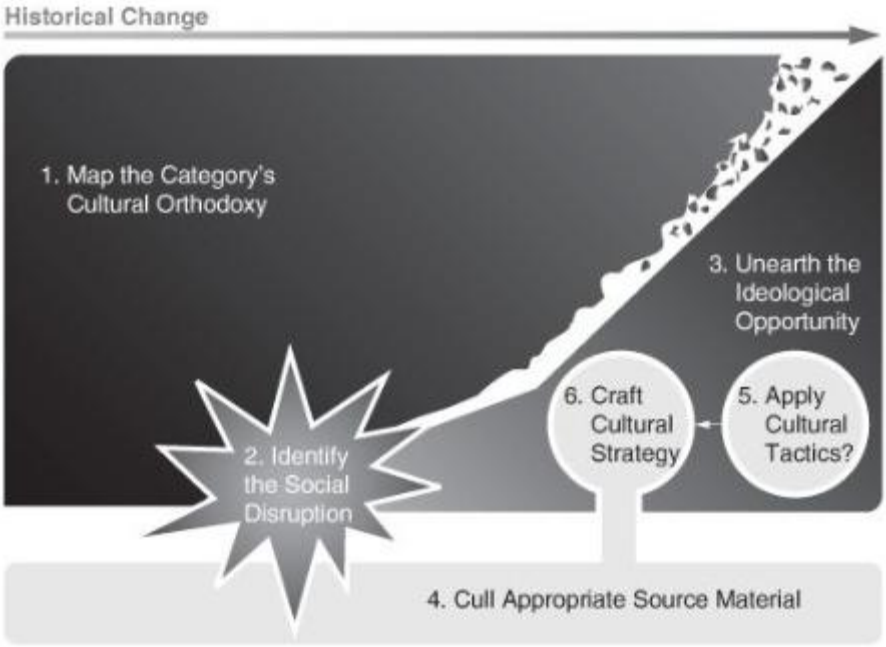

Figure 4: The Steps of Cultural Strategy (Holt, 2004)

- Map the Category's Cultural Orthodoxy

First of all, in order to avoid getting trapped in the competition for the best but still common cultural expressions of the category Holt advises to study the competitors' communicated myths and ideologies. Once companies learn the orthodoxy, the Cultural Strategy they build will more likely create new markets, and satisfy new identity anxieties instead of trying to be better or more appealing in already existing expressions and functions on market.

- Identify the Social Disruptions that can Dislodge the Orthodoxy
- Unearth the Ideological Opportunity
- Cull Appropriate Source Material

These three steps are crucial because the core of the future strategy is the social disruption and the appropriate response for the ideology represented by that disruption.

Cultural Strategy offers seven cultural research methods to discover disruptions and new opportunities for the brand; most of them are introduced without further details. First, Holt and Cameron (2010) suggest the discourse analysis of category competition to map the orthodoxy. In order to avoid the orthodoxy and find the relevant ideology provided by a social disruption he simply offers the general terms of "Sociological analyses", "Media Discourse Analysis" and the "Identity Project Interviews", the latter was co-developed by the authors themselves. Studying subcultures, social movements, and different media can provide the source for cultural expressions. The model proposes Brand Genealogy, Literary Analysis and Ethnographic Immersion to pick appropriate cultural material for the communication of the new Cultural Branding strategy.

The most elaborated technique of the above-mentioned methods is Brand Genealogy. According to Holt (2006) brand symbolism operates in a similar way to the symbolism in the case of other cultural products like books, actors, and movies. These cultural products have been studied at least as long as brands, and the accumulated research points in the direction of the method: genealogy. The basic idea behind the technique is locating the value of the brand and the meaning that it is transferring in its historical context. In an ideal case with the use of genealogy we get a macro view of how the brand shapes social institutions and inspire cultural discussion, but also get the micro understanding of the everyday use of brands and their meanings. Their context influences brands and their meaning making process therefore Holt emphasizes the analysis of the changing relationship between brands and collective consumer behavior and other cultural products over time. (Holt & Cameron, 2010)

Furthermore Holt (2004) mentions that in order to create successful new myths that resonate with the consumers' desires the brand manager himself/herself has to become a "genealogist". The manager can benefit from the skills of a cultural historian and a sociologist to identify the emerging ideological opportunities and to understand how to bake the new desires in the narrative of the brand. He doesn't elaborate further what tasks this genealogist should be able to perform.

After the identification of the opportunities and the collection of source material there are still two steps left in the Cultural Strategy:

- Apply Cultural Tactics
- Craft the Cultural Strategy

These last two steps suggest using previously formulated tactics by Holt and Cameron (2010) if applicable. These quite general "strategic tricks" include for example:

- formulating provocative cultural expressions that dramatize a new ideology (provoking ideological flashpoints),
- transforming an ideology of social change into a brand that is meaningful to the mass market (crossing the cultural chasm) and,
- using a cultural weakness of the dominating powerful incumbent on the market to position the brand (cultural jujitsu)

At last he emphasizes the significance of crafting the actual strategy document. It should be a detailed guide for the innovators participating in the "cultural brand management" to keep them away from dead-ends and to direct them towards the right cultural codes, ideology, tactics and communication.

Holt and Cameron's Cultural Strategy (2010), just as Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity Model (1991) gave us insight into the options that the brand manager has in order to

influence the perception of the consumers. These approaches highlight different key success factors, and they observe the construction of the brand's perception in distinct ways. The next part points at these differences.

Learnings from Holt and Keller

Both Kevin Lane Keller's and Douglas Holt's view has important contribution to our thesis. Before we examine them through the lens of framing theory we aim to shortly compare what the different theories focus on when explaining successful branding efforts. This is meant to help us summarize the key takeaways and gives us ideas for possible strength and shortcomings.

While Keller's theory describes brands as psychologically constructed entities in the minds of the consumers, Cultural Branding claims that brands are social constructions and they are continuously reformulated. The CBBE model takes into consideration marketers as main actors to influence the consumers' perception of the brand. In Cultural Branding theory consumers and other contextual/cultural stakeholders have significant role in co-creating the brand. Keller puts the emphasis mostly on the management of the consistent "meaning-giving" by cognitive associations, and Holt focuses on how the meaning is derived from context and how the evolving culture affects the meaning-making process. As Allen et al. (2006) expresses in the case of the "received approaches" the context is filtered away as noise. Therefore our assumption is that in the search for higher brand equity the CBBE lacks the understanding of parts of the meaning making process by ignoring the context.

