



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Master Degree Project in Knowledge-based Entrepreneurship

Brand Building in New Ventures

A subconscious process or an integrated activity?

Frida Isaksson

Supervisor: Johan Brink
Master Degree Project No. 2015:117
Graduate School

Brand Building in New Ventures

– A subconscious process or an integrated activity?

By Frida Isaksson

This thesis has been written within the research topic of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial marketing and branding.

School of Business, Economics, and Law, Gothenburg University

Vasagatan 1

P.O. Box 600

SE-40530 Gothenburg

© Frida Isaksson, 2015. All rights reserved

No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission by the author.

Contact: fridaisaksson@mac.com

Abstract

Title: Brand Building in New Ventures – A subconscious process or an integrated activity?

Author: Frida Isaksson

Supervisor: Johan Brink

Key Words: Branding, Entrepreneurial marketing, Entrepreneurial branding, Lean branding

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to examine how new ventures use branding in their start-up development process. Since branding is a broad area, the research is narrowed down to branding processes for companies in the B2C industry. I aim to understand the processes of the companies whereas the research is of exploratory nature.

Research question:

How do start-ups use branding in their start-up development process?

Methodology:

The methodology chosen to carry out this research is characterized by an inductive research strategy. A qualitative research method is applied through semi-structured interviews. The chosen paradigm for this master thesis is interpretative, which is based on questioning whether the organization exists in any real sense beyond the conceptions of social actors or not

Findings:

Entrepreneurial branding activities are very different from activities in established larger firms. It can be concluded that the process of entrepreneurial branding is a unique process dependent on what sector the company operates in, what type of company it is and the overall attitude towards branding. It is safe to say that branding is an iterative process where companies weave back and forth between activities with the aim to create brand recognition and brand awareness. It is proven that companies has the aim to align the strategic vision, organizational culture and the corporate images on the market in order to achieve success.

Acknowledgement

This thesis was written at the Graduate School of Innovation and Industrial Management, at the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg.

I would like to express my gratitude towards my supervisor Johan Brink, for his support, guidance, and valuable feedback throughout this research. Likewise, I would like to direct special thanks to the Companies which were contributing to this thesis with their time, and valuable input.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my wonderful colleagues and friends Linda Odenman, and Linnea Rehnberg at Co-Brand Concept. Without our teamwork, the completion of this thesis would not have been possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank my fantastic family; they have given me unlimited support throughout these years. Last not least, thank you Viktor Eliasson, my rock and my life partner for always believing in me.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	2
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	3
3.1 BRAND, BRAND EQUITY AND CORPORATE BRANDING DEFINITION.....	5
3.3 SERVICE LOGIC.....	6
3.2 ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING	7
3.3 CORPORATE BRANDING.....	8
3.4 LEAN BRANDING	11
3.5 TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT	13
3. METHODOLOGY.....	16
2.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	16
2.2 CHOICE OF METHOD.....	16
2.3 WORK PROGRESS.....	17
2.4 DATA COLLECTION	18
2.4.1 Primary data	18
2.4.2 Secondary data.....	19
2.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	19
4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....	21
4.1 CASE COMPANIES.....	21
4.1.1 Retail Sector	21
4.1.2 Service Sector.....	22
4.1.3 Reference Companies	22
4.2 VIEW OF BRANDING.....	23
4.2.1 Retail sector.....	23
4.2.2 Service sector	24
4.2.3 Reference companies.....	25
4.2 BRANDING PROCESS	25
4.2.1 Retail sector.....	25
4.2.2 Service sector	28
4.2.3 Reference companies.....	30
4.5 SUCCESS	31
5. ANALYSIS.....	33
5.1 THE VIEW OF BRANDING	33
5.2 INCENTIVE FOR BRANDING.....	34
5.2 PRE-ESTABLISHMENT STAGE	36
5.3 BRANDING PROCESS	37
5.3 SUCCESS	43
6. CONCLUSION	45
6.1 HOW DOES START-UPS USE BRANDING IN THEIR START-UP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?.....	45
<i>The view of branding</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>The branding process.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Managerial implications.....</i>	<i>47</i>

6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH	48
7. REFERENCE	49
8. APPENDIX	I
1. INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	I
2. GROWTH MODEL	III

1. Introduction

This first chapter will begin with an introduction to this thesis. It will begin with describing the importance of building a brand in the environment of today and the reasoning behind this research project. This is then followed by the aim and ambition of the thesis, and the research questions addressed.

1.1 Background

We are living in the communication age and we are continuously exposed to information. Thousands of companies tries to stand out in the crowd and reach their audiences through new and traditional medias, computers and, recently, even in our pockets through our always-connected smartphones. To develop a successful brand in the world of fast changing market is both a necessity and a great challenge for new ventures. A strong brand can lead to persistent competitive advantage on the market. Thus the role of the brand is becoming increasingly important in order to differentiate themselves towards competitors.

It is widely known that new ventures lack internal structures; identity and resources and therefore they face many different challenges. One of the great challenges is to reach out to their audience by establishing a brand. It is known that establishing a successful brand enhances the possibilities for customer acquisition and retention to build favorable reputation. Marketing and especially branding can be seen as the interface between a small company and its external environment. Hence, it can differentiate between surviving and failing start-up companies. Despite this traditional marketing theory offers little exploratory power for new ventures on the market as it is mainly focusing on large corporations. Entrepreneurship and marketing have many commonalities. They both have managerial foundation and have elements of being creative and innovative. Furthermore, they are also characterized by being opportunistic, flexible ad change oriented. Even though they have many commonalities they has developed as two distinct disciplines forming different schools of practice and execution. Yet these differences provide a starting point for exploring the journey of exploring entrepreneurial market creation. But what are the keys to success in terms of establishing

a brand on the market? Is there a difference between different sectors or is it simply just luck?

Since there is a limited amount of research made, this research project take a stance in the entrepreneurial process of branding in order to investigate how a new company can stand out from the crowd. The focus of this thesis is therefore to explore how firm without brand equity can try to acquire it and become more recognized among people i.e. how they use branding in their start-up development process.

1.2 Research question

The aim and ambition of this research project is to examine how new ventures use branding in their start-up development process. As there is a limited amount of research made, the research is of exploratory nature. This will be accomplished by addressing the study objects view of branding and their attitude towards developing a strong brand on the market.

The following research questions will be answered:

- How do start-ups use branding in their start-up development process?
 - How does a start-up market it self in order to build brand recognition and brand awareness?
 - Is there a difference in the branding process between the retail sector compared to the service sector?
 - What is best practice related to entrepreneurial branding?

2. Theoretical framework

The third chapter will give the reader an understanding of the related theoretical topics. It starts with describing the fit of entrepreneurship theory and marketing theory. Then, definitions about important elements of this thesis follow. Furthermore, a presentation of literature within the field of service logic, entrepreneurial marketing, corporate branding and lean branding will follow, which aims to provide an understanding of why and how topics are discussed.

Marketing, practiced by entrepreneurs is increasingly recognized as different towards traditional marketing theory (Stokes, 2000). It has been questioned for a long time how well traditional marketing paradigms and marketing models fit the environment of today (Muzyka and Hills, 1993). Tactical thinking such as 4P's of marketing can be seen as unnecessary and irrelevant (Gardner, 2014) and could hinder adaptability on the market (Bidhé, 2000).

The market today is characterized by symbolic consumption. Subjective images reflect the reality whereas corporate brands are important for companies, irrespectively to their size (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007). Research made by the Brand Orientation Index (2005) proves that organization investing in their branding process can get financial incentives. Companies investing in their branding process are almost twice as profitable as companies that do not. Wynarczyk et al (1993) argues that young ventures are vulnerable in their early phase. They lack the necessary market power and are highly dependent on a small customer base. According to Stokes (2006), this proves the incentive for branding. It enhances the chances for the new venture to succeed on the market. In this sense, the flexibility and innovativeness of entrepreneurial companies can be in their favor.

Entrepreneurship theory and marketing theory has developed as two distinct disciplines (Harrigan et al, 2013). Most of the research is described as isolated topics. In entrepreneurship theory; alertness, prior knowledge, personality traits, and different techniques in opportunity identification is in focus. Meanwhile in marketing theory models are presented in the context of larger firms and explains how these large firms shall gain competitive advantage on the market (Gruber, 2004). As traditional marketing

theory fails to account for the dynamics in entrepreneurial creativity, entrepreneurial marketing has become an emerging field of interest. Thus it links marketing and entrepreneurial activities together (Gaddefors and Andersson, 2009). The close connection with customers and the powerful impact on their marketing practices is one of the argument among researchers for marketing theory and entrepreneurship theory being a perfect fit (Carson et al., 1995; Orr, 1995; Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998; Day et al., 1998; Coviello et al., 2000; Gaddefors, 2005). To shape and create new markets is a key aspect of entrepreneurship. However, this is something that both entrepreneurial theory and marketing theory do not grasp. An opportunity can be created in the process of marketing a new venture, thus marketing can be entrepreneurial. Furthermore, entrepreneurship can be involved in the co-production of a market opportunity. Marketing can be claimed to be a key aspect of the entrepreneurial process. Hence, analyzing marketing activities helps to guide the business planning and to identify the uniqueness of the business. Thus, managing marketing is not the only key activity. It is also about having a diverse approach to marketing, mixing different resources and being creative (Gaddefors and Andersson, 2009).

Bresciani and Eppler (2010) argue that branding is crucial for establishing a new company. However, the entrepreneur often underestimates the company's ability to succeed and therefore fails to "think big". Branding is based on general considerations of the possible future of the business. Establishing a successful brand enhances the possibilities for customer acquisition and retention to build favorable reputation. However, many entrepreneurs have a lack of awareness about the importance of building a strong brand during their business creation process (Gaddefors and Andersson 2009). The reason for developing a strong brand is to highlight the uniqueness of an organization. Hence it is improving the possibilities of the company to succeed on the market (Rode and Vallaster, 2005).

When branding a venture, the company stands in front of many challenges. New ventures lacks an established identity, its reputation and internal structures are unformed and there is a lack of knowledge over what branding is and how important it is (Bresciani and Eppler., 2010; Rode and Vallaster., 2005). One challenge, according to Rode and Vallaster (2005) and Boyle (2003), is the lack of resources, the low know-how and the

little amount of time that can be spend on these type of issues. However, marketing and especially branding can be seen as the interface between a small company and its external environment. Hence, it can differentiate between surviving and failing start-up companies (Stokes, 2006).

In the process of building a strong brand, both interactions with consumers (Gardner, 2014) and strategizing are important (Bresciani and Eppler, 2010), however, theories concerns both are difficult to find. As companies focus extensively on their service offering and their customers on the market place of today, the theoretical framework problematizes on service logic and entrepreneurial marketing. Furthermore, two schools of brand building are outlined.

