Maze of Media
A Multiple Case Study on Brand Message Coordination of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods

Master’s Thesis 30 credits
Department of Business Studies
Uppsala University
Spring Semester of 2016

Date of Submission: 2016-05-27

Johanna Nurmi
Hanna Vuorimaa
Supervisor: David Sörhammar
Abstract

Technological advancements have initiated the development of a dispersed media landscape, and expanded possibilities for multichannel brand communication. The shift encourages brands in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry to establish seamless channel integration, and examine interactions in the stakeholder network. Respectively, this research explores how FMCG companies can coordinate brand messages in the dispersed media landscape.

The purpose of this thesis is to conceptualize what the underlying elements are regarding brand message coordination by examining the interdependence of the actors in the network. The study contributes to branding literature by supplementing traditional concepts of branding and multichannel management with service-dominant logic. The empirical research was conducted as a qualitative case study of three low-involvement FMCG brands.

The conclusions demonstrate that an extensive and hierarchical stakeholder network can restrict brand message coordination. Furthermore, the stakeholder network should consist of dyadic and dynamic interactions. A focal actor in the network orchestrates brand messages and stakeholder interactions, which facilitates consistent brand communication. Additionally, the conclusions indicate that a change of the brand message might result in a positive outcome and control over the messages is improved when the core of the brand is solid.

Keywords: Branding literature, Multichannel management literature, Service-dominant logic, Channel integration, Service ecosystem, Stakeholder interaction, Value proposition, Brand communication, Perceived value, Brand image
Acknowledgements

We want to thank everyone who has contributed to our Master’s thesis and helped us to improve the research by providing valuable input in different ways. Firstly, we are thankful to our supervisor, David Sörhammar, Ph.D. & assistant professor at Uppsala University for his support and guidance. Secondly, we want to thank our seminar group and opponents for their constructive feedback. Finally, we would like to thank all of our respondents for taking the time to discuss and share their valuable insights on the topic.

________________________________________
Johanna Nurmi

________________________________________
Hanna Vuorimaa
Table of Contents

1. Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Purpose of the Research ......................................................................................................................... 4

2. Literature Review ...................................................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Channel Integration ................................................................................................................................. 5
      2.1.1 Service Ecosystems in S-D Logic ....................................................................................................... 7
   2.2 Brand Communication ............................................................................................................................ 8
      2.2.1 Value Propositions in S-D Logic ......................................................................................................... 9
   2.3 Perceived Brand Image .......................................................................................................................... 11
      2.3.1 Perceived Value in S-D Logic ........................................................................................................... 12
   2.4 Conceptualization of the Literature Review .......................................................................................... 14

3. Method ...................................................................................................................................................... 16
   3.1 Case Selection ....................................................................................................................................... 18
   3.2 Interviewee Selection .............................................................................................................................. 19
   3.3 Collecting and Analysing the Data ......................................................................................................... 21

4. Findings ..................................................................................................................................................... 24
   4.1 Cases ..................................................................................................................................................... 24
      4.1.1 Brand 1 .............................................................................................................................................. 24
      4.1.2 Brand 2 .............................................................................................................................................. 24
      4.1.3 Brand 3 .............................................................................................................................................. 25
   4.2 Channel Integration ................................................................................................................................ 25
      4.2.1 Seamless Brand Communication .................................................................................................... 27
      4.2.2 Interaction in the Stakeholder Network ............................................................................................ 27
   4.3 Brand Communication ............................................................................................................................ 30
      4.3.1 Interrelation of the Stakeholder Network and Brand Communication ...................................... 32
   4.4 Perceived Brand Image .......................................................................................................................... 34
      4.4.1 Perceived Value in the Stakeholder Network ................................................................................. 34

5. Discussion .................................................................................................................................................. 38
   5.1 Strength of the Stakeholder Network .................................................................................................... 38
   5.2 Control and Change of Brand Messages ............................................................................................... 41

6. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................ 46
6.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research .................................................. 47
6.2 Managerial Implications ....................................................................................... 48
References ................................................................................................................. 49
Appendix 1: Interview Guide ................................................................................... 55
Appendix 2: Findings of Brand 1 ............................................................................ 56
Appendix 3: Findings of Brand 2 ............................................................................ 59
Appendix 4: Findings of Brand 3 ............................................................................ 61
1. Introduction

Raise awareness on TV, inspire and influence in blogs, share on Facebook, grab attention in stores, inform on brand website, the ways to interact with consumers are endless. Technological developments have facilitated the emergence of new media channels (Binder, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2015). As a consequence, the media landscape has become more dispersed and channels, both online and offline, provide numerous touchpoints between the company and the consumer creating platforms for brand communication (Deloitte, 2015; Pophal, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2010). Moreover, recent studies on multichannel consumer behaviour indicate that diverse channel behaviour is constantly increasing in the Nordic countries (EY, 2015; Postnord, 2015; TNS, 2015). Consumers gather information, interact with the provider and are influenced by different communication across channels during the decision making process (Kowalkowski, 2011). In order to better respond to the technological developments and the changed consumer behaviour, companies need to adapt to the dispersed media landscape by developing new marketing strategies (Peltola et al., 2015).

Traditionally, in the field of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), mass media (e.g. TV) has been the predominant and favoured channel for brand communication (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2009; Keller, 2009). Accordingly, the traditional branding approach argues that low levels of brand awareness or brand associations are sufficient as a brand choice regarding FMCG, and therefore there has not been a need for interactive and engaging communication (Keller, 1993). In other words, interactions between the stakeholders and holistic network approach have not been recognized central in branding literature (e.g. Fournier, 1998; Keller, 1993). However, nowadays the changed media environment and fragmented consumer behaviour have made it challenging to reach the target groups by only communicating the brand message in mass media (Keller, 2009). Hence, in order to reach the target consumers and stay competitive, FMCG companies need to focus on enhancing their channel integration strategies (Iglesias et al., 2013; Keller, 2009). Therefore, the trend regarding FMCG, despite the low-involvement nature of the brands, is to expand brand communication beyond traditional channels and become active across several touchpoints, building dynamic marketing strategies (Iglesias et al., 2013). This implies that the dispersed media environment encourages low-involvement brands to shift focus to channel integration, and recognize the role of interactions in the stakeholder network when communicating brand messages. Hence, FMCG industry, in terms of low-involvement brands,
creates an interesting setting to research and gain understanding on how the prevailing environment has impacted on brand message coordination.

The shift in media landscape has influenced the ways in which firms can coordinate brand messages across different channels (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). As a consequence, there is an increasing interest in academia regarding the previously overlooked role of an interactive stakeholder network in brand message coordination (Merz et al., 2009), and how companies can develop and adapt channel integration (Neslin et al., 2006). Furthermore, academic research emphasizes the importance of synergies and integration of channels in addition to interactions between the actors of the network when coordinating brand messages (Pophal, 2015). The trend in multichannel brand communication is to create seamless and integrated communication flow across channels, also referred to as omnichannel (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015). Omnichannel approach views beyond the company-customer relationship, and also takes into account other stakeholders and their role in interacting, influencing and communicating the brand in a dynamic way (Pophal, 2015). In short, the trend in channel integration underlines coordinating a cohesive brand message in a seamless manner by employing combinations of channels, and facilitating optimal perceived value for the end consumer (Verhoef et al., 2015).

In accordance, Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014) suggest further exploration on the strategic impacts of seamless brand communication for companies.

The current trend of seamless brand communication across multiple channels involves many stakeholders who influence in different ways on brand message coordination. Hence, this refined focus on examining brand communication as a process consisting of dynamic interaction between multiple actors, is also reflected in other fields of research. To further examine the phenomenon, since communication in service-dominant logic (S-D logic) is described as a form of value proposition (Ballantyne et al., 2011), this thesis recognizes brand communication parallel to value proposition. Furthermore, the understanding of value cocreation process in S-D logic has adopted a more holistic and integrated network perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016). Similarly to channel integration (e.g. Pophal, 2015), the focus on S-D logic has shifted from a company-customer relationship to include all stakeholders of the network in the value cocreation process (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Moreover, recent studies have introduced a concept of service ecosystem, implying that value is cocreated in a network of actors through interaction and service exchange as a continuous dynamic process (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This refined S-D logic supports the idea of coordinating value
propositions in the networks of multiple actors in a way which facilitates value cocreation and perceived value (Chandler & Lusch, 2015).