Holt's theory seems to lose applicability and control of the brand strategy; it focuses mostly on the social construction of brand meaning and analyzes (successful) historical case studies but it doesn't make it clear how to act upon the brand strategy.

Keller's model uses brand communication as a tool to shape perception and persuades by linking associations with feelings in the consumers' minds. In Cultural Branding however, the communication is not meant to be persuasive, but it rather offers value to the customers by expressing a "brand myth". According to Holt (2004) the associations put forward by the CBBE model are just end products of a successfully authored myth. This thought assumes that finding the right associations doesn't always guide the brand manager to successful branding effort, because he/she will be unaware of the main underlying reasons, why a brand is perceived as it is.

Holt (2004) rests upon the fact that the brands analyzed by him are already "identity" brands, suggesting that they already have some sort of authority. He does not explain how brands evolve to become identity brands; he only tells us how to change the perception of an already known brand. For example when branding potato chips, or crisps, Cultural Strategy focuses on making an established and recognized "crisps" brand more famous, or popular. The CBBE model however builds brands from scratch, and shows what is there to do in order to make for example branded "crisp" out of a pile of ordinary potatoes.

Per Cultural Strategy brands are built through narratives (myths), the strongest myths are built on emerging social-cultural tensions originated from unfulfilled desires. The organization behind the brand should look for the disruptive ideologies that evolve from social tensions and create narratives accordingly that will be incorporated in the brand. If the brand manager aims to increase the performance of these narratives it is beneficial for him/her to have the skills and knowledge of an anthropologist and a sociologist. These skills should

help brand managers to pick up signs of shift in society that could create new desires. (Holt & Cameron, 2010)

In Keller's model the emphasis is on the benefit claims reached through associations. The management's job here is to position the brand in the consumers mind by cognitive associations connecting the benefits with the brand frequently, consistently and simply.

Framing versus Branding

Now we have arrived to what will function as our discussion part in the thesis. Here we will refer back to what our literature review on frames and framing has uncovered and see how these concepts are treated in the approaches to strategic brand management we have just presented. Once again, our assumption is that a branding effort relies on the same factors as an attempt to frame an issue, or cause for example. We start up by discussing the role of context in the approaches, and then move on to the criteria of credibility and salience.

The role of context in branding and framing

Holt and Cameron's "Cultural Strategy"

Framing does not happen in a vacuum, neither does branding. In our literature review of framing we intended to present context as fields in the same way as Fligstein conceptualizes it. Here we found out that fields work in relation to each other, both horizontally and vertically. Holt's treatment of context in brand strategy works in a similar way.

First and foremost, Holt and Cameron (2010) mentions Cultural Branding as a novel approach to brand strategy in that it is thought that brands are carriers of cultural symbolism within a broader context they describe as culture and ideology at different levels. From our interpretation they deal with higher order institutionalized belief systems such as ideology, to lower order, almost social group levels in what they term "populist worlds". It is tempting to

draw parallels between these distinctions with how Fligstein conceptualizes how fields work. He also acknowledges that fields work vertically, where some beliefs, values, and assumptions are thought to be of a higher order than more institutionalized field frames. Additionally, like Fligstein, Holt & Cameron describe populist worlds as social groupings of people that operate below the more institutionalized fields, some maybe on the "fringes of society" with their own ways of interacting when compared to the overall perception of what is "correct" or "appropriate". The point we are trying to make here is that even though most of us humans live in societies where the institutionalized ways of communicating and interacting with each other exist, there will always be slight differences in this interaction in different fields as a consequence of the different frames people use to make sense of the world around them. Thus, we have what is called "sub cultures" where people make use of different language, symbols, gestures, and so on to interact, and different frames to interpret the symbols, actions, and language around them. "Metalheads", "Hippies", "Hipsters", "Trekkies", "Fanboys", and "Preps" are terms used to describe sub-groups of society that make up a common field. These are the sub groups that Holt and Cameron call "populist worlds". It is here meaning creation is at work, and like Fligstein, Holt and Cameron acknowledges that sometimes these fields may spill over into other fields. What Fligstein calls "Field Crisis", Holt and Cameron calls "disruptions". These concepts are remarkably similar in what both Fligstein and Holt and Cameron conceptualize as to what happens in times like crisis or disruption. Fligstein remarks that in times of "field crisis" actors start to question their position in the field - leading to ambiguity about their identities, for example. The frames that previously were "settled" to make sense of the world are now being questioned in frame contests. A change in the collective frames of the actors in the field could lead to new ways for them to perceive the actions of people, objects, or symbols. Symbols

that previously had value may lose or strengthen their value, objects may become irrelevant or more relevant, beliefs and assumptions may be strengthened or weakened. For Holt and Cameron, in times of disruptions this is exactly what happens. A disruption for Holt is a major change in the contextual environment that changes assumptions and general consensus. Sometimes, a disruption might even change what Holt refers to as "national ideology". The pre runner for disruptions is when people find contradictions between their identity and the national ideology. Holt argues that even though people are born into an "ideology" there is no guarantee that they will be able to "live up to it". When there is a contradiction here, tension arises which can eventually lead to a disruption. In times of disruption Holt argues that people crave stories or symbols that can smooth this conflict between their own situation, and what situation the "national ideology" puts them in. Holt suggests that these ambiguities can be resolved when the brand performs a "myth" which addresses the concerns of people.

For Holt and Cameron context, or culture as they put it, is of the essence when it comes to building brands. Their argument is that brands are carriers of cultural symbolism in much the same ways as movies, books, music, and so forth. These cultural products are often assumed to reflect the broader culture of where they are made and thus work as social commentaries about the society they are produced in. The emergence of new music genres can be argued to be products of ambiguities musicians feel. We believe there is no coincidence that genres such as rock, punk, heavy metal, rap, and hip-hop emerged. They were products of "frame contests" that went on between youth and older generations. These musical genres communicated messages that resonated with the youth of that time in what resulted in what was called "teenage rebellion" for example. It is this very role Holt and Cameron suggest the brand may take on when it is fueled with cultural symbolism to reduce ambiguities and concerns for the consumers. Through numerous examples they show how

brands have managed to become "part of culture" where the brand offers an "ideology" derived from the broader cultural system (Holt, 2004; Holt & Cameron, 2010).

One particular example Holt writes about is how the "Marlboro Man" campaign for cigarettes was actually a failure many times over before it eventually became successful (Holt & Cameron, 2010). The reason for the Cowboy's eventual success was not because the cowboy is inherently rugged or masculine – the cowboy image did not succeed until the western movie-genre took off and became a familiar cultural narrative. Only then did the "Marlboro man" image succeed (Holt & Cameron, 2010). This tells us that a brand manager cannot just put out a symbol that is believed to hold some sort of self-expressive value. The symbol must be accepted as such within a broader belief system in which Holt and Cameron calls culture.