3.1 Brand, brand equity and corporate branding definition

Svedberg (2014) defines a brand as a strategic asset; it could be seen as a promise that constantly needs to be delivered upon in order to gain brand equity. The substance of what a brand is, or for who it is, is found in the brand identity. Svedberg (2014) means that the identity is the substance of what the brand is. It is through the identity that the venture can create its promises. The identity of a new venture is characterized by the culture, design, behavior and communication the venture have and it is the very essence of a brand. By establishing a successful brand Bresciani and Eppler (2010) argues that it enhances the possibilities for customer acquisition and customer retention, which in turn enhances the chances to build a favorable reputation. Brand equity is defined as a set of assets and liabilities, which is directly connected to the brand name and logo in order to add value to the customer (Aaker, 1991). Brand equity is the power of the brand, functional and emotional, and it has positive influence on raising purchase power from the customer (Svedberg, 2014).

As all brands, corporate brands add value to the varieties of products and services offered by a company. Corporate brands targets all stakeholders and not just the customers. It promotes the whole company instead of just one product or service (Knox and Brickerton, 2003). Corporate branding links corporate values, such as credibility together with all stakeholders of the company. According to Balmer (2001), a corporate brand emphasizes strategies and is partly formed by its stakeholders. Each stakeholder is

a point of customer interaction and therefore, the corporate brand reinforces its value into all parts of the companies marketing activities.

3.3 Service logic

As a brand is seen as a promise towards customers, a new venture must constantly deliver on to the customers. The importance of developing a corporate brand is highly present on the market. Therefore, service logic is of high importance to investigate in the coming section. Services dominate both economic output and employment in the landscape where companies act today. According to Tether

(2013) this implies for constant development and improvement of the service offering. However, Michael et al (2008) states that the general perception of product logic versus service logic results in firms often focuses on the distinction between products and services, and thereby limits their own ability to innovate. Vargo and Lusch (2004) argues that the dominant logic of marketing today has its base in service logic, which is focused on intangible resources, co-creation of value and different relationships between service innovators and their stakeholders. Everything can be seen as a service and instead of seeing the service as a transaction, it is seen as a relationship between different parties. Instead of companies selling output to their consumers, they sell input, which is made through value creating activities where the customer plays a role as a co-creator for producing value. Vargo and Lusch (2004) together with Michael et al (2008) means that the service logic is based on recognition among consumers and the new ways of service their personal needs. This implies that service logic within innovation includes reconfiguring value constellations of services, which theory within entrepreneurship also highlights.

Service logic is an emerging field in marketing, which proposes that value of tangible products is over-dominated by the value of intangible services (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In line with Vargo and Lusch (2004), Stickdorn & Schneider (2011) also argues that the focus in marketing has shifted towards highlighting services. Chickery et al (2009) states that the new way of understanding value-creation within marketing leads to implications for theory and practice of entrepreneurship in terms of opportunity recognition and exploitation of new markets. The service logic has its base in an

entrepreneurial marketing process driven by co-creation. This forces a firm to repeatedly be involved with its customers in the innovation and value creation process, relying on customers as a source of knowledge and human capital.

3.2 Entrepreneurial marketing

Given that service logic has its base in the entrepreneurial marketing processes as described in the section above, it is important to go more into depth in theories about entrepreneurial marketing. According to Gruber (2004) marketing is the key to success for new ventures. However, only a few conceptualizations exist where there marketing is included in the organizational development of firms. Morris et al (2002) defines entrepreneurial marketing as "an integrative construct for conceptualizing marketing in an era of change, complexity, chaos, contradiction, and diminishing resources, and one that will manifest itself differently as companies age and grow. It fuses key aspects of recent developments in marketing thought and practice with those in the entrepreneurship area into one comprehensive construct".

Rode and Vallaster (2005) argues that the pre-establishment stage is an essential stage for the company in the process of building a brand. Activities such as planning and outlining the company are made before the establishment in order to facilitate the process of growth. It is of high importance to keep focus during the start-up phase. In order to help keeping focus, the aim and purpose of the company is developed. To base the business concept in a clear understanding of values allows for flexibility and enhances the ability to adapt to changes. Furthermore, it is important in the pre-establishment stage to identify key groups that will help to promote future growth. To gain feedback from the identified groups on the market is of high importance thus it reduces the uncertainty and clarifies in which direction to go. Gruber (2004) argues that marketing is the key to success for new ventures, i.e. the key to achieve business growth. To develop a brand and see it as an asset builds the brand equity severely. The purpose of branding is to boost the equity. It is an important activity, which takes long time to develop, especially as a newly founded company has limited resources. However, a strong brand allows the organization to be less vulnerable to its competitors. Thus, it is an incentive for company to build strong corporate brands (Svedberg, 2014).

Models in entrepreneurial marketing assume marketing being a primitive activity and eventually develop and grow into a professional matter. The marketing develops when the new venture gains know-how and introduces planning and formal structures into the company. In other words, the marketing is at first informal and transforms into a marketing department later on in the process. Svedberg (2014) together with Wong and Marrilees (2007) both states that a brand will develop for companies and their offers whether they actively strive for it or not. However, according to Bresciani and Eppler (2010) branding is not considered as a high priority activity in the start up process. Even though as Rode and Vallaster (2005) and Boyle (2003) pinpoints that a new venture have a lack of resources, low know-how and a little amount of time, branding makes a company stand out in the crowd among thousands companies.

3.3 Corporate branding

The section above proves that the pre-establishment stage is an essential stage for the company in the process of building a brand. Therefore, it is of high importance to go into depth into some tools for how to develop a strong corporate brand in this coming section. Bresciani and Eppler (2010) highlight the importance of developing a branding plan before the inception of a company. Aaker (2004) states that there is a need to build a strong corporate brand, especially when the company wants to own multiple products under one corporate brand name. Products and services tend to be homogenous over time and a strong corporate brand can provide a value proposition that not only help to differentiate, but also brings credibility to its products and services. There is some academic literature covering how to build a corporate brand. However, many of the theories cover only the underlying factors of the corporate brand building process. According to Ojasalo et al (2008), companies need understanding of the strategic directions and goals in order to build up a corporate brand. Hatch and Schultz (2003) states that corporate branding is a process of linking strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate images together. These three building blocks cover the general idea behind the company (strategic vision), the internal values and beliefs (culture), and the basic assumptions that is communicated to its members (image). A corporate image reflects the views of the organization developed by its stakeholders. It can be described as

the overall impression of the company, perceived by the outside world. In this impression customers, stakeholders, the media, the general public is included. The model of Hatch and Schultz (2003) highlights the level of actors involved in corporate branding – management, employees and external stakeholders. Thereby, it represents both internal, in terms of management and organizational culture, and external, in terms of the image held by the external stakeholders, sides of corporate branding.

Bresciani and Eppler (2010) propose a framework that should be followed by start-ups when developing their brand. The framework is built up in two steps; firstly, the brand creation sequence and secondly, the branding orientation classification. The brand creation sequence has three important phases. Phase one takes place before the inception of the company. The entrepreneurs should define a brand strategy that goes in line with the strategy of the new organization. Phase two is to make sure that the brand strategy is enacted through the brand design (name, logo, colors, and visual elements). Furthermore, it shall also go in line with the brand mission and philosophy defined in the first phase. In the third phase, the entrepreneur shall develop a plan for brand building activities.

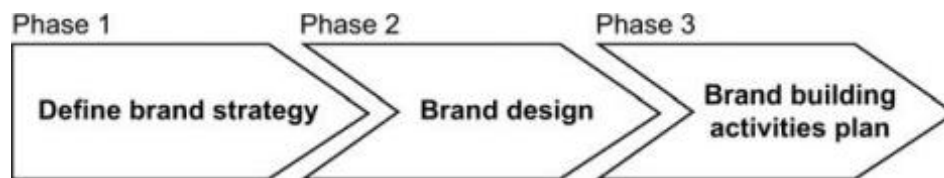


Figure 1: Brand Creation Sequence. Source: Bresciani and Eppler (2010)

The branding activities shall be carefully selected and obviously, the activities change depending on which type of company it is. Therefore, the second step, branding orientation classification, is presented by the authors in order to help the entrepreneurs to select the most appropriate activities for their newly founded companies. Depending on what type of company that is pursuing the branding activities, there are different approaches to branding. The activities of branding are typically relying on industry expectations and the company's attitude towards branding. The branding orientation classification can divide companies relative to their branding activities (innovative or traditional) and expectations of branding activities. The model is divided into four clusters; the damned to brand, i.e. the companies that have no other options but to use

both traditional and innovative branding activities. These companies see branding as an obligation and rather than an opportunity. The tech-marketers are those who have a clear brand vision. They do not rely on traditional branding activities; instead, they rely on innovative activities. The category of far-sighted is firms who operates in industries where they do not need a large branding activity in order to survive, however, they still have a creative approach to branding. The fourth cluster is the traditionalist, who does not believe in branding and its importance to future success of the business. They strive for a product-centralized approach in traditional branding activities when communicating with their customers. This classification provides an overview of typical approaches to branding, which start-ups conduct. It is specific for new ventures with limited budget to pursue branding activities.

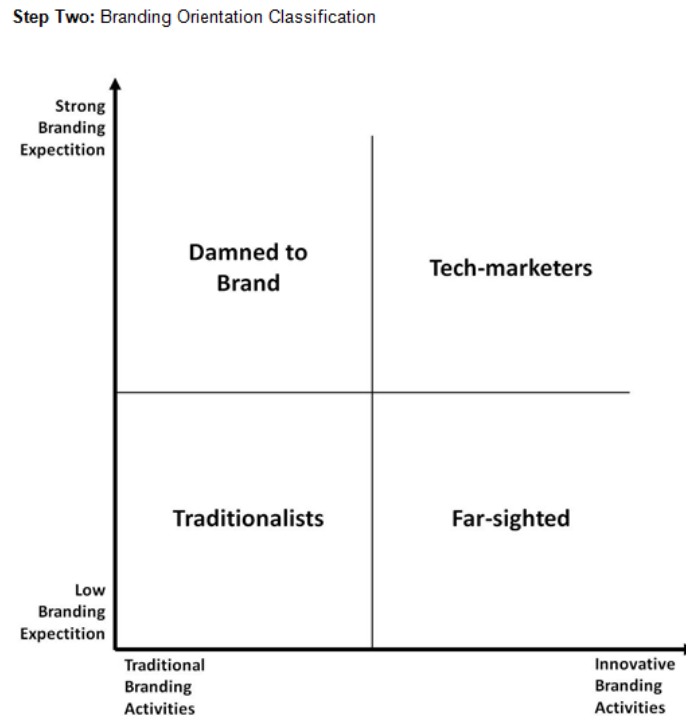


Figure 2: Branding orientation classification. Source: Bresciani and Eppler (2010)

Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006) describe brand building as a sequence of processes, divided into five steps. The first step consists of brand planning. By integrating internal processes and procedures, an organizational framework is developed. The second step consists of internal and external brand analysis. The mission, personality and values of the brand are aligned to the corporate vision and mission. Management and employees are responsible

for the activities that it takes to build a brand and all key attributes of the products and services that the company provides. However, the employees must also anticipate the needs of their customers and other stakeholders as well. The third step involves the development of a brand strategy. This has its base in the core of the brand, its values and associations. In the fourth step, the strategy is realized and the implementation takes place. This step can be called brand implementation and in order to control everything, the fifth step takes place – the brand audit. This step fulfills the task to control and monitor the performance of the established brand.



