MASTER THESIS
An exploratory investigation of the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management

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1. Abstract

This thesis explores the notion of storytelling as theoretically specified, conceptualized and utilized in brand management.

As consumers have become more informed and empowered, resulting in e.g. firm-centric communication becoming less effective, the importance of a co-creation approach - an approach emphasizing co-creation of value with customers - has become highly recognized. Similarly, brand management has evolved to increasingly concern co-creation activities that involve active stakeholders in the co-creation of brand value. Due to this, several uncertainties have arisen concerning the meaning of storytelling in these contexts, which is why this thesis aspires to assess the research question, “What is the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management”.

The limited literature on the subject made the need for exploratory research apparent, with the aim of gaining both a defining and practical view of storytelling. Along with an extensive literature review, experience surveys with consultants working with storytelling, and case studies on two organizations utilizing storytelling in branding, have been conducted.

The main findings of the exploratory study include the meaning of storytelling as a holistic, dynamic and interactive process, incorporating narrative and visual principles, focusing on involving stakeholders in co-creating brands, thus making storytelling a valuable approach to brand management. The research revealed that stories do not necessarily need to follow a strict linear narrative structure, and highlighted the importance of conflict, authenticity, use of rational and emotional elements and usefulness of social engagement in developing a core brand story. Based on the research findings, a managerial framework for utilization of storytelling taking a co-creation perspective has been suggested.

Managerial implications of the study include utilizing a storytelling process on both an operational and strategic level. In applying such a process, managers must among other things actively encourage a mindset that implies a strong belief in the importance and advantages of co-creation and interactive storytelling.

The study is considered to have filled a void in the existing storytelling literature, by taking a co-creation perspective. However, the need for future research is apparent, for instance an investigation of stakeholder groups’ reactions to brands that utilize storytelling principles and co-creation activities according to the process mentioned above.
2. Introduction

The following sections aim to explain the background, rationale and purpose of the study. The chosen methodology and research design will be presented and explained. Furthermore, a description of the research process will be provided in order to establish the quality of the research. Finally, an overview and description of the structure of the thesis will be provided.

2.1 Background

Humans have always had a need to hear and tell stories. Ever since ancient times, when people gathered around campfires to hear stories about heroic efforts and brave hunters, stories have evoked emotions, inspired and unified tribes, cultures and nations, and overall played a great part in everyday life (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004).

Storytelling is an important means of thinking and being, and method of organizing and making sense of memories and experiences (Søderberg 2003). As Baker & Boyle note:

“Indeed, storytelling is one of the most human of activities. In fact, an individual’s history, their persona, their very identity is the sum of the stories they tell about themselves and others tell about them. Everyone, inherently, is a storyteller and there are few things people love more than to hear a great story and pass it on to others” (Baker & Boyle 2009, p. 80)

Thus, storytelling is found to be an important human activity, one that has during the last decade gained much attention in the field of business, as numerous books and articles have laid focus on storytelling as a useful communication method in a wide range of disciplines, such as leadership, marketing and branding. The application of storytelling elements can furthermore be found in a wide range of advertising commercials and campaigns.

Especially in regards to being an important communication and branding tool, storytelling is able to draw consumers to be emotionally attached to brands, an important distinction point in a world where consumers are characterized as suffering from brand over choice and choice fatigue (Ballantyne & Aitken 2007). As organizations become more values-driven, focusing increasingly on branding and embedding organizational values into their brands, storytelling as a means of building emotional bonds with stakeholders thus becomes more emphasized in the branding literature, as well as in business practice.
In addition to the problem of *over choice*, consumers today are characterized as being more active, empowered and networked than ever before, leading to the emphasis of customer-centric marketing approaches such as co-creation of value, where value is co-created *with* customers. A further challenge to the firm-centric models of brand management includes customers and stakeholders indicating more willingness and interest towards being more involved with brands. Thus organizations can no longer create brands through traditional advertising and other communication methods as effectively as before, as emphasized by Prahalad & Ramaswamy:

*“In the future, companies will have to build brands through individual-centered co-creation of experiences with the cooperation of consumer communities, rather than company-centric staging of brands”* (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b, p. 134)

Hence, in line with the co-creation view, brands are increasingly viewed in terms of interactive and social co-creation processes, which involve all stakeholder groups in co-creation of brand value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b, Merz, He & Vargo 2009).

Uncertainty of how the concept of storytelling fits in with these developments in branding and co-creation raises several important questions. For instance, as indicated by the name, *storytelling* generally implies a situation in which an active storyteller (e.g. organization) communicates a story to rather passive recipients (e.g. stakeholders), indicating a firm-centric view that in today’s world is not classified as effective communication. Accordingly, it thus becomes highly relevant to assess whether the meaning and role of storytelling has or should change when approaching a more interactive, relationship and experience-based model of brand building, where stakeholders are anything but passive recipients.

Based on the increased recognition of storytelling as a business concept and the above-mentioned trends in brand and co-creation management and practice, the pivotal point of the thesis aims in exploring the meaning and role of storytelling in the context of the recent developments in brand and co-creation management.

### 2.2 Purpose

The overall purpose of this master thesis is to explore the meaning and role of storytelling in the context of brand management and co-creation, through an exploratory investigation of consultants’ and organizations’ storytelling practices. By doing this, the study aims to fill a void in the existing storytelling and brand literature, and increase the general understanding and awareness of storytelling practice in brand management. Furthermore, the study aims to develop a managerial framework providing guidance of how brands may be co-created through storytelling.
2.2.1 Main Problems & Sub Questions

Due to the recent developments in storytelling, branding and co-creation literature and management practice discussed above, the main problem of this thesis is as follows:

*What is the meaning and role of storytelling, in literature and practice, given a co-creation perspective on brand management?*

In evaluating the main problem, the following sub questions will be assessed:

1) What is the meaning and role of storytelling, co-creation and branding according to the literature?
2) How is storytelling utilized when taking a co-creation perspective on brand management?
3) What are the antecedents and consequences of storytelling when taking a co-creation perspective on brand management?

2.3 Delimitations

An important delimitation of this thesis concerns the broad perspective taken, which has had a major influence on the depth of analysis. As the concept of storytelling in relation to both branding and co-creation perspective was found to be highly unexplored, it has been considered necessary with a broad perspective.

The main focus of the thesis is on storytelling as a phenomenon. Although storytelling as an approach to branding and co-creation is focused on, it has not been the ambition to explain branding and co-creation in detail e.g. how brand is built in terms of brand equity.

As the research is based on interviews with consultants and brand managers, the perspectives and insights gained are solely from the consultants’ and managers’ point of view. Involving other groups of stakeholders, e.g. end-users, might have resulted in increased depth of the findings and deepened understanding of the concept. Furthermore, in relation to consultants and brand managers, the analysis focused on their work in utilizing storytelling in relation to branding and co-creation and thus other work processes they may utilize were not considered.

2.4 Methodology & Research Design

The following sections focus on the scientific paradigm and research approach chosen for the study, along with an explanation of the research process. Additional descriptions of data collection, sampling and analysis along with reliability, validity and ethical considerations, will be provided in relation to the specific research design (Section 4.1 and 5.1).
2.4.1 Scientific Paradigm & Overall Research Approach

The choice of scientific paradigm has a major influence on the how research is conducted. A commonly used definition of paradigm is the one offered by Guba (1990), defining a paradigm as:

“\textit{A basic set of beliefs that guide action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry}” (Guba 1990, p. 17)

In relation to managed communication, research is mostly informed by either a constructivist/interpretivist or positivist/realist paradigm (Daymon & Holloway 2004). The constructivist paradigm is generally associated with qualitative research and emphasizes a relativist view (realities exist and knowledge is a human construction), subjectivity and identification of constructions with the aim of bringing these into consensus. In contrast, positivism is generally associated with quantitative research and emphasizes a realist view (reality exists out there), objectivity and development of questions/hypotheses, which are to be empirically tested (Guba 1990, Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, Leedy & Ormond 2005).

In line with this thesis’ orientation towards a constructivist/interpretive paradigm, the main research question has its focus on understanding a phenomenon (storytelling), how it functions in its context and its meaning for participants. Due to this type of question, a qualitative research approach with a focus on exploring and interpreting, researcher involvement and a holistic focus will be utilized (Leedy & Ormrod 2005).

Although inductive reasoning is emphasized in qualitative research, most social research projects involve both inductive and deductive reasoning processes at various stages in the research. The combination of both induction and deduction is sometimes referred to as abduction and has been explained by Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) as:

The process of moving from the everyday descriptions and meanings given by people, to categories and concepts that create the basis of an understanding or an explanation to the phenomenon described (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p. 23)

As also noted by Eriksson & Kovalainen, the term abduction has been referred to as the process of generating new ideas/hypotheses thereby being the logic of exploratory data analysis. Abductive reasoning will be emphasized as this thesis focuses on generating theory by collecting and analyzing data moving from the specific to the more general patterns and commonalities (induction) and relating these general patterns to the literature (deduction). Short descriptions of induction and deduction can be found in Appendix 1.
As this thesis centers on a qualitative approach, some of the general criticism towards this approach should be taken into account, such as the high degree of subjectivity, problems of replication and generalization and lack of transparency (Daymon & Holloway 2004). In response to this, the aim of the research is subjectivity, and while it is acknowledged that replication is impossible, the research does not intend to be representative. Transparency on the other hand is considered to be highly important for the quality of the study. Accordingly, focus will be on ensuring high validity and reliability (in qualitative terms) (Section 4.1) providing rich descriptions of research procedures and acknowledging possible bias (Section 4.1 and 5.1).

2.4.2 Research Design & Process

The work process of this thesis is influenced and inspired by an action research process, which is dynamic and structured around several work-cycles that include empirical studies or other activities that enable reflection and preparation for the next work cycle (see Figure 2.1). Action research has been argued to be increasingly relevant for marketing research today, as it focuses on iterative learning and development and interaction and collaboration with research participants (Maklan, Know & Ryals 2008). During this thesis, there have been five work cycles, each ending with a discussion and reflection, providing a rationale for initiating the next work cycle. The research process will be shortly explained in the following.

Figure 2.1 Work Process (figure inspired by Maklan, Know & Ryals 2008)

**WORK CYCLE 1 - INITIAL LITERATURE REVIEW** Work cycle 1 aimed at achieving a pre-understanding of storytelling, branding and co-creation and identifying the research problem and methodology by conducting an initial literature review. As only a low amount of knowledge existed on the subject at hand, the need for an exploratory research design became apparent. Exploratory research concerns qualitative data and aims at, among other things, defining terms
and concepts and may be conducted through a variety of methods (Burns & Bush 2006, Zikmund 2003). In line with the qualitative approach and exploratory design, experience surveys with experts in the field of storytelling were found appropriate. The apparent need for further understanding and clarification of the concepts initiated work cycle 2.

WORK CYCLE 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW In work cycle 2, the initial literature review was followed up by an extensive literature review with the aim of identifying the meaning and role of storytelling, branding and co-creation based on an analytical framework consisting of meaning, antecedents and consequences (see Figure 2.2). As seen in the figure below, meaning refers to the current definitions and conceptualizations, processes and practices of the concept. The arrow from antecedents to meaning illustrates that the motivations for organizations’ utilization of the concept has an effect on the present meaning, while the arrow from meaning to consequences illustrates how the present meaning of the concept leads to some specific outcomes for the organization. In addition, the arrow from consequences to meaning implies that consequences impact the focus of the concept, thus influencing and reinforcing the meaning of it.

![Analytical Framework](image)

Figure 2.2 Analytical Framework

Overall, the literature review enabled analysis and reflection upon the impact of branding and co-creation on storytelling and provided the authors with background knowledge for conducting the experience surveys.

WORK CYCLE 3 – EXPERIENCE SURVEYS In work cycle 3, the experience surveys were prepared for and conducted with the aim of gathering insights on the relationships among the concepts by interviewing specialists (Zikmund 2000). The experience surveys involved four consultants, from different agencies within the field of branding and storytelling, in semi-structured interviews. Consultants were chosen as these were assumed to be specialists, as they often are claimed to lead new ideas and represent best brand management practice (Riley & de Chernatony 2000). Inspired by action research, an initial typology model of storytelling was developed based on the literature, and discussed at the end of the interviews, with the aim of getting more specific feedback, leading to co-created theory. In the analysis and reflection that followed, the need for additional insights on the utilization of storytelling in brand management arose, making the need for case studies apparent.

Additional information concerning sampling, data collection and data analysis for the experience surveys can be found in Section 4.1.
WORK CYCLE 4 – EXPLORATORY CASE STUDIES In work cycle 4, the exploratory case study research was prepared for and conducted with the aim of gaining further knowledge of how storytelling had been utilized in relation to branding and co-creation in practice by brand managers. A primary advantage of using case studies was the attention to detail, which allowed a focus of identifying storytelling in regards to co-creation and branding, as utilized in practice (Zikmund 2003). Based on the discussion and reflection, Unilever (Dove campaign) was chosen as case. During the process it became clear that Unilever did not utilize storytelling principles as such, and thus a second case (Novozymes and ido30 campaign) was assessed that clearly had expressed the use of storytelling. The two case studies were carried out as a multiple-case design approach (Yin 2000) with the aim to replicate them, to a degree, through using similar interview guides. The use of two case studies was expected to provide greater support for the findings, although contrasting results were expected to a degree, as the cases were two different types of organizations from two different industries.

Additional information concerning sampling, data collection and data analysis for the case studies can be found in Section 5.1.

WORK CYCLE 5 – DISCUSSION & REFLECTION OF EXPLORATORY RESEARCH In work cycle 5, all research findings were discussed and reflected upon in relation to one another and literature. This enabled the authors to provide a well-founded clarification of the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on branding, as well as provide a managerial framework of how storytelling can be utilized to enhance brand co-creation with stakeholders.

2.5 Structure of the Thesis

In line with the research process described above, the thesis is structured into eight chapters, the general structure and focus of which can be viewed in Figure 2.3. The main parts of the project include the literature review, experience surveys, case studies and a final discussion and reflection of the exploratory research. These sections will be structured based on the analytical framework mentioned above, consisting of meaning, antecedents and consequences in order to assess the meaning and role of storytelling.
Figure 2.3 Structure of the Project
3. Literature Review

The literature review focuses on clarifying the meaning and role of storytelling, co-creation and branding. The aim of the literature review is to enable analysis and reflection upon the impact of branding and co-creation on storytelling, thereby providing a first step in exploring the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management.

3.1 The Notion of Storytelling

In clarifying the meaning and role of storytelling, the following sections will be structured around meaning, antecedents and consequences, with meaning encompassing both current definitions and conceptualizations as well as how storytelling may be utilized and managed.

3.1.1 Meaning of Storytelling

Defining Storytelling

The literature provides very few obvious definitions of storytelling. Although storytelling is increasingly emphasized as a process involving internal and external communication, it is often referred to as the communication and use of stories or narratives, applying a specific set of elements.

STORYTELLING AS HUMAN ACTIVITY & MANAGERIAL PROCESS As mentioned in the introduction, storytelling has generally been argued to be an important human activity. In relation to marketing, Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård describe storytelling as follows:

“Marketing as story-telling is a form of narration where the company relates what it is and what it stands for; thereby making sense of activities and products” (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004, p. 225)

In broad terms, storytelling may thus be viewed as an important and necessary human activity, a dynamic and always evolving process that aids in defining who we are (as a company or individual) and plays a large part in sense-making of our environment and experienced events. Several authors also highlight that storytelling should be seen as an interactive phenomenon, an exchange of meaning through dialogue (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Baker & Boyle 2009,
Kristensen 2002). Stories are thus to be seen as being co-authored by the audience, which may influence the resulting story (Søderberg 2003, Bakhtin 1981).¹

In the literature, the term *narrative* (which stems from the Latin verb *narrare* meaning to recount) is often encountered (Mossberg & Johansen 2006). Some authors claim there are differences between narratives and stories, i.e. factual or descriptive narratives with the aim of objectivity cannot be considered stories (Gabriel 2000). However, most academics apply the same definitions to narratives and stories. Generally, stories are defined as accounts of events and actions organized over time with a beginning, middle and end, which may be situated in the past, present or future (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Søderberg 2003, Ibarra & Lineback 2005, Mossberg 2008, Shankar, Elliott & Goulding 2001, Woodside, Sood & Miller 2008).

Good stories have been argued to consist of basic believable elements such as message, plot, characters and conflict, which are able to generate emotion in both audience and storyteller whether fiction or non-fiction (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Mossberg 2008, Gabriel 2000, Hsu 2008, McKee 2003). Other important characteristics have been argued to include emotional engagement (Baker & Boyle 2009).

In relation to the above discussion of story elements, authenticity can also be seen as an element of storytelling. The general view of authenticity in the literature is that the story should hold some form of truth to it (see Jensen 1999/2002, Gabriel 2000, Grønborg 2002). For example, Mathews & Wacker (2007) consider honesty, authenticity and credibility to be critical elements of good storytelling, and suggest that brand stories may be more effective when they have a moral and ethical undertone.

**STORYTELLING AS INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION** Several authors divide storytelling into internally and externally communicated categories. Internally, storytelling may exist as cultural sense-making processes or as a managed process strategy, and externally storytelling may exist as a strategic marketing/branding tool or through uncontrollable external stories told by stakeholders.

Internally, in terms of sense-making processes, storytelling may manifest as e.g. gossip, informal rules and values among the employees and managers, which may aid in understanding management’s decisions and develop an organizational identity and culture (Kristensen 2002, Ind & Bjerke 2007a, Jashapra 2004, Kruse 2005). As an internally managed process, storytelling may be used to strengthen the culture, change certain behaviors or to show employees how to uphold organizational values (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Ind & Bjerke 2007a, McKinnon 2008).

¹This suggests oral communication of the story, though, excluding written communication of stories.
Externally, as a marketing/branding tool, storytelling may embed brands with values and emotions, add authenticity and a sense of quality to the product, and explain how products and services are differentiated from competitors’ (Kristensen 2002, Mossberg & Johansen 2006). For example in advertising, commercials may make up one large story in a commercial serial, with the potential of building a long-term advertising strategy, creating more brand knowledge and emotional attachment to the brand (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004). Another example of storytelling in marketing includes Transmedia storytelling, fictional stories that utilize different media channels to gain synergy, where smaller stories introduce new aspects of the whole story, each contributing a unique part and thus allowing for more complex narrative worlds (Jenkins 2007).

As uncontrollable external stories, storytelling involves stories communicated by e.g. the media, partners, competitors and, importantly, consumers in terms of consumer storytelling. The latter encompasses the stories consumers tell to other individuals, for instance about experiences with the company and brand (Kruse 2005). Consumer shared stories include Digital storytelling which has been defined in terms of stories that explain something about a person’s life, where the recorded voice and changing tone that conveys meaning is what defines the story as digital storytelling (Lambert 2010).

In relation to consumer storytelling, consumers have been argued to use brands as props in their stories (Holt 2004). For example, Escalas’ (2004) research on narrative processing showed that consumers may use stories when relating the brand’s image to their own experiences and their self-image, resulting in a Self-Brand Connection (SBC). Importantly, the meaning a consumer assigns to a brand is partly based on the narratives that the individual has created involving the brand (Escalas 2004b, Schank 1990). In support of the work by Holt and Escalas, research by Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) indicated that consumers often use brands in the stories they tell about themselves and others as this enables them to fulfill specific archetype outcomes and proper pleasure. Thus, the stories consumers tell about themselves often consciously or unconsciously correspond to the plot lines developed by brand managers. There are several examples of brands that clearly reflect a typical archetype and story gist (e.g. Harley Davidson as the anti-hero implying destruction and attraction of evil, etc.), whereby the brand tells consumers that by experiencing that particular brand they fulfill that kind of archetype outcome. A simplified version of Woodside, Sood & Miller’s (2008) model, illustrating how the brand enables archetype enactment by the consumer, may be seen in Appendix 2.1.
Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management

In terms of how storytelling may be utilized in brand management, the literature specifically focuses on the inclusion of storytelling elements in the creation of brand stories and the management of storytelling processes.

**STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES & ELEMENTS** As also mentioned above in relation to the definitions of a story, important story elements include a message, conflict, plot and characters (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, McKee 2003, Adorisio 2009, Grønborg 2002, Papadatos 2006). The message often refers to the moral or ideological statement serving as the theme of the story, while the conflict helps to secure the audience’s interest. The plot element usually includes the progression of events based on Aristotle’s beginning-middle-end sequence – the scene is set, the events quickly lead to a conflict, the conflict escalates and results in a positive or negative ending. The characters may be able to emotionally and personally involve the target audience, specifically if they can recognize themselves in the characters.

Forming the basic structure of a narrative, and relating mainly to the characters’ functions, roles and relationships, the actant model (as developed by Greimas 1966) is often referred to in the literature. This is a general model of individual’s sense-making of the world through narration, where the characters’ specific roles support each other and the storyline. The actants are structural units/functions, hence these are not necessarily humans but may also be abstractions or psychological forms (Söderberg 2003, Nymark 2003).

![Actant Model](image)

As seen in Figure 3.1, the subject is the protagonist or hero of the story, moving towards a specific goal or object, which may be a human being or the goal of reaching a certain state. The opponent helps establish a successful conflict in the story as this actant works against the subject in pursuit of the goal. Generally, the goal of the subject-actant is to capture the object and bring it to the receiver, with the help of the helper-actant and power-actant (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Söderberg 2003, Grønborg 2002).
The actant model forms a linear narrative structure, based on a perspective in the literary theory called *structuralism* which assumes that all written texts are governed by specific rules (Selden & Widdowson 1993). In support for this linear structure in brand stories, research has indicated that elements such as characters and plot influence the vividness and effectiveness of the WOM communication of the story (see Herr, Kardes & Kim 1991).

Nevertheless, plenty of criticism has surrounded the actant model and the structuralist narrative perspective, i.e. that it is too linear and insensitive of more complex stories (Søderberg 2003, Grønborg 2002, Knudsen 2007). Søderberg (2003) specifically points out that the model assumes that individual sense-making is based on a need to narrate in a specific way - with the subject-actant striving towards a goal or object and meeting opposition and help. Criticism also includes that the background and context of the story’s existence, as well as the relation between the storyteller and the audience and their experience are not considered (Adorisio 2009). In addition to this criticism, Hermansen (2003) stresses that structuralist literary theory models exclude other highly relevant aspects in relation to storytelling, such as the linguistic/visual design and layout, irony, objectivity and empathy. Furthermore, it is suggested that these models should be complemented by methods from e.g. semiotics and reception theory (Hermansen 2003). Especially in an online context, where websites provide multiple signs and impressions in communicating stories, additional methods are relevant to consider (Sandstrøm 2003).

**MANAGING THE STORYTELLING PROCESS** Recently, the literature has also focused on the importance of having a holistic view of storytelling. Although several authors suggest various steps that can be taken to create stories and good storytelling (see for example Bruce 2001, Stevenson 2008, McKee 2003), few authors provide models explaining the storytelling process in relation to branding. Authors providing such models include Ind & Bjerke (2007), Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu (2004), Heijbel (2010) and Baker & Boyle (2009). These models generally include a holistic process of aiding the flow and circulation of brand stories through several stages, selecting and refining the stories from internal and external sources so that they best communicate the organization’s culture, mission, vision and values, and that are in alignment with business strategy. The main differences include that Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu’s (2004) *Laboratory* model involves creating a core story, which forms the basis for all storytelling communication, and focuses on investigating and closing the potential gap between the external image and internal identity. The importance of a core story is also emphasized by Kristensen (2002) who stresses that the goal of the core story should be to appeal to and have relevance for all stakeholders. Another main difference involves the usefulness of negative stories in Heijbel’s (2010) model, which has also been emphasized by authors such as McKinnon (2008), who mentions that negative stories may create a negative focus on the past and a positive focus on
the future, easing transformation in the organization. The models are described in more detail in Appendix 2.2.

All of the models mentioned above have a very similar approach to the storytelling process, e.g. they all imply that storytelling is a holistic, organization-wide and continuous process. Furthermore, these also imply the importance and relevance of collecting stories from consumers and other stakeholders and storylistening, i.e. a focus on understanding a group of people/stakeholders through analyzing stories (Kristensen 2002). However, none of the models specifically mention co-creation, and little focus is on consumers’ conversations with other consumers, implying that communication stems, to a high degree, from the firm. The relevance of considering co-creation has been indicated by e.g. Mossberg’s (2008) research concerning conceptualizations of tourism/hospitality organizations, which indicated that involvement and co-creation can facilitate immersion in a story. In addition to this, authors have pointed out that a perspective viewing brands in terms of stories may be limited, as this conceptualizes the brand manager as the storyteller, and the consumers as a passive audience (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004).

It should also be mentioned that the authors above emphasize the classical story elements through the structuralist perspective and thus other potentially useful narrative principles and elements are not considered, e.g. focalization, other possible narrative structures and embedded narratives. As Jahn (2002) points out, narratives do not necessarily need to be tightly and linearly plotted like classical fairytales, but can be loosely plotted, episodic, accident driven or avoid plotting altogether. Nevertheless, taking the possible limitations into account, the models above provide practical guidance of how storytelling may be implemented in order to strengthen the brand, both in terms of internal and external branding.

3.1.2 Antecedents of Storytelling

In terms of the antecedents of storytelling, factors related to consumers’ sense-making, self-stories and identity construction as well as differentiation of products have been identified as the major motivations and reasons for the relevance of the concept today.

**SENSE-MAKING** Storytelling is an important part of individuals’ sense-making processes (see Shankar, Elliott & Goulding 2001, Mossberg & Johanssen 2006, Gergen & Gergen 1988). It has been found to be more natural for individuals to think in a story form rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically (see Hiltunen 2002, Weick 1995, Søderberg 2003). Several other authors have suggested that human beings have a need to tell and hear stories. Furthermore, storytelling has been found to be an effective way of learning, being more

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2 Concerns the character whose point of view orients the text.
3 A story within the story.
memorable and easier to retrieve from memory (McKee 2003, Schank 1990, Bruner 1990, Gergen & Gergen 1988, Mello 2001, Williams, Bedi & Goldberg 2006). Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) emphasize especially three rationales that explain consumers' needs for sharing and receiving stories. These include the pleasure that is gained from sharing stories, experience of archetype fulfillment and sense-making, which allows consumers to rethink what the story implies about them and others.

**CONSUMER SELF-STORIES & IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION** As mentioned in the previous section, several authors stress that brands are purchased by consumers, with the purpose of conveying a story about the individual and how they want others to perceive them (see Jensen 2002, Dennis 2001, Escalas 2004, Holt 2004). These brands have stories that are consistent with the consumers’ mental picture or self-story (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding 2001). In line with these authors, Gabriel & Lang (2003) suggest that brands can communicate various meanings and tell stories about the consumer, as effectively as oral communication.

**DIFFERENTIATION** It has been argued that differentiation increasingly relies on emotional engagement, product design, symbols, a good story and less about traditional differentiation strategies as price, quality and distribution, as individuals nowadays long for irrationality and fantasy (Mossberg & Johansen 2006). As Jensen (2006) notes, the material and physical product is becoming a “hollow shell” with the main purpose of embodying the selling story.

### 3.1.3 Consequences of Storytelling

In terms of major consequences of storytelling, these include effective communication, competitive advantage, emotional engagement, the possibility of making the brand more interesting, and internal culture advantages. However, storytelling may also lead to challenges such as meaning destruction and various interpretations of storytelling.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION** Storytelling has been argued to be a highly effective communication tool. Through using storytelling the organization may become more effective in sharing knowledge in an understandable way (see Mello, 2001, Jashapara, 2004). In addition, storytelling has been suggested to have educational potential in relation to all stakeholders (Gabriel 2000, Egan 1995, Egan 1999). Furthermore, as values can be communicated in a way that stakeholders understand and may be emotionally engaged by, the organization-stakeholder relationship may be enhanced through storytelling (see Kaufman, 2003, Baker & Boyle, 2009, Klein, 1999).

**COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE** Internal storytelling may be a source of competitive advantage and differentiation point for organizations, as communities of practice in the organization make it possible to embed tacit knowledge, thus making it hard for competitors to imitate (Jashapara
Furthermore, Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) suggest that understanding consumers’ narratives with brands may be highly useful for providing information in designing effective strategies in marketing and advertising.

**EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT** A good story may transport the audience to a higher degree of meaning and emotional engagement, and by e.g. inviting the target audience to participate in online stories, the consumers may feel a closer connection to the brand enabling more effective communication of the brand message through the story (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Baker & Boyle 2009, Alwitt 2002).

**MAKING BRANDS & ORGANIZATIONS MORE INTERESTING** Storytelling is useful for making brands and organizations more interesting, for example organizations may infuse adventure into their brands through storytelling (Jensen 1999). In addition, McKee (2003) suggests dramatizing the truth, so customers will perceive the brand, communication, and organization as being more exciting and dynamic. In relation to this, dramatic stories have been argued to encourage consumers’ imaginative participation more effectively than lecture-type forms of advertising (Woodside, Sood & Miller 2008).