Due to the increased focus on the integral role of the stakeholder network when communicating value propositions, this thesis regards service ecosystems as a central concept in brand message coordination process. Consequently, Frow et al. (2014) mention that the connection between value propositions and actors of a network should be further studied. By nature, actions in service ecosystems are interdependent and under the influence of other processes and actors within (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). In order to keep the brand message coherent and relevant to the end consumer, cooperation, coordination and communication between the stakeholders of the network is essential (Brodie, 2009). In other words, brand message coordination in the dispersed media landscape is influenced by various actors and is a dynamic process involving the network. For instance, the individually perceived value influences on the way companies coordinate value propositions in the network (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). Accordingly, the firm adapts value propositions to facilitate optimal perception for the beneficiary, creating a continuous social and dynamic process (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

The dispersed media landscape and the current trend of channel integration create an interesting phenomenon for further research, especially when considering the above mentioned brand communication of low-involvement goods. Therefore, this study elaborates on FMCG industry, by empirically examining brand message coordination of three low-involvement brands from a multinational FMCG giant. Lazaris and Vrechopoulos (2014) suggest further studies on the strategic impact of seamless brand communication (cf. omnichannel) in a retail environment focusing on the company’s perspective. Additionally, there is a lack of research on how brand messages can be coordinated across touchpoints in a way which has a positive influence on the performance of a company (Verhoef et al., 2015). Lastly, as suggested by Frow et al. (2014), the interconnection between value propositions and the actors of the service ecosystem should be further studied. Therefore, there is a research gap in understanding companies’ actions of coordinating brand messages in a complex and dynamic environment of multiple channels and actors. Thus, this thesis studies the following research question:

*How can FMCG companies coordinate brand messages in the dispersed media landscape?*
1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to conceptualize what the underlying elements are regarding FMCG brand message coordination in the dispersed media landscape by examining interdependence of the actors in a network. The authors recognize that traditional branding literature lacks a holistic network approach, and thus needs to be refined. Therefore, to achieve the aim of this study, multichannel management literature is reinforced and traditional branding literature is supplemented with prevailing S-D logic, integrating the role of the network to brand message coordination. Accordingly, this study contributes to branding literature. The research establishes a novel conceptualization of the components of the dynamic brand message coordination with interrelated processes of channel integration, brand communication and perceived brand image, and builds the empirical study accordingly. The empirical part of the thesis addresses the above described research gap by exploring how FMCG companies, in terms of low-involvement brands, coordinate value propositions in service ecosystems. Eventually, the study provides managers with implications how to coordinate FMCG brand messages across multiple channels in an optimal and relevant manner.

The thesis is structured in the following way, first the literature review discusses and combines the traditional research streams and S-D logic, and establishes a conceptualization for the research. Secondly, the method and the approach to the empirical research are explained, and followed by analysis of the findings of the study. Finally, the discussion concludes the thesis and provides managerial implications in addition to suggestions for future research.
2. Literature Review

In order to explore the subject matter further, and to answer the research question, this section connects relevant traditional research streams to more recent literature and complements them with the approach of service-dominant logic (S-D logic). Firstly, the present research reinforces multichannel management literature and the concept of channel integration (e.g. Neslin et al., 2006) by applying service ecosystem approach (e.g. Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Secondly, the concept of brand communication (e.g. Merz et al., 2009) is supplemented with value propositions of S-D logic (e.g. Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). Lastly, the traditional concept of brand image (e.g. Keller, 1993) is refined based on perceived value (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Based on the examined theories, the thesis proposes a novel conceptualization of the components of the dynamic brand message coordination in the end of the literature review (Figure 1). The three components; channel integration, brand communication and perceived brand image, are interrelated and overlapping. Furthermore, it is essential to understand that this thesis considers brand message coordination as not linear, but dynamic process, which is further elaborated and explained in the upcoming chapters.

2.1 Channel Integration

The emergence of new channels has expanded the possibilities to engage with stakeholders of the economic network, and thus changed the view of multichannel management resulting in recently researched concept of *channel integration* (e.g. Beck & Rygl, 2015; Neslin et al., 2006; Verhoef et al., 2015). Consequently, business models and media mix have to be adapted due to increased multichannel brand communication (Verhoef et al., 2015). Regarding the present study, channel is defined according to Neslin et al. (2006, p.96), as a “customer contact point, or a medium through which the firm and the customer interact”. Moreover, Beck and Rygl (2015) describe that the retail world has developed into a seamless and connected environment, where consumers can use various devices at any time, be active where ever they want and whenever they want. Thereby, Pophal (2015, p.16) acknowledges that “customers engage with companies or brands in many different ways”, which poses a challenge for providers to ensure a consistent brand message across channels. Companies need to consider whether to be active both online and offline, what is the optimal channel combination and integration, and to what extent interact in each channel (Verhoef et al., 2015).
Zhang et al. (2010) identify that potential challenges of brand communication in multiple channels include to what extent to create synergies, build strategies and resolve conflicts. Moreover, Neslin et al. (2006, p.98) mention that the most difficult task for managers is to coordinate the objectives of each channel and orchestrate channel synergies and design. According to Iglesias et al. (2013, p.671) “managers will need to accept a loss of control and be willing to share if they want to build a relevant brand image”. In order to gain credibility for the brand image, open and participatory information sharing with stakeholders is inevitable (ibid). Despite these possible challenges, multichannel consumers are attractive and profitable targets, as they spend more money and become loyal to the brand (Neslin et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2010). Moreover, operating across different channels facilitates an opportunity to access new markets, improve financial performance, create strategic advantage and enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Binder, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010).

Letaifa (2014) describes how distribution channels, both online and offline, are a part of the core business level when considering stakeholder interaction and value cocreation. The scholar (2014, p.282) suggests that “strong and repeated interactions among actors enable the ecosystem to generate new opportunities through information and knowledge exchange” resulting in trust, collaboration and commitment with the provider. As a result, the current trend and direction of channel integration when coordinating value propositions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) and communicating them across multiple channels is called omnichannel (Beck & Rygl, 2015). Verhoef et al. (2015, p.176) define omnichannel as “the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels is optimized”. In other words, compared to traditionally researched concepts of multichannel management (Beck & Rygl, 2015; Zhang et al., 2010), omnichannel considers in a broader setting how actors move, influence and are influenced across different media channels (Verhoef et al., 2015).

Moreover, multichannel brand communication underlines the tight interaction and connection between media channels and the brand (Pophal, 2015). On that note, has to be clarified that omnichannel is not only about broadening touchpoints and increasing two-way interactions between the actors, but also integrating for instance “customer-brand-retail channel interactions”, which emphasizes dynamic connections in the network (Verhoef et al., 2015 p.176). Furthermore, Neslin et al. (2006) underline the importance of paying attention to the channel partners and intermediaries between the provider and the beneficiary. After all, there is still a lack of research on the concept of omnichannel due to its newness in academia (Verhoef
et al., 2015). Therefore, in order to better conceptualize this recent trend, the explored channel integration and omnichannel literature are reinforced with service ecosystem approach of S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

2.1.1 Service Ecosystems in S-D Logic

The shift in marketing from goods-dominant to service-dominant logic has become widely accepted among scholars (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Lusch & Vargo, 2014). In 2004 the pioneering researchers, Vargo and Lusch (2004), presented the original premises of S-D logic, which have raised discussion and debate throughout the years (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Gummesson 2006, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). As a result an inclusive and encompassing conceptualization of S-D logic and its integral concepts (i.e. value cocreation and value proposition) has emerged (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Basically, S-D logic has developed from dyadic company-customer perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) into a dynamic view, adopting elements of network approach (Gummesson, 2006, 2008), distinguishing value proposition as a reciprocal process (Ballantyne et al., 2011) and acknowledging value as socially constructed phenomenon (Edvardsson et al., 2011). Consequently, during the years, S-D logic has expanded into a “holistic, dynamic, and realistic perspective of value creation, through exchange, among a wider, more comprehensive (than firm and customer) configuration of actors” (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p.10-11).