Figure 3: Brand Building Process. Source: Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006)

3.4 Lean Branding

The different frameworks represent a very planned, sequential process for how to develop a brand. It is therefore important to also go into depth in the diametrical opposite in order to get a wide spectrum of how to think when developing a brand. According to Gardner (2014), a brand begins to have meaning when it is connected to others. Brand development is almost exclusively thought, taught, and practiced with an industrial mindset. The brand process follows known cycles, mirrored in thousands of agencies. The agencies often act in order to position a brand, make brand promises, mission statements, brand identity systems etc. However, Gardner (2014) argues that this type of approach ignores the customer's reaction to the brands. By using this approach, companies cannot differ between those who like the brand and those who love it. Today the consumer chooses color, style, delivery etc. by themselves and they have a more fluid, agile and adaptable mindset, this means that companies cannot strategically imagine brands and it cannot be produced.

Brands are created by people and are given means by people, just like relationships do. Therefore Gardner (2014) means that a first step is to have a more fluid, relational approach. The success for new ventures and their brands are based on their ability to innovate. Innovation can only happen with fluid models of thought based on learning, which allows for creating depth, validity and strength in the relationship the company tries to nurture. Branding must allow flexibility in order to nurture the possibilities for exploration, growth and discovery. Fluid thinking weaves in and out of different thoughts of unexplored spaces. As the brand develops, the thinking about the brand must develop as well. Fluid thinking allows for jumping from side to side instead of following predefined steps. Thinking in this way increases the possibilities for your brand to create value by allowing for exploration, discovery, and learning. A second step is to adapt a more relational approach, instead of only thinking tactical. Tactical thinking such as the 4 P's is not necessary in order to push a brand to its audience, since they can compare features between different offerings easily on their own – i.e. they do not need to rely on company information anymore since its not the only source of information. Thus, tables have turned – from tactical to relational.

Gardner (2014) argues that it is impossible to experience a company without having interaction with a brand – therefore it must have a given part in the new venture development. The lean brand framework is a framework that can be used for building sustainable, validated, and passionate relationships with the customers based on shared values. The lean-brand framework places a new paradigm of brand development on the map and it fits perfectly with those new ventures that are ready to experiment, validate their different hypotheses and build long-term relationships with their customers. When using the framework, the brand will add to the potential of the new venture increasing the possibilities to succeed on the market. In the different stages a new venture is going through, the venture will face challenges. In order to overcome the challenges, the venture must overcome some gaps in order to move on to the next phase.

In order to close the first gap, assumptions must be made. This is why the first gap is called the hypothesis gap. Even if a company writes a business plan as Bresciani and Eppler (2010) proposes or follow the lean framework that Gardner (2014) has developed, every company begins with certain assumptions formed by the founders about what

people like, think, believe, want and become passionate about. In order to close the hypothesis gap, guesses about the market must be formed into an emotional-value hypothesis. In order to close the gap, the ideas must be tested with an initial audience to generate feedback. Assumptions are springboards for exploration and experimentation and it can be seen as a starting point for testing in the market place. However, it is easy to start building final versions before testing it on the market place and this is why the validation gap needs to be closed in order to eliminate waste in the discovery phase. The experimentation and assumptions of the hypothesis is tested through working with a feedback tools, such as the minimum viable brand (MVB). The assumptions are tested through the MVB and if one element works, the new venture will keep it. If it falls flat, the new venture must iterate and test again. The validation gap is crossed through business growth, a passionate group of customers is formed and a product-market fit is achieved through the MVB. By experiencing growth, a growth gap arises which mean that a growth hypothesis must be developed and tested. External demand is tested and sees if the new brand creates value. When the value is perceived, the new venture can grow its audience, its reach and its culture.

3.5 Two schools of thought

Corporate branding and lean branding can be seen as each others opposites whereas corporate branding can be seen as a planned approach and lean branding can be seen as a more unplanned, flexible approach. In order to achieve growth, the importance of planning is frequently debated. Researchers such as Brinkman et al (2010) together with Gruber (2004) argue that business planning enhances the performance and learning of the entrepreneur meanwhile Reis (2011) among others, argue that planning and forecasting are only applicable when its based on a long, stable operating history in a static environment, which a new venture do not have. The two scholars both agree that learning is an important part of the process of establishing a company and a brand. The learning is about extending the knowledge about the intended business, which, according to Brinkman et al (2010) eases the decision-making processes. Gruber (2004) argues that business planning allows for being able to process great amount of information, to set milestones towards achieving their vision and to develop action plans. However, Gardner

(2014) argues that it just limits the new ventures ability to innovate.

Bidh  (2000) states that business having high degree on uncertainty does not benefit from planning as it can actually hinder the adaptability required for surviving in this type of environment. It is evident that marketing is practiced by entrepreneurs in another setting compared to concepts presented in conventional literature (Gadderfors et al, 2009). Many authors, such as Gruber (2004), states that the key to success for new ventures lies within the ability to create a strong brand and marketing themselves. Miles et al (2014) describes entrepreneurial marketing and branding processes as a planned versus an unplanned approach. Either there is a planned approach, which emphasizes the processes in marketing in order to spot market opportunities. When doing so the recommendation is to emphasize that the management firstly should have a proactive orientation and first recognize and create opportunities and secondly the management shall exploit the opportunities innovatively. Another path of the planned approach emphasizes strategic management and focuses on external scanning which in turn become critical marketing activities, which encourage the focus of demands for customers. An unplanned approach for entrepreneurial marketing is to put emphasize on relationships, the focus on size and resources of companies in order to develop the brand of the company. In this field, a value of co-creation leads to new relationships, which in turn correspondingly are created with new resources in the business. Gaddefors et al (2009) means that entrepreneurial marketing is not just a competence that can be acquired by an entrepreneur; it is the very heart of the entrepreneurial process. They note, “Entrepreneurial marketing is not about “managing” marketing at all; but about a creative, even eclectic approach invoking a mixing of resources”.

According to the author’s, marketing is a function of business development; it needs to be seen as an inseparable aspect of the entrepreneurial process. This means that, compared to other fields of research within entrepreneurial marketing, marketing should not be treated as an add-on after certain organizational aspects has been addressed. It should be taken into account of the very beginning of the entrepreneurial process – in order to develop a strong brand.

Entrepreneurial marketing is something that is extended over time and space, involving relations, embracing co-production both in terms of identity as well as in terms

of products or services. Moreover, Gaddefors et al (2009) states that an entrepreneurial market do not exist as a mechanism, it is rather an activity of becoming. It is the interactions based around meanings, purpose and identity that create products, customers, entrepreneurs and markets. Marketing is the center of the entrepreneurial process where entrepreneurs create spaces for expectations to grow. When entrepreneurs allow this to happen, different markets can emerge. Entrepreneurs create the market potential by acting upon an opportunity and here; marketing is a fully integrated element of the entrepreneurial process. According to Gaddefors et al (2009), markets are created and recreated when situations where people meet. These moments are difficult to control since all people involved will interpret the situation from their point of view. When branding a new venture, a company can take different approaches to how to build a strong corporate brand. It is important for a new venture to establish their corporate brand on the market in a short amount of time, otherwise, as Timmons and Spinelli (2003) argues there is a risk that they soon will disappear from the market.

Svedberg (2014) notes that the customers form their own opinion about the company even if the company does branding activities or not. This is why it is important for a company to invest in thought, time and resources in how they want the company to be perceived and build the brand from this manifesto.

3. Methodology

The second chapter describes and presents the methodology used in order to carry out this research. It will treat research philosophy, choice of method, work progress, data collection and discuss the reliability and validity.

2.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy is connected to how knowledge is developed and how applicable it is to reality. Epistemology is concerned with acceptable knowledge while ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, trying to answer the question “what is” and to understand its nature of existence. In order to collect knowledge in a qualitative study, an interpretivistic approach is suitable. This means that the social scientist needs to take the social setting into consideration and try to capture differences and actions in order to understand their role. In order to connect theory to reality, constructivism will be applied. This means that the social scientist must take into consideration that a social phenomena and its categories are not produced through social interaction, they are in constant revision (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The chosen paradigm for this master thesis is interpretative, which is based on questioning whether the organization exists in any real sense beyond the conceptions of social actors or not (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This scientific paradigm is suitable since the procedure within organizations will be examined, and with this paradigm, research will show if the branding process of start-ups is existing beyond any real sense or if its just within the examined case.

2.2 Choice of method

The methodology chosen to carry out this research is characterized by an inductive research strategy. An inductive approach focuses on linking data and theory together to produce generalizable findings. A qualitative, inductive research strategy is, according to Bryman and Bell (2011) suitable and effective for obtaining necessary theories in order to explain a researched phenomenon in-depth. The research emphasizes words rather than quantification and analysis of data. In this case, the qualitative research has not been used to produce theory; instead; theory has laid the foundation for the qualitative research.

To further categorize the choice of method is through collection and analysis of data, i.e. research design. The research that will be conducted is made through a multiple-

case study. This comparative design contributes to, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), a better understanding of the phenomena and it will be used in order to compare and contrast how start-ups have used branding in their entrepreneurial processes.

2.3 Work progress

This research builds upon my personal interest of small entrepreneurial firms and their branding processes. During my studies, I came in contact with entrepreneurial marketing, which highlight the intersection of entrepreneurial theories and traditional marketing theories. The role of branding is a subject frequently discussed in these fields of research, whereas an interest arose in how a newly founded company act and think about branding in the climate of today. As I am in the process of starting up a business of my own, I wanted this thesis to investigate a topic in which I am highly interested in and consequently, give valuable insight in how to develop a brand of my own.

This thesis aims to contribute in terms of empirical findings about firms view about branding and their course of action. Three parties can benefit and gain new insights from this research; scholars participating the debate of the importance of branding using planned processes, start-ups searching for guidelines and information about branding processes and myself in my work towards building up a brand for Co-Brand Concept.

An extensive literature review has been conducted after deciding on the topic. This resulted in theories about service logic, entrepreneurial marketing, corporate branding and lean branding in order to represent two schools of thought in how to build a brand. The theoretical framework is an outcome of the literature review. After the framework was set, an interview framework was conducted and case companies were searched after. It was decided to carry out semi-structured interviews in order to let the interviewee speak freely. When the interviews were conducted, the theoretical framework was adjusted to be more aligned with the responses, indicating an inductive approach.