**INTERNAL CULTURAL ADVANTAGES** The storytelling process has been argued to be an important part of the cultural formation of the organization, whether naturally occurring or partially managed, as it may create a more unified workforce and company culture (especially in times of organizational change) and effectively connect an organization’s future vision and the present (Baker & Boyle 2009, Ind & Bjerke 2007a, Kaufman 2003, Denning 2001/2006). In particular, stories may strengthen employees’ bonds to the organization, creating respect and cooperation and encouraging employees to become ambassadors for the brand through *living the brand* (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, McKinnon 2008). This, in turn, is likely to result in a more consistent communication and a clearer brand identity and personality perceived by the consumers (Ind & Bjerke 2007a, Jensen 2002).

**MEANING DESTRUCTION** Stories may weaken and destruct meaning and it has also been argued that storytelling is to be seen as a delicate process, which may easily fail and disappoint the audience, insulting their intelligence, and/or fail to communicate the message (Gabriel 2000).

**MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS** Stories evolve through the audience’s various interpretations and interests, resulting in different meanings, thus the audience may not be interested in the same stories management is interested in, possibly resulting in miscommunication (Ind & Bjerke 2007a). In addition, it has been argued that brands are formed through several storytellers with varying influence (see Shankar, Elliott & Goulding 2001, Holt 2004). As these storytellers all
have opinions and ideas about the meaning of the brand, this indicates the importance of getting involved in the stories that may be misrepresenting the brand (Ind & Bjerke 2007a).

### 3.1.4 Summary

Through the storytelling literature review, key aspects concerning the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling were found (see Figure 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Humans’ use of stories to make sense of the environment (sense-making) • Customers’ use of (brand) stories in identity construction • Storytelling’s effectiveness in relation to learning • The increased organizational need for effective, interactive communication, which increasingly demands both rational and emotional aspects • Need for archetype fulfillment • Differentiation</td>
<td>• A view of storytelling as an effective branding/marketing tool mainly due to sense-making • A focus on the elements and structure of stories, authentic core • A focus on interactivity with stakeholders • Human activity • Archetype myth portrayal • Emerging process focus</td>
<td>• Emotional engagement • Knowledge sharing and stakeholder learning • Organizational sense-making • Effective communication of values • Consumer’s imaginary participation • Simplify brand meaning • Increase brand attractiveness • Brand value • Enhance brand-stakeholder relationships (SBC) • Strengthen employee-organization relationships • Differentiation • Bridge potential gaps in perceptions • Risk of misinterpretation • (Meaning destruction)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2 Key Aspects of Storytelling

### 3.2 The Notion of Co-creation

As with the previous section, in clarifying the meaning and role of co-creation, the following sections will be structured around meaning, antecedents and consequences. Finally, antecedents and consequences of co-creation will be discussed as these help explain the focus and relevance of the concept.

#### 3.2.1 Meaning of Co-creation

**Defining Co-creation**

Several authors have noted that the concept of co-creation has evolved from viewing the firm as the primary contributor of value, with customers somewhat active in the co-creation process, to the more recent conceptualizations where customers are viewed as the primary driving force of co-created value (see Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody 2008, Rajah, Marshall & Nam 2008). In relation to the recent conceptualizations, Prahalad & Ramaswamy argue that co-creation is highly customer and experience based:
“Value is co-created at multiple points of interaction. Basis of value is co-creation experience” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004a, p. 13)

Accordingly, focus should be on creating an experience environment in which the customer can co-construct individual co-creation experiences. In support for this view, the notion that consumers seek experiences and that experiences are important to value creation is not new (see Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), and the focus on experiences in marketing literature is steadily increasing (see Pine & Gilmore, 1999, Ryder 2007, Carú & Cova, 2007).

Vargo & Lusch (2004) offer a parallel to the experienced based view, with their work on the Service-Dominant (S-D) logic of marketing, in which they argue that customers are always co-creators of value and organizations can only offer value propositions. Here, value creation is an interactive and relational process where value is determined by the customer, based on the value-in-use:

“Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. Value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual, and meaning laden” (Vargo & Lusch 2008, p. 7)

However, in a recent article by Vargo, Maglio & Akaka (2008), it is argued that the notion of value-in-use potentially can be extended to a more descriptive concept in terms of value-in-context.

Some of the criticism towards the co-creation perspectives mentioned above includes the little attention to the role of the brand in co-creation, as several authors have highlighted the central symbolic role of the brand in the co-creation process (Brodie 2009, Brodie, Glynn & Little 2006, Fyrberg & Jüriado 2009).

**Utilization of co-creation**

The literature on the practical co-creation process can be argued to be rather scarce. Nevertheless, existing literature that describes models of co-creation include the work by Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004b), Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008), Etgar (2008) and Fyrberg & Jüriado (2009).

Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004b) suggest a framework in which Dialogue, Access, Risk-benefits, and Transparency (DART) are identified as fundamental building blocks of co-creation experiences (see Appendix 2.3). Active dialogue is vital for co-creation, enabling interactivity and motivating action from both parties, however, for meaningful dialogue to occur, providing access to information and transparency of processes is important. Focusing on these issues enables, among other things, easier assessment of the risks and benefits of participating in co-creation for customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b).
Similarly, Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008) stress the importance of creating relationship experiences in co-creating value (see Appendix 2.3). The framework consists of a set of interconnected supplier, customer and encounter processes. In relation to supplier processes focus is on creating superior and relevant value propositions where after the stakeholder determines the value when the good/service is consumed, i.e. focus is on *value-in-use*. The customer processes include the activities performed by the customers, who aim at achieving a specific goal, while encounter processes include the touch points between suppliers and customers. Overall the framework emphasizes customer and organizational learning, interactivity and cross-functional activities. As the framework assesses how suppliers may design relationship experiences aiming at co-creating value, it corresponds with the recent conceptualizations of the marketer’s primary role as the one of facilitating co-creation relationships and interaction (Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody 2008).

Presenting a broader framework, Etgar’s (2008) model of co-production specifies five stages the consumer passes when involved in co-production. The process is viewed as a consumer strategy, where the goal is customization, and encompasses development of antecedent conditions, motivations, calculation of costs and benefits from participating in co-production, activation and generation of outputs and evaluation of the results of the process. Descriptions of these stages can be found in Appendix 2.3. An interesting notion made by Etgar is that not all brands may be suitable for co-creation, as customers may not want to individualize a specific brand, since this may lead to loosing the social or psychological advantages of buying the brand in the first place.

Fyrberg & Juriado’s SBRV triangle (see Appendix 2.3) extends an earlier model by Brodie, Glynn & Little (2006) and is based on research within the travel industry. Here, interactions in the co-creation process result in a co-created outcome, which *may* be transformed into value. Key actors involved in the process are identified as Brand Governor (brand owner), Providers (smaller firms in the network that contribute to interaction and co-creation through network affiliation) and Customers. Here, Customers are mainly involved in the development of value propositions while Providers and the Brand Governor mainly focus on the exchange of resources for developing and sustaining activities. The notion that customers create value propositions through their own construction of meanings indicates that value may not always be determined by value-in-use and that interaction processes may not always lead to co-creation. In support for this view, Finne & Grönroos (2009) argue in relation to Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), that communication messages can only be integrated by the consumer, with factors that are important for the customer (Finne & Grönroos 2009). Furthermore, it is noticeable that none of the other frameworks mentioned above emphasize the role of other actors in the network, in the co-creation of value process (e.g. Fyrberg & Jüriado, 2009).
Various forms of co-creation exist e.g. Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008) suggest emotional engagement, self-service, customer engagement in an experience, activities in which customers help solve problems themselves and co-designing, as forms of co-creation. Similarly, Etgar (2008) suggests involvement in design, manufacturing/construction, assembly or consumption activities.

### 3.2.2 Antecedents of Co-creation

Several authors have argued that the increased focus on among other things intangibles, relationships, interactivity and co-creation within a wide range of areas, has resulted in the move from a firm and goods-centric marketing paradigm to a paradigm which focuses on relationship marketing and customers as co-producers of value (e.g. Gummesson, 1998, Grönroos, 1994, Vargo & Lusch, 2004). As noted by Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), customers are becoming increasingly active, empowered and networked, hence it becomes more relevant to consider the market as a forum for interactions in which consumers, consumer communities and firms increasingly interact, instead of considering the market and consumers as a target.

In relation to the increased focus on experiences as important source of value, Pine & Gilmore (1999) point to increased commoditization (arguing that the internet is “the greatest force of commoditization ever known to man” (p. 10)), disintermediation and automation (services are being increasingly productized) as main reasons for this.

Emphasis on co-creation can also be argued to be due to the numerous customer benefits derived from participating in co-creation, e.g. economic rewards, social and psychological benefits and aid in identity construction (Xie, Bagozzi & Troye 2008, Etgar 2008, Nambisan & Baron 2009). In relation to the latter, co-creation experiences may be seen as a “source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people construct narratives of identity” (Etgar 2008, p. 102)

### 3.2.3 Consequences of Co-creation

From a company perspective, a focus on co-creation is argued to lead to a wide range of benefits. Other than satisfying customers’ needs, organizations may e.g. achieve differentiation, increase lifetime value of existing customers and loyalty, increase organizational learning and market knowledge, reduce market research costs, improve innovation efforts, etc. (see Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008, O’Hern & Rindfleisch 2008, Möller, Rajala & Westerlund 2009). Recent research has indicated that co-creation generates additional value to the purchase process, e.g. Rajah, Marshall & Nam found that co-creation generates both satisfaction and trust, which in turn, strengthens relationships with customers and increases loyalty. Here, the degree of enhanced value was determined by the total customer experience including both the
value generated from the product/service purchase as well as the experience gained from the interactions and dialogue between customers and the company (Rajah, Marshall & Nam 2008). In addition, Zhang & Chen (2008) found that co-creation with customers may lead to new competences, thus leading to the possibility of obtaining more competitive advantages.

Some of the challenges with co-creation which may limit organizations’ possibility or ability to engage in co-creation, can for example be related to managerial mindsets, e.g. managers do not believe in co-creation and the challenges in attracting customers with the competences and skills needed to participate in co-creation (Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody 2008, Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000).

3.2.4 Summary

Based on the literature review, the meaning, antecedents and consequences of co-creation have been summarized in Figure 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedents</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer empowerment</td>
<td>Process focus</td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active &amp; networked customers</td>
<td>Experience focus</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commoditization</td>
<td>Customers as a driving force of co-creation</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disintermediation</td>
<td>Customer focus</td>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers’ benefits</td>
<td>Interactive &amp; Relational</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Cost efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial mindsets</td>
<td>Brand as facilitator/symbolic resource</td>
<td>Customer-organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity construction</td>
<td>Network focus</td>
<td>relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.3 Key Aspects of Co-creation

3.3 The Notion of the Brand

Similar to previous sections, in clarifying the meaning and role of the brand, the following sections will be structured around meaning, antecedents and consequences, with meaning encompassing both current definitions and conceptualizations as well as how branding may be utilized and managed. Finally, antecedents and consequences of branding will be discussed as these help explain the focus and relevance of the concept.

3.3.1 Meaning of the Brand

Defining the Brand

The concept of the brand has evolved from a name given to differentiate a company’s product to that of being a social process where brand value is co-created by the firm, the brand and its stakeholders. Thus, value creation is seen as residing in brand-stakeholder interactions (Merz,
He & Vargo 2009, Boyle 2007, Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009, Jones 2005). Consistent with value being co-created through interactions and experiences, Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) define the brand as an experience and argue that the brand evolves and develops through the collective experiences of customers:

“The experience is the brand. The brand is co-created and evolves with experiences” (Prahalad, Ramaswamy 2004a, p. 13)

In support for the notion of the brand as an experience, an increased focus on brand experiences is evident in literature, e.g. Payne et al. (2009) use the term brand relationship experience to denote the brand, emphasizing a relationship-based view of the brand with a focus on ongoing customer experiences. In line with this, de Chernatony, Cottam & Segal-Horn’s research indicated that consumers experience the brand holistically, gaining appreciation and understanding of the brand by experiencing how various information and touch points reinforce or diminish brand values. They define the brand as:

“A brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values that promises a unique and welcome experience for its stakeholders” (de Chernatony, Cottam & Segal-Horn 2006 p. 819)

Although this definition views the brand as a promise, different from the more recent conceptualizations of the brand as a social process, it still emphasizes the role of experiences. Furthermore, Brodie, Glynn & Little (2006) support the view of the brand as an experience and stress that brands constitute important symbolic resources that are integrated within the value process. Similarly, it has been argued that brands are fundamentally about experiences or relationships (Das, Stenger & Ellis 2009), and that creating positive experiences via knowledge and authenticity represents “the next evolutionary phase of brand success today” (Burnett & Hutton 2007 p. 342).

In addition to the above notions of the brand, Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård (2004) suggest a re-defining of branding as a “process of aesthetic expression” (p. 226), a process that requires interaction, wherein value is created when consumers are immersed in and use the brands as a means of self-expression.

**Utilization of the Brand**

In line with Vargo & Lusch’s S-D logic of marketing, and Prahalad & Ramaswamy’s conceptualization of the brand as an experience, Payne et al. (2009) have extended the previous framework on co-creation, discussed in Section 3.2.1, to also consider brand value. The model (see Appendix 2.4), which is developed based on interactive research with executives from a wide range of industries, illustrates how companies can design relationship experiences to co-
create brands. Similar to the original model, it consists of customer and supplier processes, encounters and additional sources of brand knowledge. The customer process includes among other things activities through which the customer aims to achieve a specific purpose. Supplier processes involves managerial considerations regarding opportunities and forms of co-creation, e.g. emotional engagement and co-designing (the same types mentioned in relation to co-creation) while encounters are processes in which suppliers and customers mutually co-create experiences. These encounters can be emotion-supporting (e.g. engaging the customers), action-supporting (e.g. enabling customers to engage in activities) or supporting co-creation in a cognitive way (e.g. aiming at sense-making). In relation to additional sources of brand knowledge, this refers to knowledge that may affect brand perceptions or lead to co-creation processes. As with the co-creation framework, customers’ and organizations’ ability to co-create is argued to be developed over time. One of the possible limitations of the framework that should be taken into account includes the extensive focus on dyadic customer-supplier relationships; little attention is given to other stakeholders and network dynamics.

In line with Payne et al., Jones (2005) argues that in co-creating value it is necessary that the organization meets stakeholders’ expectations. The Stakeholder-Brand Value model (Appendix 2.4) implies a holistic approach to brand management where focus is on identifying relationships with stakeholders that constitute important sources of brand value. Thus, brand value is seen as depending on these stakeholder relationships and it is argued that it is often necessary to achieve synergy between these in order to achieve high brand value (Jones 2005). Management must therefore consider the total communication experience of each strategic stakeholder. Similar to the model by Payne et al. (2009), the model focuses on identification and prioritization of various stakeholder relationships and exchanges according to their possible impact on brand value creation, e.g. in terms of profitability and loyalty.

The importance of stakeholder involvement in co-creating the brand is further supported by Gregory (2007) who suggests a negotiated brand process model (Appendix 2.4) in which the brand is based on the collaboration between the firm and stakeholders. The branding process is initiated by the firm through the identification of the firm’s core values and communicated to stakeholders. Hence, in addition to the models mentioned above, Gregory (2007) points out the importance of core values, these aiding in giving some consistency, avoiding the brand being perceived as chaotic. Similar to Gregory (2007), Ind (2007) proposes a general framework, in which employees, customers and other stakeholders are involved in brand value creation and development. Here, it is argued that a company’s capability to build the brand depends on its ability to connect various functions in optimizing brand equity and delivering customer experiences, requiring among other things a culture and strong leadership supportive of a participatory market orientation (Ind & Bjerke 2007b).
In relation to the frameworks mentioned above, authors have argued for the need of an IMC based brand model and a model considering market dynamics (see Ponnam & Krishnatray 2008). Research has indicated that IMC is an important driver of brand equity as it enables synergy to be achieved across multiple communication channels (Gurău 2008, Peltier, Schibrowsky & Schultz 2003). The frameworks by Payne, Storbacka & Frow (2008) and Jones (2005) can be argued to take market dynamics into account as both consider development of the brand over time. However, none of the frameworks above specifically consider IMC.

3.3.2 Antecedents of Co-creating the Brand

Except for the more general organizational needs such as a communication platform and more effective differentiation, also implied by the brand frameworks discussed above, several antecedents of the increased focus on co-creation have been identified. In particular, the emphasis on co-creation in branding has to a large degree been a result of the research into online brand communities, which has provided empirical evidence of perceived brand value being co-created by individuals (thus not necessarily consumers) through dynamic interactions and experiences (McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig 2002, Muniz Jr. & O’Guinn 2001).

In relation to brand communities, it has been argued that communities are increasingly creating the brand’s identity through WOM and viral marketing, and that WOM and peer review dialogue have become one of the primary drivers of brand attitudes and choice. Accordingly, customers are empowered to challenge any brand promise, while at the same time the effectiveness of managing and communicating a consistent image through company-created brands and traditional mass advertising is decreasing (Lawer & Knox 2006).

In explaining the emphasis on experiences, authors have in particular pointed to consumers’ increased needs today being knowledge, authenticity and personal experiences (see Burnett & Huttons, 2007). This also appears to be related to the notions of consumers suffering from over-choice and choice-fatigue, that explain the importance of emotional and symbolic attachments of brands (Ballantyne 2006). In addition to this, it appears that the increased focus on the stakeholder-brand relationships to some degree can be explained by increased recognition of the role of the brand in identity construction.

3.3.3 Consequences of Co-creating the Brand

As emphasized in the frameworks discussed above, a co-creation approach to brand management is argued to lead to stronger relationships, richer brand experiences,
differentiation, emotional engagement and thus more brand value. Accordingly, a co-creation focus is likely to lead to more effective and efficient branding practices. In terms of effectiveness, more dialogue based/individualized communication is more likely to result in, e.g. companies being better to identify and satisfy customers’ needs and wants, while efficiency gains include improved loyalty and customer retention (Boyle 2007, Das, Stenger & Ellis 2009). Interestingly, recent research has also indicated that when value and brand meaning can be predominantly created by interpersonal co-creation, enough value may be created to overcome potential perceived failings by the company (Baker 2008).

A co-creation approach to brand management may however also involve organizational challenges such as reassessment of the role of brand managers (which also means that management must let go of traditional notions of brand ownership), and constant exploring of alternative and innovative modes of communicating with stakeholders.

3.3.4 Summary

Key findings from the literature review are seen in Figure 3.4.

![Figure 3.4 Key Aspects of the Brand]

3.4 Discussion & Reflection of the Literature

The aim of the following sections is to discuss and reflect upon the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling, branding and co-creation, as identified through the literature review. In particular, focus is on similarities between the three concepts along with the apparent impact of branding and co-creation on storytelling. Additional roles of storytelling are presented in the reflection, and finally, a typology of possible organizational approaches for utilizing storytelling is developed.

The literature indicated several relevant linkages between storytelling, branding and co-creation. The key elements of the three concepts in terms of meaning, antecedents and consequences can be seen in Figure 3.5. As illustrated by the double arrows between meaning and consequences, the consequences of a concept are considered to feed back to and affect the...
meaning of the original concept, i.e. enhanced value, differentiation, loyalty and stronger customer relationships are some of the major advantages of co-creation, which have further reinforced the relevance of the factors constituting the meaning of co-creation.

Figure 3.5 Conceptual Framework of the Evolving Meaning and Role of Storytelling
3.4.1 The Meaning & Role of Storytelling

3.4.1.1 Meaning of Storytelling

As indicated by the literature review and seen in Figure 3.5, the notion of the brand has evolved similarly to the co-creation literature. Merz, He & Vargo (2009) argue that the new brand logic, viewing the brand as a social process in which brands are co-created, parallels and reflects the evolving S-D logic of marketing in which co-creation is central. Interestingly, the co-creation literature has begun to focus more and more on the role of the brand in the co-creation process, emphasizing the important role of the brand as a relationship facilitator and symbolic resource. This further points towards a convergence of the two concepts.

As seen in Figure 3.5, the emerging shift in storytelling from focusing on a narrative structure and elements, to an interactive, holistic and cross-functional process, is similar to the meanings of both the brand and co-creation (which both emphasize interactive dialogue and emotional aspects of the brand). Moreover, as storytelling has evolved from focusing on company crafted stories to involving stakeholders and enhancing brand experiences, the utilization of storytelling may be viewed as bearing similarities to co-creation and brand management activities (e.g. involving stakeholders and facilitating individual co-creation experiences).

Due to the strong emphasis and prevalence on the above-mentioned issues in branding and co-creation, these issues appear to have had a clear impact on the storytelling literature. For example, co-creation appears to have brought a higher focus on interaction between narrator and audience, two-way communication, dialogue and the interpretation of messages by the audience (Arrow 1). Storytelling has furthermore become a concept that encompasses branding aspects to a larger degree than before (mainly due to its ability to embed and communicate values) and the literature is constantly drawing on principles from branding, including the holistic line of thought and the interactive brand focus (Arrow 2).

3.4.1.2 Antecedents of Storytelling

Figure 3.5 also illustrates the close links between the antecedents of all three concepts. For example, from a company perspective, the reasons of using both co-creation and branding as a way to achieve more effective product/service/brand differentiation are equivalent to that of embedding products/services/brands with stories and creating emotional bonds with stakeholders through storytelling. From a customer perspective, it is apparent that the idea of co-creation experiences and brands aiding in identity construction corresponds with the notion that stories satisfy needs for archetype myth fulfillment by means of storytelling.
Regarding the impact of co-creation on storytelling, it is for example reasonable to assume that customer empowerment and the fact that customers are increasingly active have increased the demand for more effective communication involving both rational and emotional elements, as well as organizational learning enabled through storytelling (Arrow 3). In terms branding influencing storytelling antecedents, an example of this could be related to communication platforms. One of the reasons for having a brand strategy in place is to establish a communication platform, ensuring that the brand values are communicated effectively. Thus, storytelling may have become more popular as it enables a core brand story to be utilized as a communication platform (Arrow 4). Furthermore, the importance of communicating brand meaning effectively and simplifying customer decision-making are likely to be important factors of the company utilizing storytelling.

### 3.4.1.3 Consequences of Storytelling

The literature review further illustrates that the consequences of storytelling are similar to those of branding and co-creation. For example, consequences of both co-creation and branding such as enhanced value, learning, stronger/enhanced customer (stakeholder) relationships and experiences are equivalent to storytelling consequences such as enhanced brand value, organizational sense-making, stronger (emotional) bonds with stakeholders and brand attractiveness.

A possible impact of co-creation on storytelling is the increased focus on organizational learning and knowledge in co-creation, which appears to have led to a greater emphasis and recognition of effective knowledge sharing and organizational sense-making enabled by storytelling (Arrow 5). Regarding the impact of branding consequences on storytelling, the emphasis on employees *living the brand* can be assumed to have led to an increased focus on storytelling advantages in terms of improving internal communication and achieving greater employee commitment and motivation (Arrow 6).

As mentioned above, it is clear that both the branding and storytelling concepts have evolved similarly, focusing on co-creation of value, experiences, interactive processes and stakeholder involvement etc. However, it also appears that storytelling has evolved along with the branding and co-creation concepts. This is exemplified by the shift from focus on mainly story structure and elements, to a process focus, where interactivity, two-way communication and dialogue play an important part of the process.

Based on the above discussion, it is apparent that the storytelling, branding and co-creation concepts are converging. This, along with the close links between the antecedents and consequences of storytelling, branding and co-creation, implies that the concepts may be viewed as interdependent and complementary to one another. It may also indicate that the three
concepts could be seen as various stages in the same process. This will be further elaborated below.

3.4.2 Reflection on the Literature - Co-creating the Brand Through Storytelling

It appears that there are ways of how storytelling, co-creation and branding may possibly be viewed as being interdependent and complementary to one another. The section below concerns how storytelling may lead to/support brand co-creation and how co-creation may enhance the brand co-creation process, both of which have not previously been emphasized in the literature.

As the literature indicated, when viewing the brand as an experience, the forms of co-creation found in the co-creation literature may be seen as being equally applicable for the designing of co-creation relationship experiences. Accordingly, the word brand in parentheses implies both co-creation of value and co-creation with regards to brand value.

**STORYTELLING AS A FORM OF (BRAND) CO-CREATION** As emotional engagement was found to be a type of co-creation (also in relation to the brand), and good stories were found to enable emotional engagement, storytelling may lead the audience to emotional engagement, resulting in a co-creation process. Thus storytelling may be viewed as a form of co-creation.

**STORYTELLING AS A MEANS TO FOSTER A (BRAND) CO-CREATION FOCUS INTERNALLY** As several authors have argued that storytelling is effective in transforming organizational culture, storytelling could be utilized to foster a co-creation supporting culture. For example, management could internally spread stories that illustrate how customers engaging in co-creation have led to company success in the past.

**STORYTELLING AS A MEANS TO DISCOVER (BRAND) CO-CREATION OPPORTUNITIES** Storytelling may also increase co-creation opportunities and bridge potential gaps in perceptions among various stakeholders, both internally and externally through, e.g. applying storylistening techniques, where organizations may gain insight to customers’ and other stakeholders’ perceptions of the brand and organization.

**STORYTELLING AS A MEANS TO ENCOURAGE (BRAND) CO-CREATION** Storytelling could also be a means of increasing consumers’ willingness of getting involved and engaging in co-creation. As consumers’ intrinsic motivations (for example a desire for fun, excitement and variety seeking behavior) were found to influence their psychological drives to engage in co-creation, dramatic stories may be able to increase willingness of engaging in co-creation, as they may make the brand and organization seem more exciting and attractive. Customer learning in terms of sense-making may also increase the likelihood of customers engaging in co-creation, as these
may aid in establishing certain emotional preconditions for willingness to engage in co-creation activities (e.g. trust in the brand or organization). Hence, storytelling could be argued to be an important method of managing co-creation and thus a valuable part of innovation management.

In addition, storytelling can be seen as a means to increase stakeholders’ ability and willingness to co-create the brand and as an effective tool for enhancing customer learning and sense-making. As storyteller and listener achieve a greater understanding of experiences through sharing stories on an experiential level, and brand meaning is created through stories about the brand on a sense-making level, storytelling can be argued to be useful for improving customers’ ability and willingness to co-create the brand at both these levels. Thus, storytelling may provide answers to what the brand means to customers and why he or she should involve in co-creation.

**BRAND CO-CREATION IN THE STORYTELLING PROCESS**

Meaningful dialogue and interaction with the consumer may be viewed as increasingly important platforms or channels for successful storytelling, in which organizations not only share their stories, but also receive stories from consumers and other stakeholders. The more involved the consumer or stakeholder is in the co-creation process and the more satisfaction, trust and loyalty towards the organization, the more likelihood that stakeholders may create and share stories with the organization. Moreover, as found through research in relation to tourism/hospitality services conceptualized as stories, co-creation and involvement help facilitate immersion in a story, further indicating the relevance of co-creation in relation to storytelling.

In relation to the above, it is assumed to be important to consider the criticism towards storytelling as a form of branding, especially criticism aimed at the appropriateness of storytelling when taking a co-creation perspective on branding.

As mentioned in the literature review, authors (e.g. Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004) have pointed out that storytelling often views the brand as a bearer of values, implying a one-way communication approach not corresponding to a co-creation view of the brand. These authors instead suggest perceiving the brand as a process of aesthetic expression, including visual aspects, signs and the blurring role of senders and receivers. However, little guidance of how to manage this aesthetic process is provided. Although this perspective can be considered highly useful in branding, the use of storytelling can still be argued to be of high importance. For instance, Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård mention wearing a Burberry coat as an example of how brands are used as signs, expressing individual aesthetic performance and enabling identity building. Here, it can be argued, that the branding process is still to a large degree influenced by brand management (although it is recognized that full control over the process is impossible). As brands portray stories/archetypes (that are partly produced/marketed and thus influenced by brand managers), which help consumers fulfill an archetype outcome that aids in identity
construction, storytelling thus aids in explaining why a person chooses to wear e.g. a Burberry coat in the first place (i.e. it has a story/myth attached to it), hence providing an important argument for why brand managers should manage the stories surrounding the brand.

This focus on branding as an expressive form relying more on images and visual signs and the blurring role of senders and receivers, appears to be closely linked with other criticism towards storytelling mentioned in the literature review - criticism that has pointed out the lack of consideration of semiotics and reception theory (meaning creation) in storytelling.

**STORYTELLING, BRANDING, CO-CREATION & SEMIOTICS** Applied to communications and marketing, semiotics (the theory of signs) and semiotic analysis involves, among other things, deciphering signs in various statement contexts, diagnosing their intended meaning and assessing how various sign components are interrelated. Such analysis has proven to be useful in improving communication effectiveness (Bitoun 2006). However, by recognizing the importance of the visual elements of brands, the concepts of storytelling and the brand as stories need not be rejected, but rather considered as being complementary to one another, i.e. both modes of communication (audial/storied and visual) constitute the brand. Accordingly, there is a need for brand management to work actively with both stories that the brand conveys/tells and still focus on the visual and sensory aspects (e.g. through semiotic analyses) of the brand. By doing this, brand management recognizes the increasingly blurry roles of senders and receivers.