The broadened view of S-D logic calls for a better understanding of the interactions between the stakeholders, and thus the interest towards system orientation has increased (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). The system approach highlights the collaborative and dynamic value cocreation process in interdependent networks (Vargo et al., 2015), leading to the development of the concept service ecosystem, which is also referred to economic network (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Service ecosystems emerge from interactions between actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) and are prone to changes (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). Additionally, the actors are loosely coupled, allowing them to exit and participate also in parallel service ecosystems, reinforcing the dynamic nature (Vargo et al., 2015). Furthermore, social constructions, rules and norms guide the actors and value cocreation process (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo et al., 2015). In short, service ecosystems adapt to changing situations, and thus are not static (Frow et al., 2014).

The recent research approach of S-D logic clarifies that several actors, always including the beneficiary, are involved in the value cocreation process in service ecosystems (Vargo & Lusch,
The present research applies the definition by Vargo and Lusch (2014, p.103) and approaches actors as “the diverse set of entities that are part of market exchange systems” and involved in the process of facilitating value propositions. Beneficiary (including e.g. firm, consumer, stakeholder), on the other hand, refers to an actor determining the individually perceived value (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Furthermore, actors of the economic network can not deliver value but are able to provide value propositions. Perceived value is developed and modified in interactions in the stakeholder network. Hence, the providers act as resource integrators in the value cocreation process that occurs in service ecosystems. (Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

As explored, channel integration literature in correspondence with the refined focus of S-D logic encourages a more holistic view and understanding of the complexity and interconnections in the economic network (Frow et al., 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Therefore, due to the fundamental role of the stakeholder network, this research complements channel integration and the current trend of seamlesss brand communication (cf. omnichannel) with the concept of service ecosystem. Moreover, in S-D logic context, interaction has developed into an interactive, dynamic process, which is an aspect that has been acknowledged to support the traditional branding literature (Merz et al., 2009). Therefore, when considering the aim of this research, branding literature needs to be adapted. Accordingly, brand communication is complemented with the concept of value proposition in the following section.

2.2 Brand Communication

Nowadays brands are recognized as one of the most valuable assets companies can possess (Brodie et al., 2006; Merz et al., 2009). In early research, a brand was viewed as an identifier, and therefore brand value was considered to be embedded in goods, and determined in exchange (Copeland, 1923). Later on brands however became recognized as a way to communicate symbolic (Levy, 1951) and functional images (Park et al., 1986), offering value propositions (Merz et al., 2009). Brand communication continued to evolve towards process orientation, examining dyadic relationships (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Keller, 1993). Currently, reflecting the approach of S-D logic, brands are perceived as dynamic, social processes, incorporating networks of different stakeholders (Brodie, 2009; Iglesias et al., 2013). In other words, this thesis recognizes that stakeholder interaction and channel integration influence on and are influenced by brand communication. Iglesias et al. (2013, p.671) describe brands as “organic entities because they are built together with various stakeholders and many parts of
this process are beyond the control of the organisation”, hence brands are viewed as continuous social processes (Merz et al., 2009). Basically, a brand functions as an entity as well as a process where the value of the brand is cocreated through interactive negotiations with actors (Brodie, 2009). This implies that reciprocal interaction has become integral part of brand communication.

Merz et al. (2009, p.328) recognize the importance of addressing brands from S-D logic perspective by stating that “S-D logic and the brand literature can reinforce and inform each other”, which further supports the authors’ intentions to complement some of the central concepts of these research streams. Even though the most recent branding literature has recognized brands as dynamic processes, there is a lack of research examining the network of actors in relation to brand communication (Merz et al., 2009). Moreover, since brands are a way to communicate messages, and S-D logic parallels communication as a form of value proposition (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011), this thesis considers brand communication as a form of value proposition.

2.2.1 Value Propositions in S-D Logic

The early conceptualizations describe value propositions “in terms of positioning a firm, highlighting favourable points of difference and determining the promises of delivered value” (Frow et al., 2014, p.328). Moreover, Frow et al. (2014) describe that in the past research, narrow company-customer dyads have been focused on when examining value propositions. Nevertheless, there are early notes in academia that value propositions and value cocreation are dependent on both the actor and the situation, and shaped by the prevailing market context (Evans & Wurster, 1997; Normann & Ramirez, 1993; Webster, 1994). Accordingly, the academic interest of the topic has increased due to the previously mentioned more holistic service ecosystem approach in S-D logic (Letaifa, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). In consequence, recently value propositions and value cocreation are examined from service ecosystem perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), as “all actors continually influence one another in today’s environment” (Chandler & Lusch, 2015, p.6). Hence, the focus from delivered value (Ballantyne et al., 2011) embedded in the offering (Kowalkowski, 2011) has shifted towards examining the role of value propositions in the value cocreation process, which results from interactions between multiple actors within service ecosystems (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).
Value propositions facilitate opportunities for value cocreation between the actors within the service ecosystem (Frow et al., 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Basically, value propositions determine the resource commitment of actors, which leads to resource integration and to potential cocreation of value (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Löbler, 2013). Frow et al. (2014) point out that actors do not necessarily contribute equal value propositions to the process. Consequently, uneven resource contributions might result in more favourable positions in value cocreation process (ibid). On this note, Chandler and Lusch (2015) describe value propositions as invitations between actors of the network to engage in service. Therefore, value propositions are defined as “a dynamic and adjusting mechanism for negotiating how resources are shared within a service ecosystem”, in other words, a process of integrating actors’ recourses (Frow et al., 2014, p.340). Furthermore, the scholars (2014) describe that the nature of value propositions is reciprocal and dynamic. This implies that different actors within service ecosystems influence on value propositions, for instance by design, production or communication (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

Furthermore, the development of value propositions is a continuous process influenced by multiple actors within the economic network (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). Value propositions are refined under the impact of social constructions (Edvardsson et al., 2011) and network actors, hence the value cocreation process is never static. This implies that firms need to stay alert and modify value propositions through dynamic interaction. (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) For instance, beneficiaries’ individual perceptions of the cocreated value influences the way firms adapt the value propositions. Moreover, Corvellec and Hultman (2014) in addition to Kowalkowski (2011) underline how the value cocreation process is dependent on many variables before reaching the end consumer and the initial value proposition might change notably.

Actors in economic networks are constantly encountered with different value propositions and have to decide which to engage with (Kowalkowski, 2011). Furthermore, Chandler and Lusch (2015, p.6) discuss that due to these numerous overlapping offerings from many providers, “it is often not possible, feasible, or necessary for an actor to accept all value propositions”. Hence, depending on the level of engagement, actors might accept the invitation and cocreate value, whether they perceive it as economic, financial, social, or a combination of those (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). Moreover, prevailing context (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), individual perceptions and past service experiences influence on the engagement level with the value proposition (Chandler & Lusch, 2015).
Chandler and Lusch (2015, p.17) mention that “…actors – including firms – cannot sustain service experiences by themselves. They need to engage others and, in this respect, can only offer value propositions as invitations to engage in service systems.” In accordance, Grönroos and Voima (2013) consider that firms can only facilitate value. Respectively, in their latest article Vargo and Lusch (2016, p.11) claim that “Actors cannot deliver value but can participate in the creation and offering of value propositions.” Ballantyne et al. (2011) underline the importance of understanding the demands of the target audience in order to modify the value propositions accordingly. Thus, suitable and targeted value propositions support value cocreation process (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). This highlights the importance of gaining thorough knowledge of the target consumers and adjusting more relevant value propositions. Furthermore, Corvellec and Hultman (2014) mention that value is perceived individually under the influence of the social setting and economic network as well as intangible influences for instance arts, political affairs and brand symbols. Moreover, value is never absolute, hence reciprocal interaction (Ballantyne et al., 2011) and communication of value propositions with the most relevant message is crucial in order to reach engaging value cocreation (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). Besides, the provider should not predetermine the potential value of the offering, but develop it through interactions with the other actors of the network with the right form of communication (Kowalkowski, 2011).