Within the boundaries of a comparative research design the data was analyzed. Empirical findings from the case studies were compared in order to find similarities and differences and were then followed by a comparison of the existing literature. The first research question was answered through answering a set of sub questions about how

companies build brand awareness, differences between industries and the process of branding.

2.4 Data collection

2.4.1 Primary data

In order to gather primary data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. As interviews according to Bryman and Bell (2011) are widely used, there are two common forms: unstructured and semi-structured. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer relies on an interview guide (see appendix 1). It is a very open method, focusing on the own perspective of the interviewee. The reason for conducting semi-structured interviews in this thesis is due to that a similar sequence of events is discussed with different interviewees.

My sample of case companies are business to consumer (B2C) operates within the retail sector and the service sector. The reason for choosing cases in both sectors is to further investigate if the branding process for B2C companies uses the same processes for branding or if it differs. As the aim of this thesis is to give a process view of branding, companies in all the stages of Scott and Bruce's (1987) growth model are represented (see appendix 2). The processes have been compared to one reference company in each sector in order to see similarities and differences and determine success. To further secure whether the companies branding processes has been successful on the market, interviews with competitors has been conducted to verify if they are aware of their existence. Companies that have passed the inception stage has been able to give a retrospective view of the branding process, reflecting on pitfalls and successes, whereas the companies just entered the inception stage has given a view of where they are in the process and reflect upon the path towards the future. The reason for conducting interviews with both new and existing companies is to avoid biases in terms of after constructions of the branding process. The entrepreneurial companies are maximum 10 years old working in the B2C sector whereas the reference companies contributing to the thesis have about 20 years of experience in the market.

2.4.2 Secondary data

The secondary data collected to this thesis is exclusively from written documents such as reports and policy documents (see chapter 7 ‘references’). Two criteria’s that must be accounted for when evaluating documents are authenticity and credibility. The source of evidence must be unquestionable and free from error and distortion (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The secondary data selected for this thesis live up to these criterions as the data has been reviewed in detail and no subjective data has been used. Additionally, the databases used to retrieve the secondary data are in the author’s opinion credible (Gothenburg University Library and Google Scholar).

In the search, key words included entrepreneurial marketing, brand building, corporate branding, lean branding and service logic. Secondary data, published during the 21st century were prioritized in the search and gathering. Apart from document gathered from searching databases, some articles were reused from previous academic studies and some were found through citations in other documents.

2.5 Reliability and validity

In qualitative studies, external and internal validity are important aspects in order to determine the quality of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2011). External reliability concerns the ability to replicate the study with similar results. However, in qualitative research it is impossible to repeat a social setting. The results in this study among the cases differ extensively to each other, and a replication of the study would probably lead to different results. However, through choosing companies in the B2C industry, accounting for both product and services, I have tried to counteract this fact as much as possible. If the study were replicated, it would probably lead to variations among the results as the cases and its setting are unique (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Internal reliability concerns the disagreements in observations between the team of researchers conducting the research. As I am a single writer, the internal reliability is problematic to assess. If I wrote this thesis in a team of researchers, my view would probably been challenged. However, I have not lacked a counterpart in my topic as I have discussed my research with my supervisor and a team of researchers working on similar topics (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

External and internal validity is also important aspects to consider in a qualitative study. External validity is concerning to which extent the findings are generalizable. In qualitative studies the generalizability is often questioned due to the small samples in case studies (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This study has not produced any generalizable findings, however, some indications or guidelines may be found in the research. Internal validity is concerning the observations made by the researcher and the theoretical ideas developed. As an inductive approach has been used, I have been able to weave back and fourth between the theories when required and thereby assure the internal validity.

Another criteria for assessing the quality of a research are trustworthiness and authenticity. Regarding trustworthiness, conformability must, except from reliability and validity, be discussed. This refers to which degree the research is suffering from personal values and interpretations. Objectivity has been strived for throughout the research. I have chosen cases for representing each step in the growth model of Scott and Bruce (1998) and also verified whether the company is considered as successful among its competitors in order to ensure objectivity. However, the interviews have only taken place with one person on the company and at one single point of time. Thereby, I cannot reject that a different answer would be given at another point of time and with other circumstances.

Authenticity is to assess a wider political impact of the research. However, these considerations are not applicable since I have tried not to impact the interviewees in any sense. I have seen the interviews as a possibility to learn about the process of branding for each company, whereas I have not been able to make an impact on the respondents and their answers. One aspect that can be discussed about the authenticity is the fact that companies tried to build their brand but not succeeded has been left out. All the companies that were interviewed are working within the B2C industries and represent two fields of offerings; products and services. However, they are not exactly in the same industry within the retail and service sector, therefore they represent a spread among the cases strengthening the authenticity of the research.

4. Empirical findings

The fourth chapter presents the empirical findings, which has been gathered through interviews with founders or employees of each company, by using the interview framework. As the branding process was proved to be similar between the service companies and the product-producing companies, the empirical findings are presented sector-wise. In order to get a process view of the branding process, reference companies are presented within each sector and complemented with a success-section.

4.1 Case Companies

4.1.1 Retail Sector

The case companies in the retail sector are all working within the industry of business to consumer goods. Company A was founded in 2013 and just three months after their inception, they had their first products on the market. The founders of the company have started several businesses before in the same industry, whereas the process went very fast. Company A represent the *expansion stage* in the model of growth (see appendix 2) developed by Scott and Bruce (1987) thus the company is developing its growth continuously with new lines on the market. Furthermore, they also start to apply systematic structures in the company in order to develop even more. The company has a turnover of around 4 million SEK and employees 5 persons besides the founders of the company.

Company B was founded in august 2013 and launched the first product in may 2014. They have not yet reported any profits, however, their have start to gain profit according to the interviewee, as they represent the growth stage of the Scott and Bruce (1987) model. Company C was founded in 2007 and today, eight years later; they have 4 employees working fulltime at the company. It took about a year to launch their product on the market and today; they have a turnover of 25 million SEK. The company represent, together with Company A the expansion stage. They continuously work in order to grow the business, launching new lines on the market. Company D was founded in 2012 and represents the *survival stage* of the growth model. It is a working business entity, however, they are not yet profitable and has not yet reported any revenues. They face the challenge of increased distribution and competition as they now enter the market

launching its first pilot products in 2015. All the case-companies in the retail sector are based on trends on the market. Lifestyle trends, digitalization and innovations laid the foundation of these companies.

4.1.2 Service Sector

The case companies in the service sector are all working with services directed to consumers, within the business to consumer industry. Company E was founded in 2009 and today employees around 40 young people (part-time mostly) with a turnover of 6 million SEK. As the company started up, they immediately launched their service on the market. They too are representing the expansion stage in the model of Scott and Bruce (1987), facing the same challenges as company A and C. Company F was founded in 2011 and had already 2013 a turnover of 60 million SEK, with 6 employees working fulltime. This company represents the expansion stage together with other companies as they faces challenges of continuous growth. Company F launched their first pilot project the same year as they were founded and has since then been a story of success. Company G was founded in 2011; this is today a company generating profits. The company is a working business entity and now faces challenges such as increased distribution and competition, whereas they too represent the survival stage. They launched their services on the market just shortly after their inception and today they employ around 20 people. Company H represents the inception stage of a company, whereas they try to establish themselves on the market and develop into a working business entity. They have launched a pilot on the market in order to gain feedback from their clients, thus they are not get gaining any profits. All the case-companies in the service sector are based on gaps on the market. Just as the retail sector, the lifestyle trends, digitalization and innovations laid the foundation of these companies.

4.1.3 Reference Companies

The case companies presented as references are successful companies working in both the retail sector (Company I) and in the service sector (Company J). Company I was founded in 1993. They have around 70 employees and have a turnover of 133 million SEK. When they started up, they started with buying a space where they could operate and from that day they launched their products on the market. Company J operates within

the service sector and they were founded in 1996. They have 900 employees working fulltime with a turnover of 344 million SEK. As it is a service company, they provided their services the same day they were founded and they have grown ever since. Both Company I and J represents the maturity stage in the growth model of Scott and Bruce (1987) as they cannot be considered an entrepreneurial start-up anymore. Their growth is still present, and they still strive for growing even more.

Name	Founded in	Sector	Stage of growth
Company A	2013	Retail	Expansion
Company B	2013	Retail	Growth
Company C	2007	Retail	Expansion
Company D	2012	Retail	Survival
Company E	2009	Service	Expansion
Company F	2013	Service	Expansion
Company G	2011	Service	Growth
Company H	2014	Service	Inception
Company I	1993	Retail	Maturity
Company J	1996	Service	Maturity

Table 1: case-companies

4.2 View of branding

4.2.1 Retail sector

Company A is a company trying to revolutionize their industry with a new innovative product, which their customers has easy access to. Their view of branding is that it is a very important activity, especially since they did not succeed in the beginning. From the beginning, they had another logotype and struggled with their identity. It was hard for them to promote their brand in the beginning, as they did not really know which identity they had. Setting the scene and the boundaries helped them in their view of branding and opened their eyes to what effect the branding activities actually have. As they try to revolutionize the business, the branding activities must help to teach their consumers how to use their products. They value social media highly as it is easy to push the brand out and that almost everyone is searching for inspiration in social media settings.

Company B started their business based on something that they wished for on the market, which few persons knew of. They wanted to create hype around their product,

which they succeeded with and therefore, they express that they value branding highly. Company B found a way to both promote their brand as well as co-produce marketing materials together with their customers. Social medias are considered as an important tool to push the brand out on the market and thanks to using their “ambassadors” as the interviewee expresses, they managed to create hype around the product quickly. Company C sees branding activities as a very important part of their everyday work, which all of the companies in the retail sector highlighted, however, they do it differently. Just as Company B found a way to co-produce with their target group, Company C highlight that they have taken their target group into consideration in order to operate in the same channels as they do, pushing their brand out to the consumers and creating hype around the product. They see themselves selling an actual lifestyle and not just a product, whereas they try to document this in their branding activities. Their target group operates often on social medias, whereas they focus their branding activities almost extensively to these forums. As they view branding as an important activity they highlight that it is important for consumers to identify themselves with the brand. Company D has been struggling to find brand name and a logotype and have had a lot of difficulties getting it registered. They highlight that they believe branding is very important in their business to come through the competition on the market, making customers aware of their brand. Since they are in a very early phase with a limited budget they trying to do everything at the same time weaving in the branding activities in the work they do everyday. Furthermore, they try to use social media and all free media channels in order to promote their brand. All of the companies highlight that the presence in social media is important; it is also an activity that is easy to measure.

4.2.2 Service sector

Company E do highlight that branding is important, however, they express that they do not value it so highly in their everyday work. For them, a well-performed service is the best branding activity for them, as their customer acquisition mainly comes from recommendations. However, they started up with an intention to save time for people. Company F is just like Company A, trying to revolutionize a traditional industry thus they see branding as a very important activity. They too try to teach the market about their services and therefore it is of high importance to push their brand out on the market.