Frame and field theory tell us the same story. The stories or symbols that are used in communication must correspond with the frames that are already in place, or emerging in the broader context. If they do not, they will not make sense to the audience they are communicated to. The cowboy image presumably was not part of any symbolic discourse until movies started portraying cowboys and gunslingers of the western frontier (Holt & Cameron, 2010). Thus, the fields the American people perceived as their reality did not include this imagery before movies started portraying them. The cowboy imagery did not make sense until what it symbolized started to become attractive. We have here attempted to point out that Holt & Cameron's world-view fits to a certain extent with how Fligstein suggests that the world is set up in "field frames" that work horizontally and vertically. There are however also a number of issues with Holt and Cameron's framework that could be addressed.

First, in what Fligstein refers to as "field crisis", Holt and Cameron conceptualize as disruptions. While we have no doubt about the phenomenon and that it occurs from time to time, Holt and Cameron's insistence of using it for strategic competitive advantage is an issue because they spend not nearly enough effort to give the reader insight into how these are identified and how they can be acted upon. As Bjerrisgaard and Kjeldgaard (2011) puts it in their review of Holt and Cameron's book "Cultural Strategy":

"Even if the streamlined form and punchy rhetoric of the book would suffer, some comments on the methodological difficulties and epistemological considerations involved in the detection of ideologies, myths and cultural codes would have increased the trustworthiness of the argument and benefitted its practitioner audience" (Bjerrisgaard & Kjeldgaard, 2001, p.357)

Second, Holt & Cameron has been criticized for their overwhelming US-perspective and for treating American culture from the 1950s to the 1990s as relatively homogenous with little inner contradiction (Bjerrisgaard & Kjeldgaard, 2011):

"*With its overwhelming US perspective, the book depicts the cultural realm of 1950-1990s America as relatively homogenous and unified, without much inner contradiction, fragmentation or dependency upon a wider global system of commerce, politics and culture. Issues of cultural complexity could have been addressed by extending the simplified treatment of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital in Chapter 5 with his concept of fields, which would have alluded to the partiality and multiplicity of cultural codes and ideologies within different areas of society."*

Holt and Cameron's framework is built upon the very foundation that such contradiction and difference in perception about society exists, but when the brand finds the right "cultural expression" it is portrayed like a key that unlocks and unifies all people under

that one particular brand's "ideology". Thus, the brand has become "iconic" in Holt and Cameron's terms. This notion is also inconsistent with how we interpret field theory. In field theory and from framing literature it is acknowledged that things are perceived differently based on what frames are used to perceive things, and that the frames used are influenced with what field an actor finds him or herself in. Therefore, a brand that delivers a "cultural expression" intended to smooth over ambiguities in one field, may not work as intended in another field. From reading Holt and Cameron's strategy it would seem like the success of the "cultural expression" the brand plays will be universal across all fields, thereby rendering the brand "iconic". This is very hard to believe if we rest upon what is learnt from Fligstein's concept of fields, and a very nice example of this difference in perception occurred during the Super Bowl in 2014. Coca cola bought a 1-minute spot in the revered advertising slot of this very high profile event. The commercial[18] framed America as a nation of diversity where the song "America the beautiful" was sung in multiple languages with imagery not unique to what one would expect a commercial intended for the American consumer would contain. The advertisement spurred controversy among the audience [19] [20] [21], and especially controversial was it that the song was sung in other languages than English. Praised by some, who themselves recognize USA as a melting pot where people of all cultures, religion, and sexual orientation are welcome, and panned by others who critiqued the advertisement for

[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=443Vy3I0gJs
[19] http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/02/03/coca-cola-ad-super-bowl-racism/5177463/
[20] http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/tv-movies/coca-cola-super-bowl-ad-angers-conservatives-article-1.1600849
[21] http://atlanta.cbslocal.com/2014/02/03/coca-cola-super-bowl-ad-stirs-controversy-with-multilingual-singing-of-america-the-beautiful/

fiddling with a song that clearly is close to the heart of some Americans, the rendition divided the people:

"Speak English or go home"…"Screwed up a beautiful song. No Coke for my family."[22]

"Ashamed that people are upset by the Coca-Cola commercial. We're a melting pot y'all. I think it was a good portrait of our diversity."[23]

One could start to believe that the American people started questioning what it really meant to be American, and what values USA was built upon. A nation built upon immigration and diversity, one would assume that the people would be welcoming of all cultures, languages and religions. The case is not so however: the field frames people use to make sense of this commercial are different and thus the resulting interpretation is wildly different. So, either the "cultural expression" in Holt and Cameron's terms was not the ultimate one, or the American culture is actually filled with inner contradiction, frame contests, frames, and different meanings, just like Bjerrisgaard and Kjeldgaard hints.

Keller and Context

In Kevin Keller's framework, the role of context in strategic branding is considerably downplayed (Allen et al., 2006). In fact, as Allen et.al. states, brand research done in the received paradigm treats context as noise, because the central constructs of research are

[22] Quotes from Coca Cola's FaceBook page published on http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/02/03/coca-cola-ad-super-bowl-racism/5177463/
[23] Quote taken from Twitter user @BelleTownUSA published on http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/02/03/coca-cola-ad-super-bowl-racism/5177463/

knowledge-based cognitions and attitudes as opposed to experiential and symbolic aspects of consumption that drives the research on from the emerging paradigm (Allen et.al., 2006). That does not mean Keller completely ignores it; in fact he writes about brands as means of self-expression and how brands take on symbolic meaning through step two in his brand resonance pyramid. He calls this step "brand meaning" where it is suggested that meaning derives from two building blocks: brand performance and brand imagery. Brand performance in this sense relates to functional aspects of a product. The other building block, brand imagery refers to the intangible aspects of the brand: where the brand is perceived to be something more than the product itself (Keller, 2013). Keller mentions brand personality and values as important aspects of this imagery attribute. It is thought that the brand projects some sort of personality or value system that resonates with potential consumers, prompting them to buy the brand. What Keller fails to mention though, is how these "personality types" or "values" become something that is desirable. Where Holt and Cameron acknowledge and attempt to capture these definitions through meaning creation in "populist worlds", Keller is remarkably silent about these issues. We have learnt from framing and field theory that what is regarded as personality traits such as "successful", "masculine", or "cool" is guided by discourse in fields of actors. It is this discourse Holt and Cameron tries to capture before it "erupts" as emerging meaning patterns in "disruptions". They attempt to utilize these disruptions as "strategic action fields" because in these situations meaning is up for discussion and the meaning making of actors within the fields is becoming unstable.