As described, this research parallels brand communication with value proposition (cf. Ballantyne et al., 2011), which facilitates perceived value for the beneficiary when communicated in an optimal manner (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Traditional branding literature recognizes brand image as individual perceptions of a brand (Keller, 1993), and thereby can be argued that brand communication is interlinked with the perceived brand image. However, traditional concept of brand image lacks focus on dynamic and participatory interaction between stakeholders (Keller, 1993; Merz et al., 2009). Therefore, there is a need to adjust the traditional perspective by supplementing brand image with S-D logic and concept of perceived value.

2.3 Perceived Brand Image

Keller (1993, p.3) defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”. These brand associations, including attributes, benefits and attitudes, carry the meaning of the brand for the consumer, hence, collectively constitute an individual perception of the brand image (Keller, 1993). All touchpoints across
media channels, including direct and indirect platforms of communication, contribute to the perception of brand image (Keller, 1993, 2009; Merz et al., 2009), and therefore reinforce the importance of cohesive omnichannel management as previously discussed (Pophal, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015). Additionally, it should be noted that the touchpoints include consumer-to-consumer interaction and still impact on the brand choice, which highlights that brand communication across channels should be carefully coordinated (Verhoef et al., 2015) in a way which supports a consistent brand image (Keller, 2009). Respectively, Keller (1993) stresses the importance of congruent brand message across touchpoints. Congruity is distinguished as “the extent brand association shares content and meaning with another brand association” (ibid, p.3). Basically, congruence of the brand communication across different channels impacts on the cohesiveness of brand image (Keller, 1993, 2009; Madhavaram et al., 2005).

Considering the purpose of this thesis, it should be acknowledged that in the traditional branding literature, Keller (1993) identifies that in terms of low-involvement goods, low level of brand associations may be sufficient for a brand choice. In contrast, Fournier (1998) studied brand-consumer relationships and found that consumers might develop strong emotional connections even to low-involvement brands. This implies that the impact of brand image in value cocreation process regarding low-involvement brands, should not be disregarded. Furthermore, the concept of brand image as presented by Keller (1993), has been criticized since it examines only the dyadic relationship of a company and a customer, thus lacking the holistic network perspective (Merz et al., 2009). Regarding this critique and the aim of the research, the above described brand image literature is complemented with S-D logic and the concepts of value cocreation and perceived value.

2.3.1 Perceived Value in S-D Logic

“Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.” (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p.9) In service ecosystems value cocreation is a dynamic process consisting of actor-to-actor relationships (Frow et al., 2014, Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Fundamentally, Vargo and Lusch’s (2011) principle for their research is that value originates from processes that are intertwined with other actors’ processes. Correspondingly, Letaifa (2014, p.293) highlights the collective aspect of value cocreation, stating that “value co-creation requires social interaction, and it is inherently a social process”. Therefore, things do not inherently carry value, but interaction and integration of resources (cf. value propositions) between different actors might develop into value cocreation and perceived value (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). The previously
examined value propositions enable the process, from which participants can together through dynamic interaction cocreate value (Ballantyne et al., 2011). Regarding the purpose of the thesis, has to be underlined that perceived value is a component of the dynamic brand message coordination process and not regarded as the outcome.

Each actor in the service ecosystem has a certain role when it comes to the process of value cocreation (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Considering the provider’s perspective, it is essential to develop an internal ability to convince all actors within the economic network of their offering (Kowalkowski, 2011). The scholar (2011, p.283) mentions that developing this internal ability “will demand a constant search for new ways of involving customers in co-creation behaviour”. Basically, providers need to convince the actors of the service ecosystem about the potential value of each value proposition through innovative communication and interaction, in order to engage them in value cocreation (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Kowalkowski, 2011). Nevertheless, consumers (cf. beneficiaries) are no longer viewed as passive recipients, but interactive part of the dynamic exchange (Frow et al., 2014; Kowalkowski, 2011). Moreover, Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008, 2016) present that beneficiaries are central in economic networks and always part of the value cocreation process. Within service ecosystems, beneficiaries are “involved in planning, searching, selecting, negotiating and evaluating a range of value propositions that are available to them” (Frow et al., 2014, p.332) and the final actor determines the perceived value (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This implies that the perceived value has an impact on the ways providers form value propositions and interact in the network.

Ballantyne et al. (2011, p.208) describe that perceived value “is the culmination of a time-series of interactions, including value propositions and negotiated agreements as well as value-in-use determinations by various resource providers and integrators.” Hence, the perceived value for the beneficiary is formed by a combination of interactions across several providers and different channels (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014; Kowalkowski, 2011), for instance through brand messages. Moreover, the level of channel credibility influences the perceived value, and thus on the level of positive brand engagement (Iglesias et al., 2013). Binder (2014, p.23) mentions how each channel makes “a discrete value contribution to the shopping experience and provides unique customer value”. In correspondence, Verhoef et al. (2015) reinforce that value propositions have to be communicated as a seamless and interchangeable usage of different combinations of channels (cf. omnichannel) in order to facilitate optimal perceived value. Nevertheless, in case the beneficiary perceives the value proposition negatively, value
destruction might take place and lead to disengagement (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). Corvellec and Hultman (2014, p.369) mention that in order to diminish value destruction, actors need to have comprehensive understanding of “the fact that they simultaneously and all the time offer different kinds of value, over different temporal and spatial scales, for different stakeholders”. This approach thus highlights the targeted and carefully coordinated value propositions.

As discussed, value cocreation process and perceived value in service ecosystems posit interaction between actors as fundamental (Frow et al., 2014), which is an aspect that has been disregarded in the traditional view of brand image (Keller, 1993). Therefore, the present research proposes to refine the concept of brand image by complementing it with holistic and dynamic aspect of S-D logic, thus conceptualizing perceived brand image. This thesis treats perceived brand image as a process, which refers to individually determined perception of the brand, facilitated by dynamic stakeholder interactions in the network and the proposed brand communication.

2.4 Conceptualization of the Literature Review

Finally, the literature review demonstrates that the traditional branding should be supplemented with the current approach of S-D logic and the holistic view of service ecosystems. Hence, it is crucial to explore branding literature further by complementing channel integration, brand communication and brand image with the S-D logic. After examining the current and the traditional research streams, dynamic connections between the proposed components of brand message coordination can be established and are conceptualized below, in Figure 1. It should be emphasized that the components are interconnected and constitute a dynamic process rather than an outcome of a causal relation, which the triangle illustrates. Furthermore, all of the components are interlinked with each other, and together influence on the process, which becomes evident as this thesis approaches the research from the perspective of the company.
The literature review has supported branding literature with the current S-D logic stream of research. Three main conclusions (Figure 1) can be drawn from the discussed theories. Overall, the dispersed media landscape has impacted on the ways in which companies interact with the actors in the network, thereby influencing the process of brand message coordination. Firstly, due to the integral role of the stakeholder network, this research complements channel integration and the current trend of seamless brand communication (cf. omnichannel) with the concept of service ecosystem. It can be argued that channel integration influences both brand communication and perceived brand image. Secondly, the emergence of value propositions is a dynamic process involving several actors of the service ecosystem. Since S-D logic parallels communication as a form of value proposition and brands are a way to communicate messages, brand communication is supplemented with value proposition. This research proposes that the brand communication impacts on channel integration and perceived brand image. Thirdly, value propositions and potential cocreation of value facilitate perceived value, which is determined by the beneficiary and conceptualized as perceived brand image. Furthermore, this thesis defines perceived brand image as a process of individually determining perception of the brand, which is facilitated by dynamic stakeholder interaction in the network and the proposed brand communication. The definition indicates that perceived brand image is intertwined with the other two components. Finally, when examining the research from the perspective of the company, all of the three components presented in Figure 1 are a relevant part of coordinating brand messages in the dispersed media landscape.
3. Method

The purpose of the research is to conceptualize what the underlying elements are when coordinating brand messages in the dispersed media landscape. To reach the purpose and answer the research question, this study examines how value propositions of low-involvement brands in FMCG industry are coordinated in interdependent service ecosystems. Before conducting the empirical research, the authors examined relevant theories and academic literature, and developed a conceptualization, presenting the key components of the dynamic brand message coordination (Figure 1). Thereby, the present study adopts a deductive approach (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016), and in order to further elaborate, the connection between the theory and the empirical research is presented in Table 1. Since the study intends to clarify the understanding and discover the tendencies in this current phenomenon, it is exploratory in nature (Saunders et al., 2012).