**STORYTELLING, BRANDING, CO-CREATION & MEANING CREATION** Authors have pointed out the low amount of attention given to reception theory in storytelling literature, a theory which is highly relevant to the meaning of storytelling, when taking a co-creation view of the brand, due to its relatedness to both co-creation and brand management.

Reception theory refers to the ways in which consumers respond to, and make sense of communication, where meaning of a communicated message is not something that is given; rather it is seen as being negotiated together with consumers. As Baker & Boyle (2009) note in relation to storytelling, indicating this mindset:

“If your friends on the road trip were to recount the same story, they would each tell their own version of it because they have each taken that story, owned it and made it their own.” (Baker & Boyle 2009)

In co-creation literature, the relevance of reception theory and focus on meaning creation is further enhanced as research into co-creation and branding has indicated that customers create value propositions and value through their own construction of meanings (Fyrberg & Jüriado 2009). Interestingly, this also indicates that value propositions cannot be constrained by the
suppliers, as stated in the S-D logic where companies are believed to offer value propositions (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008).

In relation to the brand and IMC, Finne & Grönroos (2009) suggest a Relationship Communication model (Appendix 2.4) where organizations should integrate messages with customers’ time-factors (e.g. expectations and goals) and situational-factors (e.g. advertising and trends) in order for relationship communication to occur (meaning that both parties in a communication process are active in the creation of meaning). It is only this kind of communication that significantly influences customers’ long-term commitment to the brand/organization (Finne & Grönroos 2009). Thus, to manage storytelling effectively in the branding process, it is assumed that consumers’ integration and meaning creation are important to consider.

In addition, due to the increased focus on IMC in branding, it is assumed that an IMC perspective is equally important for storytelling communication, as with all other brand communication. As IMC theory implies that various channels communicate messages differently (e.g. some messages are better communicated offline than online), integration of these may lead to synergy effects, thus the choice of channel should also be considered in storytelling.

Based on the discussions above, it appears that both semiotics and reception theory may provide useful insights in managing images and visual signs as well as in responding to the blurring role of senders and receivers.

3.4.3 An Initial Typology of Storytelling

Based on the literature review and the reflections above, a typology of storytelling (see Figure 3.6) has been developed, in order to illustrate the various ways an organization may approach the storytelling concept, on the basis of stakeholder involvement in co-creation processes and the amount of possible interaction through storytelling communication. As both involvement and interaction were found to be increasingly important in the meaning of storytelling, these have formed the axes of the typology.
### Figure 3.6 Initial Typology of Storytelling Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach 1</th>
<th>Approach 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High degree of interaction exists, but the organization does not utilize these e.g. due to lacking capabilities and competencies</td>
<td>Two-way communication, interactive and co-creation approach to storytelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach 3</th>
<th>Approach 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-way communication, firm-centric focus approach to storytelling</td>
<td>Customers interested in co-creation, but organization does not take advantage of this e.g. due to lacking belief in the advantages of co-creation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Few</th>
<th>Many</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possibilities of involving consumers and other stakeholders in co-creation of the brand in the specific storytelling context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The storytelling concept is used as a way to foster interaction and dialogue – this does not necessarily mean that customers affect the story as such, the way it is developed, etc.

Approach 1 may include companies with a high degree of stakeholder interaction which they do not make further use of, possibly due to e.g. lacking capabilities or competencies in co-creation, unbalanced power-relationships or a lack of empathy from the companies, as also mentioned by Etgar (2008) in relation to antecedents of co-creation.

Approach 2 shows a two-way, interactive and co-creation approach to storytelling, where organizations may believe that storytelling through co-creation approaches serves as a differentiation tool, strengthens brand-stakeholder relationships, and acts as a communication platform for the brand. The recent Føtex (Knokol) commercial may be viewed as an example of this approach (see Appendix 2.5 for an elaboration on the Føtex commercial), as it includes story elements and several co-creation opportunities.
Approach 3 implies the opposite, here companies approach branding and storytelling in a traditional, firm-centric way with generally little interest in involving customers in marketing processes. Communication may thus follow a storytelling format including story elements, without involving consumers in co-creation opportunities, except possibly emotional engagement.

In Approach 4, many opportunities for engaging customers in co-creation exist, but these are not taken advantage of. Examples of such organizations could include popular manufacturers where customers have a visible interest in the brand, although due to, e.g. a lack of interest in co-creation, the organization may not perceive the benefits of co-creation as relevant. Hence, as an important antecedent for co-creation is management’s beliefs in the advantages of engaging in co-creation with customers and other stakeholders, co-creation opportunities may not be seized if managers do not believe in the advantages of these (Etgar 2008).

Based on the literature, Approach 2 is considered to be in line with a co-creation of the brand approach to storytelling. In support for Figure 3.5 and Figure 3.6, the literature indicates that storytelling is a useful branding tool and the relevance of co-creation in a branding context is becoming increasingly recognized. However, it seems that a more defined and specified concept of storytelling is needed in the literature. The following research will hopefully contribute in further clarifying, defining and theoretically specifying the storytelling concept.

3.5 Literature Review Summary

Through the literature review, the concepts of storytelling, co-creation and branding have been specified. Co-creation includes a high relational focus with customers as the driving force of value creation, and a focus on customers’ co-creation experiences. Branding has evolved to include a focus on experience processes and brand-stakeholder relationships, where brand value is co-created through interaction and experiences. Along with the development of the co-creation and branding literature, the storytelling concept may be viewed as evolving as well, as the literature increasingly focuses on branding, interactivity, and utilization of storytelling as a holistic and dynamic process focus. Furthermore, the literature review has found relevance of including semiotics, visual aspects, broader narrative structures and IMC considerations such as reception theory in the conceptualization and utilization of storytelling.
4. Practical Insights from Experience Surveys

The following sections include the methodological implications, main research findings and the discussion and reflection of the experience surveys. In exploring the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management, the research findings will be assessed in relation to literature.

4.1 Methodological Implications

As mentioned in Section 2.4, more detailed descriptions regarding the sampling, data collection and analysis, along with reliability, validity and ethical considerations in relation to the experience surveys will be provided in the following sections.

THE SAMPLE

The sample of experts can be considered as purposeful as it was criterion-based including 1) storytelling or branding consultants in Denmark or Sweden and 2) consultants practicing storytelling. Several relevant storytelling and branding agencies were found by searching for information about the agencies online. These were thereafter contacted via phone, followed up by an information letter. Four consultants agreed to participate (see Table 4.1). As all consultants were assumed to be a group of specialists in the field of storytelling, the sample can be considered to be homogenous (Daymon & Holloway 2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Main Consulting Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolf Jensen</td>
<td>Dream Company A/S</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus Fog</td>
<td>Sigma A/S</td>
<td>Storytelling &amp; Branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matts Heijbel</td>
<td>Storytellers Heijbel &amp; co</td>
<td>Storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morten Kornerup</td>
<td>Blue Business</td>
<td>Branding- Clients primary B2B companies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Experts Sample Description

DATA COLLECTION

The one-to-one interviews (involving both authors) were held during the period April-May 2010 and each interview lasted approximately 1 ½ hour and was recorded. Three of the interviews were face-to-face interviews conducted at the experts’ respective offices, as it was assumed that the respondents felt more comfortable when interviewed in a familiar environment. One interview was carried out by telephone via computer, as this agency was
located in Stockholm, Sweden. The interviews were conducted based on recommendations regarding in-depth interviews by Daymon & Holloway (2004). An interview guide was used to guide the overall themes discussed during the interviews, with a focus on the concepts’ relationships with one another. The interview guide, along with additional information regarding the interview process, can be found in Appendix 3.1.

**DATA ANALYSIS** The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed based on recommendations by Miles & Huberman (1994). Three of the interviews were conducted in Danish and one in Swedish and thereafter translated to English. After coding, inter-linkages between the categories and concepts were assessed and categorized based on the analytical framework, where after this was related to the literature in order to explore the relationships between the data and the relevant literature. Citations and their translations may be viewed in Appendix 3.1, along with additional information regarding the coding process.

**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN QUALITATIVE TERMS** It has been suggested in terms of qualitative research, that it is more appropriate to talk about the level of authenticity and trustworthiness rather than validity and reliability, but where these notions involve elements relatable to validity and reliability. Authenticity relates to, among other things, the fairness and appropriateness of the strategies used while trustworthiness refers to issues such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Daymon & Holloway 2004). Efforts made to increase the levels of authenticity and trustworthiness included the strategies of member checking, searching for alternative explanations and an audit trail, after recommendations by Daymon & Holloway (2004). Member checking involved emailing all the participants the sections with the relevant data and authors’ interpretation, which enabled participants to among other things confirm, correct errors and comment on the interpretation. In relation to alternative explanations, the authors strived to actively search for alternative explanations during the analysis, looking for contradictions between data and literature, etc. In relation to the audit trail, the authors have during the whole research process written down activities and critical decisions encountered, allowing for a detailed description of the research process seen in Section 2.4.2, which enables readers to better judge the quality of the research. Furthermore, the authors have acknowledged significant preconceptions they have had (see Section 2.4).

A possible confirmatory bias that should be taken into account is that books written by the three of the experts have been assessed in the thesis, as the amount of well-founded storytelling literature on the subject was considered to be scarce. As there were only minor differences in

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*Credibility includes e.g. that participants recognize the truth of the findings, transferability includes e.g. how findings can be related or transferable to other settings, dependability includes e.g. findings should be consistent and accurate, and confirmability includes e.g. illustrations of how data are linked to their sources.*
the responses compared to the books, these have not been considered in the discussion and reflection.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS** Ethical issues in research usually concern issues such as protection from harm, informed consent, right to privacy, and reporting of findings in a honest and complete fashion. These concerns have been assessed after recommendations by Leedy and Ormrod (2005). For example, an information letter was sent out, which included among other things contact information, description of the nature of the study, expected interview duration and the focus of the interview. The information letter also pointed out that participation was voluntarily and that the opportunity to confirm the data would be given. Finally, the authors have strived to give appropriate credit when credit is due and report all findings in a complete and honest way. The information letter can be seen in Appendix 3.1.

4.2 Main Findings from Experience Surveys

The following sections will present the main findings of the experience surveys. The experts’ general view of co-creation and the brand will be shortly presented followed by a summary of the key findings.

4.2.1 Experts’ Views on Co-creation & the Brand

When discussing the experts’ view of the meaning of co-creation, the perceptions of the concept were relatively alike. Both Jensen and Heijbel had the view that co-creation meant involving customers in the creation or design of the product. Kornerup viewed co-creation mainly in terms of involving end users in a campaign’s development. Fog viewed co-creation as the “interactive method”, mentioning that there was nothing new about involving consumers.

A co-creation view of the brand, both with regards to involving stakeholders was strongly indicated by most experts, as seen in the following statements:

“...*all brands are based on co-creation with the consumers, the primary consumers and stakeholders*” (Fog 2010)

“*The brand is the experience of everything the organization does, says and is, and manufactures and sells, that is, services or products...It is the outside world and customers and stakeholders that create the brand*” (Heijbel 2010)

It was further noted by Kornerup that in B2B, the brand is created mainly by the actions of employees and others who represent the organization, and not only through communication. Jensen however, did not specifically emphasize co-creation of the brand, instead he explained that the concept of branding had developed over the years to focus on the symbols a consumer
identifies himself/herself with, as consumers purchase products/brands that hold certain desired values.

4.2.2 Meaning of Storytelling

The experts revealed many interesting insights of how to work with storytelling in relation to a brand and co-creation. These are summarized below in relation to defining and utilizing storytelling.

**Defining Storytelling**

**MARKETING & BRANDING METHOD & TOOL** The concept was seen as a method or tool, implicit in the branding process (for Kornerup, branding and storytelling were almost like “two sides of same coin”), which organizations could apply to improve both internal and external communication and enhance branding efforts, e.g. through more effective differentiation.

**GOOD STORIES HAVE KEY ELEMENTS** Several key elements of a story were emphasized as characterizing storytelling in a business context, especially the role of the conflict, plot and the classical narrative structure often seen in fairytales. As Jensen explains, storytelling is like a classic movie; it follows, and has always followed, the same structure which is part of human nature:

“First everything is fine, then something horrible happens, then the hero fights against evil, and then the hero wins” (Jensen 2010)

Similarly, Heijbel explained:

“You attempt to create a dramaturgy which sets a scene, to which you bring people, and where you allow for something to happen, something that makes you get an “aha” experience or insight, or a feeling...” (Heijbel 2010)

The experts stressed that an element of stories should be a focus on having both rational and emotional arguments, in order for storytelling to appeal to both heart and brain. Fog emphasized that a story should contain a conflict if aiming at communicating on both a rational and emotional level:

“...communication, should appeal to you both emotionally and rationally. And that is what stories can do, under the condition that, and this is important, one dares to talk about a conflict, and they always do, if it is a story...” (Fog 2010)
Similar to the conflict, Kornerup believed that storytelling should have some kind of *hook*. A hook was described as a unique position or interesting angle which makes it possible to make a connection that is relevant for everyone involved.

**Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management**

**HOLISTIC PROCESS FOCUS** All of the experts stressed the importance of working holistically with storytelling e.g. Kornerup highlighted that it is a prerequisite that the organization itself believes in the story for it to be successfully communicated externally, while Fog stressed that it is necessary to work both internally and externally in order to achieve consistency and credibility. On a more operational level, the research clearly indicated that working with storytelling involves sub processes and various storytelling tools. For example, Heijbel talked about the *Heijbel model*, which includes workshops/lectures aiming at inspiring e.g. employees and consumers to come up with stories, while Jensen emphasized *story mining* as a way (process) of finding stories.

**AUTHENTIC CORE** Also mentioned as elements of good stories was the importance of having an authentic core/basis, as all of the experts strongly believed that it is important that stories in a business context are authentic, although one may further romanticize or dramatize the story.

**STORYTELLING AS A WAY OF TRANSFORMING THE ORGANIZATION** The research implied that storytelling was an effective way of transforming an organization e.g. through sharing visions of the future. As Heijbel pointed out, storytelling does not only concern stories about the past, rather it is important that storytelling also concerns the present, and perhaps what is even more important, visions of the future. Importantly, the experts mentioned that stories can both have positive and negative messages.

**CORE STORY & COMMUNICATION PLATFORM** The usefulness of storytelling in establishing a communication platform was found. Fog for example, emphasized the importance of having a core story, a core message that all of the organization’s stories should be based on. Similarly, Kornerup used the term “*platform*”, meaning that all stories are based on a central message. In line with the co-creation view mentioned above, Kornerup emphasized that it was important to ensure that mission and vision are properly understood and embodied by all the employees, and to keep communication consistent, which could be enabled through a communication platform.

**STORIES AS CULTURAL CAPITAL, SHAPING CULTURES & AIDING IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION** The research revealed the importance of understanding the role of culture in relation to storytelling. For example, Heijbel explained that all cultures (at work, school etc.) are borne by stories, and that within each culture, stories can be found that may impact the members of the
culture, e.g. by making the culture stronger. Stories should therefore be viewed and handled as important organizational capital. In addition, Fog emphasized that it is absolutely important that one strives to uncover the culture, the main story, as “cultures create brands”. He mentioned a famous brand of bottled water as an example – the area the water was tapped in and the culture of the area, including the way of life and attitudes of the locals, were all symbolized by the brand. All of these symbols are what customers buy when they purchase the water and they may ultimately constitute and symbolize part of consumers’ identities.

**CO-CREATION: INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS & TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION IN STORYTELLING** In line with a co-creation perspective on branding, the research clearly indicated the relevance and importance of involving stakeholders, two-way communication and co-creation in storytelling. In particular, it was found that co-creation can be useful for storytelling, e.g. as a way to effectively generate stories, it can even be seen as a dialogue. In addition, storytelling can be useful in achieving co-creation.

In relation to the usefulness of co-creation in storytelling, Kornerup viewed co-creation and storytelling as being highly integrated, as customer insights were important for finding the balance between rational and emotional arguments and the triggers and barriers in a market. This in turn is important for developing a communication strategy that can connect activities and insights through a compelling story or universe. In addition, Heijbel believed that storytelling could be thought of as a kind of dialogue with customers, occurring when the storyteller succeeds to tell a story in a way that enables the listener to be absorbed in it. In relation to the usefulness of storytelling in achieving co-creation, Fog highlighted that involving people in rational activities still requires an emotional element. Similarly, Jensen explained:

“...well, it can make it necessary that you find such a good story that people get absorbed in it, which is quite a challenge. In return, if it is the real thing, you can get everyone onboard” (Jensen 2010)

Hence in involving users in co-creation, e.g. in customer panels, a good story is required.

**4.2.3 Antecedents of Storytelling**

**STORIES EXPLAIN THE CULTURE THAT MAKES THE BRAND** According to the experts, customers buy stories, which is why storytelling is so useful in managing brands. Specifically, Fog explained that in his view, it is not the stories that create the brand, but the culture that the stories explain and make available and understandable, that creates the brand:

“...because customers buy into the stories, they have never bought a brand rationally. How come there are intelligent women...who are prepared to pay 5000 DKK for a Louis Vuitton
purse, that’s not rational is it? It is the woman’s experience and story about what it does for her, and it never stops. This is what makes it” (Fog 2010)

In addition, Fog explained that in this way, storytelling may be seen as a kind of dialogue with the consumer about the brand.

**INCREASED NEED FOR INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE & INVOLVEMENT DUE TO FIRM-CENTRIC, ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION BEING INEFFECTIVE**

It was implied by the experts that an increased focus on co-creation, involvement and interactive two-way communication (dialogue) in storytelling, is due to the traditional, firm-centric mode of communication becoming increasingly ineffective, as Fog notes:

“...if you do it the traditional way, you will quickly run out of money, and you will constantly hit the wall, a wall called push communication...” (Fog 2010)

Thus, push-communication was expressed to be highly ineffective explaining why organizations need to focus on communicating with rather than to stakeholders. In relation to this, some of the challenges with co-creation were mentioned, e.g. the loss of control of the organization’s communication. However, as mentioned by one of the experts, one-way communication “just doesn’t make sense anymore”, thus organizations should make efforts to accept and use the attention from consumers from e.g. social media and blogs.

**NEED FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY**

One of the antecedents of storytelling as a branding process and method involving co-creation was found to be the need for trustworthiness and transparency. As Kornerup stressed, you co-creation is necessary in branding, as it aids in avoiding the brand or organization being perceived as untrustworthy:

“Because the worst thing that can happen is if you just release a story or campaign resulting in people not being able to recognize themselves, or the organization not being able to recognize themselves, its employees cannot recognize themselves or the subsidiaries, and then you have lost, you have become untrustworthy” (Kornerup 2010)

Closely related to trustworthiness is the demand for transparency. For example, Fog had no doubt that more and more brands are becoming co-created brands, highlighting the transparent nature of businesses today as a major reason for this as, “everything is transparent today”. Hence, businesses can no longer come up with just any (brand) story they believe will fit with the company, as this would immediately backfire.

**NEED FOR INDIVIDUALIZATION & INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF BRAND-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS**

In general, the research implied that the increased importance of storytelling was also due to increased individualization and the increased importance of brand-consumer
relationships. Jensen in particular, emphasized that the view of the brand as a kind of symbol expressing individuality, was due to the increased use of brands for defining who individuals are and the group/culture individuals identify themselves with.

4.2.4 Consequences of Storytelling

**ENHANCED BRAND EXPERIENCE** The research clearly indicated that storytelling leads to enhanced and improved brand experiences. As one expert noted, if organizations are able to present a story that is truly relevant for the customer, and where the product lives up to this story, then the brand experience is enhanced.

**BRAND IS MADE MEANINGFUL & MORE DIMENSIONS ARE ADDED TO THE BRAND** Another important consequence of storytelling was found to be the opportunity to make the brand more deep and meaningful by adding some more dimensions to the brand (thereby also improving customers’ brand experiences), as seen in the following statements:

“...If you enjoyed that story, then perhaps the brand becomes a bit more likeable, then I have populated the brand, I have filled it with people, who say something, who feel something, who do something and then add this to the brand. This I call, to populate the brand with stories from reality” (Heijbel 2010)

“...you use the stories to get people to understand what the brand really is... ...The thing that makes them fascinated internally is exactly the same message, essence, as externally. There might be different types of languages, different examples, but it is the story that makes people understand...” (Fog 2010)

**GAINING FEEDBACK & BRIDGING POTENTIAL GAPS IN PERCEPTIONS** In relation to co-creating the brand through storytelling (e.g. through qualitative interviews) most experts mentioned the value in receiving useful feedback and inspiration gained from consumers. Furthermore, co-creation was seen as being useful to start up a dialogue with stakeholders. However, Kornerup mentioned co-creating the brand can be challenging, as the organizations’ and customers’ starting viewpoints might be different, although good branding (via storytelling) can result in the synchronization of those two differences, and hence aid in minimizing potential gaps in perceptions.

**INCREASE WILLINGNESS OF STAKEHOLDERS’ PARTICIPATION IN (BRAND) CO-CREATION** As mentioned earlier, the research clearly indicated that co-creation would become more important the future, also in relation to storytelling, and that storytelling can be seen as useful for co-creation, e.g. Kornerup emphasized that storytelling can enable organizations to talk to their customers on a more arms-length basis, communicating around the same platform, which
the organizations then can continue to build on. Importantly, by involving customers in co-creation, e.g. in creating future solutions, it was also indicated that as customers are involved, they are more likely to tell the stories as well, through WOM.

**CONSUMERS DEFENDING THE BRAND** Another interesting consequence emphasized by Fog, was that storytelling may (under certain conditions) increase the likelihood that people defend the brand whenever a negative story comes along.

**BRAND LOYALTY, IMPROVED COMMUNICATION & ENHANCED BRANDING EFFORTS**

Overall, the research indicated that co-creating the brand through storytelling was seen as a challenging but important way of building the brand, enhancing brand experiences, gaining useful feedback, building and maintaining relationships, and thus staying competitive. As Fog stressed:

“...The more use of, I would call it narrative principles, and the more involvement, the stronger the brand. But only under the condition that it is around the same authentic core, that is, the core story, as experienced both by those who have created it, but also those who use it...” (Fog 2010)

In relation to this, it was mentioned that a challenge is that often that stories told by customers are solely testimonials, and as such, these often lack the element of conflict, which was argued to be a critical element of a good story by all of the experts.

The key findings from the experience surveys can be seen in Figure 4.1. These will be discussed in the following section.
4.3 Discussion & Reflection Experience Surveys

In the following sections, the meaning and role of storytelling, as perceived and practiced by the experts, will be assessed in relation to the literature, and discussed and reflected upon, with the aim of further clarifying the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management. Finally, the typology of storytelling presented in the previous section, is revised based on the feedback from experts.

4.3.1 The Meaning & Role of Storytelling

Generally, the experts had the same line of thought as the storytelling literature, although several new aspects of working with storytelling in relation to co-creation and branding were highlighted, including the relevance of co-creation in storytelling processes. The findings according to the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling are discussed below.

4.3.1.1 Meaning of Storytelling

Defining Storytelling

MARKETING & BRANDING METHOD & TOOL Overall, the research strongly supported the literature (e.g. Kristensen 2002, Mossberg 2006) emphasizing the usefulness of storytelling as a method or approach (both strategically and operationally) to enhance the brand and an organization’s brand communication, making storytelling an important and implicit part of a communication strategy and branding process.
GOOD STORIES HAVE KEY ELEMENTS Not surprisingly, all of the experts except for one, emphasized the classical fairytale narrative structure based on the actant model and story elements such as plot and conflict in defining storytelling. However, although authors have argued conflict is an important driving force of the story, (e.g. Grønborg 2002, McKee 2003), the importance of the conflict (or “hook”) as well as the inclusion of both emotional and rational elements appeared to be even more emphasized compared to the general literature. It should be taken into account that other possible variations of narrative structures or various degrees of plotting, as discussed in the literature review section (e.g. Søderberg 2003), were not mentioned. Rather, the research indicated that stories should be evaluated and structured according the actant model and the specific story elements mentioned above, in order to enhance emotional engagement and immersion in the story.

As all experts shared the general idea of storytelling as a useful way of adding dimensions and communicating the symbolic values of the brand, the research corresponds with Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård’s (2004) view of storytelling as a form of narration where the organization relates what it is and what it stands for.

Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management

Although the experts mainly agreed on the main aspects constituting the main findings, their emphasis differed. Throughout the research it became rather clear that the four experts had different views on the brand and branding, and co-creation of brand value accordingly. This also appears to support the existence of seven brand approaches, as identified by Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre (2009). The differences in the experts’ brand perspectives indicated that the focus on the meaning of storytelling varied depending on brand perspective and focus (see a model illustrating these perspectives in Appendix 3.2.1).

The four apparent perspectives/focuses included, 1) a cultural perspective (similar to the cultural brand approach) 2) a perspective viewing the brand as an experience 3) a perspective viewing storytelling and branding as two sides of the same coin, where the brand is seen as being mainly created by an organization’s communication and through the actions of all organizational members (similar to the identity brand approach), and finally, 4) one expert implied personality traits as important drivers of emotional bonding between brands and consumers (similar to the personality brand approach). For example, the expert who had an identity focus (and who worked mainly with B2B), placed more emphasis on storytelling as a communication platform aiming at aligning vision, culture and image, compared to the other perspectives. This indicates that storytelling is recognized in several brand approaches and hence, its relevance is not limited to one specific approach and view of the brand.
Importantly, despite various perspectives, all experts indicated a perspective on brand management implying co-creation of brand value.

**Holistic Process Focus** It was found that storytelling is a holistic, interactive process, consisting of similar steps such as searching/collecting, connecting, communicating stories (about positive or negative experiences), etc., similar to the processes mentioned in the literature (e.g. Ind & Bjerke 2007, Baker & Boyle 2007). These stories are then to be communicated both externally as well as internally, in order to strengthen brand-stakeholder relationships and effectively communicate vision, mission and values. Such a process was found to involve both internal and external stakeholders, as brands were seen as co-created by both groups of stakeholders. However, compared to existing literature, the experts highly emphasized co-creation and stakeholder involvement in the process, as well as consumers’ conversations with each other, implying that the role and meaning of storytelling increasingly corresponds to a brand co-creation focus.

**Authentic Core** In line with the literature, e.g. Mathews & Wacker (2007), the notions of authentic basis and authentic stories (although dramatized or romanticized) were thought important in order to be perceived as trustworthy and ensure somewhat consistency in communication, and as one expert highlighted, in order to aid in missions and visions being properly understood and embodied by all employees.

**Storytelling as a Way of Transforming the Organization** It was found that storytelling was an effective way of transforming an organization, for example through sharing visions of the future. As also highlighted, e.g. by McKinnon (2008), storytelling as an internally managed process may be used to strengthen culture, change certain behaviors or to show employees how to uphold organizational values.

This was especially emphasized by one of the experts who, through his emphasis on e.g. alignment of vision, culture and actions of employees, indicated an identity perspective towards branding, which places the organization and employees at the centre of brand value creation (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). This is in line with Hatch & Schultz (2001), who stress the importance of aligning identity, culture, image and reputation, and de Chernatony, Cottam & Segal-Horn (2006), who argue for the importance of employees in communicating brand values. However, by stressing that co-creation is implicit in storytelling/branding, the expert indicated a more recent and dynamic view of organizational identity as being co-created (formed both internally and externally). According to the above, the relevance of utilizing storytelling as a means of aligning vision, culture and image, and building employee commitment, is supported by Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre (2009).
**CORE STORY & COMMUNICATION PLATFORM** The research clearly indicated the usefulness of a core story, connected with the organization’s vision, mission and values, and a core story’s ability to function as a communication platform. This is also stressed by e.g. Kristensen (2002), who also argues that the goal of the core story should be to appeal to, and have relevance for all stakeholders, and that it should take a starting point from the organization’s culture and identity. Furthermore, the relevance of a rather consistent communication platform, such as the core story, is further supported by the notion that storytelling efforts can be seen as communicating on various levels that affect one another, e.g. strategic, marketing or communication level (Mossberg & Johansen 2006).

**STORIES AS CULTURAL CAPITAL, SHAPING CULTURES & AIDING IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION** The research revealed the importance of understanding the role of culture in storytelling and the ways storytelling may aid in identity construction. These aspects were especially highlighted by three of the experts, taking three different perspectives on the brand, as mentioned earlier.