Keller acknowledges too that culture has a profound influence on brands (Keller, 2013 p.34), but instead of attempting to build a strategic brand management framework that incorporates the surrounding context of the brand, he seems to look away from it. It would appear from our review of framing theory that Keller misses out on a potential source of

competitive advantage by overlooking this. Field theory tells us that in times of field crises meaning about issues, events, objects, or artifacts is up for discussion. Thus, we argue, the meaning of brands can also be up for discussion, and it is the task of the brand manager to inject the brand into this context, fueled with emerging symbolic meaning to soothe the ambiguities experienced by actors in the field.

It seems as though the concept of "strategic action fields" is hard to translate into Keller's thinking. One of the reasons for this we believe is that Keller's framework can be likened to framing research done on the micro level. In our literature review we presented Cornelissen and Werner's (2014) argument that research done on the micro level of framing tends to overlook how meaning is created through social interaction. It is our argument that so does Keller. In his quest for building brand associations in consumer's minds, his approach to branding rests on priming effects – getting access to cognitive knowledge structures in the minds of consumers to have the brand associated with attributes and benefits it is assumed that consumers' desire. Ignoring how the meaning of brands is dependent on frames originating in social discourse he seems to attempt to utilize mental frames that is "already existent" in society. By this we mean that his framework depends on using symbolism that is already accepted, because he attempts to tap into already existent frames in the minds of consumers. Thereby, the brand manager following Keller's model may overlook emerging discourse and frame contests where the meaning of brands may change, and use imagery such as the cowboy to get a brand associated with "ruggedness" at the wrong times. Keller's CBBE is inherently reactive, as his model tries to hitch brands on to frames that are already institutionalized. As Entman says*: "Texts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols. However, even a single unillustrated appearance of a notion in an obscure part of the text can be highly*

salient, if it comports with the existing schemata in a receiver's belief system" (Entman, 1993)

This does not say that Keller's model is weak, because these associative frames can be said to have powerful opportunities when the alignment goes through. Also, we can assume that Keller with "user imagery" or "usage situations" as building blocks for brand meaning can incorporate familiar cultural symbolism. For example, Coca Cola has somehow managed to get their everyday soda associated so strongly with Christmas that it marks the beginning of the holidays to some people[24]. We assume that there was no particular field crisis that laid the groundwork for the success of this commercial. It rests upon the use of already familiar Christmas symbolism to hammer home its message and thereby somehow indicates the start of the Christmas celebration for some people. However, Keller overlooks the production of these frames, and how they emerge into existence.

Holt attempts to remedy this "shortcoming" of Keller by fixing the brand onto what he terms "disruptions". One could liken the concept of disruptions to the time at which reframings occur, and thereby enable people to see things differently. It is entirely possible that these reframings alter the meaning-making process of people and Holt attempts to hitch the brand onto this new "wave" of meaning making. In theory, then, Holt's philosophy has a point: Build the brand where new meanings emerge. What we would wish though, is an elaborate explanation of where to look for these disruptions, if they can be forecasted at all. The perspective of framing provides little more insight into this as well. Framing processes, even if they are defined as "strategic", seem to happen more sporadically when people or

[24] http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk/article/1103513/coca-cola-rolls-festive-holidays-coming-favourite

SMOs see an immediate problem in the context they live in. Thus, the "strategic" efforts of an SMO are fundamentally reactive, based on an issue that is already there, rather than proactive. The issue must exist beforehand.

Factors of frame resonance and brand resonance

The distinct perspectives of the brand management approaches result in different ways to reach a certain perception of the brand amongst consumers. Benford and Snow (2000) states that some collective action frames are better than others in mobilizing their target groups. Our assumption is that this statement is true also for the frames that brands put forward. Through the lens of "factors influencing frame resonance" given by Benford and Snow (2000) we will examine the criteria for reaching brand resonance in Holt's and Keller's case. We strive to show the implications of the different focuses of the branding approaches and we will try to contribute to further improve the theories.

Theory on strategic framing has shown that "credibility" and "salience" are crucial factors of successful Social Movement Organizations (Benford & Snow, 2000). Both Keller and Holt bake similar criteria in their respective theories but to a seemingly different extent, and with different focus.

Credibility

Strategic framing names *"consistency",* the *"credibility of the frame articulator"* and *"empirical credibility"* as key dimensions of credibility. Notions similar to Benford and Snow's's (2000) consistency and the framer's credibility get reoccurring attention in Keller's (2013) Brand Pyramid. Keller (2013) gives special attention to make the brand trustworthy and believable while developing the different levels of this pyramid. Holt and Cameron's Cultural Strategy (2010) also acknowledges the importance of having a reliable and credible brand, but it does not explain how to establish this credibility.. Instead, Holt and Cameron

assume brands to have this criterion already by focusing only on identity brands. The following paragraphs aim to support these arguments, so that we can draw the implications of the differences between the branding theories later.

Credibility in Keller's terms is related to consumers' responses, specifically judgments of the brand and has an exact highlighted position in the Pyramid (in the 3rd level of the pyramid[25]). Nevertheless, he incorporates the criteria carefully on each level of the Pyramid, because the brand can only receive positive responses about its consistency and credibility if it develops the right meaning (second level of the Pyramid). Furthermore it can only reach this meaning if it has created its identity (first level of the Pyramid). (Keller, 2013)

Brands reach credibility according to Keller (2013) by getting cognitive [26] confirmation of their trustworthiness, perceived expertise, and likeability. The first step to receive these positive responses is building a steady foundation, a strong identity for the brand. Brand awareness increases the strength of the identity by making the brand top-of-mind, easily recalled and recognized. It is more probable that consumers believe and trust the brand if it is not only recognized, but the consumers can recall this knowledge from their memory at the right place, and/or in the right (or any) time (Keller, 2013).

The second step to the right responses is positioning the brand. The purpose of choosing points of difference (PODs) - while positioning - is mainly to provide the consumers with a convincing and credible reason to choose the brands over the others. We can clearly draw a parallel between the consistency criterion of strategic framing and the "deliverability"

[25] See the pyramid model on page 57
[26] We use the word cognitive here because Keller's (2013) Brand Pyramid divides the responses to "judgements" that are more cognitive and "feelings" that are more emotional responses.

attribute of PODs. PODs are deliverable if the brand can actually live up to its promises, meaning that the brand can be consistent in what it does and how it acts upon it (Keller, 2013). Deliverability also requires brand managers to choose convincing, easy-to-understand PODs to render the brand communication as believable.