The research approach for this thesis is a qualitative case study of three low-involvement FMCG brands. A case study is applicable when studying a contemporary, complex and broad research phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2013). Furthermore, a case study approach allows to capture rich description of the context and enables holistic understanding (Saunders et al., 2012). Therefore, the current development of channel integration towards a seamless brand communication creates a contemporary and dynamic context. Additionally, brand message coordination in FMCG stakeholder network creates an extensive real-life phenomenon. In addition, there is little empirical research on multichannel management (Beck & Rygl, 2015) and the traditional branding concepts in the dynamic setting of S-D logic (Merz et al., 2009). To our knowledge, S-D logic lacks empirical exploration in a real-life context. Accordingly, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) describe that case study is a suitable empirical approach when adopting a deductive approach to discover and develop constructs of unexplored research topic. Hence, for the purpose of the research, case study approach was considered the most applicable. Moreover, the present research examines three in-depth case studies. The cases in question share the same contextual factor since they all are categorized as low-involvement FMCG brands and are part of the same corporation. Thereby, the respective case study includes more than one unit of analysis within the same corporation and constitutes as an embedded multiple case study. Three cases with similar contextual factors were chosen deliberately in order to derive potential replication across cases, and thus reinforce the theoretical conceptualization of the study. (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Theoretical Concepts</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Channel Integration          | interdependence • synergies • seamless brand communication • omnichannel • holistic approach • service ecosystem • stakeholder network • stakeholder interaction | The dispersed media landscape has impacted on the ways in which companies interact with the actors in the network, Thereby, channel integration and current trend of seamless brand communication is complemented with the concept of service ecosystem. | Edvardsson et al., 2011; Beck & Rygl, 2015; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Neslin et al., 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2010 | • What are the motives for multichannel presence?  
• How would you describe the connection and communication between different stakeholders?  
• What is the role of omnichannel in terms of brand communication? |
| Brand Communication          | interactive and dynamic process • relevant and coherent communication • value propositions • resource integration • reciprocal interaction • change of the brand message | The emergence of value propositions is a dynamic process involving several actors of the service ecosystem. S-D logic parallels communication as a form of value proposition and as brands are a way to communicate messages, brand communication is supplemented with value proposition. | Ballantyne et al., 2011; Brodie, 2009; Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Corvellec & Hultman, 2014; Frow et al., 2014; Iglesias et al., 2013; Kowalkowski, 2011; Letalfa, 2014; Merz et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2016 | • What is important to consider when communicating the brand message across multiple channels?  
• How do you make the brand message stand out and reach the target consumer?  
• Have you experienced change of the brand message due to the influence of multiple actors in the network? |
| Perceived Brand Image        | individually determined value • dynamic value cocreation process • perceived value • control over the brand message • value destruction | Perceived brand image is a process of individually determining perception of the brand, which is facilitated by dynamic stakeholder interaction in the network and the proposed brand communication. | Ballantyne et al., 2011; Chaudhler & Lusch, 2015; Frow et al., 2014; Keller, 1993, 2009; Kowalkowski, 2011; Merz et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2016 | • Do you consider there is a lack of control when coordinating the brand message?  
• How can you avoid consumer disengagement in brand communication? |
3.1 Case Selection

Due to the unexplored nature of the topic, the present multiple case study aims to enhance understanding rather than focus on representativeness in terms of population, and therefore the case selection was purposeful in nature (Salonen & Jaakkola, 2015). It should be mentioned that due to a disclosure agreement, the name of the company, to which all case brands belong, is not revealed in this research. The company is referred to as Daily Goods. A multinational FMCG company, Daily Goods, was chosen as the case company for the empirical study due to its extensive portfolio of well-known brands, and broad experience in brand communication. The product portfolio includes four large categories: foods, home care, personal care and refreshments. Moreover, the company owns more than 400 brands worldwide. Therefore, as one of the biggest multinational corporations within FMCG, Daily Goods was considered well-suited for the present study. As previously mentioned, this thesis focuses on FMCG, and especially on low-involvement brands. It can be claimed that within the FMCG industry there are both high and low-involvement brands. Since high-involvement FMCG brands can trigger strong emotional brand attachment, all FMCG brands were not applicable for this study. Therefore, in order to obtain realistic and detailed understanding, it was essential to select only low-involvement brands from the Daily Goods’ portfolio. The study includes three cases in order to generate a holistic view of brand message coordination in the FMCG stakeholder network. Moreover, examining three cases provides larger amount of data and evidence (Saunders et al., 2012), and therefore allows broader analysis of the underlying elements of the dynamic brand message coordination. The selected cases represent two Nordic markets, Finland and Sweden. Based on recent studies on multichannel behaviour, these markets indicate similar trend (Postnord 2015; TNS 2015). Furthermore, the shift towards online shopping and usage of digital devices and channels is indicated to grow across the Nordics in the FMCG industry (EY, 2015). Hence, in order to illustrate and gain deeper insights of the described phenomenon, a cross-market case study approach was chosen.

As mentioned, the three cases for this research were carefully selected from the low-involvement Daily Goods’ brands. The first brand is from the home care category in the Finnish market, referred to as Brand 1 in this research. The Brand 2 is present in Sweden in the foods category. The third brand, Brand 3, is also from the foods category, and examined based on its presence in the Finnish market. However, due to disclosure agreements, the names of the brands in addition to the names of the respondents are not used in this research, which allows them to
retain anonymity. Hence, the study considers and takes the ethical issues into account when conducting the study (Saunders et al., 2012). The brands are further explained when presenting the findings of the empirical research (see 4.1).

### 3.2 Interviewee Selection

Data collection for the cases was conducted with semi-structured interviews, and this section presents the interviewee selection process. As described above, three brands from the same context, more precisely from the FMCG industry, were chosen for the study. Snowball sampling was applied when selecting the interviewees, first establishing contact with a focal person of each brand (Saunders et al., 2012). The initial contact was obtained through an existing network due to the author’s prior work experience at the company. The rest of the interviewees were identified and contacted in cooperation with the focal contact. Moreover, in order to achieve the aim of the research, snowball sampling was considered beneficial as it enables the authors to detect additional internal and external stakeholders for the study throughout the data collection process (Saunders et al., 2012).