As seen in Appendix 3.2.1, one of the experts emphasized a cultural approach to branding, as he believed that it is behavior/culture that creates brands and that focus therefore should be on understanding and uncovering the culture that you are part of. This view corresponds with the work of Holt (2004), who argues that the brand embodies a myth, and that consumers buy a certain product in order to experience the story that the brand tells. Thus, from a cultural perspective, the brand is seen, more or less, as a storied product, which explains why storytelling becomes highly relevant for branding. Accordingly, as the expert explained, storytelling focuses on uncovering the culture, the core of the story and then enables people to talk about the brand through different stories (although based on the same core story). Thus, as also stressed by the expert, brand value is co-created. However, taking a cultural perspective implies that co-creation is not only among dyadic or triadic consumer-brand relationships, but also includes the exchange between macro level culture and brands (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009).

Also pointing towards the relevance of considering culture, another expert referred to his view of storytelling as a “tribe perspective”, stressing the importance of stories for cultures, in that stories impact cultures, e.g. organizational culture. The expert specifically emphasized that the brand is an experience, and that the brand is created mainly by customers and other stakeholders. This clearly corresponds with the work of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) and Payne et al. (2009), who argue that the brand is an experience and social process, which develops and evolves with experiences. Based on this view, the expert implied that storytelling was a way to impact the brand (and the way stakeholders experience the brand), through “populating” the brand with stories/experiences.
In relation to identity construction, one expert specifically indicated a personality perspective on brand management, as the expert viewed branding, as involving a focus on the symbols/values a consumer identifies with (or would like be to identified with), as consumers buy products and brands because they hold desired values. This clearly corresponds with a personality perspective, which highlights personality traits as important drivers of emotional bonding between the brand and consumers, and that by working on developing brand personality, differentiation, positioning, and importantly, emotional bonds with consumers can be achieved (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). The expert’s view and emphasis is also is very much in line with the work of Escalas (2004), who found that consumers use stories to relate the brand’s image to their own experiences and self image, as well as the work by Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008). Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) argue that the stories consumers tell about themselves often correspond to the stories developed by brand managers due to consumers’ desire for archetype fulfillment. As the expert stressed, focusing on these aspects, storytelling is seen as highly useful mode of purposefully associating the brand with the specific values or feelings that people demand. Noticeably, although a personality perspective implies that brand value is co-created, it usually considers mainly dyadic brand-consumer relationships, and hence not other stakeholders (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). This appeared to be true in this case, as the expert mainly talked about storytelling in relation to consumers.

The research clearly indicated the symbolic importance of the brand and the usefulness of storytelling in adding values to the brand (whether calling it a storied product, populating the brand, etc.), in order to influence individual identity or cultural identity, which supports recent research findings about brands strengthening consumer identity, both on an individual and group level (e.g. Swaminathan, Page & Gürhan-Canli 2007).

**CO-CREATION: INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS & TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION IN STORYTELLING**

The experts had slightly varying views on co-creation, and used the term slightly differently, depending on whether the discussion was about co-creation as a concept, co-creation of the brand or co-creation in storytelling. This further supports Rajah, Marshall & Nam (2008) who note, “There is general agreement in the literature that co-creation is a customer-centric approach, however there is no clear consensus on the precise meaning of co-creation” (p. 367). Nevertheless, the research revealed that the notion of co-creation implies that consumers are active in producing storytelling communication, as well as communicating the stories about the brand.

Co-creation was thus seen as an important part of storytelling, including involvement and interactive dialogue with mainly consumers. As one expert stated, “I see co-creation as being a more or less integrated part of storytelling. So that dialogue can be achieved, and synergy can be created, and it begins to be more of a two-way communication instead of just one-way…”
In relation to Prahalad and Ramaswamy’s building blocks of co-creation, co-creation is here seen as a way to achieve dialogue, rather than a view of dialogue as a prerequisite of co-creation.

The experts mentioned several examples of co-creation being utilized in relation to storytelling, such as customer testimonials, when customers tell their story (about the brand) and when customers spread stories to one another, e.g. via social media such as YouTube. Here, co-creation appears to relate more to the co-creation of brand value, further supporting the notions of negotiating brand processes, and that value is created when consumers are immersed in and use the brands as a means of self-expression (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004, Gregory 2007).

In addition, the research also emphasized that actively engaging consumers in co-creation, for example in terms of involvement in campaign and/or product development (e.g. through qualitative interviews, co-designing products/services, etc.), is a way to generate valuable customer insights and generate good stories, “stories to shape the future”, as one expert expressed. This clearly corresponds with the recent notions of co-creation as a means to increase market knowledge, (see Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody 2008).

The research also revealed that co-creation in relation to storytelling, involves storytelling as a form of dialogue. For example, one expert argued that when the storyteller succeeds to tell a story in a way that enables the listener to draw up a mental picture of the story for themselves and be absorbed in it, it can be considered as a dialogue. This relates to Bruner’s (1990) landscape of consciousness, i.e. an important feature in a good story that suggests the audience has a possibility of understanding or getting inside the head of the characters of the story. In addition, this reasoning also corresponds to Payne et al.’s (2009) theory on designing brand co-creation experiences (and co-creation) through emotional engagement (hence not necessarily physical dialogue). Based on the above, it is rather clear that storytelling is increasingly seen as an interactive mode of communication, which is also emphasized in literature (e.g. Baker and Boyle, 2009).

Finally, the research also indicated that, in order to achieve co-creation, a good story (including emotional elements) is necessary. Hence, as also discussed in previous sections, based on the work of e.g. Payne et al. (2009) and Etgar (2008), storytelling can be viewed as highly useful in increasing stakeholder participation in co-creation.

Some challenges were mentioned in relation to co-creation and storytelling. For example, it was mentioned that a co-creation perspective implied that involved customers would have to work for free and on their own time. This is also mentioned by Etgar (2008), who views these aspects as being potential costs of participating in co-creation, assessed by consumers when evaluating
co-creation participation, and hence important for organizations to be aware of. Another challenge was, that an increased focus on co-creation, would result in the organization receiving more relevant input, meaning that brand owners must assess and use this input, while at the same time ensuring that the organization holds on to its brand values.

4.3.1.2 Antecedents of Storytelling

In general, the research implied similar antecedents found in the literature review, as discussed below.

**STORIES EXPLAIN THE CULTURE THAT MAKES THE BRAND** In the literature, sense-making was explained to be one of major reasons for why storytelling is such an effective mode of communication. That is, people make sense of the world through stories (e.g. Söderberg 2003), which was also implied by the experts. For example, the experts emphasized that stories help explain a culture, making it more understandable, which in turn helps create the brand. In line with this, the research also emphasized the increased importance of storytelling due to the fact that emotional aspects of products and services have become more important as customers increasingly buy the stories (for identity construction), rather than the functional benefits of products/services. This also corresponds with the notion that differentiation increasingly relies on emotional engagement, symbols and stories, etc., as individuals nowadays long for irrationality and fantasy (Mossberg & Johansen 2006).

**FIRM CENTRIC, ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION IS INEFFECTIVE & INCREASED DEMAND FOR INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE & INVOLVEMENT** As often mentioned in the literature, the experts also pointed out the fact that customers are exposed to more brand messages than ever before has made traditional push communication of brand messages less effective. In response to this, the experts highlighted that commercial messages in story form are more likely to get through the clutter, as also indicated by previous consumer research (e.g. Escalas 2004). As a natural consequence of the ineffectiveness of firm-centric, one-way communication, the experts, along with both co-creation and branding literature, clearly expressed the increased necessity of interactive dialogue and involvement in business, also with regards to storytelling. As Gregory (2007) highlights, the brand develops over time through a process of dialogue and negotiation.

**NEED FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY** The importance of trustworthiness and transparency were recognized as major reasons for why storytelling, and consequently branding, have become more process focused on involving co-creation, and why storytelling should be based on an authentic core. In co-creation, transparency has also been stressed by Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004), who include transparency as another critical prerequisite for successfully establishing co-creation experience environments. This also supports recent co-creation research, which has found that co-creation generates both satisfaction and trust, which in turn,
strengthens relationships with customers and increases loyalty, further implying the importance of trustworthiness and transparency (Rajah, Marshall & Nam 2008). In relation to branding, several authors argue for the importance of a branding framework founded on trust and transparency (e.g. Lawer & Knox 2006).

NEED FOR INDIVIDUALIZATION/INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF BRAND-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIPS Research implied the increased need of individualization as an antecedent of storytelling, and in relation to this, the increased importance of the role of brand stories in consumers’ identity construction (and consequently brand-consumer relationships), as also discussed above. The notion of individualization, customization and individualized experiences is central both in the co-creation literature and brand literature (e.g. Etgar 2008, Jones 2005). Here, the research clearly indicates the close link between storytelling, branding and co-creation, emphasizing the role of storytelling in light of the developments in branding and co-creation.

4.3.1.3 Consequences of Storytelling

ENHANCED BRAND EXPERIENCE In line with the literature, the possibility to enhance brand experiences through storytelling were highlighted, specifically due to the storytelling consequences described below.

BRAND IS MADE MEANINGFUL & MORE DIMENSIONS ARE ADDED TO THE BRAND These effects of storytelling certainly indicate the usefulness of the concept in brand management, and are also commonly mentioned in the storytelling literature, e.g. in terms of differentiation (Mossberg & Johansen 2006). Importantly, stories enable people to understand the brand, as one expert stated, “...there might be different types of languages, different examples, but it is the story that makes people understand”. Accordingly, this is related to the notions of sense-making, identity and cultural identity discussed earlier.

GAINING FEEDBACK & BRIDGING POTENTIAL GAPS IN PERCEPTIONS As also previously discussed in relation to co-creation, the usefulness of storytelling involving co-creation, for gaining feedback and thereby minimizing gaps in perception, should be seen as an important consequence. As with the above consequences, these aspects are emphasized in the literature (mainly the co-creation and brand literature), when explaining why customer involvement, insights and co-creation are so important.

INCREASE WILLINGNESS OF STAKEHOLDERS’ PARTICIPATION IN (BRAND) CO-CREATION Although it was found that storytelling can make the brand more attractive, enhance emotional engagement etc., the notion that storytelling specifically aids in increasing stakeholders’ willingness of participating in (brand) co-creation does not appear to have been emphasized in
the literature. Hence, it can be seen as constituting an additional benefit of storytelling that is relevant to consider.

**CONSUMERS DEFENDING THE BRAND, BRAND LOYALTY, IMPROVED COMMUNICATION & ENHANCED BRANDING EFFORTS** In relation to the aspects mentioned above, all of which lead to improved brand communication and enhanced branding efforts, the experts also mentioned increased brand loyalty as a natural consequence of these. In particular, one expert noted that, if storytelling is managed successfully, it may lead to consumers actively defending the brand. This corresponds with the notions in literature that consumers and stakeholders are increasingly empowered and willing to get involved in brands (e.g. Lawer & Knox 2006).

4.3.2 Reflection of Research Findings
The research provided insights of how storytelling may be utilized in brand management when taking a co-creation perspective, and how co-creation can be utilized in the storytelling process (e.g. through involving customers in campaign development). The research also appeared to confirm the convergence of the three concepts by supporting the aspects discussed in the previous chapter, placing storytelling as:

- A form of brand co-creation (through the notion of storytelling becoming dialogue)
- A means of discovering (brand) co-creation opportunities
  The notion of involving customers in campaign development implies a view of storytelling encompassing storylistening and a focus on minimizing potential gaps in perceptions. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is relevant as it may lead to the discovering of new (brand) co-creation opportunities.
- A means to encouraging co-creation ("for co-creation, a good story is required")
  As also mentioned in the discussion of literature, the usefulness of storytelling for increasing stakeholders’ willingness, as well as ability, to co-create is not something that has been previously emphasized in literature. Research focused mainly on willingness rather than ability; however, it concerned both co-creation in the form of, e.g. co-developing campaign, design, etc., as well as co-creation of the brand, referring more to stakeholders’ willingness of communicating the brand.
- A means to foster a (brand) co-creation focus internally
  Although the experts did not specifically mention the use of storytelling in fostering a co-creation supporting culture, the notion that storytelling may effectively transform organizations definitely indicates that storytelling may be an important means of fostering an internal focus on (brand) co-creation. Doing this also supports the innovation of experience environments for new co-creation experiences.
The experts’ views of the brand also appeared to reflect their view of co-creation and its meaning in relation to storytelling. For example, as seen in Appendix 3.2.1, taking a cultural, experience and identity focus, implied more emphasis on interactive dialogue and involvement of (mainly) consumers than the personality brand perspective. This could be explained by the more narrow focus on the co-creation of brand value compare to the other perspective, which e.g. mainly considers dyadic brand-customer relationships (compared to stakeholders), and by the primary focus of the brand manager building a brand personality.

In relation to the notion that engaging consumers in co-creation is a way to generate valuable customer insights and generate good stories, it is noticeable that although several authors in the literature have pointed out the relevance of considering customers in developing stories, the aspect of stories “to shape the future”, appears to be rather unexplored in the storytelling literature, as well as the general co-creation literature. Furthermore, in relation to the existing branding literature, the research indicates that, in addition to the existing theories involving consumer stories, organizations may benefit by using consumer input and consumer stories more actively in developing brand communication.

Although the experts emphasized customer insights and participation in storytelling, they did not specifically mention that the meaning of a story, and thus the brand, may be understood differently depending on the receivers’ interpretation and background. As discussed in previous sections, the literature has pointed out that the role of senders and receivers is becoming increasingly blurred, that when retelling a story, people tell their own version, and that marketers need to consider consumers’ time and situational factors for meaning creation (Baker & Boyle 2009, Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004, Finne & Grönroos 2009). Hence, although dialogue and interaction is emphasized, it appears that storytelling is mainly viewed by the experts, as communicating stories to stakeholders, rather than viewing the meaning of the story as being created with stakeholders, which Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård have pointed out as a limitation of a storytelling focus in branding.

It was also mentioned, in the discussion of literature, the low amount of focus on possible challenges related to storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management. The research provided some identification of possible challenges when utilizing storytelling in relation to co-creation and branding. Here, the challenge of balancing consumer input with the organizations’ value, appears to be additional to the literature, and is not considered in the existing frameworks of storytelling.

As seen in the discussion of the literature, the use of semiotics was mentioned as a way to broaden the storytelling concept. In relation to a cultural approach towards branding, semiotic methods have been found highly useful as a way of deconstructing the meaning behind
communication in advertising, important for cultural consumption (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). As the research highlighted cultural aspects in storytelling, this further indicates the relevance of including semiotic methods.

In relation to the benefits of storytelling, if managed successfully, the notion of customers “defending the brand” was mentioned. As highlighted both in literature and by the experts, brand stories are important for customers’ self-expression and stakeholders are increasingly empowered and willing to get involved with brands. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that whenever criticism is pointed towards a brand that individuals view as acting as an extension to their self, it is likely that this criticism also affects him/her on a personal level. Consequently, the empowered individual is likely to get involved and “defend” the brand via e.g. social media, and thus constitute a highly valuable advantage of storytelling.

4.3.3 Typology of Storytelling

As mentioned earlier, under the interviews with experts, the initial Typology (see Figure 3.6) was presented and feedback was requested. Feedback included, among other things, adding the degree of narrative principles utilized, depth/meaning in the story and the degree of achievable emotional involvement. It was also recommended that the previous example of Føtex should be removed from Approach 2 to Approach 3, due to the lack of critical storytelling principles such as authentic core.

Based on the discussion and reflection above and the experts’ comments, the typology has been revised, resulting in Figure 4.2, which is more oriented towards implementation and shows the ways in which organizations may utilize storytelling. These are based on the storytelling elements used in brand communication and initiatives taken to enable co-creation of the brand. The revised typology is explained below.

The X-axis illustrates the number of storytelling elements that an organization uses in brand communication, such as conflict, characters, an authentic basis and the core story principle. A high number implies awareness of storytelling, and it is assumed that the more elements utilized, the higher stakeholder immersion and involvement in the story and brand, while the opposite is assumed to be true for a low number. The Y-axis represents the number of organizational initiatives taken to enable co-creation of the brand. A high number implies high customer orientation and that many efforts to co-create exist, e.g. to involve in dialogue, while the opposite is apparent for a low number.

**APPROACH 1: CO-CREATION BUT FEW STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES** This could for example be a situation in which blogs and communities are established. These may however not be optimally utilized in co-creating the brand, due to e.g. lacking awareness of storytelling. An
example of an organization that may relate to Approach 1, is the Danish bank - José Bank, that has a focus on creating a platform enabling customer participation, where customers can create individual experiences (Borghini & Carù 2008), but where the bank does not utilize any storytelling principles.

**APPROACH 2: CO-CREATION & STORYTELLING** A high number of both co-creation initiatives and storytelling elements represent a co-creation approach to storytelling. Here, the prerequisites to enhance brand value are in place, i.e. interactivity, compelling brand story and experience environment, etc. Thus Approach 2 may be viewed as consistent with the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation view of branding. An example could be Nike, which implies a brand story involving characters, plot, message, conflict, authentic core, core story, etc. At the same time, Nike enables co-creation, e.g. in terms of highly interactive websites, possibilities for customizing products, participating in brand communities, etc. Another example is mentioned in Appendix 3.2.

**APPROACH 3: FEW STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES & CO-CREATION POSSIBILITIES** This approach implies a highly firm-centric (one-way communication) approach to storytelling thereby limiting brand value enhancement. Although not all brands may be equally suitable for co-creation, it is still assumed that, regardless of the brand, additional value can be gained from adopting a consumer/stakeholder-centric view, and from utilizing stories. Gevalia, a coffee brand, may be seen as an example of this approach, as the organization (Kraft) only uses a few storytelling principles via TV spots that feature short stories and enable only a few co-creation opportunities (e.g. the sharing of recipes).

**APPROACH 4: STORYTELLING BUT FEW CO-CREATION OPPORTUNITIES** This could for example be a situation in which stakeholders are immersed in the story, find the brand attractive and are willing to get involved with the brand. Hence, the possibilities for successful co-creation exist but the organization does not take advantage of these e.g. due to little belief in advantages of co-creating the brand. The Virgin brand could be mentioned as an example, also highlighted by one of the experts as utilizing storytelling. Here, the brand story follows a traditional storytelling format (including conflict, characters, message, authentic core, rational and emotional elements etc.), with Richard Branson as the customers’ ally against large monopoly-oriented organizations. Although customers can for example become members in the brand community, it is still deemed that co-creation could be utilized to a greater extent.

The revised typology provides a general overview of the storytelling approaches and implementation, and aids in locating the current brand (story) positions, as well as clarifying future directions.
### 4.4 Summary of Experience Surveys

The research findings were generally in line with the literature, in terms of narrative structure and story elements, although new and more emphasized aspects were also found. Although the experts expressed various perspectives on the brand and co-creation, and consequently placed focus on different aspects of storytelling, there was a general agreement of the view of storytelling as a holistic, interactive process with an authentic focus, stories as cultural capital and involvement of stakeholders in brand co-creation. Overall, the research indicated that a co-creation approach to storytelling is becoming increasingly relevant in today’s business environment, i.e. as emotional and immaterial aspects are becoming more important, and due to empowerment and the increasing involvement of consumers. Thus, the findings indicated support towards the convergence of storytelling, branding and co-creation, and the usefulness of storytelling in co-creating the brand. Additionally, the experts provided relevant feedback, which led to a revised version of the typology, focusing more on implementation, and taking into account the aspects mentioned above.

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**Figure 4.2 Revised Typology of Storytelling Approaches**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach 1</th>
<th>Approach 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. Jyske Bank</td>
<td>E.g. Nike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach 3</th>
<th>Approach 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g. Gevalia</td>
<td>E.g. Virgin Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of organizational initiatives taken to enable co-creation of the brand

Number of storytelling principles organizations use in brand communication
5. Case Study Research

The following sections include methodological implications and main research findings of the case study research, followed by a discussion and reflection. Focus of the research is on the utilization of storytelling in brand management practice. The findings will be assessed in relation to the literature, as well as the previous experience survey research, in order to further explore the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation view of brand management.

5.1 Methodological Implications

As the methodological implications of the case studies are similar to those of the experience surveys, only a brief description will be provided in the following. Additional descriptions regarding the sample, data collection and analysis, as well as validity, reliability and ethical concerns can be found in Appendix 4.1.

Similar to the experience surveys, the sampling can be considered as purposeful. The criteria used when choosing cases included: use of storytelling principles (purposeful or non-purposeful), use of a compelling brand story based on some degree of authenticity, a visible link between brand values and the story, visible signs of a co-creation and IMC orientation. Of the several organizations contacted, Novozymes and Unilever agreed to participate. The interview with Unilever involved two brand managers who answered the questions interchangeably (see Table 5.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Interview’s Main Focus Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unilever A/S</td>
<td>Fredrik Lundberg</td>
<td>Nordic Brand Manager (Dove Deo and Skin)</td>
<td>Branding &amp; the Dove campaign; Campaign for Real Beauty, External communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maria Friberg</td>
<td>Nordic Senior Brand Manager for Dove</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novozymes A/S</td>
<td>Jesper Frederiksen</td>
<td>Corporate Brand Manager</td>
<td>Storytelling &amp; the ido30 campaign, Internal &amp; external communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Case Sample Description
The one-to-one interviews (involving both authors) were held during June 2010, and each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. The interviews were recorded, conducted and coded in a similar manner to the experience surveys. The same strategies aiming at increasing the authenticity and trustworthiness were applied. In relation to member checking, a few corrections concerning the interpretation were provided by Novozymes, which were corrected in the project. Similarly, the same ethical considerations as those mentioned in relation to experience surveys were taken into account.

5.2 Case Unilever (Dove)

In the following, a brief introduction to Unilever and Dove will be provided in order to introduce some background information about the campaign. As with previous sections, the main findings of the interview are summarized and structured according to meaning, antecedents and consequences.

5.2.1 Introduction to Unilever and Dove

Unilever has 400 brands, which span over 14 categories of home, personal care and food products (Unilever 2010b). The organization is one of the global market leaders in skin care and deodorants, and some of its most famous brands include Axe and Dove. Unilever employs 163,000 people, and the organization’s products are sold in over 170 countries, and in 2009 the worldwide turnover amounted to €39.8 billion (Unilever 2010b). According to its homepage, Unilever has a major focus on corporate responsibility and sustainability. In relation to the Dove brand, the brand has since the introduction of the classical Dove beauty soap in 1957, represented a wide range of cleansing and personal care products with sales of over €2.5 billion a year in more than 80 countries. According to Unilever, the heart of the brand lies in the promise of “Bringing out your real inner beauty”. Furthermore, the brand’s mission is

“To make more women feel beautiful every day, by widening today’s view on beauty and by inspiring women to take great care of themselves” (Unilever 2010a)

In line with this mission, Unilever has since 2004 focused on the global campaign: Campaign for Real Beauty. In accordance with Dove’s brand promise and mission, the campaign strives to challenge conventional beauty stereotypes, advocating unconventional beauty and self-esteem, while inspiring women to take care of themselves. In the campaign, real beauty is portrayed by women that do not have a typical runway model look.
As part of this campaign, Unilever founded the Dove Self-Esteem Fund (DSEF) in 2004 to support initiatives that inspire and help girls view beauty through a broader perspective (Unilever 2010a, Dove 2010b).

5.2.2 Research Findings

The following will focus on Unilever’s view of the brand story in relation to their Campaign for Real Beauty, sectioned into the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling. First, a short explanation of how the brand managers viewed the concepts of co-creation and the brand.

5.2.2.1 Brand Managers’ View of Co-creation & the Brand

When asked about co-creation, Lundberg viewed the concept as:

“...when consumers help build the brand capital by talking positively about the brand, in a way that corresponds with what we communicate” (Lundberg 2010)

As examples of how Unilever has approached co-creation, having a Facebook site was mentioned, as this enables Unilever to start a dialogue with consumers and get direct feedback from consumers regarding product launches and promotional activities, etc. In relation to branding, the brand managers indicated a co-creation view of the brand, further supported by Lundberg mentioning that in the future, co-creation in relation to branding would definitely become more important, as media consumption has changed radically in recent years:

“...there will be discussion, whether you like it or not, online, with consumers or individuals who do not like your products, your brand, who attempt to work against it. Accordingly, as a company you have a choice. Either you can open up, or you can close the door, ignoring it while attempting to run one-way communication” (Lundberg 2010)

Hence, the statements above clearly indicates a co-creation emphasis in relation to brand management.
5.2.2.2 Meaning of Storytelling

Storytelling as a branding method or tool has not been, and is not currently utilized, to the knowledge of the brand managers. However, Lundberg explained that as Unilever has various brand divisions, it is possible that storytelling techniques are utilized when developing campaigns, although he could not say this for sure. Nevertheless, Lundberg could definitely see the potential of working with storytelling:

“...you can definitely see that the brands which have a story, and which are consistent in their way of communicating, e.g. Ben and Jerry’s with their relaxed hippie culture and their interest in social issues such as the environment and unemployment in the US, works very well...” (Lundberg 2010)

Thus, although several storytelling elements can be argued to be apparent in the campaign, storytelling has not been something that has acted as any kind of foundation for the campaign. The following sections will therefore not focus on storytelling as such but on Unilever’s management of the Dove campaign, encompassing a brand story.

Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AS A FOUNDATION In the campaign, social engagement has been the foundation:

“...social engagement has been the foundation, which has developed into a story, that we but mostly the consumers have continued to talk about. So we are expected to carry on with this...” (Friberg 2010)

In addition, Lundberg expressed that the story Unilever tells is a good story, one that works very well.

ORIGINALITY, RELEVANCE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS & AUTHENTIC CORE The idea of the campaign started with curiosity about women’s self-esteem and a hypothesis of the general definition of beauty becoming too narrow. This led Unilever to conduct a global research report “The Real Truth about Beauty” which confirmed the hypothesis:

“It was important for us to ensure that what we believed was also something that our consumers believed.” (Friberg 2010)

By conducting the research report, Unilever secured evidence that this was an issue that the majority of the consumers could relate to. Furthermore, as the campaign was perceived as ground breaking and original, it got a lot of attention.
DIALOGUE & INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS  When asked whether the central message/story was viewed as a way to strategically build a dialogue, Friberg responded that they could absolutely see that this was an important issue that would engage and encourage dialogue, also long-term. Here, online media was seen as an important platform to establish dialogue as it enables quick responses while being cost effective. For example, Unilever utilizes social media, e.g. a Facebook page as this enables dialogue and the possibility of attaining valuable feedback. The brand managers also explained that they make active use of consumer stories for branding purposes but also in order to better understand consumers. Currently, Unilever is to produce commercials with a few selected consumers (or “brand ambassadors”) who have had a good, serious and interesting story to tell.

CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION OF BRAND VALUES & BRAND EXPERIENCE  It was explained that focus is on building the Dove brand “clearly, constantly staying on the same straight line” and that Dove’s core values are to be infused in “everything they do and say” so that the brand is perceived similarly worldwide. Unilever also focuses on working internally with brand values and the issues focused on through the campaign; for instance, the organization has had programs on subjects such as eating disorders. It was further explained that focus is on integrating all communication channels available, in order to strengthen and effectively communicate the message.

In achieving consistency and infusing brand values, conducting market analyses were important. In relation to this, it was explained that customer brand experiences were constantly being worked on and improved, e.g. in terms of measuring how consumers experience the brand and how this corresponds to what is actually being communicated.

5.2.2.3 Antecedents of Storytelling

NEED & WILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND CONSUMERS  Critical antecedents of why Unilever has chosen to tell this story, and the methods used in doing this, included the willingness of researching whether the assumptions regarding the narrow definition of beauty were true. As Friberg explains, a major focus has been to understand the consumer, to discover whether this issue spreads over a wider perspective, e.g. women of all ages, globally etc.:

“Women are our target group, we want to communicate with them, but also to hear from them, what they believe and experience, and how they view themselves” (Friberg 2010)

FIRM-CENTRIC COMMUNICATION IS INEFFECTIVE  As also indicated by the brand manager’s view of branding mentioned above, Unilever has the view that dialogue and interaction with consumers is necessary, and thus firm-centric, one-way communication is ineffective.

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1This campaign had not been launched at the time of the interview with the Dove brand managers.
5.2.2.4 Consequences of Storytelling

LONG-TERM COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, WOM & MEDIA COVERAGE Two important consequences of the story mentioned by the brand managers have been the high level of engagement and the possibility to continue with the campaign longer than expected. According to the brand managers, it was not expected that the campaign would create that much engagement, and continue to run for so many years. Noticeably, the majority of the debate around the campaign has not been on Unilever’s own controlled forums. Lundberg further added that since the campaign’s launch, only a low amount of effort has been applied in reminding stakeholders about the campaign. The campaign has received massive attention in the general media, the fashion industry, the advertising industry, in various online consumer forums, etc. Based on the above, it is clear that by developing and managing a good story, an organization may prolong the time span of brand communication efforts, and accordingly experience benefits such as cost efficiency and resources.