By pushing their brand out they build awareness and recognition on the market. Company G highlight that they value branding very much, as they came into the market as a competitor. They want to turn the consumers everyday actions into using their services, and therefore they must put a lot of effort into their branding activities, teaching their clients to use their services. Company H is in the start-up phase and has therefore not pursued any branding activities other then coming up with a name of the company. However, they believe that branding is very important, especially since they are a new innovative service entering the market. As they are innovative, they believe that they need to teach their customers how to use the service as well as creating hype. They highlight that their resources are very limited, thus they mainly use free channels to push their brand out on the market.

4.2.3 Reference companies

The view of branding in Company I, working in the retail sector, is that it is not of high importance. They have not pursued any branding activities and still today, do not have a department for marketing. At the time they started up, they wanted to revolutionize the market, making it easier to access products on the market. Since they have succeeded without it in the past, they leave the branding activities to the employees of the company. Lately they are present in social medias since its “required” of you as a company to be there, however, they expressed that they do not have any strategies behind this decision. Company J sees branding in terms of doing a good job delivering the service perfectly to their customers. At the time they started up, they introduced a innovative service on the market. They express that they create brand awareness and brand recognition based on recommendations on the market therefore they view branding as taking god care of the relationships. In this sense they value branding highly.

4.2 Branding process

4.2.1 Retail sector

The branding process of Company A has been fringed by rapid growth and an identity crisis. As the founder started up business in the industry before, they knew what to do. The development of the new company went beyond that they expected and they started to

build an online platform for their products, develop a logotype and started to form their identity. They took on a name, which came with a lot of promises and responsibilities. The company grew and employees entered the company, everyone formed their view of the company based on the name and the products, which lead to an identity crises. The fact that they had problems with leveraging on their promises, the picture of them in the industry and at the same time trying to revolutionize a traditional industry made it hard for them to live up to the expectations on them. External help was needed in order to align the employees and unite in what the name really meant to them. A manifesto was developed where all communication rules were set for both internal and external communication. According to the company, routines have been the greatest challenge due to the high growth and the identity problems. When the manifesto was developed, everyone had something to work with and towards which made it easier to grow the weather. As the rules and routines were set, they started to build their brand professionally. Two persons handle all the channels in media, they today work more with storytelling and they are starting to connect all their channels to achieve continuity when pushing their brand out on the market. They continuously have the manifesto in mind, all the employees are united in their work and deliver their promises to their customers. During the interview, learning was a repeated word. The companies made mistakes in the beginning, however, they probably needed the experience in order to develop to what they are today.

The branding process of Company B and Company C has its base in the lifestyle of people – as the interviewees expressed; they sell a “lifestyle”. When the companies spotted the opportunity to bring this product to the Swedish market, the first step in the branding process was to create hype around the product. During the process Company B focused on relationship building, choosing some exclusive ambassadors to work with. They wanted to reach their target audience by this strategy and create a demand on the market. They created recognition in the market by taking part in a big event launching their product there around the people that could promote their product. In line with the strategy of Company B, Company C also wanted to attract interest in the beginning and turned to famous franchisee and selling the product exclusively through them, creating a demand and hype around the product. Both of the companies succeeded faster then

indented with selling out their first batches, much thanks to the hype they created on the market. Both companies marketed the product name instead of the brand name, which means that both of them marketed a descriptive word instead of focusing on the identity of the company and its brand. They were first on the market to promote the product, however both of them have pinpointed that competitors that remained passive also benefited a lot from their efforts to spread the knowledge on the market. As they realized along the way of branding their product and not their company, they have tried to develop a strong brand for the entire company instead of just branding the product.

Strategically thinking, Company B worked with target groups in segments of alphabetical order, dividing different segments and markets in order to keep focus on branding the company on the market. The relational approach towards different segments have paid off, however, since the company has been growing very fast, it has been hard to manage all the relationships and keep focus on the path they are working towards. Something that was highlighted during the interview was the difficulty of not going after all opportunities. When the company is growing and gets a strong position on the market, one wants to develop even more and launch more products on the market. Thus it is even more important to nurture existing relationships and not be replaced with another substitute product.

Company C has also working with their branding with a relational approach, targeting consumers who can promote the product in social medias. Today, the company has several lines, which they market towards different target segments, which gives them a broad target group. In line with Company A, Company B and Company C highlight the process of learning and taking care of the relationships that they have today. Although everything has not run smoothly in the brand building process, they have learned a lot during the process. Company C also has a background of changing design agency for their graphic identity many times. Reflecting on this process, it would have been better for them to hire one firm and pay all the money they spent in total only on them and it probably have been cheaper for them then changing many times. They give the recommendation to test and follow one of all the ideas instead of changing track and it later in the process profs that it does not work. Both Company B and C pointed out the value of creating relationships with their customers, as they believe that their success is

much thanks to them. This is something that also Company D highlights. This company is in an early phase still working with their identity on the market. They too work with a special type of target group working to promote the brand even before their launch on the market. The process to get where they are today they have been working with guidelines, business plan, marketing plan – which is a necessity to get help from governmental institutions. The difficulties with developing all the plans are to both plan and execute at the same time, parallel with product development and branding, which according to the interviewee is very frustrating. Company D has, as well as Company A and B struggled with their name and their logotype and for Company D it took a long time for them to get the name approved on “Bolagsverket”.

Aim of existence	Pushing the brand out through	Company
Revolutionize the market	Teaching / Storytelling	A, D
Introduce an innovation	Co-creation	B, C

Table 2: aim of existence - retail sector

4.2.2 Service sector

The branding process of Company E is mainly built on recommendations. As a service provider, they highlight that this is the key to success in the development of a strong brand. In the service business it is more about relationships and word of mouth than developing hype around a product. Recommendations are said to be the key to success, but it can also be the death of the company if they do not live up to the expectations and the promises they make to the consumers.

The branding process of Company E started off with recommendations around one single person, however, as the company grew, employees were hired and they developed a name and a logo (when they afford to) with an ambition to attract both customers willing to help and also to attract employees who sees the job as a red thread through their life. As they live to service people and achieve growth through recommendations, not many resources is put on marketing efforts, getting their brand out on the market. However, they put a lot of efforts into strategies, planning different scenarios of how the future of the company can look like since the political landscape could differ and not be beneficial for them. If the political landscape changes, then they

would probably need to start with brand building activities in order to attract a different type of customers. Company E has mainly worked with relationships, whereas they did not put a lot of effort into the branding process. However, the employees can be seen as a branding tool and therefore it's important to find good people to hire as they have had some problems with this, they think it could have hurt them in some way. Furthermore, as a service company, they highlight that they do not have long lead times, which makes planning and preparations not very useful. It is primarily about sales in the service sector and this is why their recommendation is to try and see what will work on the market and learn from the processes in order to make continuous improvements. Company E rejects any kind of planning and argues that as a service company, the planning just slows the process down while you actually could be out selling your services on the market.

Just like Company E, Company F has a foundation based on recommendation. This company exists, just as Company D, to revolutionize a traditional business. They highlight the work with storytelling and personas as important in order to explain the business and convince people to take this path instead of the traditional one. The branding process of Company F has the aim to build recognition and loyalty among consumers. They want to attract consumers to their website and at the same time make the step from visiting to purchasing smaller. From the beginning, they have developed their brand and their graphical identity and they used a pilot study in order to gain market knowledge. They have pinpointed that convincing customers is hard, however, the returning customer rate is high once the customer has tried the service. They have solved the problem of getting consumers to try the service by providing generous offers to the consumers in order to attract them to use the service.

Company F just as Company E highlight the importance of recommendations and word-of-mouth because it is easier to take the step of using a service if someone recommends them to use the service. This fact is something they have learned through their development. They have made thorough research about what the customers want from the beginning and after taking the customer feedback into consideration they have grown rapidly. Due to recommendations and their work with explaining to the market, they have managed to get a big market share of the market. The expansion has now started for Company F and they are making continuous improvements. Company G has,

just like Company F struggled with the perception of the market. Making their customers accepting them has been hard. They too highlight the importance of working with storytelling and personas in their branding process in order to teach the customers of how to use their services.

Company H is in an early phase and are working their coming launch. They try to create hype around their brand before they have launched their services and are frustrated around all the planning that is required to do before starting up the business seriously, just as Company B. They are in the process of developing a logotype and graphical identity and have a few customers that are co-creating and promoting them. However, as they work to promote others, they do not really know how to develop their brand. They want to be aligned with other brands that they are promoting. Company G, works with strategically smart target groups, just as Company B does and highlight the importance of nurturing existing relationships. They have strategically divided their current customers into groups in alphabetical order in order to see where to put their efforts in use and conducted a pilot study together with them to gain market knowledge. For example, they have collaboration with one of their clients who promote them internally upward in the organization. They have chosen to put a lot of effort into this client due to the possible gain of this collaboration. Therefore, they believe, the relationships are the most important resource in developing a business focusing on service. All companies discuss the importance of relationships in service sector generally, since it is, according to them, nothing that damages your brand as much as an unhappy consumer.

Aim of existence	Pushing the brand out through	Company
Revolutionize the market	Teaching / Storytelling	F, H, E
Entering as a competitor	Co-creation / Teaching	E, G
Introduce an innovation	Co-creation	H

Table 3: aim of existence - service sector

4.2.3 Reference companies

The branding process of Company I started off when the founders of the company found an opportunity to rent out a space in store to newly founded companies wanting to sell their products on the market. They set up a simple store where they could set up their

products for weekly rentals. The company did not really have a plan or a strategy for developing a brand other than logotype and later on a website, and therefore the brand evolved as a result of the consumers and the products provided in the store. Thus the company did not develop the way that Company I wanted. As a result of this, the company recently developed a new graphical identity, which they will soon launch on the market. Company I want to go back to their roots and their heritage. As per today they still do not have employees working with their branding activities. It has been a sub-activity on the company among all the employees.

Company J who is working in the service sector also gains a lot on their heritage. They do not work very much with marketing activities but they do work a lot with relationship building activities. The process the company describes is aligned with the other companies; developing a logotype and an identity. Since they were founded in 1996, they mainly use traditional media to push out their brand; however, they now try to reinvent themselves to adapt to the society of today. This is seen as a very costly activity, however, if they do not they will not be able to survive on the market. Except working with external branding, they also work with internal branding in order to motivate their employees to always to their best – which in the service sector pays off in regards of happy, highly recommending, customers. Even though both of the reference companies have not invested in their branding activities explicitly, they say that their heritage has helped them on the market. If they have started up today, they express that they would probably have had another way of thinking, using social media and other activities to push their brand out on the market.

Aim of existence	Pushing the brand out through	Company
Revolutionize the market	Doing nothing	I
Introduce an innovation	Co-creation	J

Table 4: aim of existence – reference companies

4.5 Success

Interviewing the top three competitors of each company was to verify the success of the companies branding processes. The competitors of Company A, C, F and G, all knew

about the brand and highlighted that they see them as a threat on the market. As many of these companies are trying to revolutionize the business they see them as a big threat on the market. This was especially expressed by the competitors of Company A, F and G.