To establish differentiating benefit claims brands can leverage the equity of another entity as Keller (2013) suggests. This tactic has important position in designing marketing programs because it grants the brand with secondary associations by linking the attributes of other entities (for example brands, companies, regions, events or spokespeople) to the brand (Keller, 2001). This process allows brands to "rent" credibility. Theory on Social Movement Organizations suggests that one of the most common but definitely the simplest way to make the frame articulator credible is to identify it with already credible framer or framers. Judging by Keller's (2013) theory, endorsement fulfills this role by attaching the reliability of for example a celebrity to a certain brand. This way in most cases the endorser provides the brand not only with the credibility of the frame articulator but also with empirical credibility. If we take the example of the brand Nike: the athlete representing the brand connects the abstract benefit claim like "performance" to the real world by his/her famous performance, which is explained by the technology of the Nike shoes.

Cultural Branding takes a shortcut in answering the criteria of becoming credible by focusing only on identity brands. It is therefore assumed by us that the brands used as examples by Holt and Cameron (2010) already have some sort of credibility; Holt and Cameron focus on identity brands that are used mostly for their self-expressive value. It is reasonable to believe that these brands already have some sort of authority or credibility, because people already use them as means for their symbolic self-expression. When a brand is used as such, it is our understanding that the brand already has a certain meaning in addition

to being credible. From the perspective of framing it is essential to have all three criteria of credibility, but Cultural Strategy (Holt and Cameron 2010) doesn't elaborate on the steps of how identity brands reach credibility. Moreover the classification of identity brands seems to be too obscure, and subjective without clear limits. If those brands are defined as identity brands that are used mainly for self-expression then their definition depends on continuous social discourse, and it is always changing. Even a tomato can be a symbolic product (Sternberg, 1999), which we suspect Holt and Cameron (2010) would refer to as a "low involvement product" or "commodity product" not suited for Cultural Branding. However if a tomato can be a carrier of symbolism, like Sternberg suggests, couldn't a tomato also be branded "culturally"?

It seems like Cultural Strategy aims to make these identity brands believable by emphasizing only authenticity (Holt & Cameron, 2010); it is more probable that the consumers believe the brand if it is genuine in what it communicates. According to Cultural Branding credibility is not something that can be forced on other people. The theory suggests that consumers should not be persuaded about the trustworthiness of the brand; they believe the brand if it communicates what it authentically stands for (Holt, 2004, 2003b). A brand with an obvious commercial interest, just like a politician with a strong self-interest in the case of a Social Movement Organization is usually not considered trustworthy, nor reliable (Benford & Snow, 2000). Probably both of these actors put forward an attractive frame, but the audience (the consumers in the case of a brand) can't believe the framers act on shared values or for the benefit of others. This is where the role of populist worlds becomes important. These cultural hubs that are referred to as subcultures are the cradles for new meaning, and they are free of any commercial interest (Holt, 2004). They can enhance the trust of the consumers, if linked to the brand. This is why according to Holt and Cameron

(2010) brands like Nike is trusted and liked. Nike can represent the "combative solo willpower", the idea of "success in spite of the restraining origin/skin color/poverty", because Nike was among the first ones expressing and dramatizing this social striving amongst the competitors through endorsements (Holt and Cameron, 2010).

Authenticity and credibility is inherently linked, but an authentic brand will not necessarily have the fundamental awareness and brand history/heritage to build its credibility. If the brand is not established yet as a credible frame articulator and it is not recalled or recognized then the chances are higher that it will be doubted or completely ignored. Where Holt and Cameron (2010) lack elaboration is how to reach that point when the consumers start perceiving and recognizing the brand as a symbol.

By urging adaptive brand communication Cultural Strategy also ignores the value that the coherent brand heritage provides to credibility. If we compare brand frames to the frames articulated by for example politicians, we see that too many or too frequent changes in communication can make the audience question the credibility of the frame articulator' message (Benford & Snow, 2000). However Holt and Cameron (2010) even argue against having a consistent brand meaning, because according to them the brand has to adapt to the changes in the context.

Salience

The criteria of salient frames put forward by the literature on Social Movement Organizations are *"centrality", "experiential commensurability",* and *"narrative fidelity"* (Benford & Snow, 2000). These factors represent importance and meaning for the target customers in the case of brand management, and they are not to be confused with Keller's term of Brand Salience that stands for the breadth and depth of awareness of a brand (Keller, 2001). "Meaning" has an important role in both Cultural Branding and the Customer-Based Brand

Equity model, but the way they think about filling the brand with meaning is very different. We aim to show this divergence and its implications as they are seen through the lens of framing.

The CBBE model (Keller, 2013) aims to build a brand that fits its target customers' values and also the customers' experiences. Keller suggests (2013) establishing what the brand stands for in the consumer' minds by associations. The aim of the associations is to create a link between the product and the desires of the consumer through direct experience, advertising or word of mouth. Some of the associations address the everyday functional needs of the consumers; these are the associations related to Performance in the Brand Pyramid. Other associations address the psychological and social values and needs, and these form the building block *Imagery* in the Pyramid. Brand personality highlighted in the *Imagery* block functions as a projected value system that attracts consumers who either have the same values, attributes or they desire to have those and want to be associated with the brand.

Keller (2013) certainly strives to create brands that comply with the framing criteria of centrality and experiential commensurability, but he is missing the narrative fidelity from his model. Strategic framing suggests that the framing attempt's ability to mobilize is higher if the frame corresponds with the existing cultural assumptions and ideologies in a given context. Field theory showed us that these ideologies are always changing; they are always the part of discourse and frame contests (Fligstein, 2001). In order to give an appropriate answer for these changing ideologies, the brand manager has to monitor and answer the emerging new ideologies. The CBBE model builds brands on frames that already exist in the minds of consumers. It ignores the difference between the existing ideologies and emerging ideologies, therefore can't prepare the brand to comply with narrative fidelity.

The CBBE model shows what attributes and benefits a brand should claim to be resonant, and also creates a strategy to capitalize on this knowledge. This mindset black boxes the reasons behind successful associations; managers don't see all affecting elements on the changing preferences of people in a particular situation, at a particular time.