MISINTERPRETATION OF THE MESSAGE & LOSS OF CONTROL In relation to the potential challenges due to the campaign, Lundberg mentioned that copied versions exist of the viral video “Dove Evolution”, where people have chosen to misinterpret the Dove brand and the original film created by Unilever. This has however not been perceived as a major problem, as it, at the same time, strengthens the campaign, in that it prolongs the dialogue surrounding the campaign. In relation to this, the discussion of potentially reduced control over brand communication was discussed, however this as well has not been perceived as a major problem. Here, it was expressed that this is what makes it all so beautiful, that this can be seen as truly concerning and engaging individuals and furthermore that there is always the risk that you might be misunderstood. It was also explained that certain degrees of control could always be regained. For example, in cases where people clearly have misinterpreted the message, Unilever has stepped in and further clarified the campaign.

The key findings emphasized in the interview with Unilever can be seen in Figure 5.2. These findings will be discussed in Section 5.4.
5.3 Case Novozymes

In the following, a brief introduction to Novozymes will be provided in order to introduce some background information about the organization and campaign. As with previous sections, the main findings of the interview are summarized and structured according to meaning, antecedents and consequences.

5.3.1 Introduction to Novozymes

Novozymes is the world leader in bioinnovation, creating biosolutions with customers, where the production and distribution of enzymes are a major part of Novozymes’ business, and account for over 90% of their sales (Novozymes 2010a). Novozymes globally employs 5,500 people in 30 different countries, and the organization’s 2009 worldwide turnover amounted to 8,4 billion DKK (Novozymes 2010e).

The values of the company are expressed through Novozymes Touch, which includes the vision, values, commitments and fundamental guidelines for daily work at Novozymes. These include that all employees are environmentally accountable and responsible towards both the organization and society, seeking an active dialogue with stakeholders and pursuing innovation (Novozymes 2010g). In line with these values, Novozymes’ vision is presented as:

“We imagine a future where our biological solutions create the necessary balance between better business, cleaner environment and better lives.” (Novozymes 2010h)

The ido30 campaign was started as a response to COP15 and to encourage consumers to wash their clothes at lower temperatures and save CO2 and money and to increase awareness amongst friends and politicians (Novozymes 2010c). The ido30 campaign was the first time Novozymes addressed the end user (Frederiksen 2010).
5.3.2 Research Findings

The following will focus on Novozymes’ view of storytelling both generally and in relation to their *ido30* campaign, sectioned into the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling. First, a short explanation of how the brand manager viewed the concepts of co-creation and the brand.

5.3.2.1 Brand Manager’s View of Co-creation & the Brand

When asked what co-creation means to Novozymes and how stakeholders are involved, Frederiksen did believe that co-creation was utilized in the organization. Novozymes is focused and built around the idea of partnerships or a “partnership mindset”:

“...co-creation in the form of partnerships is basically what our business model is made up of. When we make products, we almost always do it with the customer...so that we know there is a real need for it and so we are able to test it” (Frederiksen 2010)

As other examples of co-creation in the organization, sessions with research workers were mentioned. These research workers were both from Novozymes and other companies in Denmark and the aim of these sessions was to create solutions and new products together. Thus co-creation of products through partnerships has become necessary for Novozymes’ success.

A need for a more outward-in focus (rather than the organization’s past inside-out focus) was indicated as a reason for their new branding philosophy *Rethink Tomorrow*, which communicates the benefits that Novozymes offers. Here, Frederiksen expressed a focus on making the brand story work for all stakeholders and that the concept of branding is connected mainly with gaining more brand awareness worldwide, and branding the fundamental idea of how the future as a bio-based fuel society might be portrayed.

5.3.2.2 Meaning of Storytelling

Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management

**FIGHT FOR A CAUSE** When discussing the *ido30* campaign, Frederiksen believed that the basic story of the campaign could be found by looking at the value chain of washing powder:

“...from cultivating the raw materials on a field, driving it by tractor into a store, using energy to warm it up, and all the processes till it lands in a cardboard box that is driven out to a supermarket where the consumer buys it, takes it home and uses it in their washing machine, from this you can calculate the environmental strain through the whole process” (Frederiksen 2010)
The message of the *ido30* campaign was communicated through “a kind of storytelling”, using a YouTube *ido30* channel. The main video features real people from different European countries. The campaign also included a portable sign, which utilized Facebook and YouTube for engaging stakeholders in posting reasons why they do their laundry at 30 degrees, where a message was picked for the day, and written on a board and carried around Copenhagen, whilst being filmed for the YouTube channel. Internally, the *ido30* campaign was also spread amongst employees, through having presentations, explaining why the organization was communicating this message, and by handing out T-shirts with the *ido30* logo, to summon team spirit in diverse football matches and other gatherings.

**RATIONAL & EMOTIONAL ARGUMENTS, HUMORISTIC TWIST & A BALANCE BETWEEN FICTION & DATA** Generally, Novozymes calls their storytelling initiatives “communication”, where much of what they do is about communicating a good story that may touch stakeholders’ emotions. A good story according to Novozymes, is a story with a “serious backbone”, but with a funny/“humoristic twist” added to it, and a balance between fiction and data. For Novozymes, stories must have a balance between creativity/fiction and facts, that is, there has to be a core of truth, although it is possible to create a fictive character. Storytelling methods and principles used by Novozymes include a rational and emotional argument, where the story is based on facts and numbers, but told in a creative way.

**STORYTELLING TEMPLATE** In line with their outside-in focus, Novozymes works with a kind of storytelling template, the so called NASA model (Need, Acceptance, Solution, Acceptance), focusing on finding the customers’ problem, allow them to understand and accept that there is a need, where after Novozymes suggests a solution that the customer may accept.

**INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS & COMMUNICATION OF VISION & MISSION** Internally, storytelling has in the past been utilized to form a new vision, mission and values for the organization (*Novozymes Touch*), through inviting employees from all over the world to workshops in which the stories that best represented the new values were selected, with the guidance of a storytelling specialist, David Snowden. Here, employees were asked e.g. what they liked and disliked about working for the organization. This was done in storytelling form. After the *Novozymes Touch* project, the organization does not use the specific term storytelling as much, although they always use storytelling to some extent. In the future, Frederiksen believed that Novozymes would not use storytelling again in this way.

**RELEVANCE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS & CORE STORY PRINCIPLE** Novozymes’ brand slogan, *Rethink Tomorrow*, was emphasized by Frederiksen as a basis for all external and internal communication. The slogan tells a story about Novozymes’ vision of the future – a bio-based society where fossil fuels and oil-based products are replaced with plant-based products, where
enzymes created from the plants may replace many oil-based products, including petrol, plastics and chemicals. Novozymes focuses on communicating their *Rethink Tomorrow* story both to external and internal stakeholders, e.g. through Novozymes TV and through the customer magazine, Biotimes, both of which feature customer testimonials.

**VISUAL STORYTELLING** Also regarding both the internal and external storytelling communication, Novozymes uses small elements in the architecture and interior design of buildings to convey their brand story. The idea is that stakeholders should be able to recognize various small elements separately and understand that these are a part of the Novozymes brand. The design of buildings is also meant to drive and foster the employee behaviors that the organization is interested in encouraging. For example, meeting rooms have been created with different themes that convey stories through the interior design (e.g. washing powder room, biofuel room). Thus, as the Novozymes case illustrates, storytelling can also be utilized through “visual storytelling”. That is, through visual cues the story may be supported by smaller elements that also tell stories.

**ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION** The importance of thinking about the different organizational departments’ initiatives and efforts in an integrated way, was highlighted i.e. branding, HR, PR and marketing departments should work together to align branding, organizational development, awareness in the market and to find which concrete stories may be used and how the Novozymes brand may be communicated to create value. This was vital for avoiding silos in the organization.

**5.3.2.3 Antecedents of Storytelling**

**A NEED FOR COST-EFFECTIVENESS & RESOURCE-EFFECTIVENESS** In relation to the *ido30* campaign, it was mentioned that the campaign was created as a response to COP15, where Novozymes did not want to spend a large amount of money and resources on an expensive short film that would only be shown once. They started the campaign well in advance and used a minimal amount of money and resources on involving people and experimenting with social media.

**5.3.2.4 Consequences of Storytelling**

**BUZZ & MEDIA COVERAGE** The campaign did not result in the sales of more enzymes in the short run, although it did function as a good reference point for new contacts in different industries. For example, the campaign led to new contacts in the fashion and textile industry, resulting in a video with Danish celebrities talking about their laundry habits, which was used at various exhibitions during COP15, as well as online. The collaboration also included
Copenhagen Fashion Week representatives who discussed the *ido30* campaign on two major Danish television channels (TV2 and DR1), resulting in buzz and media coverage:

“...they had this story that was pushed, which resulted in a lot of PR in Denmark. There was an added bonus, PR in regards to recruiting new employees and also internally as traditional PR coverage, which surely has an effect on our branding image barometer in the long run” (Frederiksen 2010)

**DIALOGUE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONTROL** Frederiksen mentioned the risks of dialogue in relation to the *ido30* campaign, and that dialogue is impossible to control, but can work if an organization has control of their facts, doesn’t promise too much and is completely credible throughout their communication. Here, the importance of focusing on integrating functions and division, and controlling suppliers and other partners, by “always checking two steps back in the system” was also mentioned.

**FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS** The organization tried to create interaction via the Facebook group, but this did not result in much useful feedback, although they did consider using the Facebook group as a consumer panel, to ask questions about what was effective and ineffective when doing laundry or what future washing powder should be able to do. Frederiksen believed that it was evident to someday use the community to gain feedback.

**COMMUNICATION OF CREDIBLE & CREATIVE MESSAGES** Frederiksen mentioned communicating credible messages (for example through storytelling), about this future society as the key ingredient of Novozymes’ branding initiatives. Due to the credibility issue, though, Novozymes focuses on communicating these messages through some sort of alliance with key partners, such as politicians, major organizations and NGOs, thus for Novozymes, alliances may be a way to effectively communicate credible messages. Furthermore, and in relation to alliances, Frederiksen mentions one of the problems he sees with storytelling:

“...there is too little reality in it, it can easily be thought of as something [the organization] has just made up” (Frederiksen 2010)

Frederiksen predicted that in the future, partnerships with organizations would grow and he saw this leading to co-creation for all parties and a good story that all parties could communicate to their stakeholders.

The key findings from the interview with Novozymes can be seen in Figure 5.3 and will be discussed in the following section.
### 5.4 Discussion & Reflection of Case Study Research

The main findings from both of the case studies will be discussed and assessed in relation to the literature and experience surveys, with focus on the meaning, antecedents and consequences of storytelling. The aspects not previously discussed by the literature will be focused on in the reflection section. Furthermore, the case study findings will shortly be discussed in relation to the typology described in Section 3.4.3.

#### 5.4.1 The Meaning & Role of Storytelling Based on Case Study Research

Regarding Unilever (Dove), the organization did not utilize storytelling and the brand managers were not asked to give their specific definition and view of the concept. Regarding Novozymes, focus will be mainly on the *ido30* campaign, but will also include the *Rethink Tomorrow* core story and the *Novozymes Touch* mission, vision and values creation project.

##### 5.4.1.1 Meaning of Storytelling

**Utilization of Storytelling in Brand Management**

The potential of storytelling was recognized in the Dove case, although no clear view of storytelling as a concept was provided. The Novozymes case, however, indicated a general view of storytelling, which emphasized a holistic process involving stakeholders in both co-creation (co-production) and co-creation of the brand activities, and inclusion of story elements, in line with an emerging storytelling process focus in the literature (e.g. Ind & Bjerke 2007). This, along with the findings concerning the management of Dove’s brand story, will be further discussed in the following.
STORY ELEMENTS

Similar to the literature (e.g. Mathews & Wacker 2007) both cases implied the importance of an authentic background (Novozymes mentioned a balance between fiction and facts) and rational and emotional arguments as important story elements. As highlighted in literature (e.g. McKee 2003), the use of rational and emotional elements are an important part of storytelling, and the fact that the cases also implied this provides more evidence for the usefulness of these elements. However, both of the cases also indicated the relevance of many of the elements highlighted by the literature, such as a conflict, characters, message, etc. (e.g. Mossberg 2006).

Novozymes’ story has a central message, moral and conflict, with focus on changing the world through improving technology and fighting climate change. The characters in the *ido30* campaign can be placed in an actant model (as described by Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, see Appendix 4.2), where Novozymes is the subject-actant, with the goal of saving the environment, through a washing powder that uses enzymes and therefore is more effective at lower temperatures. In contrast to some of the definitions of narratives/stories found in the literature, which stress that a story should have a clear beginning, middle and end, the story does not indicate this sequence clearly or have a plot as such, as there is no specific progression of events. The *ido30* campaign message relies on both rational and emotional communication; rational as washing at lower temperatures is less expensive and emotional as consumers are aiding in a fight for a cause.

Similarly, the *Campaign for Real Beauty* brand story shows evidence of several story elements and the brand values and messages communicated by the campaign can easily be plotted into an actant model (see Appendix 4.2). For example, the story can be argued to have a central message, a moral statement and a conflict that all center on rational and emotional communication about the superficiality of the world of beauty, with the consequence that girls and women have low self-esteem issues and do not view themselves as beautiful. In terms of characters and the actant model, Dove is the subject-actant fighting against the opponents of superficiality and low self-esteem. Similar to Novozymes, the apparent story does not have a clear-cut beginning, middle and end (i.e. plot).

The cases indicated that story elements, apart from the plot, are important in the implementation of storytelling, as also emphasized in literature (e.g. Mossberg 2006). In some contrast to the literature, both cases indicated that there is not necessarily a clear plot in the story, which is often emphasized as being an important element in defining a story or narrative. Thus, stories do not need to follow a strict classical narrative linear structure in order to be classified as a *good* story. Instead, this supports the notion of various degrees of *plotting* put forward by Jahn (2002), in which stories also can be loosely plotted, or avoid plotting altogether.
HUMORISTIC TWIST, ORIGINALITY, STORYTELLING TEMPLATE From the Novozymes case, the use of a “humoristic twist” was implied to be important in attracting stakeholders’ attention to the story and message, although a “serious backbone” was necessary in other situations. The Dove brand managers similarly emphasized that much of the success of the campaign was due to the originality of the campaign, as none of their competitors had in the past initiated similar campaigns. Hence, originality, or a humoristic twist (which implies originality), was significant in both cases. Furthermore, in creating good stories with a consistent message, Novozymes implied the importance of a predefined storytelling template, i.e. the NASA model. Neither a humoristic twist, originality nor storytelling templates were specifically emphasized by the literature, but the cases suggest that these might be useful to consider when utilizing storytelling.

CORE STORY PRINCIPLE & COMMUNICATION OF VISION & MISSION The Rethink Tomorrow story was emphasized in the Novozymes interview, suggesting a core story focus for the organization’s overall communication of the vision, mission and values, including the ido30 campaign. The Rethink Tomorrow story is further illustrated in Appendix 4.3. Thus the interview indicated the use of the ido30 story as a brand story that is based on the Rethink Tomorrow core story. The core story focus implies similarities to the literature (e.g. Kristensen, 2002), in which the core story message may result in consistent communication and in employees embodying the vision and mission. This further shows a connection with the experts’ views on the importance of aligning storytelling with the vision, mission, values and business strategy. Furthermore, through the interview, it was mentioned that the same core story was communicated to several different stakeholders, implying that the core story should have relevance for all stakeholders, similar to the experts, who emphasized that stories with relevance for stakeholders could strengthen brand-stakeholder relationships and effectively communicate vision, mission and values. For example, Unilever having a clear brand focus and aiming at “staying on the same straight line” (in order to, among other things, ensure that the brand was perceived similarly worldwide) indicated this.

Aiming at achieving some level of consistency was also indicated by Unilever’s focus on integrating communication channels in order to strengthen and get through with the message consistently. Unilever’s combination of a wide range of online tools with offline media in the campaign also indicated its utilization of IMC. As stressed in the literature (e.g. by Ponnam & Krishnatray, 2008), IMC has become an increasingly important concept for branding, enabling synergy to be achieved through strategically utilizing multiple communication channels.

FIGHT FOR A CAUSE/SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT AS A FOUNDATION & RELEVANCE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS Regarding the overall messages of the two campaigns, both can be seen as emphasizing emotional communication and social engagement. The Dove campaign is based upon social engagement, and as the campaign without a doubt strives to challenge conventional
beauty stereotypes, advocating unconventional beauty and self-esteem, it is clear that Dove fights for a cause. Furthermore, the focus on social engagement and fight for a cause clearly correspond with Unilever’s vision (it is stated in relation to the company’s vision: “We’ve always believed in the power of our brands to improve the quality of people’s lives and in doing the right thing. As our business grows, so do our responsibilities...” (Unilever 2010c)) Here, social engagement clearly relates to “doing the right thing”. Importantly, this also shows the close connection and alignment between the organizations’ business strategy, core values, vision, mission, branding efforts and the brand story, as emphasized in the literature (e.g. Ind & Bjerke, 2007).

This is also evident in Novozyms’ campaign and core story; although it was not directly emphasized by the brand manager, it is clear the organization’s communication is based on changing the world, i.e. fighting for a cause. Similar to the literature (e.g. Mathews & Wacker, 2007) this suggests that stories with an ethical or moral focus might be more effective than stories with another focus.

The Dove campaign’s success was also due to the high degree of relevancy the message had in relation to the target group and other stakeholders. Through conducting the global research report, and confirming the narrow definition of beauty, Unilever secured evidence of this being and issue the majority of consumers could relate to. Similarly, in the Novozyms case, where research was used to find the amount of waste produced by doing laundry, in comparison to the production of washing powder, the issue was also found to be relevant for several groups of stakeholders. In line with the literature (e.g. Kristensen 2002, Baker & Boyle 2009) these cases demonstrate that ensuring relevance for consumers is of great importance for the development of good brand stories.

**CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION OF BRAND VALUES & ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION**

Both cases highlighted the importance of the same brand values and stories being acted upon and communicated internally and externally to achieve consistency and credibility. For example, Novozyms’ ido30 campaign was both spread amongst employees (e.g. through presentations) and end-users (e.g. through social media). Moreover, Novozyms mentioned that departments in the organization should focus on aligning and integrating activities, avoiding silos in the organization, and communicating the same core story to all stakeholders, which is very similar to recommendations from Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu (2004). This implies a holistic and integrative view of working with storytelling and the brand in line with, e.g. Ind & Bjerke 2007.

In relation to communicating brand values internally, stories have been emphasized by the literature as being effective in encouraging employees to live the brand (and thereby increase commitment and motivation) (e.g. Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre
2009). Although this was not directly mentioned during the interviews, it was implied, e.g. in the Novozymes case, as measures and considerations were taken to encourage the employees to live the brand through, e.g. involving employees in revising the organizational values (co-creation internally), promoting the *ido30* campaign with T-shirts, and consistent communication of the story.

**BRAND EXPERIENCES, DIALOGUE & INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS** In line with the literature, the Dove case clearly indicated the importance of a co-creation approach towards branding and storytelling. The brand managers’ views of co-creation and branding (Section 5.2.2.1) implied that Unilever takes a co-creation view of the brand, in which consumers are seen as active participants in the branding process. In accordance with the increased focus on experiences in the co-creation and branding literature (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), Unilever emphasized working with brand experiences “*all the time*”, as also emphasized on their website:

“*We’re constantly enhancing our brands to deliver more intense, rewarding product experiences*” (Unilever 2010b)

The Dove brand managers’ view of branding and co-creation also implied the importance of the communication aspect (rather than e.g. the co-designing of products, often mentioned in literature). The co-designing of products (as emphasized by e.g. Etgar 2008 and Payne et al. 2009) was however implied by Novozymes, who co-creates value through partnerships and co-created products and solutions, as a result of their customers’ individualized needs.

Both cases mentioned the importance of dialogue and generating dialogue through, e.g. utilizing social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and by having interactive websites with discussion forums and blogs in which people are encouraged to share their viewpoints and participate in the discussions. This indicates that the cases have succeeded in establishing a dialogue with stakeholders about beauty and self-esteem/global warming and climate change, and in Novozymes’ case, succeeded in upholding their commitment:

“*We will maintain an open dialogue with our stakeholders*” (Novozymes 2010f)

Unilever has succeeded in conveying its brand promise, core values and establishing a dialogue about the brand and overall definition of beauty. Here it can be argued that both cases illustrate that by help of an engaging story and online media, organizations can establish an experience environment in which stakeholders can co-create consumption experiences, vital in co-creating value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b). Furthermore, this has indicated a relevance and usefulness of social online media in establishing dialogue.
In relation to interactive communication, both cases apply a wide range of online media tools, e.g. Dove has been successful in achieving viral videos (mainly the “Dove Evolution” video), and supplies consumers with downloads, tell-a-friend tools, etc. (Dove 2010a), allowing consumers to share the story and thereby increase WOM communication. Furthermore, both cases utilize social media sites, and actively use these to enable interaction with stakeholders, e.g. Novozymes used their YouTube, Twitter and Facebook pages to involve stakeholders during COP15. Both cases’ online forums were viewed as important ways of gaining feedback and gaining understanding of consumers. On Dove’s discussion forums, the debates have since the campaign started, been ongoing, further indicating the campaign’s power to engage, despite having run for several years. However, there is also a debate around the morality of the Dove brand. Here, both supporting and critical voices about Dove’s sincerity in trying to broaden the definition of beauty is discussed (Campaign for Real Beauty Forum 2009).

It can be argued that the Dove story is truly brought to life through the viral video “Dove Evolution” (see Figure 5.4). In the short video, Dove demonstrates how an ordinary woman is transformed by makeup artists, hair stylists, etc., during a photo shoot session, where the photo is retouched before being placed as a billboard advertisement. The video clearly communicates the message that the world of beauty is built on fakeness and that Dove does not wish to support the superficiality of the world of beauty. Furthermore, the video brings to mind the classical story of “The ugly duckling” where the duckling is transformed into a beautiful swan.

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1The video has been viewed more than 11 million times on YouTube: on the 7th of July, 2010 there were 11,237,090 views.
(Lindstrom 2008). This further illustrates how a brand’s values may be brought to life by a strong story.

In terms of creating brand experiences, it is also apparent that by the story told in “Dove Evolution”, Unilever has succeeded in creating a deep and rich brand experience by conveying the brand story through a gripping video. Similar to Baker & Boyle (2009), the video seems to imply that a good story may transport the stakeholders to becoming emotionally engaged.

Furthermore, in line with a co-creation view, both cases strive to involve stakeholders, e.g. the Dove brand ambassadors’ stories are being used in commercials. Another example includes the Novozymes Touch project, where storytelling was utilized as a communication tool, to effectively gain feedback and positive and negative stories from employees. In line with the literature (e.g. McKinnon 2008, Ind & Bjerke 2007), the negative stories were implied to be an important factor in considering the new values. Furthermore, through this project, Novozymes indicates a process orientation towards storytelling, due to the several workshops that have been held, in order to find stories that best represented a new vision. Moreover, the use of storylistening in this process was indicated as an important way of understanding stakeholders and closing the potential gap between the internal and external perceptions of the organization, which has also been mentioned in the literature (e.g. Kristensen 2002, Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2004, Ind & Bjerke 2007). Novozymes’ utilization of such a process is evidence for the emerging importance of structuring the uncovering and creation of stories around a carefully maintained process. In addition, the cases also supported the literature in terms of utilizing consumer stories for branding purposes, as well as product development. In accordance with the recent conceptualizations of both branding and co-creation of value, both cases further indicated the importance of considering stakeholders rather than only customers.

**VISUAL STORYTELLING** The Novozymes case highlighted visual storytelling, where architecture and interior design may convey stories to stakeholders. This visual aspect of storytelling was not mentioned by the storytelling literature, but was discussed in Section 3.4, as a relevant aspect that could be considered complementary to the practice of storytelling. Here one could argue that the interior design of buildings allows stakeholders (both employees and customers) to become immersed in the Novozymes brand and story.
5.4.1.2 Antecedents of Storytelling

**NEED & WILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND CONSUMERS** As a natural consequence of Unilever not utilizing storytelling as such, antecedents linked directly to storytelling elements, such as a strong belief that customers buy stories, were not emphasized. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the brand story was, to a large degree, developed based on the company’s curiosity and willingness to find out whether their assumptions regarding the narrow definition of beauty was true, and based on an interest in understanding their customers.

**FIRM-CENTRIC COMMUNICATION IS INEFFECTIVE** Along with literature the Unilever case also strongly implied that the reasons for working with interaction, dialogue and involvement of customers were due to the ineffectiveness of firm centric, one-way communication.

**A NEED FOR COST & RESOURCE EFFECTIVENESS** Through the Novozymes interview, a need for cost and resource effectiveness was emphasized. In general, notions of cost and resource effectiveness have not often been encountered in the literature.

5.4.1.3 Consequences of Storytelling

**LONG-TERM COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, WOM, BUZZ & MEDIA COVERAGE** Two important consequences of the story have been the high level of engagement and the possibility of continuing with the campaign longer than expected. Furthermore, the “Dove Evolution” viral video has been awarded by the advertising industry¹ (High, Morrissey & Parpis 2007). As consequences of the ido30 campaign and other PR and marketing initiatives from Novozymes, buzz surrounding the brand and message, and media coverage were emphasized, resulting in

¹The viral video (and TV spots) was awarded both in Film and Cyber categories at the ad industry’s 2007 Cannes Lions (High, Morrissey & Parpis 2007).
new contacts in other industries. Buzz and media coverage were not specifically mentioned in the literature.

**MISINTERPRETATION, LOSS OF CONTROL & RISKS** The misinterpretation of campaigns and loss of control of the Dove brand indicated the potential negative consequences (although Unilever had not experienced these issues as major challenges or problems). The Novozymes case also mentioned loss of control as a risk of using dialogue in a storytelling campaign, although this was thought to be avoidable by integrating functions, staying credible and in control of facts. Novozymes has experienced negative comments on their Facebook page that imply misunderstanding towards the campaign, although these are not to the same degree as the comments found regarding the Dove campaign. The example of the parody versions of “Dove Evolution”, show an obvious loss of control of brand communication.

![Figure 5.6 Example of “Dove Evolution” Parody Video (Unknown 2008)](image)

Noticeably however, consumers are defending the brand by responding to the negative comments. The following statements found on YouTube, are in response to one of the parodies:

“...*All Dove cares about is profits...*Just to trick consumers like you into thinking that they are helping the world.*"

“...*Yeah, its true Dove is really only after the money, the same owners of Dove own Axe, and in every Axe commercial there is a parade of women who match everything Dove is supposedly “against”. All they want is your money, hypocrisy I tell you!*"

“*This is disgusting. Dove is actually doing something to try and better the world, what are you doing?:*” (Unknown 2008)

This illustrates the challenges experienced by Unilever, in terms of double or conflicted messages concerning Dove and Axe, although this was not seen as major problem. Thus, when co-creating the brand, loss of control is a challenge that to some degree must be countered, and the organization should consider stepping in when consumers misinterpret the brand message, in line with recommendations from Ind & Bjerke (2007), although, as mentioned by e.g. Salzer-
Mörlng & Strannegård (2004) and Lawer & Knox (2006), it is important to accept loss of control and increased customer empowerment.

FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS Although Novozymes did not gain much feedback from stakeholders, the findings implied that they felt storytelling might lead to feedback, which could be useful in different contexts, e.g. feedback from the Facebook community.

COMMUNICATION OF CREDIBLE & CREATIVE MESSAGES It was implied that storytelling could lead to the consequence of communication of credible and creative messages, both through using a humoristic twist, but also, in Novzymes’ case, through alliances and partnerships for conveying these messages credibly.

5.4.2 Reflections on Findings

Overall, the case studies presented findings similar to the literature and provided additional support of the previous findings, as well as interesting additional insights of storytelling. This was apparent both with regards to storytelling in general, and in terms of how brands can be co-created through storytelling.

INSIGHTS SUPPORTIVE OF THE LITERATURE & EXPERIENCE SURVEYS Similar to the literature and experience surveys, the cases indicated support of storytelling being viewed as a holistic process, closely linked with strategy, vision, mission and core values, and assessed both on a strategic and operational level.

The Novozymes case indicated a holistic storytelling process through the several workshops held during the Novozymes Touch project, to find stories that best represented the new vision. The description of the workshops is comparable to Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu’s (2004) core story process, where the internal data-gathering step focuses on gathering both negative and positive data about the organization (especially from employee stories centered around the vision, mission and values), which is used to define the culture, a process also mentioned during the experience surveys. Also, this project was in line with Heijbel’s (2010) process of finding stories, through workshops that uncover the stories. In addition, the indication of a core story is in line with the literature (e.g. Kristensen, 2002) as well as the experience survey findings, where core story messages may result in consistent communication and in employees embodying the vision and mission. This holistic focus has been emphasized in both the literature and experience surveys, e.g. as mentioned by one of the experts, it is necessary to work both internally and externally with storytelling in order to achieve consistency and creditability.