In order to ensure holistic network approach, it was important that interviewees represented multiple functional backgrounds such as brand building, brand development, sales and external agencies. Basically, to ensure an inclusive and encompassing approach to the topic, the respondents were selected from diverse positions, having different responsibilities in terms of brand message coordination. The respondents and their involvement in brand communication are presented in Table 2. Together with the focal contact it was agreed that the titles and product categories are used, but company name, brand names and the names of the respondents are left out to retain the anonymity in the cases. Moreover, as discussed in the literature review, the economic network does not solely consider internal actors but acknowledges a more holistic approach which also includes external stakeholders. Therefore, it was essential to include external actors when selecting the sample. However, it should be noted that the level of interaction between the stakeholders does not depend on whether the actors is external or internal. Therefore, the authors did not consider necessary to select equal amounts of external and internal respondents. After all, the authors ensured that all interviewees were part of the brand communication network supporting the aim of the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>External/Internal</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Involvement in Brand Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Brand Manager (Europe)</td>
<td>Project management on a regional level. Provides regional input to global, discusses and supplies media assets to local teams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Online Manager</td>
<td>Ensures optimal brand communication in retailers’ online sales channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Focal actor, link between regional team and local stakeholders. Involved in the process from idea to execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Territory Manager</td>
<td>Manages individual retailer relations. Ensures that in-store communication is executed accordingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Head of SEO</td>
<td>Analyses and optimizes the search engine visibility of the brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 1</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</td>
<td>Project management at the local media agency. Involved in planning, creating and follows through the execution of local communication strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 2</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Assistant Brand Development Manager (Europe)</td>
<td>Coordinates product launches, strongly involved in package design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 2</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Assistant Brand Manager</td>
<td>Focal actor in network, link between local and regional team. Involved in the process from idea to execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 2</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Key Account Manager</td>
<td>Creates communication plans for a retailer based on the available assets and negotiates campaigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 2</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Local Deploy Manager</td>
<td>Provides regulatory as well as legal insights and guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 3</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Brand Manager</td>
<td>Focal actor and central link between different stakeholders. Involved in the process from idea to execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 3</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Category Manager</td>
<td>Bridge between the Brand Manager and the sales team, provides input from the sales perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 3</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Media Agency representative 1, Client Lead</td>
<td>Project management at the local media agency. Involved in planning, creating and follows through the execution of local communication strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 3</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Media Agency representative 2, Digital Planner</td>
<td>Plans the overall digital brand communication at the Media agency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand 3</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Project Manager</td>
<td>Project management of the brand communication in certain digital platforms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Interview respondents
3.3 Collecting and Analysing the Data

When describing the data collection and analysis process of a case study, transparency is highlighted, and thereby the process is presented in the following section (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Yin, 2013). In order to gather the most appropriate and applicable empirical data, when considering the unexplored nature of the topic, a qualitative approach was chosen (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The qualitative data was used as the primary data for the analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and it was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with the 15 representatives working in the brand communication networks presented in Table 2. It should noted that the gathered data can not be generalized. Nevertheless, present study aims at providing deeper understanding of the phenomenon rather than generalizing the results. In addition to the primary data, secondary data, such as company and brand websites, brands’ social media platforms and other digital channels were used to gather background information and gain broader understanding of the brand activities across channels. However, gathering secondary data was an initial phase of the empirical research, and only used to aid the interview process, and is therefore not referred to in the findings section. Basically, the use of several data sources is considered to strengthen the research (Yin, 2009).

All the interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide (Appendix 1). An interview guide is a beneficial tool to assure that the interviewer addresses all the topics during the interview and directs the conversation to the right themes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the interview guide was established based on the explored theoretical background and the presented conceptualization of the theory (Figure 1). It should be noted that data gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews is always subjective and interpretable (Saunders et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) identify that deductive case studies commonly use qualitative interviews to collect the empirical data. The strength of this data collection method is that it is an efficient way to gather abundant data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Semi-structured approach enables adjusting the questions according to the interviewee, which could potentially result in richer and more detailed data (Saunders et al., 2012). Since the respondents represented different actors within the networks, flexibility to omit, amend or adjust the questions during the interview was considered valuable. Hence, it was seen beneficial that the respondents could focus on the topics of their expertise and provide deeper insights accordingly.
Prior to the data collection, the interview guide was first discussed with the supervisor of the study, and then pre-tested with an independent industry professional. This way, it was ensured the questions were understandable and relevant to the research aim. Before the interviews, an email was sent to the respondents with a brief explanation of the research topic, length of the interview and other practical matters (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The interviews were carried out either in person, via Skype or mobile phone. Skype or mobile phone were used if the interviewee was located in a different country or it was otherwise challenging to meet in person. Both of the authors were present in all of the interviews. The interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted either in English or Finnish during March and April 2016. When possible, the interview was conducted in the respondent’s first language (Finnish), which could be argued to result in a more thorough and rich description of the research phenomenon. Additionally, the authors divided roles for each interview; one took notes, while the other was the main interviewer leading the conversation. In order to remain unbiased through the interview process, the leading interviewer did not have prior relation to the respective respondent. Furthermore, when collecting the empirical data, the interview questions and themes were kept as objective as possible following the predetermined conceptualization of this thesis in order not to influence on the interviewees’ responses (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). However, potentially providing perspective to the issues when conducting the interviews has to be acknowledged. Furthermore, all the interviews were audio recorded, allowing full focus on the dialogue with the respondent.

The research approach this study adopts sets the direction for the analysis process (Saunders et al., 2012). When using deductive approach, Yin (2009) suggests that a framework based on the reviewed literature should be utilized to structure and direct the analysis of the qualitative data. As mentioned, all interviews were recorded, which enabled the authors to return to certain parts of the interviews during the analysis process, when necessary. Moreover, in order to aid the overall analysis process, it is recommended to partly transcribe the data (Saunders et al, 2012). After conducting the interviews, the authors listened to the recordings, made extensive notes and transcribed the most important parts individually. It should be pointed out that since some of the interviews were conducted in Finnish, some quotations used in this research have been translated. Therefore, it has to be recognized that the richness of the quotations might have been lost during the translation process.

After thoroughly going through the recordings and partly transcribing the most important findings, the analysis process continued with data coding. The aim of coding is to find patterns
and similarities across data (Saunders et al., 2012). The authors first analysed and categorized individually the data, and then compared, reflected and combined their perceptions and individual findings, thereby increasing the relevance of the results. Moreover, following the deductive analysis approach (Yin, 2009), coding included categorizing the data into main themes according to the theoretical conceptualization (Figure 1). These were further divided into subthemes. The essential findings of the data analysis process of each case are summarized in the Appendices 2, 3 and 4, further supporting the transparency and relevance of this study.

When analysing the cases, the gathered data was not compared but rather contrasted and complemented in order to obtain a holistic view of the research phenomenon, reinforcing the purpose of this thesis. In order to make the qualitative data more comprehensive, analysis of the findings follows the same structure as the conceptualization of this study (Figure 1), which can be seen as a suitable option due to the broad and complex nature of the collected data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).
4. Findings

This section describes the case brands, and presents and analyses the empirical findings. The data is structured and organised based on the literature review and the established conceptualization of the components of the dynamic brand message coordination process (Figure 1). In order to conceptualize what the underlying elements are regarding brand message coordination, the findings construct a holistic picture with the following three cases.

4.1 Cases

In order to present a comprehensive view of the empirical findings, relevant background information about brand communication and stakeholder interaction of each case is briefly elaborated in the following section.

4.1.1 Brand 1

The first case is a home care brand present in Finland. The brand has a long heritage in the market since it was launched in 1966. With 16.3% market share in value in 2015, Brand 1 is the second biggest brand in the respective category. (Marketing Manager, Brand 1) Three years ago Daily Goods started repositioning Brand 1 locally and recently it was migrated into a global platform. Hence, the current brand messages are strongly influenced by the strategies developed by the global and regional teams, yet still adapted according to the market with the expertise of the local team. In essence, Brand 1 aims to be perceived as an expert in its field, and the core brand message is that the products take care of the clothes and keep them beautiful for long. In terms of channels, Brand 1 communicates in traditional mediums, such as TV, print and in-store, as well as across digital platforms. The role of TV is considered important when building brand awareness, while more informative and content driven channels, such as online advertorials and brand website provide credibility. All in all, brand message coordination is dispersed across multiple channels and the process involves many external and internal stakeholders.

4.1.2 Brand 2

The second case is a foods brand present in the Swedish market. Brand 2 has a long heritage since it was launched already in 1943. The market share in value of Brand 2 in 2015 was 7.1%. (Assistant Brand Manager, Brand 2) The core of the brand message is that everyday cooking
does not need to be boring, and with the products everyone can add a little flavour to their home cooked meals. Daily Goods divides their brands into global and local, and Brand 2 is considered more local. This implies that the local actors of the stakeholder network have a strong influence on how the brand message is developed. Regarding its multichannel presence, Brand 2 recently launched a line extension, which has been communicated for instance in TV and WebTV. Furthermore, Brand 2 is present in social media with videos and inspirational content for different recipes. Moreover, the importance of in-store presence is highlighted due to its central role regarding the final purchase decision. As several stakeholders are involved, brand messages develop and evolve across the network in each interaction to reach a better outcome.