Cultural Strategy answers the consumers' need for a salient brand, but with a different focus from Keller's Brand Pyramid. Its main intention is to create culturally resonant myth (Holt & Cameron, 2010). The values put forward by a myth have to be central to the main beliefs of the target groups. Iconic brands provide a narrative that eases the gap between desires and reality, between one's identity project and the national ideology (Holt, 2004; Holt & Cameron, 2010). The myth strives to respond to all 3 criteria of salience proposed by the literature on Social Movement Organization Theory (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Narrative fidelity is the core of Cultural Branding. Instead of looking into the existing frames in the consumers' minds, it maps the context for disruptions, for field contest to make the brand able to respond to the new desires formed by emerging ideologies. Per Holt and Cameron (2010) the sources to build culturally resonant myth already exist in society. However, instead of focusing on already institutionalized ideologies, they suggest to look into populist worlds, and gather source from "cultural industries" as movies, books, art or music. The strongest social desires are usually born and cultivated in subcultures and other industries, free of commercial interest. If the brand incorporates themes that originate from subcultures then it can successfully find and audience before it becomes "mainstream" or institutionalized.

His research focuses less on the direct opinion of the consumers, but trying to answer questions that are probably unknown even for the majority of consumers. This kind of thinking requires the "social skill" from the brand manager that is highlighted in Holt (2004).

This skill stands for anthropological and sociological knowledge that the brand manager can use to monitor and exploit the changes in culture for the benefit of the brand. “Social skill” also appears advantageous in Fligstein and McAdams’s (2011) Strategic Actions Field theory. In their term the socially skilled actor can benefit from a number of tactics in the ongoing frame contests to convince others. The ability to seem neutral and free from self-interest, to use a broad convincing portfolio of ideas and to make others feel they are in control seem quite applicable in the case of the brand too. Both Holt’s and Fligstein’s concept need further elaboration on how social actors or brand managers can acquire this skill

In the following segment we will illustrate on a specific example the way credibility and salience is built by Cultural Strategy (Holt & Cameron, 2010) and the CBBE model (Keller, 2013).

The example of endorsements

Both Holt and Cameron (2010) and Keller (2008) create their own case studies on the brand Nike that we use in the upcoming paragraphs when examining the way endorsements work according to their distinct views on strategic brand management.

Keller (2008) suggests that the endorsements significantly contributed to the success of Nike, because the products of the brand were associated with the authentic athletic performance of the sportsmen wearing the brand. Keller’s case draws attention to the role of Michael Jordan as a credible endorser in making the Nike basketball shoes popular. Fans stared at the TV screens or at the live game mesmerized by this player’s performance, and they saw him wearing the “shiny” - in this case - Nike shoes, and they associated the desired great performance with the Nike shoes. In their minds the memory nodes of performance were linked with the brand Nike, resulting in successful associations.

In Holt and Cameron's (2010) opinion the endorsers' performance didn't have significant importance as all other competitors used top performing athletes. The authors attribute the success of the endorsements to the fact that some of Nike's athletes (like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods) became symbols of social striving. Furthermore these sportsmen have been put in a narrative that builds on cultural tensions; breaking out from the poor and hopeless life and into success. The consumers could identify themselves with this emerging ideology that the endorsers represented. If Michael Jordan contributed to the success of the Nike brand he did it by representing the myth of the "boy from the hood", coming from nowhere and then reaching for the stars by doing what he loves (Holt & Cameron, 2010). His life and game was the symbol of an epic dream, and the myth that eased this desire was filled with familiar cultural themes.

An ultimate lesson learnt from comparing the Nike cases is that Keller (2008) doesn't elaborate on why the specific Nike sponsorships and endorsements become successful throughout time compared to other brands' similar efforts. It seems like the company's growth is only the matter of luck: all the competing brands were endorsed for their great performance, but Nike invested in future winners and these celebrities made the message of the sportswear brand believable and credible (Keller, 2008).

Cultural Branding seem to unwrap the mysterious relationship between sponsorships, brand popularity and myths: the athletes gain meaning from the context, their role is to represent particular cultural tensions with their success stories (Holt & Cameron, 2010). The cases support the view that the actual reasons of brand resonance (culturally relevant myths) are misidentified, and often confused with end products (successful associations). The brand didn't succeed in becoming believable just because it was endorsed by great athletic

sportsmen, but because the narratives about the success of those endorser athletes authentically represented emerging social strivings or desires (Holt & Cameron, 2010).

Summing up on factors of frame and brand resonance

The factors of framing resonance highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses of the branding approaches. What strategic framing taught us is that both credibility and salience is important in building a frame to influence or motivate people. It also showed that both branding approaches mention them as criteria but the focuses of the approaches have different result on the process of reaching a resonating brand. CBBE is stronger in establishing a credible brand from scratch. The Brand Pyramid highlights the importance of a strong identity and elaborates on the breadth and depth of awareness and the first steps of positioning a brand seemingly right after the brand is created. The strength of Cultural Strategy lies in what strategic framing terms salience; filling the brand with different meanings so that it fits with the target's cultural narrations once it already has an identity (Holt & Cameron, 2010). It is not strong on building brand awareness of for example startups, and especially if they don't fit the category that is called identity brand by Holt (2004). The myth itself does not necessarily make the brand seem like a credible frame articulator; both high awareness and heritage can enhance the credibility.

The example of endorsements shows that the distinct perspectives can affect brand management efforts. Cultural Strategy just like the CBBE model finds endorsements useful to build a particular perception amongst consumers but for CBBE the most important factor utilized is "gaining credibility" for the framer, while in Cultural Branding the value of endorsement ultimately adds to the narrative fidelity of the branding effort. Ultimately Keller only touches the decision-making process of consumers superficially by not acknowledging

the discursive context in which particular associations are established, and by not building narrative fidelity it loses effectiveness in influencing the perception of a brand.

The lens of strategic framing highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses of the different brand management approaches, but also left some questions unanswered. Therefore after the upcoming conclusive thoughts we find it important to note the questions to encourage further research.

Summary and concluding remarks

At the onset of this thesis we were interested whether framing theory, specifically the literature on Social Movement Organizations and field theory can contribute to brand management.

The first guiding question was given as:

1: What is strategic framing and how is it related to strategic brand management?

Our initial assumption was that strategic framing is similar to strategic brand management in its effort to influence people's perception. We have learnt that frames are like boundaries that help people make sense of their experiences. Frames work on 3 "levels" according to Cornelissen and Werner (2014); the micro, meso and macro levels. It is noted that these levels are somewhat artificial, as research tend to cut across, and acknowledge frames as mental constructs, and how frames are constructed through social interaction, and how the larger context we exist in affects our perception of the world around us.