The competitors of Company B, D and E had two out of three competitors knowing about them and saw them as a threat. For Company B, the one did not see them as a threat knew about the company but expressed that they did not agree that they were competitors, as they do not work in the same industry. It is the vision of Company D that makes them consider this one company as their competitor. The competitor of company D and E was however not aware of their existence.

Company H is still in a too early phase to have competitors know about them, whereas they are neither a success nor a failure. All the competitors to Company I knew about the company, however, due to their passive existence on the market, they do not see them as an aggressive threat. The competitors of Company J all knew about them, since they are “the biggest organization in the business”. The competitors of this company expressed that the overall vision of course was to be the biggest one in the industry; however, it is hard to compete with this company due to its good reputation and the way they work.

Name	Founded in	Sector	Stage of growth	Competitors awareness
Company A	2013	Retail	Expansion	3/3
Company B	2013	Retail	Growth	2/3
Company C	2007	Retail	Expansion	3/3
Company D	2012	Retail	Survival	2/3
Company E	2009	Service	Expansion	2/3
Company F	2013	Service	Expansion	3/3
Company G	2011	Service	Growth	3/3
Company H	2014	Service	Inception	0/3
Company I	1993	Retail	Maturity	3/3
Company J	1996	Service	Maturity	3/3

Table 5: competitor awareness

5. Analysis

In the fifth chapter, the empirical findings will be compared and analyzed alongside the theoretical framework. I will start by comparing the companies' view of branding. Then a comparison between the incentives for branding and the branding processes of the case companies will be made in order to distinguish similarities and differences in the sectors.

In the always-connected society where we live and operate today, the key to success for new ventures lies within the ability to create a strong brand and marketing themselves. The view of branding and the importance of branding are highlighted among the case companies; however, how they work with different branding activities in the establishment of a new company differs slightly. Therefore, it is important to discuss and present the cases unique condition and prerequisites for establishing their brand. In the following section, an analysis within the boundaries of a comparative research design will be made. The empirical findings and the theoretical framework will be compared in order to find similarities and differences. The touch points of the empirical findings will be used as a guideline, with five main headings that recalls the empirical analysis, namely in order: *the view of branding, incentive for branding, pre-establishment phase, branding process and success.*

5.1 The view of branding

As Tether (2013) argues that constant development is needed, the brand is of high importance for companies in the B2C industry in order to stand out in the competition. According to the case companies, differentiation and originality is important factors whereas establishing a strong brand is important for communicating with their customers. Svedberg (2014) argues that a brand is a strategic asset. Thus, its scholarly proven that there is a value of having a strong brand i.e. boost the brand equity (Brand Orientation Index, 2005). When consumers are buying a product or service by the case companies, they all express that the customers get a promise of something. Independently of which company that the consumer is buying from, they get a promise and an easier, better way of living. This can be compared to that the focus of marketing has shifted towards highlighting the very essence of what you get – how the product or service serves you.

As companies sell a promise, it can be seen as they sell input instead of output, just as theory argues. As the companies selling their brand to the consumers, they do not sell a product or a service per se. They sell a lifestyle or a way of living, which the case companies also includes in their communication towards their customers. Based on recognition among consumers on the market, they try to serve their consumers' personal needs. Chickery et al (2009) argues that a firm must be involved with its customers in order to innovate and create value. This means that the case companies must create an incentive for consumers to engage in their brand. All cases has been involved with their customers from the beginning, developed the brand with customer needs in mind, either taking trends into consideration or listening to consumer feedback when the service is not perceived as thought. All of the companies values branding highly, however, one of the companies in the service sector, Company E, does not see branding as a crucial activity in establishing themselves in the market. Company E sees the close connection with their clients as a branding activity, whereas they differ from the rest of the entrepreneurial companies.

The reasoning about the view of branding in the reference companies established in the 90's is similar to the service sector. Svedberg (2014) argues that a brand will develop whether the companies puts any efforts into the process or not. The reference company, acting in the retail sector does not value branding and has never put any effort into branding activities. The reputation today for the company is not according to the initial thought, however, they consider themselves as successful either way. Company J, acting in the service sector was the first company in its kind and this is something that have gained a lot of customers on. Just as the other company, they do not value branding per se, they value the recommendations and the relationships they have with their clients. Thus their view of branding does not differ from the other companies in the service sector.

5.2 Incentive for branding

Even though they all value branding, they all have different incentives for how and why to brand the company. All of them brand the company to create recognition on the market. Companies such as Company A, D and F has the incentive to revolutionize a

business. Company G comes in as a competitor on the market together with Company E and H, and therefore, their incentive is to introduce a better product/service on the market. Company B and C; in the retail sector have had the incentive to introduce a product on the market, used in a new, innovative way. These companies introduced a complete new product on the market and their focus has been to build up a brand around a descriptive word and not the company brand. They have promoted their product brand instead of their corporate brand in order to educate the consumers about the benefits of the product. In one aspect it has created recognition on the market, however, they have also helped to promote others in their work to establish recognition about the product itself. Thus competitors has gained on their activities, but remained passive. Company B and C have started to promote their corporate brand just recently, as they realized along the way that they promoted others, who markets the same products.

All the other case-companies have promoted their brand as a corporate brand. The cases focusing on their corporate brand has identified the brand as an important asset in line with general branding theory. Furthermore, the incentive behind building a corporate brand is just as Balmer (2001) highlights, that it linked values and credibility together with the consumers. The reason for conducting corporate branding is that for these companies, the founders have a belief in targeting everyone and trying to get everyone to promote their brand. They want to have credibility at all stages, attracting suppliers as well as investors and consumers. To branding the whole company as corporate is important for the companies trying to revolutionize the market. For the consumers, there are entry barriers in terms of using the product/service whereas the branding gets an even more important meaning. The recommendations and word of mouth activities are important for them, especially in the service sector. As the branding is important for them, they have chosen a very describing name in order to educate the consumers of what they do. For the companies entering the market as competitors, the incentive for branding is too very important as they try to diverse themselves on the market. For the reference companies, there has not been a specific incentive for branding their company, as they have not worked with branding activities in order to promote themselves.

5.2 Pre-establishment stage

In line with theory, the pre-establishment is characterized by planning. All the investigated cases in the retail sector highlighted the pre-establishment stage as an important part of the foundation of the company. The identity of the company and thus the brand is created through culture, design and behavior. Company A, B and D in the retail sector expressed the difficulties to stick to a plan as opportunities on the market came to light. It is easy to keep track on the overall vision; however, the path toward that goal is quite tricky, as companies want to take all opportunities on the market. However, even if it is hard to keep track on the goal, exploring opportunities means learning which theory highlights as important. Learning and knowledge eases the decision time and allows for flexibility to changes on the market (Gruber, 2004).

Company F, G, H highlighted planning and outlining the company as well as gaining knowledge of the market as an important activity. Company F and H has gained market knowledge through a pilot study while company G has made extensive research of what their customers want, using feedback in order to develop their offer. Company C highlights that planning and outlining the company was not really something that they put a lot of thought into other than ordering the products and develop a name for the product. However, they had thorough sales strategies in order to create hype around and demand for the product. Differing from the other companies, Company E sees planning as a useless activity. Since this company mainly got customers based on recommendation, the planning would only slow down the process for them. Throughout their service delivery they have gained feedback directly from their clients and been able to develop their services from that.

In the pre-establishment stage, all cases defined feedback from the market as a key to success. The feedback loop is highly used among all cases and also scholarly proved to be successful. Company B and C in the retail sector highlighted that they have worked with different strategic groups, divided as A, B, and C groups of whom they shall focus on. This has helped them to differentiate among consumers who like the product and those who love the product, just as Gardner (2014) highlight as important. This has been especially helpful in the process of generating hype around the brand and their products, as for example Company B, who worked with ambassadors.

Furthermore, all the service companies have also been successful in using feedback from their customers. Companies in the service sector highlighted that it is nothing that damages your brand as much as an unhappy consumer, this has been important for them. Company F and H used the A-groups to generate feedback in order to develop the service offering as they participated in a pilot study of theirs. In both cases, these pilot studies have been conducted before the establishments of the firm. To develop a strong brand allows for organizations to be less vulnerable to its competitors. This is something the different companies highlight as important, however, the service companies are not as focused on building a brand in a traditional matter as the retail sector. They highlight relationships as the most important resource for building a brand. By using feedback as a tool for development, the company can always be in the forefront of what their costumers want, making constant development and learn about the market.

The reference company in the retail sector in this sense differs a lot in contrast to the entrepreneurial companies in the same sector. Company I set up a store, which attracted both suppliers, and consumers by itself and it, grew from peoples' interest about the product. The branding process was according to the interviewee founded by the consumers and a reputation grew without any guidelines from the company. Both of the companies were founded in a time where social medias were not present and marketing theory was still almost only applicable to corporations and big companies. As both companies are considered as successful and are a highly working business entity with many employees, the view of their need for branding is not valued. The service company does use their reputations and their heritage in their activities today, which they gain on, but the company in the retail sector does not even have a marketing department.

5.3 Branding process

How to develop a brand differs among the directions of theory and the cases have not followed a certain process when developing their brand. They have instead altered between different activities in order to develop a strong brand. Even though the activities differ between the companies, they have touch points such as development, learning, pivoting and relationships.

Development

In contrast to theory, the empirical findings prove that the case-companies have altered between different steps of developing a brand. Weaving back and forth between different processes has helped the companies develop something that their customers can relate to. Linking vision, culture and images together, is accordingly to Hatch and Schultz (2003), however, this is not something that either the companies in the retail sector or the service sector has done from the beginning. Marketing and branding is a natural activity for the case-companies, just as theory states, it can be seen as the heart of the entrepreneurial process. The activities in order to pushing out the brand on the market has emerged naturally and the company grows. Thus, in line with theory, marketing is a primitive activity, which eventually develops and grows into a professional matter.

The reasoning among companies in the retail sector is that their branding processes together with good promoters have been their key to success. In the beginning it has been a primitive activity for several of the case-companies, however, it has quickly grew into an activity within the company as the landscape of today allows for rapid spread in for example, social medias. Among the cases in the service sector, it was a primitive activity for a while longer for two of the companies at least, since they mostly rely on relationships in the beginning. The marketing department thus not evolved from planning and formal structures as Gruber (2004) states. It has rather been an outcome of the social-media landscape of today. Brescrani and Eppler (2010) states that branding is not a high priority activity in the start-up process, but in contrast to the findings, all the companies has considered branding as an important activity in order to diversify themselves from the crowd. Half of the cases among companies in the retail sector and service sector highlight that the usage of social media has helped them build their identity. Thus branding is an activity of becoming, the cases have been able to test their branding activities and measure it with the usage of social media. It has been an easy way for them to measure the factors that spreads the information of the brand. Furthermore, Gaddefors et al (2009) states that a market is created and recreated in situations where people meet and interact. If their usage of social media proofs interaction among people and situations, it can be considered as successful.