4.1.3 Brand 3

The third and final case is also a brand from the foods category. Brand 3 is a market leader in Finland of the respective category with 36% market share in value in 2015. Brand 3 has been present in the Finnish and other Nordic markets for more than 30 years. (Brand Manager, Brand 3) However, regarding the aim of this thesis, Brand 3 is analysed based on the Finnish market presence. The essence of Brand 3 is that it inspires everyday cooking, and spices up the ordinary into extraordinary. Furthermore, Brand 3 is a so-called local jewel, as it operates and makes most of the decisions on a Nordic level, thus facilitating flexible and agile ways of brand message coordination. Basically, the stakeholder network includes mainly local actors, and interaction with the global team is not as intensive. Nevertheless, since the brand is part of a multinational corporation, connections to the global networks are inevitable. Brand 3 is present in a wide range of traditional and new channels, and for instance cooperates with selected bloggers in order to gain credibility, raise interest and inspire consumers. Moreover, search engine optimization together with search engine marketing have had a big impact on increasing the online visibility of the brand website.

4.2 Channel Integration

The focus on brand communication in FMCG is shifting towards digital channels in order to bring the brand closer to the consumers. The data identifies advances in technology and convenience of the devices as the main motives for the current changes in consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the change in brand communication is driven by the consumers, in which channels they are present and what kind of information they want. For instance, using mobile screens and multiple devices simultaneously has become everyday occurrence for the consumers, and
brands need to follow. Moreover, consumer channel behaviour is changing not only due to people changing their habits, but also due to the new generation of consumers. In other words, constant connectivity has become a presumption and the consumers demand that brand communication is proactive rather than reactive.

"If we want to win in the future, the most important thing is to learn and test new ways to communicate in the digital world right now." (Online Manager, Brand 1)

The current shift and multichannel presence facilitate an opportunity to reach more people in a more direct way, when communicating brand messages. Additionally, digital brand messages can be expanded to people who are not even in the same sphere, therefore accessing new potential markets. Furthermore, digital channels enable cost-efficient and tactical communication, thus creating financial opportunities and encouraging innovative and creative ways to communicate the brand. Brand 1 indicates that digital channels enable data gathering throughout the consumer journey, which subsequently facilitates targeting of the message, increases conversion rates and control over brand message coordination. On reflection, the findings demonstrate that brand messaging should be quickly adaptive and real-time to fit the prevalent market situation.

“It is possible to target and reach only the consumers for whom the message is relevant and there is no need to show irrelevant messages. Therefore, there is an opportunity to save money but achieve better results.” (Digital Agency representative, Brand 3)

However, due to the newness of digital channels and brand presence across numerous touchpoints, the challenge is how to integrate all stakeholders (inside and outside the company) who are involved in brand messaging to the same level of competence. Furthermore, the Assistant Brand Manager of Brand 2 describes that real-time marketing is a challenge as even small changes in brand communication can take weeks in a big corporation. Moreover, Daily Goods plans budgets for a year at a time and is hesitant to shift focus of the investments to new media. Despite the underlying potential, there is not much room for agile and proactive brand communication. Hence, the data indicates that due to the vast and hierarchical network of stakeholders, Daily Goods is not fully utilizing the above described opportunities of digital channels.

“Brand development comes from Rotterdam...and it is a very long process in terms of approval....This is due to the corporate policies and many stakeholders involved....The brand
communication process should be faster and more pragmatic.” (Key Account Manager, Brand 2)

4.2.1 Seamless Brand Communication

The aim at Daily Goods is seamless and integrated brand message coordination. Hence, the cases demonstrate increasing interest in omnichannel, and underline seamless brand communication and creation of synergies across the channels. Brand 1 establishes that if the consumer previously encountered the brand in 10 different touchpoints, now the amount has increased exponentially, which reinforces the importance of coordinating consistent messages. Ideally, the brands would reach the consumer multiple times in several touchpoints reinforcing a potential purchase.

“It is good to reach the same target several times. Ideally, we would like them to see the brand message on TV, WebTV, web campaign advertisement, print ad, and in store where they buy the product. But this is difficult.” (Assistant Brand Manager, Brand 2)

Hence, the cases describe how creating synergies across multiple channels is a challenge. The Brand Manager of Brand 3 indicates that a company, such as Daily Goods, has an influential role in the network, but is nevertheless dependent on stakeholder cooperation to ensure synergies across touchpoints. Partly due to technical barriers, and the challenge to incorporate all stakeholders in the omnichannel approach, creating synergies in brand communication is not yet 100% possible. For instance, the challenge stems from how the stakeholders’, especially the retailers’, individual perceptions and plans can be integrated into one strategy.

”Of course all communication should move into seamless direction. This probably creates some pressure inside the company. How to incorporate the communication chain, for instance retailers, sales and other stakeholders closer together. Ideally, we wouldn’t talk about media plans and media schedules separately, but all actions...would be integrated into one plan.” (Media Agency representative, Brand 1)

4.2.2 Interaction in the Stakeholder Network

In order to optimize brand message coordination and enhance omnichannel approach, open and participatory interaction between stakeholders is emphasized. Accordingly, the cases demonstrate that a wide network of stakeholders influence on brand message coordination, and certain actors have stronger impact than others. To begin with, the findings illustrate an
important stakeholder interaction between global, regional and local brand building teams. In
general, Daily Goods has established frameworks and rules for the communication flow
between the teams, and especially regarding global brands, innovation and main media assets
come from the global product development. According to Brand 1, the global team makes the
key decisions about brand communication, the regional team gives input, and the local team
adapts the messages to the respective market. The process in this case is rather hierarchical,
which appears to restrict the dynamic, reciprocal interaction between the stakeholders.
Basically, the local team should trust that the global team is able to provide the right core brand
message and assets.

“We (regional team) provide the assets that they (local team) can use...Locals have the
responsibility to allocate and adapt the budget and campaigns and execute.” (Brand Manager,
Brand 1)

The stakeholder network of Brand 2 is dynamic between the local and global brand building
teams, and thus the message coordination is strongly influenced by both. Furthermore, Brand 3
highlights that brand communication is often planned and produced on a local level. The Brand
Manager of Brand 3 explains that the local jewel status implies that there is no need to report
all actions to the global team, which makes brand message coordination more flexible and agile
in comparison to global brands. Nevertheless, also in this case, brand communication is
impacted by the strong corporate structure, for instance regarding IT processes. In this sense,
the data indicates that connections to the global stakeholder network, even regarding local
brands, might result in a negative way restricting quick adaptation according to the market
needs.

“The fact that we are local means we are a lot more flexible. We make decisions here and now,
instead of always asking the European brand development for their opinion. The brands that
are local jewels are able to develop things a lot faster.” (Brand Manager, Brand 3)

Furthermore, the cases demonstrate another important interaction between the local brand
building team and the external stakeholders (e.g. media and digital agency). The data clarifies
that all Daily Goods’ brands use a globally negotiated media agency, who to some extent links
and briefs the other agencies and optimizes the media locally, thereby facilitating consistent
brand messages across channels. Additionally, the data illustrates that different inputs to a brand
message might be divided between several external agencies, which increases complexity but
also provides more resources and expertise. Nevertheless, the cases commonly identify one

focal person, who holds the stakeholder network together and has the strongest influence on how brand messages are coordinated. Basically, the findings indicate that all brand messages go through the local Brand or Marketing Manager who is responsible for local adaptation, and makes the final decisions. Thus a focal actor is an integral part in facilitating interaction between the different actors in brand communication network. Therefore, a wide network of stakeholders can also strengthen the brand communication, but has to be orchestrated by one focal actor.