It was our particular interest to discover how it is presumed that framing can be a strategic effort. We presented how framing can be an active, goal-oriented process that aims

to mobilize audiences to take action in accordance with what is intended by the "framer". The "framer" here is seen as the actor or actors that attempts to mobilize others into action. We learnt that the efforts of framing, just like brand management, indeed strive to influence people's understanding about events, situations, people, or objects.

We argued that that framing processes and the process of branding a product rest upon the same "mechanisms". Therefore we examined what kind of criteria a framing effort should include to increase the chance of the effort resonating with its audience and thereby increasing the chance of mobilization. Our first part of the thesis was then written with the objective to unearth these criteria, and attempt to put them in a brand perspective.

We found that a strategic framing effort rests upon criteria of credibility and salience. First, the "framer" must be perceived as a credible claimsmaker, and put forward frames that are believable and credible and fits its context. The salience criterion refers to how make a framing attempt meaningful and important to its audience. More specifically the framing attempt needs to incorporate values important to the audience, it needs to be close to the everyday, lived experiences of its audience, and it needs to have narrative fidelity. In other words, the framing attempt must come in "frame packages" (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp, 2007) where these factors are present. Moreover, the context plays a significant part in framing efforts, as Field theory suggests (Fligstein, 2001). The way people make sense of their surroundings is affected by the ongoing frame contests, social discourse and emerging and fading ideologies (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011), where the socially skilled actor has the ability to use a set of specific tactics to enhance the chance of mobilizing others.

We accepted the concepts of credibility, salience, and the role of context with the assumption that branding attempts, just like framing attempts, should rest upon these very same criteria. We assumed first that the brand must be seen as credible, and then its salience

must depend on its values and how important these are for consumers. It needs to solve the everyday, lived issues of consumers whether related to functional or abstract issues or aspects, and it needs to tie this together with narrative fidelity in terms of cultural symbolism made up of myths, folk tales, or stories that are familiar to the consumers. In addition, the brand exists in context, and its meaning is dependent on the on-going meaning construction in fields.

Armed with these assumptions, we have analyzed the extent to what the Customer-Based Brand Equity model by Kevin Lane Keller (2013) and the Cultural Strategy model by Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron (2010) accommodate issues of credibility and salience, and how they treat context in their brand models. These models, although built from different foundations, aim for the same goal: to create meaningful, desired brands that appeal to the target customers. Our guiding questions for this part of the thesis were:

2: To what extent do assumptions and concepts from strategic framing uncovered in Q1 correspond to, or deviate from

- *2.1: Kevin Lane Keller's "Customer Based Brand Equity model"?*
- *2.2: Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron's concept of "Cultural Strategy"?*

The comparison with the CBBE model resulted in a number of interesting discoveries. First and foremost, our proposition is that Keller does not elaborate on the role of context that the brands reside in. Although he notes that culture has profound influence on brands, he does not give the concept further thought. We have drawn parallel between Keller's model of brand management with research done on the micro level in framing. Cornelissen and Werner (2014) state that research on the micro level of framing tend to ignore the social and on-going process of meaning construction, and it is our proposition that Keller's view on brand building has the same short-coming. By not paying attention to this meaning construction

Keller's model runs the risk of building brands on "old" institutionalized frames, and it is challenging with this approach in mind to capture emerging frames.

With regards to the criteria of credibility and salience, Keller clearly focuses on building credibility "into the brand". One of the building blocks of his CBBE pyramid refers to credibility and it is assumed to result from the successful building of identity, which is awareness in his terms, and "brand meaning". First the model establishes a brand identity where consumers are able to recognize and recall the brand, and thereby the brand achieves wide and broad awareness. Then as Keller suggests the branding effort should revolve around positioning the brand with "Points of Parity" and "Points of Difference", and infuse the brand with meaning through associating it with presumed benefits and attributes. To a certain extent, Keller meets the criteria of credibility and salience with one exception: *narrative fidelity.*

When compared to the assumptions and concepts of strategic framing, Cultural Strategy also shows some noteworthy findings. Cultural Branding (Holt, 2004) which serves as the foundation of Cultural Strategy (Holt & Cameron, 2010) acknowledges *first*: that there is a context, *second*: that the brand is part of this context, and *third*: that as this context changes, the underlying principles for meaning making change. Much like Fligstein conceptualizes fields as "strategic action fields" where meaning is up for negotiation, and actors can take advantage of instability in fields through framing attempts, Holt and Cameron argues that this happens to brands, because they can benefit from "disruptions" in "cultural ideologies". Holt and Cameron suggest looking for "disruptions", or "field crises" in Fligstein's terms, to figure out what ideologies will emerge and potentially make its way into part of institutionalized set frames. Holt and Cameron acknowledge that the ideologies in the social world are hierarchical and they can interact. The set of ideas in small "populist worlds"

often differ from and contest national ideologies, similarly to how Fligstein see the hierarchy and contest in fields, and between fields.

After analyzing the Cultural Strategy model in terms of credibility and salience, we propose that Holt and Cameron's model takes a shortcut in terms of credibility. They mention little about how to build a brand's credibility, and their examples revolve around brands that have already established a form of credibility. They postulate that Cultural Branding is predominantly meant for identity brands which they define as brands used mostly for their value in consumer's self-expression. Therefore, their examples are derived from such brands as well. If we interpret their view of identity brands as already established brands that are already used by consumers as part of their self-expression, then it is fair to assume that these brands indeed have already accomplished credibility to an extent. We would wish the Cultural Strategy model to give us some hints as to how to achieve this credibility, and thus become an identity brand as this seems like a necessary factor for the brand to become "iconic".

The assumption that the brands built by Cultural Strategy perform myths to the consumers "solves" the criteria of salience for Holt and Cameron. They argue that narratives, or in their term myths, are supposed to ease gaps between consumer's desired- versus actual realities. The myths express brand values built on cultural themes that are familiar to the consumer. Therefore these culturally resonant narratives can resolve the tensions consumers face when they experience ambiguities and contradictions between their desired identity and actual identity. People's understanding of the narratives is influenced by discourses or ongoing frame contests surrounding the brands. Therefore tactics of the socially skilled actor can be useful for the brand in the effort of expressing emerging ideologies through myths to appeal to the consumers.

Thus, one can say that Holt acknowledges both the centrality and experiential commensurability dimensions of salience. Narrative fidelity is at the core of Holt and Cameron's model as it suggests using culturally resonant myths to make the brand desired by consumers.

It becomes apparent that the approaches to brand management meet the criteria of frame resonance to different extent and their treatment of the role of context is also quite contrary. Where Holt and Cameron's approach builds its premise on cultural and social forces, Keller almost ignores them. The answer to our third guiding question will show the implications of these findings, and allow us to present what strategic brand management can learn from strategic framing theories.