The notion of storytelling as a concept that should be assessed both on a strategic as well as an operational level, was further supported through the case studies. In terms of a core story, Dove encompassed their core values, mission and vision in a story, and based it on “everything they
do and say”, while Novozymes’ Rethink Tomorrow initiative served as a basis for all their external and internal communication.

Both cases further indicated the usefulness of the classical story elements (e.g. conflict, characters, etc.) emphasized by experts, and often found in literature. However, contrary to the literature (and somewhat the experts), the cases did not imply a strict linear plot, but supported the notion of various degrees of plotting. In addition, similar to the literature (e.g. Mathews & Wacker 2007) and especially highlighted by the experts, both cases suggested the importance of an authentic background and inclusion of both rational and emotional elements.

In relation to the “Dove Evolution” parody, one of the statements seen above clearly supports what was also highlighted by one of the experts, that a good story based on co-creation, an authentic core and some kind of conflict, increases the likelihood of consumers defending the brand whenever a negative story comes along. In particular, the statements illustrate the importance of authenticity, which if questioned, may have a destructive impact on the brand.

Similarities between the cases and experience surveys could also be viewed in terms of antecedents and consequences. For example, the experts mentioned an increased importance and need for brand-consumer relationships, and dialogue as an important antecedent, which was also apparent in the Dove case, where an honest interest in understanding their consumers led to a dialogue based on reality (i.e. based on the research report). Furthermore, based on both cases’ views of co-creation and branding, it is reasonable to assume that a major antecedent has been the need to focus on co-creation in terms of involvement and engagement, in order to enhance brand value (rather than a focus on push communication). In support for the experience surveys, the cases also indicated that through a story, communication of brand values can both be internally and externally improved, while the brand can be perceived as more meaningful. Another important consequence also highlighted by the experts, was the high level of stakeholder involvement (consumers, media, industry etc.) and the willingness to co-create the brand. In relation to the usefulness of a story as a communication platform, the cases indicated that having a compelling story increases the possibility of prolonging campaigns.

**ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS** The cases also provided additional insights of the existing literature and the previous experience surveys, where the usefulness of social engagement serving as a main message and conflict in a story, the importance of originality, use of storytelling template and visual aspects were most noticeable. These will be shortly discussed below. Moreover, in relation to antecedents and consequences, the cases showed that storytelling initiatives can be cost and resource effective and that buzz and media coverage is an important consequence.

In relation to fighting for a cause, the cases further supported the need for an authentic background and relevance, as highlighted by both literature and experience surveys, i.e. the
story needs to be perceived as being authentic or real. Both issues of young women’s low self-esteem and climate change are believed to be perceived as real by stakeholders and a message and conflict that the majority of women/people can relate to (in Dove’s case, the company secured its relevance by conducting an extensive research report). In line with the theory (e.g. Kristensen 2002, Baker & Boyle 2009) and experts, these cases demonstrate that ensuring relevance for consumers is important for the development of good brand stories. The usefulness of having a story based on social engagement in order to achieve emotional engagement and involvement, is considered to be an important addition to the existing storytelling literature, as well as in expanding business initiatives, i.e. in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (e.g. the *Self-Esteem Fund* developed in relation to the Dove campaign).

An interesting notion in relation to the above, is that when applying stories based upon a *fight for a cause* in relation to the actant model, placing such a story in the actant model often leads to the stakeholders becoming the helper-actant. As the goal cannot be reached by the subject without the helper, a *fight for a cause* story/model implies that interaction and involvement must take place between the helper and the subject for the goal to be reached, thus assuming co-creation.

The cases also provided additional insights in terms of a humoristic twist, originality and a storytelling template, which have not been emphasized in the storytelling literature. Based on the discussions above concerning these issues, it is apparent that these might be useful to consider when utilizing storytelling.

In relation to visual aspects, especially the emphasis put on visual storytelling in the Novozymes case supported previous discussions and reflections, in which semiotics and visual aspects were argued to be useful in storytelling. The Dove case also indicated the relevance of these aspects.

In relation to signs and visual aspects, it was mentioned in Section 3.4 that in consumer storytelling, brands may explicitly or implicitly inform consumers that experiencing the particular brand results in fulfilling one or more archetypes. Assessment of these archetype profiles may thus be highly useful in brand management, i.e. in terms of providing inspiration for the development and communication of brand stories. This is further illustrated in relation to Dove in Appendix 4.4.

The parody videos of “*Dove Evolution*” mentioned above, further support the relevance of considering brands in terms of signs. Here, Salzer-Möring & Strannegård’s argument that brands are more like signs that are “used, reused, contextualized and re-contextualized, acquiring new appearances” becomes relevant, as they point out: “...far from being a spectacle with actors and an audience, the brandscape can be understood of as an arena of aesthetic
reflection and expression. Signs are turned into brands in actions” (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004, p. 234). In addition, these videos definitely support the notion that branding is no longer to be considered a one-way communication flow, as emphasized in the literature.

All in all, the above clearly indicates the relevance of broadening the concept of storytelling in terms of more visual considerations and methods such as semiotic analysis, discussed in previous sections, thereby also addressing some of the criticism mentioned in the storytelling literature review.

Overall, the case study research clearly illustrated how storytelling may be utilized in brand management when taking a co-creation perspective on the brand, and how co-creation can be utilized in the storytelling process (e.g., through interactive homepages and involvement of customers in campaign development). The research also supported the aspects discussed in the previous chapter, concerning storytelling as:

- A form of brand co-creation (e.g., illustrated through the “Dove Evolution” video, which indicated achievement of a high degree of emotional engagement)
- A means of discovering brand co-creation opportunities
  Support for the usefulness of assessing consumer stories for branding purposes, e.g., developing commercials, as well as product development
- A means of encouraging (brand) co-creation
  Strong support for the relevance of storytelling in increasing stakeholders’ willingness to co-create, especially supported by the notions of originality, relevance, conflict, and emotional engagement. In addition, the cases also indicated that the story provides answers to what the brand means to stakeholders, and reasons for getting involved in co-creation. Furthermore, the stories were indicated as aiding in successfully initiating a dialogue with/among stakeholders, thereby increasing stakeholders’ willingness of co-creating the brand.
- A means of fostering an internal brand co-creation focus
  As with the experience surveys, the cases did not specifically mentioned the use of storytelling in fostering a co-creation supporting culture. However, the notion that the brand story is used to communicate values externally as well as internally, indicates that storytelling may be an important means of fostering a (brand) co-creation focus internally.

Overall, the discussions above indicate that through the use of a compelling, relevant and authentic brand story, and a co-creation perspective on brand management (for instance through interactive homepages), use of social media and establishments of online forums enabling dialogue, the cases have succeeded in establishing an experience environment in which
stakeholders can co-create individual brand experiences. Thus, it is apparent that through storytelling, or management of a brand story, brand value can be enhanced and brand-stakeholder relationships can be strengthened.

5.4.3 Typology
Through the typology, the cases may be viewed as illustrating storytelling Approach 2. If imagining the typology as a sort of continuum, the cases can be argued to have slightly different locations, e.g. Dover rather leaning towards Approach 2, although closer to Approach 1, as there is a high focus on co-creating the brand, but a low focus on managing storytelling initiatives, implying the room for further enhancement and progress. Thus the Dove brand would possibly benefit further if general awareness and active use of relevant storytelling techniques and elements were increased, e.g. evaluation of consumers’ stories based on story elements and utilizing these accordingly for branding purposes.

As Novozymes has a relatively high awareness and experience of using storytelling, it is assumed that the organization may also benefit further by focusing more on branding aspects in relation to storytelling, i.e. utilizing the interaction and co-creation achieved and the established story for additional branding initiatives.

The various degrees of experience of working with storytelling in the two cases is considered to reflect the placement of the two cases; the more experience, the more knowledge and ideas about antecedents. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that utilizing storytelling is a learning process, in which the organization’s ability of utilizing storytelling effectively develops over time. Nevertheless both cases can be argued to be examples of organizations approaching storytelling in a way corresponding to a brand co-creation perspective.

5.5 Summary Case Study Research
The case studies have provided several relevant insights of the meaning and role of storytelling, in relation to co-creation and branding in practice. Generally, the case studies have supported many of the literature review and experience survey findings, e.g. the importance of having a core brand story as a strategic brand communication platform, a holistic process focus and emphasis on co-creation of the brand through stakeholder involvement and interactive communication. Moreover, the cases have provided aspects of storytelling not previously emphasized, such as the usefulness of a foundation on social engagement (fight for a cause) that creates a type of conflict that might involve people on both emotional and rational levels.

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9 Novozymes has been working with storytelling for several years, whereas the Dove brand managers were uncertain of the extent to which storytelling was used at Unilever. Furthermore, the case studies indicated that Novozymes had clear ideas of how to work with storytelling and which initiatives to invest in.

10 Based on the above discussion and reflection, one could argue that Unilever pursues such a branding approach despite the fact that the company itself may not deliberately work with storytelling as such.
Regarding story elements, the cases, in contrast to the findings from the literature and experience surveys, have provided evidence of other narrative structures than a linear one, which are also relevant for the core story. Additional storytelling insights include the usefulness of a storytelling template, the message being communicated through an original humoristic twist, and also the relevance of visual storytelling. Overall, the cases indicated support for the convergence of storytelling, branding and co-creation, and strongly indicated the usefulness of storytelling principles and elements in a branding strategy and process.
6. Meaning & Role of Storytelling Given a Co-creation Perspective of Brand Management

Based on the literature review and the research findings, both the experience surveys and case studies, the following section aims to summarize the main aspects and insights of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management. Based on this, a managerial framework of how storytelling may be utilized in brand management will be presented.

6.1 Meaning & Role of Storytelling

In exploring the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management, it has been necessary to also assess the meaning of the brand (and branding) as well as co-creation. These two concepts have throughout this study been conceptualized by several different sources, which are summarized here.

Co-creation has been conceptualized in various ways throughout the literature and exploratory research. Co-creation has been described as a process involving customers in the creation and/or design of a product/service and solutions, creating value through partnerships and when consumers build brand capital by talking positively about the brand. Thus, the communicative aspect of co-creation in terms of meaningful dialogue, rather than organizational monologue, should be emphasized. Furthermore, it has been indicated that co-creation has become increasingly important for any type of business in creating value. Nevertheless, common for all these sources, is that co-creation is about creating value through focusing on actively interacting with and involving customers in various marketing and communication processes.

In relation to brand management, co-creation aspects such as interaction, dialogue and customer orientation have been emphasized throughout the study. A general belief is that co-creation will play a greater part in building brands and enhancing brand value in the future. Brands have for example been defined as experiences based on all the organization’s actions, and have been argued to be based on co-creation with stakeholders. Furthermore, co-creation is important for enhancing brand experiences. Importantly, a co-creation view of branding demands a holistic and organization wide perspective, as it is a process that involves the whole organization.

Given the conceptualizations of co-creation and branding described above, the role and meaning storytelling has been assessed according to its meaning, antecedents and consequences. Figure 6.1 summarizes the key aspects.
MEANING The exploratory research supported the notion of storytelling as a human activity, an activity that enables sense-making and shapes cultures. Based on this, storytelling in an organization and in a branding context can overall be perceived as a holistic, integrative, dynamic and interactive brand process consisting of developing, generating, collecting and managing stories around the brand, based on an authentic core as a communication platform. Such a platform could e.g. be a central message based on a fight for a cause, as was the case with Dove and Novozymes. This process constitutes an effective method for enhancing marketing, branding and the organizations’ communication efforts, including visual communication, thereby being a valuable approach to brand management. In relation to such a process, it was found that storytelling may be a form of (brand) co-creation, and serve an important role in discovering brand co-creation opportunities, a means of encouraging (brand) co-creation, and a means of fostering a co-creation culture. Importantly, the storytelling process involves both internal and external stakeholders, as brands are viewed as co-created. At the same time, storytelling may be seen as a marketing, branding and communication tool, in that storytelling elements can be perceived as a kind of checklist for improving communication. This in turn implies that brand communication should not only be relevant for consumers, but for other stakeholders as well.

Due to the above, storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management may be described as follows:

*Storytelling is a holistic, integrative, interactive and dynamic process of managing the organization’s brand stories, based on the use of narrative and visual principles, and involving stakeholders in the co-creation of brands.*

Such a storytelling process, incorporating the principles summarized in Figure 6.1, is assumed to result in more valuable brand stories, managed in a more effective way.

ANTECEDENTS In line with the literature, major antecedents of storytelling, as previously described, were the increased need for effective and interactive communication, a need for transparency and trustworthiness, and a need for differentiation based on emotional propositions. In addition, consumer and other stakeholder benefits, such as pleasure from sharing stories, sense-making and identity construction, were emphasized (see Figure 6.1).

CONSEQUENCES As argued by the experts and seen in the cases, the management of a good story is likely to yield a wide range of organizational, as well as consumer and stakeholder benefits. Some of the most apparent advantages can be seen in Figure 6.1, e.g. effective communication of brand messages and increased opportunities for co-creation. Overall, having a storytelling process in place is considered to aid managers in achieving enhanced brand value and brand image, getting more involved and motivated employees who have a higher
understanding of the brand and who are better at expressing and acting in accordance to the brand, and furthermore result in employees living the brand. The usefulness of implementing storytelling is also assumed to extend brand benefits, e.g. increase the number of recruits, easing the recruitment processes and aid the practice of good leadership. As mentioned in previous sections, storytelling is also considered to enhance co-creation and innovation management on a general level.

It should be mentioned though, that although storytelling leads to many positive consequences, including enhancing brand efforts and co-creation, it is recognized that there is always the risk that storytelling, as with all brand communication, can backfire and have unwanted and negative effects on the brand. As seen in the Dove case, stories may be misinterpreted by the stakeholders, authenticity may be questioned and credibility may fall.

Based on the above assessment of storytelling, it is clear that the concept of storytelling has evolved alongside the meaning and role of co-creation and branding, e.g. through having a co-creation and stakeholder focus. Finally, the above strongly indicates that the three concepts should be viewed as being complementary, all constituting vital elements in the branding process.
**Antecedents**
- Humans’ use of stories to make sense of the environment (sense-making & learning)
- Stories explain the culture that make the brand
- The increased organizational need for effective, interactive, communication, which increasingly requires emotional aspects (firm centric communication ineffective)
- Need for archetype fulfilment/using brands in identity construction
- Need for emotional differentiation
- Transparency & trustworthiness
- Need for individualization
- Increased importance of brand-consumer relationships
- A need for cost-effectiveness & resource-effectiveness
- A need and willingness to understand consumers

**Meaning**
- A view of storytelling as an effective branding/marketing process based on an authentic foundation, useful on two communication levels, strategic & operational
- A process that requires a holistic focus & organizational integration
- A focus on story elements & often a linear narrative structure
- Human activity & archetype myth portrayal
- A focus on a core story
- A means to add symbolic values to the brand
- A means to impact culture on various levels & communicate the vision, mission and values
- Focus on interaction & involvement of stakeholders
- Way of achieving co-creation
- Use of a storytelling template
- Importance of humorous twist and originality
- Relevance for all stakeholders
- A basis on social engagement/ a fight for a cause for an effective story
- Visual storytelling

**Consequences**
- Increase brand value & enhance branding efforts overall (e.g. through more effective communication, emotional engagement, enhancing experiences, strengthening brand-stakeholder relationships, enhancing brand loyalty, making the brand more meaningful etc.)
- Stakeholders’ imaginary participation/dialogue
- Differentiation
- Bridge potential gap in perceptions
- WOM brand communication
- Willingness to participate in co-creation & in co-creating brand value
- Result in long-term communication
- Buzz & media coverage
- Communication of credible & creative messages
- Knowledge sharing/learning
- Organizational sense-making through stakeholder stories
- (Loss of control)
- (Risk of misinterpretation)
- (Meaning destruction)

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**Figure 6.1 Key Aspects of the Meaning & Role of Storytelling Given a Co-creation View of Branding**

### 6.2 Managerial Framework

Based on the meaning and role of storytelling as described above, a managerial framework for how storytelling can be utilized in brand management practice, given a co-creation perspective on brand management, has been developed (Figure 6.2). The model forms the basis for the discussion below.

As found through the experience surveys, taking different approaches to branding might imply different approaches to storytelling. As mentioned by Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre (2009), though, the differences between brand approaches and perceptions are in reality blurred, and thus it is more advantageous to view different approaches as being complementary, which is also considered to be the case for storytelling. Thus, the framework is considered to be equally relevant for different brand focuses.

The model encompasses key storytelling, branding and co-creation processes and elements, on both a strategic and an operational level, and highly recognizes the importance of co-creating value with the organizations’ internal and external environment. The model is relatable to a
storytelling Approach 2 in the typology mentioned in Section 4.3.3 and Figure 4.2, as it provides practical guidance of how to move to, or maintain the position described in Approach 2.

In addition to the exploratory research, the framework draws in particular upon the work by Ind & Bjerke (2007), Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu (2004), Baker & Boyle (2009), Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) and Holt (2004).

The Core Brand Story Platform – Storytelling on a Strategic Level

Based on the vision, mission and values, and consequently the corporate or product brand’s specific values, management should, through involving employees and other stakeholders, develop the platform for all brand story communication. This is the core story of the organization, a story that in a short and an easily understandable way, implies what the organization stands for, and provides the central underlying brand message. Managing the core brand story platform involves mainly developing, connecting and communicating the core story. Often the core story is connected to the corporate brand, but is this not necessarily always the case. In some cases, such as with the Dove case, the core story may be connected to the product brand (Dove) and serve as the basis for all the brand initiatives.

**Develop** In developing an effective platform, cultural cues and input from stakeholder stories should be considered to ensure that e.g. possible gaps between internal and external perceptions of the brand are minimized. In relation to cultural cues, semiotic analysis may be useful in attempting to uncover a culture, i.e. a core story. Importantly, the core brand story must be authentic, i.e. it must be perceived as real, in order to ensure credibility. Furthermore, the story should involve some kind of conflict, e.g. based on a fight for a cause, and include both emotional and rational arguments. In developing the core story, considerations regarding what kind of archetype myth the story and brand reflect are considered to be valuable, as this makes it easier for stakeholders to act upon and according to the brand story, in terms of consumer storytelling, leading to stakeholders’ fulfillment of desirable archetypes and thereby pleasure.

**Connect** In line with the recent developments, such as an increased demand of corporate transparency, CSR, etc., organizational credibility and trustworthiness is assumed to be vital. In order for the story to be perceived as credible, the organization should ensure connection with the vision, mission and organizational values and business strategy, as well as connection with various departments of the organization and with stakeholders’ experiences and expectations. Thus, the core story should have relevance for the most important stakeholder groups. This however, requires a focus on achieving stakeholder engagement and involvement.
The focus is to use this platform strategically, i.e. base brand communication on this platform, resulting in more consistent and credible communication. A core brand story is easier for organizational members to grasp, understand, make sense of and act in accordance to, rather than a couple of words constituting values or a brand promise. Accordingly, organizations avoid that the brand is perceived as chaotic and inconsistent, despite co-creation and evolvement of brand meaning. Importantly, the story should also encompass visual communication, i.e. by focusing on signs in order to enhance immersion in the story.

**Management of Brand Stories – Storytelling on an Operational Level**

Brand stories swirling internally and externally around the organization should be managed to a degree, and should actively be used in branding. Similar to the core brand story, the management of these stories includes generating, collecting, compiling, communicating and evaluating stories on a regular basis.

**GENERATE** The organization should actively strive to generate brand stories, internally as well as externally. Here, co-creation in terms of establishing co-creation experience environments, co-creation initiatives (e.g. co-designing of products), involvement in campaign development, etc., are highly important. This increases the likelihood that stakeholders would like to share their stories with the company, and with other stakeholders through WOM. It should also be recognized that stakeholders’ ability to co-create develops over time.

**COLLECT** The organization should actively focus on collecting stories through e.g., encouraging stakeholders to share their stories on online forums, in order to gain inspiration and create new brand stories in line with the core story. Stories may also be collected through marketing research, for example through qualitative interviews. It is also possible to “buy” stories, through e.g. collaborations/sponsorships with other brands, celebrities or sports icons. It could be relevant to appoint a kind of story ambassador responsible for the process of collecting stories.

**COMPILE** The collected stories should be evaluated for relevance and structured according to a set of criteria, in order to focus on the most appropriate and effective ones. Such criteria include:

- Alignment with core brand story platform and an authentic foundation
- Involvement of elements such as conflict, characters and plot
- Possibility to get emotionally involved and immersed in the story
- The degree to which the story is considered to be memorable, interesting, relevant and credible
- Link to an archetype to attract and involve a specific group of stakeholders
• Possibility to add a humoristic twist, and enable a creative and original way of communicating the message

Furthermore, a basis on social engagement has been found successful in engaging consumers in dialogue. Finally, it should be remembered that, although good stories are based on an authentic core, these could still be dramatized and romanticized, without losing their credibility.

**COMMUNICATE** In communicating the brand stories (also visually), focus should be on IMC in order to achieve synergies, enhance immersion in the story and create experience environments. It is especially important to integrate online media with offline media, which can bring stories to life and enable WOM. Online media also enables a longer story time-span. Importantly, organizations should show appreciation to any response (also negative responses), invite and encourage dialogue with stakeholders via online blogs, forums, etc., and consider transparency and access to information, in order to ensure meaningful dialogue and to enable stakeholders’ co-creation experiences with the brand.

In managing dialogue and ensuring relevance, the organization should create database driven, customized and interactive IMC plans for each stakeholder group, taking into account time and situation factors that influence stakeholders’ meaning creation (Peltier, Schibrowsky & Schultz 2003, Finne & Grönroos 2009). Thus, the total communication experience of each stakeholder should be considered. Prioritizing stakeholders according to their possible impact on brand value and having an IMC focus, is assumed to result in cost and resource effectiveness. In addition, the research also indicated relevance of storytelling templates in structuring stories, ensuring quality and some level of consistency.

Finally, the relevance of communication that works across country boundaries was mentioned during the research. For global brands, it is important to consider that some social cues with positive meaning for one culture may imply negative associations for other cultures (Javidan et al. 2006).

**EVALUATE** Storytelling efforts should be evaluated, e.g. through employee studies and qualitative research that measures how far stories have spread, and how these are received by various stakeholders. Another important reason for evaluating efforts is learning, as it is assumed that organizations’ ability to manage storytelling effectively develops over time.
Figure 6.2 Managerial Framework for Utilizing Storytelling Given a Co-creation View of Branding
In line with the contemporary branding and co-creation theory, the model implies several important assumptions. First, it implies that branding should be conceptualized as both a narrative and visual process (e.g. Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård 2004). By focus on dialogue and stakeholders’ meaning creation, the model acknowledges that storytelling is an interactive process (e.g. Finne & Grönroos 2009, Baker & Boyle 2009).

Second, the model assumes that the brand is a social process in which brand value is co-created with stakeholders, and that branding increasingly is about brand experiences (e.g. Merz, He & Vargo 2009, Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009, Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, Das, Stenger & Ellis 2009, Jones 2005, Payne et al. 2009).

Third, a co-creation perspective is a prerequisite. Co-creation possibilities are valuable for storytelling, and at the same time, storytelling can infuse and improve co-creation initiatives. Thus a co-creation foundation should be in place, focusing on innovating experience environments and solutions (e.g. Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004, Etgar 2008, Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008).

Fourth, the model should be seen as dynamic, as it for one, considers brands and brand stories as developed over time, as well as organizations’ and stakeholders’ ability and willingness of co-creating the brand. Also, the model purposefully does not specify a certain order of conducting the separate steps. Specifically, the model takes into account that both over time (e.g. Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008).

Fifth, the minor processes mentioned above should be seen as constituting one whole dynamic, holistic and integrative process. Hence, the two processes are seen as being parallel to each other, as each requires continuous update and focus.
7. Managerial Implications

In the following, the managerial implications that have arisen due to the research will be presented and explained, in order to clarify important considerations when utilizing storytelling in brand management, given a co-creation perspective.

Other than the managerial framework above, several things must be considered when utilizing storytelling as described above.

In promoting storytelling, managers must gain organization-wide support that is vital for implementing storytelling and achieving credibility, through increasing organizational awareness of the storytelling elements, the storytelling process and the benefits of utilizing storytelling principles in co-creating the brand. Although brand and communication managers may ultimately be responsible for implementing storytelling, it is still a process that is highly dependent on the whole organization, i.e. good internal stories are to be generated and collected from various sources and departments. Thus, uncovering good stories requires time, effort and dedication. Implementing a storytelling process as recommended in Figure 6.2, implies relocating resources to storytelling activities, and in turn, acceptance and understanding from the whole organization. Hence, responsible managers must be aware of mindsets in the organization and actively work for, and encourage, a mindset that implies a strong belief in the importance and advantages of co-creation and interactive storytelling, and a constant wish to improve these activities. Increased organizational understanding, acceptance and support of storytelling could be achieved through various initiatives such as:

- Convincing senior managers and other natural leaders of the benefits of storytelling first
- Increase motivation through a workshop held by a storytelling expert
- Invite managers to a seminar where they are asked to remember good stories, which is likely to convince/remind the managers about the power of good stories
- Encourage informal discussions about internal stories through the intranet, company newsletters, speeches, etc.
- Focus on promoting the use of good stories rather than the term storytelling, especially if there is skepticism towards the term
- Consider employing a story ambassador for e.g. sowing stories internally

Based on the above, effective implementation of storytelling requires leadership through appointed managers. Furthermore, implementing the suggestions laid out in Section 6.2 implies that storytelling is about planning and communication related decision-making, concerning the
whole organization. This requires leadership, both short-term and long-term considerations of time and resources, and managerial planning. Hence, storytelling is strategic and should be viewed as such.
8. Limitations of the Study & Suggestions for Future Research

This section aims to acknowledge the limitations of the research conducted and suggest directions for future research that is relevant in the fields of storytelling, branding and co-creation.

The exploratory study of this thesis has several limitations. An important limitation is that no consumer/stakeholder research has been made, which could have provided valuable insights for the meaning and role of storytelling taking a consumer/stakeholder perspective. For example, in relation to the case studies, consumers and media representatives' views and experiences of brand stories could have been assessed and compared with the companies' intentions. In addition, due to the increased recognition of storytelling as an interactive process, research focusing on storytelling in relation to stakeholders meaning creation would be relevant, e.g. extending the work of Finne & Grönroos (2009) on relationship communication.

In relation to the case studies, the two cases had rather different focuses with regards to branding and co-creation initiatives. Having two cases that had similar focuses could have led to more specific insights, e.g. with regards to end-users. Moreover, one of the cases did not utilize storytelling intentionally, while the other case implied that the focus of working strategically with storytelling had declined in recent years. Although other companies that were thought to utilize storytelling in a more strategic, active and holistic way were contacted, these were unable to participate. Including such organizations in the study, is likely to have provided more insights on implementing storytelling.

In research, triangulation, in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are assessed, is often emphasized. The current study could have benefited from including quantitative research, e.g. in the form of questionnaires based on expert interviews or case studies, sent out to consultants or organizations, and resulting in generalization of the findings. This could have provided further indications of the appropriateness of the typology suggested. In relation to the typology, this illustrated several approaches of storytelling, thereby also implying different managerial mindsets. Here, research could be argued to be relevant, further exploring various mindsets implied by the typology.

It could also be relevant to investigate whether storytelling is better suited in some communication situations than others, e.g. the experience surveys revealed that storytelling may not be appropriate in cases where there is a need for rational communication. It would
therefore be interesting to investigate whether there is a continuum of various types of communication, which correspond to the appropriateness of using storytelling.

Due to the increased recognition and use of storytelling, it becomes important to consider how storytelling investments and effects may be measured and evaluated. Thus, measurement and evaluation of storytelling is also considered to be a highly important future study, focusing e.g. on possibilities to assess this in relation to existing brand equity measurement systems, or in terms of a separate storytelling system.

Future research may also focus on consumer archetypes and the relevance of focusing on these in storytelling and branding, e.g. building on studies of the cognitive processing of brands resulting in archetypes, such as Woodside, Sood & Miller (2008) and Wertime (2002). In relation to archetypes, a cultural perspective on visual cues such as packaging and advertisement images could be further focused on, as these may vary from country to country (e.g. see the GLOBE dimensions as described by Javidan et al., 2006). This may be especially relevant for organizations with a global focus to consider, as images that are meant to portray one thing, may in fact mean something else to specific cultures. Therefore it may be relevant for such organizations to create different campaign-images for different countries. This cultural aspect could further be stretched to question whether the core story should be appropriate on a global level, or whether it should have minor variations in different countries. Furthermore, due to the suggested focus on visual aspects of storytelling, it could be relevant to consider models of aesthetic pleasure, and neuroscientific advances in the field of aesthetic judgment and visual attention in relation to storytelling communication and visual story elements (e.g. Clement, 2007).