Learning

Not one of the companies highlighted that they performed any kind of planning of their branding activities in written plans from the beginning. Company D and H who is in an early stage expressed frustration about all the planning activities they were forced to do when they applied for funding. Since they are busy writing business plans for others, a branding plan would have only slowed down the process of getting to the market even more. The other companies expressed that they did not make a plan before the inception, however, they expressed that they from the beginning, based on the know-how they have about the market, knew where to move, who to target and where to act in terms of branding their company. Since learning has been involved from the pre-establishment stage, the process of branding has been consisting of processes of trial and error. If something did not work out, at least they learned something. This can be linked to the unplanned approach, which highlights testing assumptions. Learning and flexibility is highlighted in the process of developing a brand and as companies' sees it as a learning process it can be aligned with theories of lean branding. All of the companies have had a clear vision of where to be in the future and therefore, strategies has emerged during their process of reaching the market. For the cases in the retail sector, the development of brand name and logotype has been of high importance as it makes the company stand out in the market. They can differentiate themselves with a strong brand name and logotype and their aim is for people to identify themselves with the brand. For company E and H, the name were more important then the logotype in the beginning. The name came first and when the companies then afforded to create a logotype they did. Company H is still in the process of creating their identity. However, they have started marketing themselves before having their logotype as they got their customers based on recommendations from the different customers they co-develop with.

The case companies that sees themselves as damned to brand are Company A, B, D, F, G and H. Tech-marketers are those only using innovative activities to brand themselves in this matter, it is only Company B. Company E and J is representing the far-sighted as they do not need large branding activities, however, they still have a creative approach towards it. Company I belongs to the traditionalists do not believe in branding at all. Svedberg (2014) highlight that a brand develops whether the new venture puts an

effort into the branding activity or not. All the companies highlighted that the guidelines they have provided the consumers with has helped them shape their brand on the market. All companies expressed that they need to conduct branding, however, the approach differs. Those damned to brand have fierce competition on the market, therefore the majority of the retail sector companies falls into this category. Furthermore, the service company trying to revolutionize the industry also falls into this category, as they have to teach the consumers how to use their service. One of the companies in the retail sector has a more innovative approach and considers themselves as a tech marketer. In the far-sighted category, the rest of the service companies are represented. They mainly live on recommendations; however, they still need to conduct some branding activities. While one of the reference companies in the service sector falls into the category of far-sighted, the other one belongs to the traditionalist.

Pivoting

All the case-companies in the retail and service sector highlight that their approach towards branding has helped them a lot and they would probably not be where they are today if they did not have this approach from the beginning. Company A noted that as they grew on the market, the brand was not as consistent as they wished for it to be. Furthermore, there were not an aligned design idiom in the company and how they promoted themselves. After launching the brand they needed to pivot and go back to the third phase of the model of Bresciani and Eppler (2010) and develop a plan for brand building – or a manifesto of how to conduct brand-building activities.

As Company B and C had marketed the product and not the company brand, they also needed to pivot and start working with the corporate brand. This can be compared to Hatch and Schultz (2003) reasoning about internal and external branding. Strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image must be aligned in order to develop a successful brand. As the companies needed to pivot, some of the links were missing inside the company. In the case of Company A, there was a difference between the internal brand and the external brand and in the case of Company B and C; they missed to take all stakeholders into account.

Relationships

In order to take the brand to the market, many of the case companies has explicitly pointed out how much value their relationships with their early consumers have given them. What all the model forgets to expound is the relationships that the new ventures constantly has with their customers. All companies identified the relationships as a critical point in the process of developing a brand, as all of them worked together with customers who promoted their brand. Gardner (2014) highlight the importance's of differentiate between consumers who like and love the product and therefore the customers and their feedback are very important in the inception of the company. The relational approach is something that the unplanned school of thought cherishes, the outcome of the relationships is learning which in turn enhances the chances to succeed on the market. Branding must allow flexibility, which also the cases highlight. It is especially the cases in the retail sector that highlight this since they need to reach their target groups in many different medias.

For the cases in the service sector it is important to build sustainable, validated, and passionate relationships together with the customers based on share values. They must deliver what the customers want; otherwise they will be outdated quite fast. To have a relational approach and a fluid thinking makes it possible to move between different steps, as the companies actually do as they weave back and forth. To build assumptions about the market as Gardner (2014) resembles with planning and learning as Bresciani and Eppler (2010) promotes. This step is among the cases seen as a critical activity as they learn about the market and what they want. Company B did not expressed that they followed a specific framework. They created such hype on the market and therefore wanted to get their products out on the market as soon as possible. Their branding elements were perceived well on the market and therefore they decided to keep the elements and launch the products on the market, even though they did not like the outcome. This can be compared with the recommendation to work with the minimum viable brand (MVB).

Entrepreneurial VS established

In the process of branding for the reference companies it have some similarities and differences. The development, learning, pivoting and relationships do not have the same focus as in the entrepreneurial companies. Learning and pivoting is very much present in their environment of today, as they now redefine themselves on the market. Furthermore, in the service sector, the relationships have played an important role in their brand development process.

When the reference companies were founded, both companies developed a logotype and a graphical identity in order to create recognition on the market. However, this was mainly the only thing they did. As mentioned before, the reference company for the retail sector put the whole branding process in the hands of the consumers. As the company grew they established more on the market and the market got more and more aware of them. The company grew even more and they were able to expand on the market, opening up on more places, which in turn created more recognition. This company can be considered as a traditionalist, since they do not believe in branding. As a company without strategy of how to promote themselves they can be seen as successful, however, after realizing that they did not get perceived as they hoped they would from the beginning they spotted a need (15 years later) to pivot and go back to their roots. As the society developed, they tried to keep up with it and developed an online-shop as well as accounts on different social media sites, however, they did not still see a change in perception which lead them to the decision to develop a complete new graphical identity, promoting the initial thought and vision in order to get away from the reputation that the consumers has created for them. Today they hope that their new identity can help the consumers to change the perception about the brand and thereby be even more successful. The company in the service sector too build up their logotype and graphical identity in an early stage, however, they as the other cases in this sector gain mostly on recommendations and has done this from the very beginning. The founder spotted a need on the market and developed the company from this. As they were the first of their kind, their reputation quickly reached the market. This reputation is still present today and they have worked a lot with pleasing their customers instead of pushing out their brand on the market. As they developed, they have worked a lot with gaining acceptance on the

market. They are coming from a time where traditional medias were most used and thereby they have used this frequently. This company can be seen as far-sighted, since they do not feel like they have to brand themselves, however they do anyway and are then creative in their approach. As another landscape has entered the business environment they too, like the other reference company have tried to keep up with the development. They do not see that they have succeeded with this in a good way, whereas they too develop and re-launch their brand in the coming months. To do this at a mature phase is very costly for the company, both in reputation and in resources. However, if they do not re-launch, they risk to be outcompeted on the market.

Even though the cases of entrepreneurial ventures and established firms have not followed proposed processes as in the planned approach or followed the lean-branding principles, they have followed a process even if it has not been linear. The processes have weaved back and forth, used trial and error and learned from their experiences trying to measure the outcome in order to determine what can be considered as successful or not. The case companies highlighted *development, feedback and learning, relationships and pivoting* as important activities in their development process. However, they emphasize the aim towards perceiving the overall vision, and therefore, they orientate themselves towards that goal.

5.3 Success

To invest in the brand doubles the chances of getting a successful brand according to Brand Orientation Index (2005). As all of the companies except the ones in the inception and survival stage in the model of Scott and Bruce (1987) sees themselves as successful. Five out of ten companies (A, B, C, F, G) has heavily invested resources in their brand in order to gain recognition on the market while three out of ten (E, I, J) have not other than doing a god job invested more into this activity than any other activity. Company A, C, F, G is considered as successful among their competitors and three out of three companies see them as a threat on the market. Company B is recognized of two out of three as successful. They have an overall vision for one the competitors, who not yet view them as a threat. Company D and E is also recognized as successful among two out of three of their competitors, due to the same reasons. In line with the empirical findings it is

scholarly proven that a brand develops either the company invests in the brand or not. However, it is in the hands of the consumer, and only if you are lucky, the customers' view of the company is according to their initial thought.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I will answer the research question. The view of branding, the process of branding and managerial implications will be concerned. Finally, suggestions for future research will be outlined.

6.1 How does start-ups use branding in their start-up development process?

Entrepreneurial branding activities are very different from activities in established larger firms. New ventures faces many different challenges when building their brand and the branding process can be seen as a hybrid between the planned approach and the unplanned approach. It can be concluded that the process of entrepreneurial branding is a unique process dependent on what sector the company operates in, what type of company it is and the overall attitude towards branding.

The view of branding

It seems as entrepreneurial companies in both sectors value branding highly, however, there are some inconsistencies between the sectors in the view of branding. In the retail sector, the branding activities are very important in order to push the brand out on the market among the competition. Working closely connected with their customers in the pre-establishment phase is of great importance. To have close relationships with the customers, getting them engaged in the brand is an invaluable asset for the new venture as they promote the brand effectively on the market.

In the service sector, branding is seen as an important activity; however, they see branding as well-performed services. For service-sector companies it is important to engage closely with their customers, serving them and making them happy. They gain recognition and new customers on the market based on recommendations and word of mouth. Nurturing their relationships is branding for them, thus their branding activities are very important.

The value of branding is something that theory fails to grasp. It can be concluded that customers in both sectors values branding activities highly. Furthermore, companies in both sectors cherish the relations with their customers high which theory in the planned approach fails to grasp contrary to the unplanned approach.

The branding process

It has been difficult to pinpoint and identify the exact activities that a new venture does since it is not only depending on whether it is a company in the retail sector or the service sector. Thus, there is no such thing as best practice, at least not in general terms. The only significant similarity between the companies is the development of a brand design and a brand strategy characterized by learning in the pre-establishment stage. Between the two sectors in the business to consumer industry there are some significant differences in terms of focus, however, companies in the same sector have taken different ways in the branding process. Thus, the ventures do not go through a linear process. It is safe to say that branding is an iterative process where companies weave back and forth between activities.