3: What are the implications of the similarities and differences uncovered in Q2.1 and Q2.2?

By almost ignoring the context, Keller misses out on the opportunity to be "ahead of the curve". Our frames help us judge if brands are relevant for us, but these frames are not static. They come into existence through the social interactions we have, and they are situated within our minds as well as the broader context we exist in. Thus, if the brand manager tries to associate a brand with what is "fun" or "cool" today, this might not be "fun" or "cool" in the near future. Fligstein tells us that we exist socially in "fields", and that these fields influence how we perceive things. Thus, what is "cool" in one field might not be "cool" in another field because the frames employed to judge what is "cool" are different from field to field. In addition, fields can become unstable, and "spill over" into other fields, or even be institutionalized into a broader field up in the field hierarchy. If that is the case, brands may take on different meanings as the field-frames change or transforms. Keller overlooks these

problems, and the implication is that following the CBBE model, it would be hard to build a brand on emerging frames. Without special attention to culture or context, it becomes difficult to predict what to associate the brand with for it to remain "cool" or popular in the future.

Narrative fidelity, which is a dimension of salience is something we miss from Keller's framework. Although he acknowledges that brands have a symbolic role, he does not elaborate much on how to build this into a brand offering. He "only" notes that we use brands for social approval and self-expression, and that associating the brand with certain users or usage situations may have influences on how the brand is perceived in terms of whom it is for, and what situations one can use the brand in. This, we argue, is partly a consequence of ignoring the context in his branding approach. We see narrative fidelity as a criterion that is closely tied to the contextual aspects of framing theory. The use of contextually relevant symbols, stories and myths are parts of what determines if a framing attempt resonates with the consumers' desires, and therefore it should be considered in the CBBE model.

To sum up, Keller's model of branding lacks contextual awareness, and narrative fidelity. Seeing as framing theory tells us that these are important criteria for a framing attempt's possibility to resonate, Keller's CBBE model's probability of "brand resonance" may be weakened when not treating these concepts with more attention than it currently does.

Holt and Cameron's model on the other hand seems to be more aligned with the concepts uncovered from our review of frames and framing. It's important to mention that this could be partly the result of the choice of concepts mainly from meso and macro framing theories. His treatment of context is largely corresponding with how Fligstein conceptualizes it, and he seems to meet the criteria of salience. What we miss from Holt is how to achieve a credible brand. The Cultural Strategy should include the steps to make consumers believe the narratives put forward by the brand. A brand without customers who are aware of it and

recognize it will struggle to build trust and credibility. If the so called identity brands in the focus of Cultural Strategy need credibility to perform myths to consumers, then it is necessary to elaborate on the way to achieve it.

We set out with this project to see whether theory on brand management can learn something from framing theory. With the two selected brand management approaches in mind, it seems that strategic framing can definitely contribute to brand management efforts. These approaches can learn from the criteria of credibility and salience to different extents, and they can have a new perspective on how context shapes the brand's meaning.

Seeing as how framing research can be divided into three levels (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014), we hypothesize that brand management also have split into levels of similar characteristics. Keller's model seem to fit with the assumptions that research on micro level framing has, and Holt has an approach to brand management that appears to correspond to the meso and macro levels of framing. Thus, they are both "right" in their own level. Cornelissen and Werner (2014) argue the need for a unification of the micro, meso, and macro framing levels, and suggest exploring the reciprocal influence between language, cognition, and culture. There also seem to be a potential for research on strategic brand management to take a similar direction to see the reciprocal influence on brands from perspectives of both cognition and culture.

Unanswered questions, suggestion for further research

After we learnt what kind of challenges brand management faces from a framing perspective, we obtained probably even more questions than answers.

- *We hypothesize that more and more brands are used for their symbolic value rather than their functional value, if true, what could be the reason for this, and what does it imply regarding brand management in the future?*

Our assumption is that by developing and reaching higher and higher standard of living the needs and desires of the customers change. This pushes them to focus more on using products for self-actualization and self-expression rather than using them for satisfying their physical, functional needs. What does this imply regarding branding in the future of western countries and regarding developing ones?

- *How to create the right myth to incorporate in a brand and how to research populist worlds for the disruption?*

The core of the Cultural Strategy is the myth that is built in the brand to answer the social strivings of the consumers, the source material can be adapted or learnt possibly from other cultural artifacts (book, movies, music, art), but how to look for the next theme? If there are signs of disruption in society, how does one search for them and how does one translate the disruptive idea into branding communication?

Grant McCracken (2006) attempts to elaborate on the idea of building a "net", that an organization can use to collect all the relevant information and monitors the other culture industries and ranks the emerging disruptions. He calls his concept "flocks and flows" and

attempts to construct a framework that brand managers can use to catch "disruptions" at an early emerging stage. A study to find empirical evidence in the application of his concept would provide insight into how to identify emerging meaning patterns among consumers.

- *How to prevent losing heritage and credibility by continuous adaptation to new disruptions?*

Credibility is an important criterion of the frames put forward by a brand. By always hunting for the disruptive ideologies and adapt to them with the narratives, we assume that brands could lose trust. Literature on framing has taught us that the factor of credibility may suffer if the dimension of frame consistency is not in place (Benford & Snow, 2000). The relation between a firm's actions and sayings should ideally be consistent, but this may be hard to achieve if the brand is constantly searching for, and telling new stories based in different ideologies. How to find the balance between a consistent[27] and an adaptive brand?

- *How to solve the problem of answering different national ideologies/ social desires in the case of global brands?*

We hypothesize that developing a myth to answer social tensions is not an easy task. If the brand operates on a global scale then these difficulties multiply. Different countries/regions have their different tensions and cultural heritage. Therefore the brand has to take care of

[27] Means here: constant, steady.

building an umbrella of myths that represents the global brand, but parts of it still appears relevant locally.

- *Can Cultural Branding learn directly from for example the movie industry?*

According to Holt (2006) brand symbolism operates in a similar way to the symbolism of other cultural products like books, actors, and movies. We assume that studying the way the movie industry produces narratives can further benefit the myth-driven cultural brand management.

- *How can brand managers acquire social skill and what parts of this broad concept are the most important for them to have?*

Fligstein (1997, 2001) denotes that socially skilled actors are better at putting forward a resonant message, and he has examples of what tasks should be performed by the actor. He does not elaborate on how this skill is acquired or if brand managers could learn it at all. It would also be important to know which aspects of social skill to acquire as a brand manager to make the brand resonant with the consumers' desire.

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