Finally, although this study has been inspired by action research, which has been argued to correspond with the increased emphasis on co-creation in marketing, it is assumed that this could have been considered further i.e. in terms of collaboration with research participants, resulting in more co-created findings.
9. Conclusion

Storytelling is an important human activity, which has gained recognition in marketing and branding, due to its effectiveness in e.g. creating emotional bonds with consumers and differentiating possibilities. In light of the increasing use and recognition of the notions of co-creation and the brand as results of organizations’ and stakeholders’ collaborative effort, it becomes relevant to review the meaning and role of storytelling, in relation to the evolving notion of the brand. Due to the low amount of research done on storytelling in relation to the co-creation and branding concepts, several uncertainties arise regarding the definition and practical implications of storytelling in a co-creation and brand context.

In relation to these uncertainties, the thesis has aimed at investigating the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective on brand management, through focusing on analyzing the meaning (defining the concept and its utilization), antecedents and consequences of storytelling.

In assessing the meaning and role of storytelling, an extensive literature review has been conducted, as well as exploratory research, with the purpose of gaining practical insights of the definition and utilization of storytelling in relation to co-creation and branding. The exploratory research has consisted of experience surveys, with four consultants in the field of storytelling, and two case studies, focusing mainly on Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty and Novozymes’ ido30 campaign, that have indicated the application of storytelling in their external or/and internal communication.

Based on the research findings, the meanings and roles of co-creation and branding have been clarified. The meaning of co-creation has been found to encompass value creation through a focus on interaction and involvement of customers, through various communication and marketing processes, and importantly, through dialogue and a high customer orientation. The meaning of branding is generally founded on co-creation with stakeholders and the stakeholders’ experiences of the organization’s actions, and takes a holistic and organization-wide perspective and process-orientation. Furthermore, co-creation of the brand processes are predicted to have a greater role in the future, especially as co-creation is an important way of enhancing the brand experience for stakeholders.

Through the findings, and the discussion and reflections, the meaning and role of storytelling given a co-creation perspective of brand management has been found to encompass a holistic, integrative and dynamic process of managing the organization’s brand stories in a way that involves the use of narrative and visual principles and involves stakeholders in co-creating the brand.
The main findings of the experience surveys have included the use of the conflict, the authentic core and basis, and use of rational and emotional elements. Through the Novozymes and Dove campaigns, visual aspects were found relevant in relation to storytelling and branding. A major difference between the two research studies has been the emphasis on the necessity of the plot by the experts, although the cases have proven otherwise, highlighting that various degrees of plotting can take place in good stories.

Antecedents of storytelling have included organizations’ need for trustworthiness and effective communication, and stakeholders applying storytelling in sense-making and identity construction processes. Many positive consequences of storytelling have been found, including effective communication of brand messages, enhancement of the brand experience, increased opportunities for co-creation and employees living the brand. An important negative consequence of storytelling highlighted throughout the study, is the possibility of stakeholders misinterpreting the story message.

Based on the literature review and research findings, a dynamic and holistic managerial framework of storytelling taking a co-creation perspective, has been developed, indicating how to co-create brands through storytelling. In this framework, the storytelling process encompasses activities on both a strategic level and an operational level, through stages such as developing and compiling stories, and communicating and evaluating these storytelling efforts. Both levels imply a focus on visual storytelling, where storylistening and collecting stories that swirl in and around the organization’s internal and external environments play a large part in all stages. Furthermore, the operational level focuses on integration of the organization’s departments, IMC, dialogue and the continuous effectiveness of storytelling initiatives through evaluation.

Thus, as found through the study, firm-centric communication is becoming less effective in today’s consumer-driven world, where misinterpretation of messages and loss of control of dialogue about the brand can easily decrease brand value. This implies the need for effective initiation of co-creation and co-creation of the brand opportunities with consumers and other stakeholders, and a process that may encourage and maintain dialogue with stakeholders. A holistic, dynamic and integrative process approach to storytelling is the way to do it.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Induction and deduction
In brief, induction implies proceeding from empirical research to theoretical results, moving from the specific observed to the more general patterns and statements while deduction implies proceeding from theory to empirical results, focusing on hypotheses and theories from which phenomena can be explained.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Simplification of archetype enactment model
A simplified version of Woodside, Sood & Miller’s (2008) model illustrating how the brand enables archetype enactment by the consumer can be seen below. In brief, consumers act due to their (often unconscious) desire for archetype fulfillment (Arrow 1) and often marketer’s advertising reflects one or a few archetypes (Arrow 2). Optimally, the archetype reflected in marketers’ advertising corresponds with the one desired by the consumer (Arrow 3). The ways the story is assessed and acted upon reflects the archetype(s) (Arrows 4, 5 and 6) (this applies to both consumers’ and marketers’ storytelling). This may lead to consumers experiencing proper pleasure as it enables the fulfilling of one or more of these archetype myths. Thus, crafting a story in which the brand reflects an archetype and story gist can therefore lead to more favorable consumer-brand relationships (Woodside, Sood & Miller 2008).
2.2 Storytelling process models

Ind and Bjerke (2007) suggest a holistic process to aid the flow of brand stories and selecting stories that communicate the organization’s culture, mission, vision and values. The process includes five stages: connecting, collection, compilation, communication and co-evaluation. Importantly, the process involves engaging key individuals in different departments with the story, as this increases the story’s connection with the whole organization. This is also believed to aid in constructing an appropriate message, tone and language for the story (connecting stage). Stories may be collected from e.g. informal conversations between employees or feedback from customers (collection stage) and these are to be evaluated and structured based on, among other things, alignment with business strategy and inclusion of elements such as conflict (compilation stage). The stories may thereafter be communicated internally as well as externally, through speeches, blogs, etc. (communication stage). Finally, stories should be evaluated e.g. through keeping track of how far they spread and how the stories are responded to (co-evaluation stage).

Fog et al (2004) have developed a similar model which focuses on how to create storytelling-circulation internally in the organization in relation to the internal branding process. The model includes searching for stories (e.g. via workshops), sorting and shaping the stories based on depth and relevance and according to the elements: message, conflict, characters and plot. Finally, the process involves showing the stories (e.g. via booklets) and sharing them (e.g. by establishing a forum).

Fog et al have also developed the Laboratory model which explains the process of developing the organization’s core story, forming the basis for all storytelling communication. The notion of core story is also emphasized by Kristensen (2002) who stresses that the goal of the core story should be to appeal to and have relevance for all stakeholders and that it should take a starting point from the organization’s culture and identity. The Laboratory model involves among other things assessing the organization’s reason for being, and gathering and screening data about the organization in order to help define e.g. the organization’s culture. Furthermore, focus should be on making sure to close the possible gap between the external image and internal identity. Importantly, the core story should be created based on the elements plot, message, characters and conflict according to the Fairytale model (which is based on the actant model) and assessed in relation to the stories of competitors.

In line with Ind and Bjerke and Fog et al, Baker and Boyle (2009) emphasize a strategic storytelling process involving three main stages. First, the organization should imagine, define and search for the story that is to be told where after the organization should engage individuals in the story through sharing the story. Finally, the story should be enacted, through encouraging individuals in the organization to interpret the story and start acting upon it.
In addition to the models described above, Heijbel (2010), in relation to his model for corporate storytelling (which involves similar steps as those described above), points out the importance of refining the stories (e.g. through removing facts) so that these are more easily remembered, and that negative stories also may be useful. The usefulness of negative stories has also been emphasized by authors such as McKinnon (2008), who mentions that they may be useful for creating a negative focus on the past and a positive focus on the future, easing transformation in the organization.

2.3 Co-creation models

**DART framework** The model below shows Prahalad & Ramaswamy’s (2004b) model of building blocks of interactions for co-creations of value, which are dialogue, access, risk-benefits and transparency (DART).

![DART Framework Diagram](image)

**Framework for value co-creation** The model below shows Payne, Storbacka & Frow’s (2008) conceptual framework for value co-creation.
Co-production process  Etgar (2008) Antecedent conditions refer to those conditions that are necessary for consumers to want to participate in co-production and include: Macro environmental conditions (e.g. economic, technological and cultural factors), Consumer linked factors (e.g. time and skills), Product linked factors (e.g. product differences may be of little importance and some brands may have such a strong brand personality that consumers not want to change it) and Situationally linked conditions (e.g. issues of trust and empathy as well as management’s belief and support for co-production). As for the macro environmental conditions it is argued that co-production is most likely in mature economies than emerging economies as people value customization more and have a greater need for experiences and because consumer culture and technological information systems encourage customization and co-production to a greater extent.

The second stage refers to the values and drivers which motivate consumers to participate in co-production, including economic drives/economic rewards (e.g. cost reductions, risk reduction in terms of physical, time related and psychological risks etc.), level of customization and differentiation possible/achieved, psychological motivations (e.g. benefits in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic values) and social benefits (e.g. social status). The third stage, evaluation of costs and cost-benefit analysis, include the evaluation and analysis of costs (both economic and non-economic such as social and psychological costs) and benefits of participation in co-production. Stage four is termed activation and at this stage consumers are to decide what/which level(s) to participate in co-production. Etgar (2008) specifies the following phases: 1) Design (activities related to the designing of products/attributes) 2) Manufacturing/construction (processes in which raw materials are processed into items) 3) Assembly (e.g. involvement in assembling various components) 4) Distribution and logistics and 5) Consumption (can be divided into before use, during use or after use). Thus, various forms of co-production include co-production through consumer participation in the design, manufacturing/construction, assembly
or consumption activities. Finally, the fifth stage refers to consumers’ evaluation. The overall benefits and values of the co-production experience is evaluated and compared with experiences that did not include any co-production.

**SBRV triangle.** The service network. Fyrberg and Juriado (2009) based on Brodie et al’s (2006) service brand-relationship-value triangle

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2.4 **Branding process models and Relationship communication model**

Co-creating the brand relationship experience Payne et al’s (2009) model for co-creating the brand relationship experience can be seen below.
The Stakeholder-Brand Value model Jones’ (2005) stakeholder-brand value model can be viewed below.

Negotiated brand process model Gregory (2007) - Stakeholders are actively engaged in the brand process and stakeholders (both internal and external) are viewed as partners. In the process of reviewing, evaluating and refining the core values, the firm is able to develop an informed knowledge base. Actions are taken that influencing the brand are based on the previous processes.
2.5 An initial typology of storytelling

Føtex – The Knolø Commercial Serial

The Danish supermarket chain, Føtex, has recently launched a new long-term branding campaign, which radically differs from previous campaigns, as well as commercials of
competitors. In Danish media, the new campaign has been seen as representing a new “commercial universe” (Børsen.dk). The campaign utilizes both traditional TV-spots, as well as online media, in terms of micro sites and social media applications such as Facebook. The main reason for utilizing media in this new way is that Føtex anticipates that consumers of the future will have different habits, and be more familiar with online media. Thus, this is seen as a way to get the brand come closer to current as well as potential consumers.

The fictive “universe” is built around sixteen rather “special” people living on the small and distant Danish island called “Knolø” were the only local supermarket is the central meeting place. The store is as far you can come from a typical Føtex. Only one TV spot has been launched up to the point of writing, although at least four more can be expected according to micro site knolø.dk.

In the first TV-spot, “Welcome to Knolø”, the audience gets familiar with the owner of the local store, and his three grown up children; the two sons Torsten and Klaus, and his daughter Betty. That day Torsten receives an important letter which says that Torsten has been offered a new job in Føtex. This is seen as good news. As Torsten accepts the job offer, Claus is to be the one responsible for the local store, if the father gets sick or if something else happen. In a rather absurd situation, Claus shoots his father in the foot by a mistake, and becomes the responsible. In the end of the TV spot, questions such as what will happen at the local store now? And how will it go for Torsten in his new job at Føtex? arises. Finally, the audience is encouraged to visit the micro site, knolø.dk, to find out more about the island and the people living there.

In future TV-spots, Torsten is to write letters home to his family about his experiences when working at Føtex, where after his family will strive to run their business in Knolø in the same way Føtex do. Apparently, this leads to some further absurd situations (Børsen.dk).

At the micro site, people can read more about the life at Knolø and get to know the family better, their interests etc. Here, one can also become a member of Knolø’s own a version of Facebook “Ansigtsbogen”, and integrate this with ones real Facebook applications and profile, watch the TV spots and sign up for Føtex newsletters. Additionally, it is planned that the online part of the campaign will be integrated in the recruitment process of young employees (Børsen.dk).

The campaign serial is clearly used as a long-term platform including several individual episodes that uphold the overall story of Knolø. According to Føtex, the campaign has been made for branding purposes, and is not as product oriented as normal Føtex commercials (Børsen.dk). As with typical commercial serials, focus is on the story, which aims to entertain and involve the audience emotionally, rather than communicate products and prices (Fog et al 2004).
As the campaign is currently running, and only one of the TV-spots have been released, it cannot be known for certain whether the campaign has an ongoing ideological or moral statement that works as a central theme. However, some of the classical storytelling elements can be found in the story. The story has clearly defined characters (the family members) as well as various conflicts which forces action to be taken in order to restore harmony e.g. Klaus sudden takeover of the local store. Although, it can be anticipated that the characters eventually will take on the various roles of benefactor, beneficiary, adversary, hero or supporter, this cannot be known at this point. Nor can it be concluded that the story has a plot, that is, a beginning, middle and end.

In terms of co-creation, the campaign clearly illustrates at least two forms of co-creation. First, Fotex involve and engage its current and potential customers in the experience by the various activities available on the micro site as described above. Second, the TV-spots are examples of how Fotex aims to entertain and engage its audience emotionally.

3. Experience Surveys

3.1 Methodological implications

Interview guide
The interview guide was based on findings from the literature review and focused on the meaning and role of storytelling, branding and co-creation in current practice and the development of the storytelling concept, both in regards to how it has developed until now as well as its future development.

| INTERVIEW GUIDE Semi-structured interviews with consultants |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Concept                        | Dimensions     | Guiding Questions                                    |
| Meaning and role of Storytelling| Storytelling    | Hvad er storytelling for jer?                        |
|                                 |                | Hvordan arbejder virksomheden med storytelling? (Storytelling techniques?) |
|                                 |                | Hvad mener du er en god historie? Har en god historie en specifik struktur? |
|                                 |                | Hvornår synes du at storytelling egner sig bedst og hvornår burde man ikke anvende storytelling? Er der et behov for storytelling? |
|                                 |                | Har betydningen af storytelling ændres med åren? Hvis ja, hvordan? Hvilke aspekter? |
| Branding                       |                | Hvad er et brand i jeres mening?                     |
|                                 |                | Hvad er det som gør et brand værdifuldt og for hvem har det værdi? Hvad er brandets primære rolle for en virksomhed? |
### Storytelling & Branding

**Hvordan arbejder virksomheden med branding? (Hvad er jeres tilgang til branding generelt?)**

_Hvad mener i er de vigiste fordele med et stærkt brand?_

**Hvilken betydning mener i i at storytelling har og hvordan kan storytelling bruges i branding?**

_Tror i at konsumenter oplever brands med historier anderledes end brands som markedsføres med traditionelle værktøjer? Hvordan?_

_Hvad skal der tænkes på for at formulere en god brand historie? Til hvilke typer brands er det mest hensigtsmæssigt at bruge storytelling?_

_Kan kunder have effekt på et brands historier?_

**Storytelling & Co-creation**

"Co-creation er et relativt nyt udtryk som begynder at blive anvendt oftere i en marketing og branding sammenhæng..."

_Har i hørt udtrykket 'co-creation' og i så fald, hvad betyder 'co-creation' for jer?_  
**Hvis ikke bekendt med 'co-creation' - Det er mange synspunkter på hvad co-creation rent faktisk er, og hvad det betyder i praksis - men som vi personligen opfatter og ser på co-creation, handler det om at skabe værdi for virksomheden og dess interessenter gennem at involvere kunder og andre interessenter i marketing og branding aktiviteter i så stor udstrækning som muligt. Dvs. værdi er ikke noget som skabes indenfor virksomhendens fire vægge, men skabes sammen med kunder og interessenter gennem oplevelser. I vores opfattning, forudsætter det hvert andet aktiv, to vejs dialog med kunder og andre interessenter, og et større fokus på de enkeltes oplevelser med fx. brandet."

_Hvordan mener i værdi for virksomheden, dens kunder og andre interessenter skabes? Hvad er vigtigt i forhold til at skabe værdi?_

_Hvad er din mening og tilgang til individualisering/customization af produkter og tjenester?_

**Co-creation & Branding**

**Hvad betyder co-creation i forhold til branding? Hvordan kan man arbejde med co-creation i forhold til branding?**

_Hvad mener i om at involvere kunder og andre interessenter i branding processen? Hvordan kan det gøres?_

**Storytelling & Co-creation**

**Mener I kunder og andre interessenter kan indrages/involveres i storytelling? Hvis ja, hvordan?**

_Hvilket formål har storytelling i forhold til co-creation?_

_Hvad er forbrugerens rolle i kommunikationsprocessen? Hvorfor?_

**Storytelling, Branding & Co-creation**

_Hvad betyder storytelling i forhold til branding og co-creation? Hvilke relationer ser i mellem branding, storytelling og co-creation?_

_Hvordan kan man arbejde (arbejder i) med storytelling i forhold til branding og co-creation? Hvad er vigtigt i denne sammenhæng?_

_Mener i storytelling kan formidle/forvandles til en dialog med konsumenten om brandet? I hvor stor udstrækning? Hvordan?_
Hvordan kan co-creation i forhold brandets storytelling have en negativ/positiv effekt på brandet?

Hvordan tror i at storytelling, branding og co-creation utvikles (til se ud) i fremtiden?

Til sidst i interviewet

Vise vores forslag til Storytelling -Brand/Co-creation Typology - og be om deres reaktioner på denne

Har du nogle reaktioner/kommentarer til denne model? Ser du evt. modellen anderledes?

Hvilke eksempler kunne i nævne som passer ind i nogle af kaserne? Det må gerne være virksomhedens cases.

Interview process

Questions were as non-directive as possible, to allow for broad answers, but responses were still guided towards the overall topic and aim of the interview. Probes were applied where possible, to help elaboration of questions and gain more descriptive answers for areas of interest. Also, the language used for forming the questions during the interviews, was toned down to not include a too technical jargon. This may have eliminated some of the doubt the experts could have experienced regarding the meaning of the questions in addition to raising the comfort level. During the interviews imposing pre-conceptions was strived to be avoided, for example questions that inferred direct relations between concepts were avoided.

All interviews were recorded which enabled the authors to better capture important answers and words afterwards as well as maintaining eye contact and pay better attention to what participants say. Furthermore, both authors took notes sporadically during the interview.

Webcam which would have enabled eye-contact and awareness of body language was considered, but due to convenience/technical issues, this was not established.

In relation to ethical considerations - In terms of protection from harm, the authors have been aware of not creating situations in which could have led to e.g. participants felt embarrassment.

Coding

Coding was conducted as codes allowed the authors to tag and pull together parts of the data, and create notes about themes, key words, etc. with the aim of forming categories and identifying concepts. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize three types of codes: a note that summarizes a paragraph or a few sentences e.g. DEF for definition, descriptive codes that describe the phenomena in the text segment, and pattern codes that are more analyzing/inferential and involve explanation. Mostly the first type of code was used in the coding process, where a few codes were created in the beginning before going through the
transcription, and other codes were created inductively from the transcription. During the process, more codes were created, and the coding process stopped when several patterns emerged and categories were thought to be sufficiently saturated. Differences in the interpretation of the codes were resolved through discussion between the authors. The codes and coded transcription may be seen in Appendix X. A potential limitation of coding involves the lack of attention given to aspects that are not coded. However, this was not believed to be a problem as the transcriptions were read and discussed several times, by both authors.

It should be mentioned that the study did not make use of any specific pre-determined theoretical framework, as this would have imposed an external system on the data which would not be as open to adaptation (Daymon & Holloway 2002).

**Example of codes and illustration of coding process step I and II:**

**Process I – coding individual interviews**

**Process II – Assessing all interviews together – forming themes and categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Definition</td>
<td>ST-DEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Practice</td>
<td>ST-PRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding</td>
<td>BR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branding - Definition</td>
<td>BR-DEF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branding - Practice</td>
<td>BR-PRACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand-Value</td>
<td>BR-VAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>CC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-creation - Definition</td>
<td>CC-DEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation practice</td>
<td>CC-PRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Branding</td>
<td>ST-BR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Co-creation</td>
<td>ST-CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding - Co-creation</td>
<td>BR-CC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Branding Practice</td>
<td>ST-BR-PRACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Co-creation Practice</td>
<td>ST-CC-PRACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branding - Co-creation Practice</td>
<td>BR-CC-PRACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling-Branding - Co-creation Practice</td>
<td>ST-BRCC-PRACT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Creation-TIME</td>
<td>CC-TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Creation - Branding - Storytelling-TIME</td>
<td>CC-BR-ST-TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling-Practice-Time</td>
<td>ST-PR-TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling-Example</td>
<td>ST-EX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding-Example</td>
<td>BR-EX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling-Brand - Example</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand Loyalty</td>
<td>BR-LOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Brand Loyalty</td>
<td>ST-BR-LOY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - True</td>
<td>ST-TRUE</td>
</tr>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>CULT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Culture</td>
<td>ST-CULT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>CHAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>CON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling - Practice - Conflict</td>
<td>ST-PRACT-CON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog</td>
<td>DIA</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Storytelling-Communication-Branding</td>
<td>ST-COM-BR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling-Dialogue</td>
<td>ST-DIA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Model</td>
<td>MODEL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>CSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling-CSR</td>
<td>ST-CS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brand awareness</td>
<td>BR-AWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>VAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-Storytelling</td>
<td>VAL-ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Creation -Control</td>
<td>CC-CONT</td>
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<td>Storytelling-Experience</td>
<td>ST-EXP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Identity</td>
<td>BR-ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Story</td>
<td>COR-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Ethics</td>
<td>BR-ETH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling tools</td>
<td>ST-TO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Illustration Coding process step I - Interview Klaus Fog*
**Illustration Coding process step II – Forming of themes and categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions and explanation of key concepts (not practice)</th>
<th>Brand culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K. Jeg vil også sige at den møde nogle mennesker forstår branding er gået af mode, men man begynder at se kulturel branding, og ikoner og brands der simpelthen skaber kulturer umkring</td>
<td>(quotation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Den er helhed, det er ikke brands der skaber kulturer, det er kulturer der skaber brands. Jeg skal gerne forklare hvorfor, men det er pointen, det er min påstand, det er gerne det modsatte. Fordi vi gerne foretager kulturel branding, vi har nogen på besøg der havde det her med, rationelt, det er sådan en klassisk historie, så er det jo, forstå to, at vi har nogen på besøg der har været i det område, og endnu mere i SV, og NO, der er det her vand jo ikke særligt rent eller særligt sundt, det er teknisk bedre det du huser ud af vandfabrikken, så kan du putte lidt kulsyre i. Men alligevel betaler vi de her 600% mere for det, ik. Men den kultur som der er det her vand repræsenterer der hvor det ligger, det er altså den, der er en kultur, og men men, det er ikke det det der er et brand i alle øjne, men så i hvert fald, for dem er det et brand der skaber en særlig værdi, ik. Så kan man sige for de mennesker, og dem der så benytter sig af det, altså der er en kultur, der er en passion. Altså, hvad kan vi tage, nu skal vi tage noget negativt. Der er rigtig mange mennesker der ikke kan lide Aldi, eller Jysk, eller sådan noget ik?</td>
<td>BR-VAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Nej man skal jo måske have en form for passion bag denne brand, eller en følelse for det</td>
<td>Brand-ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Jeg sådan har jeg også haft det, men det er sådan at hvis der er en gruppe mennesker der kan overveje af at have skabt et eller andet, som det, så er det ikke sjældent at det er et brand i alene</td>
<td>Brand culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Nej, jeg føler mig lidt udsat for denne. Pludselig fordi vi fik en hendelse fra Canadian Tobacco forrige år, om vi ville have et tag på at lave noget for dem, og det gav en stor etisk debat, fordi her i huset har vi lavede meget for Carlsberg. Og hvad er egentlig taget forskellen, det er jo egentligt færdigt og drikke sl som det er at ryge tobak, det er nøjagtig lige så færdigt. Det gav en stor debat, der var mange, men det var mindre færdigt, men det er jo lige så mange alkoholikere, der er lige så mange der dør af tobakmisbrug som der dør af alkoholmisbrug.</td>
<td>ST-DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ja altid, for vi har hørt det store påores, der har været rundt både alene og sammen med andre, og det var et af de mest fascinerende når man gør det der, for eksempel, hvis du gør det for, jeg tror det højest jeg prøvede det var 40 forskellige nationer, i Amsterdam, hvor jeg sagde til det pågældende eller det var for Oracle, jeg kunne ikke være sikker på det at virkelig, at ikke jo, det var i starten, tænker man virkelig det nu lige godt hver gang? Og hvad er det der gør at nogle koreaterne og nogle Sydafrikanere og nogle Svensker, nogle Finner...Det er noget af det sjoveste jeg oplevede. Finner reagerer på samme måde, og hvorfor bliver de så begejstrede jeg tror ikke jeg har ikke prøvet en eneste...Jeg laver workshops de tror handler om storytelling, men det gør det ikke, de handler om branding, og det handler om at forstå den kultur du selver en del af, og hvilken mening du giver i en større sammenhæng.</td>
<td>BR Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Storytelling</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Det er ligesom en biograffilm, læg mærk til at der er en fast struktur i hver film med mindre det er en kunst film som har fået statssættet, så starter det med at det går godt og så sker der et eller andet forfærdeligt. Og så går resten af filmen stort set med at få opklaret det. Også, enten til sidst drejer det, men først til sidst, og så, du har, først så går det godt, så sker der et eller andet forfærdeligt, og så kemper helten mod den onde, og så vinder helten. Det er strukturen i enhver fortælling, og sådan har det været, den første som skrev om det var Aristotles, for 2003 år siden, godt og vel. Og så har vi indrettet i den menneskelige natur, vi er sådan (RJ)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dilemma ik? Det er det første – og der ryger de fleste reklamer og det meste marketing. Den bliver ikke set som noget der bliver troet på, de kan ikke sælge noget af det (10,17) og så de næste de ryger ofte når det er konflikten der skal fortælles. RJ</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST/ST-CON</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vi finder altid ud af det. Der er ikke noget af deres tvivl og deres bekymringer. Volvo skrev om det for fem år siden i deres miljø rapport, kan volvo lave firehjulstrækker? RJ</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Så bliver det så rationelt og formuelt, så du kun appellerer til hjernen, og det er ikke så smart som at appellere til hjertet. Mit bedste eksempel, det er fortærsket, det er hvis i går ind på Virgin groups hjemmeside, så har i egentlige en god storytelling, fordi der har du et naturtalent der fortæller, MR. Branson, der, ”Vi hjælper kunderne, når de bliver dårligt behandlet af store dumme monopol-tænkende virksomheder, som er sovnige og ikke kan forandre sig, og ikke tilpasse sig kundens behov.” RJ</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST-EX</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For os så er ST meget at finde tror jeg den rigtige balance mellem det rationelle og det emotionelle argumenter inde i en virksomheds histoire BB</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST-DEF</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ja det kommer lidt an på hvad ST enlig er, fordi der er jo et vidt begreb og det kan gå, jeg synes det er meget svært på den måde at definere hvad ST er for for mig er ST næsten en, ja hvad en historie, det er at få bygget noget op omkring en virksomhed som er relevant og som egentlig tager udgangspunkt i dens kernen og dens corporate brand og identitet, så på den måde er det svært at sige hvordan det egentligt er, fordi det er meget forskelligt fra virksomhed til virksomhed det er også meget, nogle virksomheder er jo meget stringente i deres tankegang og der prøver vi som bureau selvfølgelig at flytte dem og andre vil gerne gå længere i deres bestræbelser på at være med emotionelt og derved hvor ST får et andetudtryk så det er enormt forskelligt. BB</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST-DEF</strong> <strong>ST-PRACT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J Vil du sige ST er et godt værktøj til at formidle CSR? M ...Med... jeg synes man kan godt, med udgangspunkt i en stærk ST kan man godt formidle sin CSR men på et eller andet tidspunkt så kommer du også der, ligesom sine finansielle kommunikationen, hvor det bliver meget faktuet. Men jeg synes at, hvis man forstiller sig at man har en korne af ST så synes jeg at der kan din CSR bygge på det og tage udgangspunkt i det. Det synes jeg er superstærkt. BB</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST-CSR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fordi for mig er ST ikke en eller anden lang historie om et eller andet og en gang for hundrede år</strong></td>
<td><strong>ST-DEF</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
siden, for mig er ST, den der compelling mission og vision, altså dit brands eksistens berettsler
der gjør at jeg connecter med det brand der, det synes jeg er, det er sko det der gjør det BB

* * * * * * *

Og nyhedskritereiet det har en tendens til at det meget hurtig bliver inaktuelt. Så derfor så var det
altså den narrative metode som vi altså tog fat i. Og hvad er det så den narrative metode den kan?
Ja, se i den her verden hvor der er alt for meget af alt ting, og hvor mængden af kommunikation.