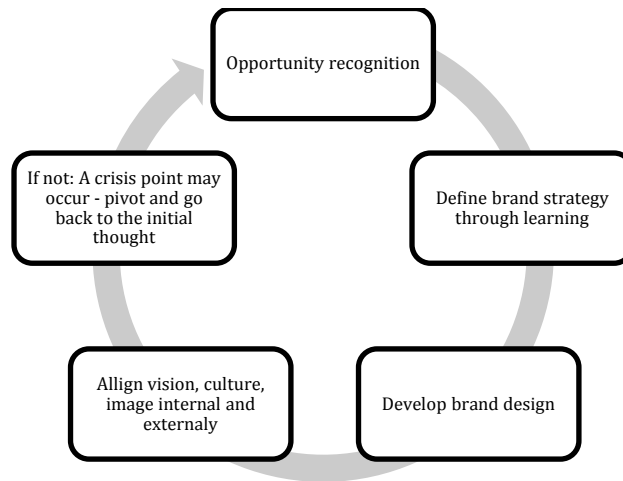
The branding process is a hybrid of the planned and the unplanned approach, following an overall vision with the aim to create brand recognition and brand awareness. Thus, aligning strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image is of great importance for reaching success. Companies go through a process when developing their brand, which proves that the planned approach is represented. However, the process is not linear as theory describes, as it allows for flexible branding activities highlighting relationships and innovativeness. This, in contrast to the planned approach is represented by the unplanned approach.

New ventures in the business to consumer industry have elements of both the planned and unplanned approach. Companies tend not to write any marketing plans in conjunction with establishing themselves on the market. Thus, it could be seen as a subconscious process of brand strategy and brand design as companies operate towards an overall vision. As the venture establishes on the market, they learn and make up their mind about which channels to use and how important the branding activities are.

Theory in both approaches highlights learning about the market, however, in the unplanned approach, learning is connected with trial and error, using feedback loops and learning to distinguish between those who like the product and those who love the product. Building brand awareness and recognition is done by setting the brand design and brand strategies. These two phases are represented by the planned approach; however, it is done differently depending on sector and target group. Indications show

that creating hype around the offering is important. In this initial step, it is evident that social media plays a significant role in terms of measuring what activities that generates the most spread.

Aligned with both approaches, it is important to find an identity of the brand and a strategy that works for the company. As the company grows, there is an imminent risk that they will face a crisis point in where the vision, culture and image are not aligned. Thus being forced to pivot and go back to its roots. However, it is important to do this as early in the process as possible, as it is very costly. Companies are always affected of the landscape that it operates in and therefore; they must constantly learn and develop in order to orient themselves in this environment.



Managerial implications

Based on the key findings in this thesis, there are some managerial implications to consider. Even though it is not proven to be best practice, it can be used as guidelines when thinking of building a brand.

- Branding activities are important
- Actively engage in your customers
- Have a close connection with the market
- Align image, vision and culture (internal and external brand)
- Follow your customers; do not get stuck in planning processes.
- Follow an overall vision

In addition to these managerial implications, I must stress that the view branding is very much related to the success of the venture. The aim of this thesis was not to relate attitude of branding to success; however, the findings imply that the success of the company bases the view of branding among the ventures. Companies that have not invested anything in their branding activities does not value branding very high and vice versa. This further strengthens my thesis that there is no such thing as best practice; there is just a path forward as an outcome of an overall vision.

6.3 Future research

As this research has been conducted under a limited and short period of time, biases may occur in terms of companies only been given the possibility to give a retrospective view of their branding process. Furthermore, as only successful companies are represented in this study, it has not been possible to provide best practice.

Conducting this study following companies in real-time would give better insights of the branding process among new venture, whereas statistically, both successes and failures will be represented. The attitude towards branding and the success rates of the brand are to me, unknown. Conducting this study would give valuable insight to the mindset of the entrepreneur. In order to get generalizable findings within the industry of business to consumer, the retail sector or the service sector would also be inspiring to the debate. Finally, conducting more studies within the field of lean branding would give the branding industry a true awakening as branding agencies today mirrors the process view of thinking excluding relationships to others in the process.

7. Reference

Aaker, D. A. (2004) '*Leveraging the corporate brand*'. California Management Review, Vol. 41, No.3, pp. 104-24.

Abimbola T. & Vallaster C. (2007). '*Brand, organisational identity and reputation in SMEs: an overview.*' Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal,10(4), pp. 341-348.

Aaker, D. (1991), '*Managing Brand Equity: Capitalizing on the value of brand name*', Free Press, New York, NY.

Balmer, J. M. T. (2001) '*Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate marketing: seeing through the fog*'. European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 35 No.3/4, pp. 248-91.

Bhidé, A., 2000. '*The Origin and Evolution of New Businesses*'. Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

Boyle, E. (2003) '*A study of entrepreneurial brand building in the manufacturing sector in the UK*'. Journal of Product & Brand Management, Vol.7 No.2, pp. 79-93.

Bresciani, S. & Eppler, M.J. (2010) '*Brand new ventures? Insights on start-ups branding practices*'. Journal of Product & Brand Management, Vol.19 No.5, pp. 356- 366.

Brinkckmann, J., Grischnik, D. & Kapsa, D. (2010), '*Should entrepreneurs plan or just storm the castle? A meta-analysis on contextual factors impacting the business planning–performance relationship in small firms*', Journal of business venturing, vol 25, no 1, pp. 24-40

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011), '*Business research methods*', Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Brand orientation index (2005) Assessed through:

http://www.brandorientationindex.se/wpcontent/uploads/2010/10/BOI_release_sv.pdf

Burrell, G. Morgan, G. (1979) 'Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis: elements of the sociology of corporate life', Sage, Aldershot, London

Chickery J. Kasouf Jenny Darroch Claes M. Hultman Morgan P. Miles, (2009), 'Service dominant logic', Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 10 Iss 1 pp. 57-69

Chwolka, A & Raith, M.G. (2012), *The value of business planning before start-up – A decision-theoretical perspective*". Journal of business venturing, vol 27, no. 3, pp. 385-399

Gardner, J., Cooper, B. (2014), *Entrepreneur's guide to the lean brand: how brand innovation transforms organizations, discovers new value and creates passionate customers*', Market by numbers LCC, San Diego, California

Gruber, M. (2007), 'Uncovering the value of planning in new venture creation: A process and contingency perspective', Journal of business venturing, vol 22. No 6, pp 282-807

Gaddefors, J, Anderson, Alistair R. (2009), 'Market creation: the epitome of entrepreneurial marketing practices', Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 10 Iss 1 pp. 19 – 39

Hatch, M.J. & Schultz, M. (2003). 'Bringing the corporation into corporate branding. *European Journal of Marketing*', 37(7/8), pp. 1041-1064.

Kotler, P. & Pfoertsch, W. (2006). 'B2B Brand Management'. Springer, Berlin.

Knox, S. & Bickerton, D. (2003). '*The six conventions of corporate branding*'. European Journal of Marketing, 37(7/8), pp. 998-1016.

Michel, S. S. Brown and A. Gallan (2008), '*Service-Logic Innovations: How to Innovate Customers, Not Products*', California Management Review, Vol. 50, No. 3 Spring

Merrilees, B. (2007). '*A theory of brand-led SME new venture development*'. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 10(4), pp. 403-415.

Morgan Miles, Audrey Gilmore, Paul Harrigan, Gemma Lewis & Zubin Sethna (2014): '*Exploring entrepreneurial marketing*', Journal of Strategic Marketing,

Morris, M., Schindehutte, M. and La Forge, R.W. (2002). '*Entrepreneurial marketing: a construct for integrating emerging entrepreneurship and marketing perspectives*'. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 10(4), 1-18.

Muzyka, Daniel F./Hills, Gerald E. (1993), Introduction, in: Hills, Gerald E./LaForge, Raymond W./ Muzyka, Daniel F. (eds.), '*Research at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship Interface*' (Proceedings), pp.vii – xv.

Ojasalo, J., Nätti, S. & Olkkonen, R. (2008). '*Brand building in software SMEs: an empirical study*'. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 17(2), pp. 92-107.

Ries, E. (2011) '*The Lean Startup: How Constant Innovation Creates Radically Successful Businesses*', Penguin Group, London.

Rode, V. & Vallaster, C. (2005). '*Corporate Branding for Start-ups: The Crucial Role of Entrepreneurs*'. Corporate Reputation Review, 8(2), pp. 121-135 # Henry Stewart Publications, 1363–3589

Scott, M. & Bruce, R. (1987). '*Five Stages of Growth in Small Business, Long Range Planning*', 20(3), pp. 45-52.

Stokes, D. (2000). '*Putting entrepreneurship into marketing: The process of entrepreneurial marketing*'. *Journal of Research in Marketing & Entrepreneurship*, 2(1), pp. 1–16.

Stokes, D. (2006). '*Marketing and the small business*'. In Carter, S. & Jones-Evans, D. (eds). *Enterprise and Small Business: Principles, Practise and Policy*. 2nd ed. London: Prentice Hall, pp. 324-337.

Stickdorn, M. & J. Schneider, (2011). '*This is Service Design Thinking*', BIS Publishers, Amsterdam

Svedberg, J. 2014, '*Nio resonemang om varumärken och varumärkeskommunikation*', Göteborgstryckeriet, Nine Yards AB

Tether, B. (2013) '*Services, Innovation and Managing Service Innovation*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation Management*, eds Dodgeson, Gann and Philips, Oxford

Timmons, J.A. & Spinelli, S. 2009, '*New venture creation: entrepreneurship for the 21st century*', McGraw-Hill/Irwin, Boston.

Vargo S. & R. Lusch, (2004) '*Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing*', *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68 (January), 1–17

Wynarczyk, P., Watson, R., Storey, D.J., Short, H. and Keasey, K. (1993), '*The Managerial Labour Market in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises*', Routledge, London.

8. Appendix

1. Interview guide

General info

1. Company name?
2. When were you founded?

Company information

1. Who are the founders?
2. Where did the idea come from?
3. How long time has it take for your company to go from idea to market?
4. What was the initial offer and what was the realized offer?
5. What was the initial customer segment and what was the realized customer segment?
 - a. Did you target all your stakeholders, only customers or no one?

The brand of your company

1. What is branding for you?
2. How would you describe the brand of your company in general?
3. What have you done to get here?
4. What makes your brand different to your competitors?
5. Do you think branding is important? Why/Why not?
6. Are competitors aware of your brand and who are your top 3 competitors?
7. When customers buy your brand, what are they buying? What is your promise to your customers?
8. Inside your company, what is characterizing you in your branding?
9. When did the marketing become a given activity in the company?

The branding process

1. Can you describe the process of branding for your company? Please describe it from the very beginning until today. Did you follow a certain process or planned the activities?
2. If you shall tell the story of branding this company, what would you highlight? Please reflect on both successes and pitfalls.
3. If you were to give advice to others making their branding process right now, what would you advice them to do / not to do?
4. How would an ideal branding process look to you?
5. What has been the greatest challenge in branding this business and why do you think it has been a challenge?
6. If you could have changed something during the process, what would you have changed?
7. How do you divide the resources for marketing among different types of activities such as advertising in magazines, social media, direct marketing etc?

Questions for established companies

1. How do you use your heritage in your brand in your marketing?
2. What role does your brand play when you market your product?
3. How have your brand developed over the last years? Do you see a change?

Questions for competitors

1. Do you recognize the company X?
2. Are you aware of its existence?
3. Do you know which segment they direct themselves too?
4. Do you see them as an aggressive competitor? Why? Why not?

2. Growth model