Og der kan man sige, når de gjør det, så er det fordi den måde mennesker tager information til sig
på den måde folk forandrer sig på, det er gennem historier, men problemet er at de ikke rigtig
kunne se at der er nogen system i det og det de mangle det er det der med kernen. Og det der
med at det skal være omkring den samme kjerne. Så er det vores bidrag. Og det er derfor vi har
lavet det værktøj også som holder n oklog test, det kan folk ikke fordrage, det er en obituary test,
fordi der er ikke nogen der kan lide at sige hvad soren der ville ske hvis ikke vi var her, det er jo
fakisk der vi først finder ud af hvilke værdier vi har, hvilken forskel vi gjør, og så er det man laver
værdig.

det är ingen story, det har egentligen inte hänt någonting. H

Då är det en story, för då händer det någonting, hon såg mig, hon ser mig, och då kan jag säga att
då fick jag berätta hur jag kände mig, och hon lyssnade på mig. H

Där har du ju hela, det är hela klimax hela berättelsen, det är ingen speciell märkvärdig berättelse,
men det är en berättelse, för att den får dig och Carina att kanske ser någonting framför er, ni
kanske bygger en bild framför i ert huvud H

eller där tänkte vi fel, men vi försökte. Det kan också bli en bra story, att hela tiden försöka shape
the future H

Men vad gäller ST så tycker jag att det finns någon anledning att avstå för att man är rädd för att
det ska misslyckas, utan tvårtom, tala sanning, var tydlig och berätta. H

* * * * * * *

Och stories är ju i och för sig ett sätt att beskriva, att visa knowledge, och stories kan också vara ett
sätt att visa culture och values på olika sätt, alltså, jag tycker att det borde finnas en sån, som har till
uppgift och som förstår det här och som driver på det här i alla lägen, det tycker jag, det borde vara
så, jag tror att det blir så också, snart. H

Det här vi pratade om i början, om Ica och ST och reklam filmer, man kan använda ST till reklam
filmer? Om de byggs på sama historier?

Ja alltså man kan säga så här, om man tar ICA som vi vet vad det är för någonting, då kan man ju
säga att det är en saga. En reklamsaga H
**Transcriptions**

The transcriptions of the four expert interviews can be found in Appendix 5 on the attached CD.

**Expert citations and their translations**

**Morten Kornerup**

Fordi det værste der kan ske det er at du går ud med en eller anden historie eller en kampagne og så kan folk ikke genkende sig selv, eller virksomheden kan ikke genkende sig selv, dens ansatte kan ikke genkende sig selv, eller datterselskaberne er ikke med og så har du tabt, så er du blevet utroværdig.

“Because the worst thing that can happen is if you just release a story or campaign resulting in people not being able to recognize themselves, or the organization not being able to recognize themselves, its employees cannot recognize themselves or the subsidiaries, and then you have lost, you have become untrustworthy”

jeg ser CC som en mere eller mindre integreret del af ST. Så at der kommer den der dialog og der kommer en synergi og det begynder at køre frem og tilbage i stedet for at det bare kører one way…

“I see co-creation as being a more or less integrated part of storytelling. So that dialogue can be achieved, and synergy can be created, and it begins to be more of a two way communication instead of just one-way...”

**Klaus Fog**

...alle brands er jo baseret på CC med dets brugere, dets primære brugere og dets interessenter.

“...all brands are based on co-creation with the consumers, the primary consumers and stakeholders”

i en verden hvor der er alt for meget af alting og alt for meget kommunikation, så skal det jo både ramme dig emotionelt og rationelt. Og det er det historier kan, fortsat, nu kommer det meget vigtige, det kommer jeg til at sige mange gange, at de tør tale om en konflikt og det gør de altid, hvis det skal være en historie

”...communication, should appeal to you both emotionally and rationally. And that is what stories can do, under the condition that, and this is important, one dares to talk about a conflict, and they always do, if it is a story…”

fordi kunderne køber ind til historierne, de har aldrig købt ind til et rationelt brand altså, hvorfor er der kvinder der, intelligente kloge kvinder som jer, som vil give 5000 danske kr for
en LV pung, altså det er da ikke rationelt vel? Det er jo kvindens oplevelse og historie om hvad den gør for hende og det stopper aldrig. Det er det der skaber det ik?

“...because customers buy into the stories, they have never bought a brand rationally. How come there are intelligent women...who are prepared to pay 5000 DKK for a Louis Vuitton purse, that's not rational is it? It is the woman’s experience and story about what it does for her, and it never stops. This is what makes it”

altå hvis du gør det på den traditionelle måde, der løber du meget hurtigt tør for penge, og du slår hele tiden hovedet mod en mur, det der hedder push-kommunikation.

“...if you do it the traditional way, you will quickly run out of money, and you will constantly hit the wall, a wall called push communication...”

Og sådan er det i alle organisationer, så det man bruger historierne til det er for at få dem til at forstå hvad der i egentligtaget er brandet, og pas på det, og det er de samme historierer du kan vise ekstern, men specielt kombinerede med hvordan folk så oplever brandet for det er det der er så fantastisk, og det har jeg prøvet nogle gange, det som er det de reelt bliver så fascineret af internt, det er nøjagtig det samme budskab, essens, det er det samme ekstern, men det der sker er at det kan jo være forskellige sprog, forskellige eksempler, men det er historien der gør at folk forstår. Og det skaber så en enorm loyalitet for et brand, og det skaber en stor involvering og en enorm trafik men det kræver at man finder ud af hvad der er samme omdrejningspunkt og det er svært.

“...you use the stories to get people to understand what the brand really is... The thing that makes them fascinated internally is exactly the same message, essence, as externally. There might be different types of languages, different examples, but it is the story that makes people understand.”

Så jo højere grad af, jeg ville kalde det, brug af narrative principper, og jo højere grad af involvering jo stærkere brand. Men forudsætningen er at det er det i mangler, det skal, altså det skal være omkring den samme autentiske kerne. Atlså den kerne som man oplever både dem der har skabt det men også dem der bruger det...

“...The more use of, I would call it narrative principles, and the more involvement, the stronger the brand. But only under the condition that it is around the same authentic core, that is, the core story, as experienced both by those who have created it, but also those who use it...”

Matts Heijbel
För branding är ju upplevelsen om allt vi gör och säger och är, och tillverkar och säljer, alltså tjänster eller varor…. det är ändå omvärlden och kunderna och intressenterna som sätter brandet,

“The brand is the experience of everything the organization does, says and is, and manufactures and sells, that is services or products…It is the outside world and customers and stakeholders that create the brand”

så kommer man inte på själva storyn, så att man lägger alltså inte energin på att redovisa fakta, utan man försöker ha en dramaturgi som sätter en scen där man för in människor där man låter någonting hånda, som gör att man får en aha upplevelse eller insikt, eller en känsla

“You attempt to create a dramaturgy which sets a scene, to which you bring people, and where you allow for something to happen, something that makes you get an “aha” experience or insight, or a feeling…”

...om du tycker om den berättelsen så kanske varumärket blir lite vackrare då har jag befolkat varumärket, jag har stoppat in människor, som säger någonting som känner någonting, som gör någonting och adderar det också till varumärket. Det kallar jag för att befolka varumärket med berättelser från verkligheten.

“…If you enjoyed that story, then perhaps the brand becomes a bit more likeable, then I have populated the brand, I have filled it with people, who say something, who feel something, who do something and then add this to the brand. This I call, to populate the brand with stories from reality”

Rolf Jensen

… først så går det godt, så sker der et eller andet forfærdeligt, og så kæmper helten mod den onde, og så vinder helten.

“First everything is fine, then something horrible happens, then the hero fights against evil, and then the hero wins”

ja det kan gøre at du bliver nød til at finde en rigig historie som er så god så at du bliver inddraget af den Det er altså er rimeligt stort krav at stille Til gengæld hvis det er den rigtige så kan du altså få alle med

“…well, it can make it necessary that you find such a good story that people get absorbed in it, which is quite a challenge. In return, if it is the real thing, you can get everyone onboard”
Information letter

Example of mail and information letter can be seen below.

Follow up - Mail

Til XX,

Som aftalt på telefon med din medarbejder på XX, sender vi hermed forespørgsel om deltagelse i et interview i forbindelse med vores speciale.

Vi er to cand.merc studerende på CBS, som er i gang med at skrive speciale om storytelling i forhold til branding og kundeinvolvering. I den forbindelse vil vi lave et antal interviews for at belyse, hvilken betydning storytelling har i relation til branding i praksis og kundeinvolvering.

Se venligst vedhæftet dokument for mere information om interview og specialet.

Vi er meget fleksible med hensyn til tidspunkter, men det skal gerne være i tidsperioden april - primo maj.

Vi vil sætte stor pris på eventuel deltagelse i interviewet.

Information letter
Til Klaus Fog, Sigma as

Vi er to cand.merc. studerende ved Copenhagen Business School (CBS) og er i gang med at skrive vores afsluttende speciale om branding og storytelling. I den forbindelse vil vi lave et antal interviews for at belyse, hvilken betydning storytelling har i relation til branding praksis og kundeinvolvering.

Vi kontakter dig, fordi vi er interesseret i at høre dine meninger om branding og storytelling og hvordan du arbejder med disse begreber i din rådgivningspraksis. Derudover vil vi gerne høre om Sigmas opfattelse af kundeinvolvering i forhold til forskellige branding aktiviteter. Vores interesse er, at undersøge om storytelling og branding som strategi kan medvirke til kundeinvolvering og dermed værdiskabelsen af et brand. Vores projektet sætter fokus på et felt, hvor der ikke findes megen empiri. Din deltagelse i projektet vil derfor bidrage til feltets udvidelse.

Interviewene er planlagt til at blive afholdt i april - primo maj. Vi er meget fleksible mht. tidspunkter. Interviewet vil vare ca. en time. Der er tale om et uformelt interview som lægger op til diskussion omkring følgende hovedspørgsmål, hvor svar meget gerne må supplieres med eksempler:

- Hvordan arbejder Sigma med storytelling?
- Hvilken betydning mener du at storytelling har for et brand?
- Hvad mener du om kundeinvolvering i diverse branding processer/aktiviteter?
- Hvordan kan storytelling bruges i forhold til branding, og for at involvere kunder i branding processen?
- For at storytelling og branding kan skabe værdi for en virksomhed, dens kunder og interessenter, hvad er så vigtigt?


Vi håber du vil bidrage med din viden i et interview. I så fald bedes du kontakte os hurtigst muligt for at aftale interviewdato og eventuelt få mere information om projektet.

Med venlig hilsen,

Carina Claire Jeppesen

Josephine Pettersson

Note, contact information followed after names
### 3.2 Discussion & Reflection Experience surveys

#### Brand & Storytelling Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand Views/Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational communication &amp; members’ actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Storytelling elements & Narrative Structure**

| It is the culture that the stories explain that creates the brand. Focus on uncovering culture |
| Focus on “populating the brand” with stories |
| Storytelling & brand are two sides of the same coin. Focus on aligning vision, culture and image, and communication platform |
| Focus on adding values to the brand that people identify themselves with |

**Storytelling View/Focus**

| Interaction, dialogue, stakeholder involvement |
| Product development to generate stories |
| Campaign development, Interaction, two-way communication, testing, insights, involvement |
| Co-creation of value in terms of co-design, co-production. Not so interactive. Stories can be necessary for co-creation |
Example of Approach 2 in Typology

An example of this approach as mentioned by the Heijbel during the interview, involved a Swedish insurance company If. This organization had a TV campaign a few years ago, casting some of their real life customers, talking about an experience in which they had need to contact the insurance company. Heijbel believed that the humorous, authentic and conflict-rich stories communicated to the audience by real people made the advertisements highly credible and the If brand more human. The If advertisements illustrate how an organization has succeeded in listening to and involving customers in order to find and choose good stories, and thereafter to utilize these stories for branding purposes.

4. Case studies

4.1 Methodological Implications

Sampling

Regarding sample, another prerequisite was availability to campaign material online. In searching for potential cases, the authors searched the internet and the literature and considered several organizations which were mentioned as good examples by the experts. It should be mentioned that few organizations/campaigns were found to match the criteria mentioned above. Organizations were contacted first via telephone, where after information letter was sent out (similar as those being sent to experts).

Of all the organizations contacted, brand managers at Novozymes and Unilever (which were both found by searching the internet) were willing to participate. Although storytelling was not explicitly mentioned by the organization as being used in the Dove campaign, Unilever was considered as a case as its Campaign for real beauty could be argued to apply several storytelling principles, e.g. conflict, characters, etc. as well as involving consumers in co-creation of the brand. Novozymes was considered as a case, as among other things the organization had previously stated that storytelling had been utilized by them for the last 10 years, and indications of the organization working both internally and externally (through the ido30 campaign) with storytelling could be found. Furthermore, the organization appeared to work with branding and co-creation, based on their brand guide found on their website and statements of the website which emphasized being open to dialogue with stakeholders.

Interview Guide Dove/Unilever

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Vad är er uppfattning av storytelling begreppet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Använder Unilever några &quot;storytelling&quot; principer medvetet i branding arbetet? I så fall, på vilket sätt? (Om ja, skal storytelling vara baserat på en autentisk bakgrund?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vad är ett brand för er? Kan du berätta lite kort om hur ni arbetar med branding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hur viktigt menar ni det är att involvera kunder i branding arbetet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vad betyder &quot;co-creation&quot; för er?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dove campaign</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vad är de främsta anledningarna till att Unilever har valt att berätta om Dove's &quot;story&quot; om &quot;real beauty of all women&quot; på det framgångsrikt som ni gör?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Är det en &quot;story&quot; som också används intern för att styrka varumärket?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Har ni tänkt över/aktuellt använt några storytelling principer som kan ses i kampagnen? (Till exempel: Konflikt och Spännande karaktärer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hur arbetar Unilever med branding i förhållande till Dove kampagnen? Några specifika branding metoder?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I Dove kampagnen används många olika marketing kanaler – är det strategiskt planerat? Vad är era tankar omkring att integrera olika kanaler för att bygga ett brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nu har kampagnen pågått under flera år, vad tror ni är de främsta anledningarna till att ni lyckas hålla kampagnen körande?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- De största succéer och utmaningar i arbetet med kampagnen? Vad tror ni att dessa succéer/utmaningar primärt beror på?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Kritik – har ni mottagit kritik och i så fall, hur har ni tacklat denna?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Future</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Ex. några &quot;lessons learned&quot; som du kan dela med dig!?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Kommer ni försöka göra liknande kampagnor i framtiden?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Är storytelling något ni kan tänka på att arbeta med mer systematiskt i framtiden?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hur tror ni att co-creation och branding kommer att utvecklas/betyda för Unilever i framtiden?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Interview Guide Novozymes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storytelling generalt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hvordan använder Novozymes storytelling i forhold til intern og ekstern kommunikation?* Några specifike eksempler?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Anvender Novozymes nogle specifikke storytelling principer eller metoder? Hvis ja, hvilke og hvordan? Både intern og extern?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mener i at storytelling skal have en autentisk baggrund? (eller må historier gerne være opdigtet?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branding og Co-creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hvordan arbejder i med branding externt?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hvorn vigtigt er det at involvere kunderne og andre intressenter i branding arbejdet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hvad er co-creation for jer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Arbejder Novozymes aktivt med co-creation? Hvis ja, hvordan?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Er co-creation noget i tænker på når i arbejder med branding?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storytelling i forhold til branding og co-creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Hvad er jeres tanker (og evt. erfahrenheder med) storytelling i forhold til branding og co-creation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- “Lessons learned” i forhold til storytelling som du kan dele med os? |
- Har i planer om at arbejde mere med storytelling, internt såvel som eksternt i fremtiden?
### Fremtid

- Hvordan tror i at co-creation og branding vil udvikle sig/betyde for Novozymes i fremtiden?

### Hvis muligt, vil vi gerne have nærmere om Ido30 kampagnen

- Har i tænkt over/aktivt anvendt nogle storytelling principper som kan ses i jeres ido30 kampagne?
- Er det en "story" som også anveses internt for at styrke brandet?
- Hvordan arbejder Novozymes med branding i forhold til ido30 kampagnen?
- Er det er mål at kampagnen skal skabe en dialog mellem brandet Novozymes og end-users og deres historier?
  
  I så fald, hvad er jeres tanker omkring dialog? Hvor meget dialog vil man ha – er der risiko forbundet med for meget dialog? Tanker omkring at slippe kontrollen?
- De største succeser og udfordringer i arbejdet med kampagnen?
  
  Hvad tror i disse succeser/udfordringer skyldes?
- Vil i forsøge at lave kampagner som ligner ido30 kampagnen i fremtiden?

---

**Interview Process and Coding**

The interview with Novozymes was face-to-face, conducted at its head quarters in Copenhagen, while the interview with Unilever was held via telephone (via computer) as its brand division was located in Stockholm, Sweden. The interviews were therefore conducted in Danish and Swedish respectively and translated to English.

The interviews were recorded and conducted in a similar manner to the experience surveys. A similar interview guide was used. Furthermore, the interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed in a similar manner, also based on the recommendations by Miles & Huberman (1994). After coding, inter-linkages between the categories and concepts were assessed and thereafter categorized based on the analytical framework (meaning, antecedents and consequences). Subsequently, this was related to the literature in order to explore the relationships between the data and the relevant literature.

**Example of codes and illustration of coding process:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Coding Dove Interview 10/6-2010</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (Maria Friberg) - Nordic senior brand manager for Dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (Fredrik Lundberg) - Brand manager for Dove</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST-POT</th>
<th>Potential of storytelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOC-ENG</td>
<td>Social engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INV-STKH</td>
<td>Involving stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOM</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REL-STKH</td>
<td>Relevance for all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UND-CUST</td>
<td>Need for understanding customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LT-STRAT</td>
<td>Long-term strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISK</td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR-EXP</td>
<td>Brand experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR-CC</td>
<td>Co-creation of branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMC</td>
<td>Integrated Marketing Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dove campaign

Vad är de främsta anledningarna till att Unilever har valt att berätta om Dove’s "story" om "real beauty of all women" på det framgångsätt som ni gör?

Bottnar i en nyfikenhet, om kvinnors självkänsla och syn på sig själva och en hypotes om att den allmänna definitionen av skönhet har blivit för snäv. Vi gjorde en undersökning, en global i 10 olika länder, som bekräftade hypotesen, bara 2% tycker själva att dom är vackra. Då kände vi att vi måste göra något åt det här, få folk till att se problemet. Det var startskottet till kampagnen där vi hade med "vanliga" kvinnor – kunna lyfta fram budskapet om att man duger som man är, att alla kan känna sig vackra och att skönhet inte har några gränser vad gäller färg, form, utseende mm. Man kan vara vacker utan att passa in i skönheits ideal biklen M

Det var viktigt för oss att förankra det här, att det stämde med vad vi trodde och kvinnor trodde också

Kvinnor är vår målgrupp, vi vill kunna kommunicera med dom men också höra från dom, vad dom tycker och upplever, hur dom ser på sig själva M

Har ni tänkt över/aktivt använt några storytelling principer som kan ses kampagnen?

(Till exempel: Konflikt och Spännanden karaktärer)

Tror att begreppet ST marknadsföring först kommit senare, i 2004 när vi började med kampagnen så var det inte så känt. Så det har inte varit ST som varit botten i det här, utan det social engagemang som så blivit en story som vi och framför allt konsumenten har pratat vidare om. Så det finns förväntningar på oss att driva det vidare. Och det är det som är så roligt, nu kan vi se det börjar hända lite överallt-tex konkurrener börjar kopiera, media börjar efterfråga flera modeller som inte passar in i den traditionella biklen mm. M

Vi var först, så därför fick kampagnen så mycket uppmärksamhet

Var det strategiskt, att ni tänkte att det här var något som ni skulle kunna bygga en dialog på?

Det har varit mest efteråt som det visat sig engagera så mycket som det gjort, men givetvis såg vi att det var en viktig fråga. Bottnar i socialt engagemang. Självklart var tanken att det här var en fråga som engagerar, också på längre sikt. Men det var nog inte huvud syftet att kampagnen skulle fortsätta så länge som den faktiskt gjort.

Bottnar mer i att kunna förstå konsumenten, och se om det breder sig över ett bredare perspektiv, kvinnor i alla åldrar, global fråga mm, och det var det ju. Självklart framförallt ett problem för yngre kvinnor.

Transcriptions

The transcriptions of Dove interview 10/6-2010 with Maria Friberg - Nordic senior brand manager for Dove and Fredrik Lundberg - Brand manager for Dove and Novozymes interview 16/6-2010 with Jesper Frederiksen can be found in Appendix 5 on the attached CD.

Citations and their translations

Quotations Dove

Men man ser ju att dom varumärken som har en story och som är konsekventa i sättet dom berättar det på tex Ben&Jerry med deras avslappande hippie kultur och intresset för samhälls frågor, miljö och arbetslöshet mm, att det funkar bra
“...you can definitely see that the brands which have a story, and which are consistent in their way of communicating, e.g. Ben and Jerry’s with their relaxed hippie culture and their interest in social issues such as the environment and unemployment in the US, works very well...” (Lundberg 2010)

(Så det har inte varit ST som varit botten i det här) ... utan det social engagemang som så blivit en story som vi och framför allt konsumenten har pratat vidare om. Så det finns förväntningar på oss om att driva det vidare.

“...social engagement has been the foundation, which has developed into a story, that we but mostly the consumers have continued to talk about. So we are expected to carry on with this...” (Friberg 2010)

Det var viktigt för oss att förankra det här, att det stämde med vad vi trodde och kvinnor trodde också

“...social engagement has been the foundation, which has developed into a story, that we but mostly the consumers have continued to talk about. So we are expected to carry on with this...” (Friberg 2010)

Kvinnor är vår målgrupp, vi vill kunna kommunicera med dom men också höra från dom, vad dom tycker och upplever, hur dom ser på sig själva

“Women are our target group, we want to communicate with them, but also to hear from them, what they believe and experience, and how they view themselves” Fridberg (2010)

Ja, det ju när konsumenterna hjälper till att bygga varumärkes kapitalet genom att prata om varumärket på ett positivt sätt, som ligger i linje med vad vi kommunicerar

“...when consumers help build the brand capital by talking positively about the brand, in a way that corresponds with what we communicate” Lundberg (2010)

(Eftersom media konsumtionen har ändrats så radikalt på sistone) ...så det kommer vara diskussioner vare sig du vill eller inte på nätet, med konsumenter eller folk som kanske inte gillar dina produkter, ditt varumärke, som kanske försöker motverka det. Då har man ett val som företag, antingen så öppnar du upp, eller så stänger du dörren och ignoreras det och försöker köra en-vägs kommunikation.

“...there will be discussion, whether you like it or not, online, with consumers or individuals who do not like your products, your brand, who attempt to work against it. Accordingly, as a company you have a choice. Either you can open up, or you can close the door, ignoring it while attempting to run one-way communication” (Lundberg 2010)
A30

Quotations Novozymes

Så co-creation i form af partnerskaber er sådan set det hele vores forretningsmodel er. Så når vi laver et produkt laver vi det næsten altid sammen med kunden. Så vi tager fat i Procter and Gamble eller Unilever eller en anden, snakker med dem om hvad har de af problemer, hvordan kan vi løse dem med enzymer og så laver man et eller andet fælles projekt hvor man udvikler et produkt, så typisk får de lov til at inde rette produktet i et eller to år, så de får en headstart og nogle konkurrencemæssige fordele, og så er der altid et slagsmål om brugerrettigheder, patent, osv. som der er alle mulige jurister der slås om, så lander man ved en løsning og så ender man med et produkt som man kan gå bredere ud til markedet. Det bliver næsten altid lavet sammen med en kunde så vi ved at der er et reelt behov for det og så vi kan få det testede.

“...co-creation in the form of partnerships is basically what our business model is made up of. When we make products, we almost always do it with the customer...so that we know there is a real need for it and so we are able to test it. ”

Man kan sige, grundfortællingen det er at hvis man kigger på værdikæden af vaskemiddel, fra man dyrker råvarene på en mark, kører det med traktor inde på en fabrik, bruger energi på at varme det op og hele vejen ud til den lander i en papkasse som bliver kørt ud til et supermarked hvor forbrugeren køber det, tager det hjem og bruger det i sin vaskemaskine, så kan man regne ud miljøbelastningen hele vejen igennem.

“...from cultivating the raw materials on a field, driving it by tractor into a store, using energy to warm it up, and all the processes till it lands in a cardboard box that is driven out to a supermarket where the consumer buys it, takes it home and uses it in their washing machine, from this you can calculate the environmental strain through the whole process”

Men så havde de den her historie som ligesom blev pushet, så vi fik voldsomt meget PR ud af det i Danmark. Så det var en sidegevinst, PR i forhold til rekruttering af medarbejdere og internt igen, traditionelt PR omtale, det betyder sikkert noget for vores branding image barometer på sigt.

“...they had this story that was pushed, which resulted in a lot of PR in Denmark. There was an added bonus, PR in regards to recruiting new employees and also internally as traditional PR coverage, which surely has an effect on our branding image barometer in the long run”
Information Letter

Till Fredrik Lundberg, Unilever

Vi kontaktar dig för att vi gärna vill höra hur Unilever arbetar med branding och storytelling i förhållande till Dove och kampagnen ”Campaign for real beauty”. Dessutom vill vi gärna höra Unilevers uppfattning av involvering av kunder i förhållande till Dove kampagnen.

Vi är intresserade i att undersöka hur storytelling och branding kan bidra till mer involvering och ”emotional bonding” med kunder och därmed skapa mer värde för varumärket. Vår uppsats fokuserar på ett relativt outforskat område. Ditt deltagande kan därför bidra till ökad kunskap på området.

Vi vill gärna utföra intervjun en gång i början av juni. Vi är mycket flexibla vad gäller tid och datum. Intervjun beräknas ta ca 1 timme där vi vill fokusera på följande huvudfrågor:

- Vad är de främsta anledningarna till att Unilever har valt att berätta om Dove’s ”story” och iden om ”real beauty of all women” på det framgångssätt som ni gör?
- Hur arbetar Unilever med branding i förhållande till Dove kampagnen? Några specifika branding metoder?
- Använder Unilever några ”storytelling” principer medvetet? I så fall, på vilket sätt?
- Hur viktigt menar ni det är att involvera kunder i branding arbetet? Skapar kampagnen en slags dialog mellan varumärket Dove och kunderna och deras historier?
- De största succéer och utmaningar i arbetet med kampagnen?


För att vara säkra på att vi har förstått dina svar rätt, vill vi försöka skicka en sammanfattning av vår tolkning, så att vi kan korrigera eventuella missförstånd. Dessutom kan du få en kopia av projektet när det är färdigt, om du önskar det.

Vi hoppas att du vill bidra med din erfarenhet i en intervju. I så fall, får du gärna kontakta oss så fort som möjligt för att avtala tid och datum och eventuellt få mer information om projektet.

Med vänlig hälsning,

*Carina Claire Jeppesen (dansk)*

*Josephine Pettersson (svensk)*
4.2 The Actant Model

The actant models below are created according to recommendations by Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu (2004).

The Campaigns Plotted into the Actant Model

The story encompassing Novozymes ido30 campaign can be placed in an actant model as seen below.

Similarly, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty brand story shows evidence of several story elements and the brand values and messages communicated by the campaign can easily be plotted into an actant model as seen below.

4.3 Novozymes - The Rethink Tomorrow Story

The assumption of the story is that society has been built up and is based on flawed technology that has functioned well, but is now becoming more rare and expensive, thus creating a need for a new fundament for building our society through other raw materials such as sun, wind and bio-based products. According to Frederiksen, the Rethink Tomorrow story has created value both externally and internally, especially as the employees may feel they are contributing to the story through their work.
The Rethink Tomorrow story features several story elements including a conflict of future global warming, a core story which is reinforced by smaller stories, found for example on the company’s webpage, and the relations between the characters that may be viewed in an actant model. The Rethink Tomorrow actant model may be seen below, where Novozymes is the subject striving towards a goal of saving the environment and environmental resources and lowering CO₂ through applying bio-based solutions.

 Sender/Power: Novozymes

 Object/Goal: Fight global warming

 Receiver: Stakeholders & Environment

 Helper: Stakeholders

 Subject: Novozymes

 Opponent: Fossil/Chemical-based solutions

### 4.4 An Example of an Archetype Profile – Dove

Assessment of archetype profiles may be highly useful in brand management, i.e. in terms of providing inspiration for the development and communication of brand stories. Based on Wertime’s identification of common archetypes, one can assume that, for example, the brand Dove implies a profile of “The mother of goodness” representing universal messages of “purity, nourishment and motherly warmth” (Wertime 2002, p. 173) as advertising and products trigger associations of purity etc through the inclusion of words and symbols such as pure, fresh and gentle, fruits and milk and the color white. These symbols and signs are all seen in the advertisements and brand logos of Dove (see below).