“We have a good conversational interaction with the client, advertising and communication agency. ... The only stakeholder that I am not in direct contact with, is the global team, this communication always goes through the Brand Manager. ... certain aims are set globally, but I think regarding this brand we have an open dialogue and reciprocal communication with stakeholders.” (Media Agency representative 2, Brand 3)

In addition to the interaction with external agencies, the data exemplifies interaction between retailers, sales team and brand building team. Currently the information flows first from the retailers to the field sales and Key Account Managers who communicate with the Category Manager, who then forwards these insights together with his or her own strategic inputs to the Brand Manager. Hence, the findings indicate that communication in the stakeholder network flows between certain dyadic relationships rather than involves only dynamic and reciprocal interaction. Moreover, the data consistently demonstrates that on an individual level stakeholders interact intensively and dynamically with certain actors and the interaction with others is often dyadic. Basically, the data illustrates that reciprocal interaction often occurs within the closest relationships in the network, and the further the actors are from one another, physically and regarding responsibilities, the more dyadic and sporadic the interaction become.

“Also retailers have power over the brand communication, but sometimes they just have to accept what they are provided with.” (Media Agency representative, Brand 1)

Another important stakeholder interaction in the network is between the brand and consumer. The data explicates that this interaction could be increased, since the tools for interactive communication exist, and thereby it is easier to engage in a dynamic dialogue with the consumers through digital channels. However, participatory interaction and activating the consumer is not considered highly relevant regarding low-involvement FMCG brands. Moreover, the Media Agency representative of Brand 1 identifies that if the brand decides to initiate participatory interaction, the objective has to be crisp and clear, as the consumer might
not want to engage in a long dialogue with a low-involvement brand. For instance, due to the changed consumer habits and the increased supply of brand messages, consumers’ willingness and ability to concentrate on one message has decreased. Overall, the findings acknowledge that consumer feedback is valued, but the brand-consumer interaction is mainly dyadic. Nevertheless, this brand-consumer interaction can impact on the style of the brand message or a new product variant, but not on the core of the brand strategy.

“If consumers are so interested that they give feedback and care about the brand, it is essential to listen and interact. Responding brings the brand closer to the consumer as they notice that the brand really cares about them….However, every single comment is not necessary to take into account to the same extent.” (Media Agency representative 1, Brand 3)

Even though, the data explicates that a large stakeholder network provides more resources, increases knowledge flow and can generate better brand messages, long processes and extensive communication chains can hinder brand message coordination. The company structures and frameworks aim to orchestrate the extensive amount of actors involved in brand messaging, thus supporting a consistent brand message. However, the findings indicate that a large network with hierarchical structure potentially restricts adaptation to the market according to the local environment and consumer demands.

4.3 Brand Communication

The findings suggest several motives for multichannel brand communication. Firstly, consumers are looking for varying messages depending on the channel. Nowadays brands are able to tweak the message nuances to fit different platforms, for instance by adjusting the tone-of Voice, and therefore offer diverse, yet coherent, brand messages depending on the channel context. Hence, the aim of the interaction differs in each channel, and it is crucial to understand what kind of messages should be communicated in which context. Secondly, due to the vast target audience of FMCG brands, the channel mix has to be balanced between new and traditional platforms and none of the touchpoints can be neglected. Furthermore, Brand 3 indicates that in order to reinforce brand memory traces in consumers’ minds, the different channels have to complement one another regarding content and campaign schedules. With multichannel presence, brands can not only approach vast target and prospective new consumers, but also reach them repeatedly. Basically, messaging in different channels can trigger and remind consumers several times, enhancing seamless brand communication.
Moreover, the findings point out that reinforcing memory traces should be the favoured way of building low-involvement brand communication strategies rather than aiming at establishing attachment and loyalty.

“Repetition (of the brand message) only through TV remains so low that the memory traces of the brand are not strong enough. Therefore, communication in additional touchpoints where the consumer can be reached again is important.” (Media Agency representative 2, Brand 3)

The data reveals essential elements, which FMCG companies need to acknowledge when facilitating brand messages in the current environment. Consumers are continuously encountered with a lot of noise due to numerous brand messages both online and offline. Accordingly, since the supply and variety of similar FMCG brands is nearly endless, and new digital platforms emerge, the competition to get the brand message across to the consumers increases. In order to stand out, the brand message should be attractive and grab consumers’ attention immediately. Furthermore, the purchase decision is not made only based on a good product, but currently consumers are looking for identification with the brand. FMCG companies can respond to this by personalizing the message according to interest and behaviour, however not on an individual level. Therefore, the cases emphasize that FMCG brands must understand the importance of making the message relevant for the target groups, and thus focus on quality over quantity in the brand communication. To sum up, consumers insist value, relevance and experience when interacting with a brand.

“Consumers are more demanding, they want to have the product right away with the right price. I think creating relevance is very important. Make sure that the consumers understand what the product is about, and why they need to buy it, rather than pushing it as the greatest product.” (Key Account Manager, Brand 2)

On the one hand, Brand 3 illustrates that despite the low-involvement nature of the brands, consumers should be targeted with emotional brand communication, in a way that they can identify and want to share the message. In other words, brand communication should aim at creating talkability. Basically, talkability refers to a relevant brand message consumers want to share and discuss with their friends. Positive word of mouth adds credibility to the brand and is considered as the most reliable reference. The cases exemplify the unexpected nature of social media channels, for instance a sudden hype can occur if consumers find a new way to use the product and share it. If the message is relevant and engaging enough, social media channels enable rapid organic spread to a large amount of consumers. On the other hand, the data
mentions that due to the low-involvement aspect of the cases, rather than aiming at emotional engagement, brand communication should focus on making the brand familiar in the consumers’ minds and strengthening the memory traces.

“If we manage to reach people who think similar to what the brand represents, then we have the possibility to attach them as fans and get them to share the brand message. This is the ideal world we wish to create, get individuals to take initiative and talk about the brand, share recipes, or tips….to create this, the brand has to be credible and trustworthy.” (Media Agency representative 1, Brand 3)

4.3.1 Interrelation of the Stakeholder Network and Brand Communication

The cases demonstrate that the initial brand message might change in the stakeholder network resulting in both positive and negative outcomes. Due to Daily Goods’ corporate structure and centralized decision making, the global team makes the key decisions regarding communication of global brands and forwards the planned strategies to the local teams, which implies that the potential change of the brand message decreases. Despite the globally set core brand message, also the local brand building team has an influence regarding the possible change. The findings argue that the previously described focal actor of the network has the responsibility to ensure that the core of the brand is solid, and communicated in the right channels and in the right way to all stakeholders.

“Although several stakeholders are involved, in the end the final decision goes through one desk, which eases controlling the (potential change of the) brand message.” (Marketing Manager, Brand 1)

Moreover, the brand message might change in the stakeholder network due to the context where it is communicated. For instance, the Marketing Manager of Brand 1 identifies physical store as a challenging channel since the communication tends to be strongly price-driven. After building awareness and reinforcing the memory traces through other channels, diverging in-store communication might break the seamless chain of brand messages and lead to value destruction. Therefore, cases suggest that creating strong memory traces that reinforce the purchase intention and convince the consumer about the brand before entering the store is essential, especially regarding the intense competition between low-involvement brands. In addition, change can occur in social platforms when the brand messages are shared organically and the initial meaning might differ. Thus, multichannel presence and the vast network of
internal and external stakeholders, increases the importance of having a solid core in all brand messaging. Basically, tight interaction between the focal actor and the stakeholders, for instance through open communication, personal meetings and detailed written and oral instructions, ensure that the brand is communicated throughout the network in a consistent way. For instance, Brand 3 points out that ambiguous and confusing instructions when briefing the external stakeholders might lead to unintentional change of the message. Overall, the cases consistently indicate that it is important to ensure that the core of the brand is communicated correctly aiding that all stakeholders understand what the brand is about and perceive the message in the right way.

“Brand could be first communicated in TV with emotional edge and then in-store focusing only on the price. This might lead to change of the brand message and broken brand equity. The messaging should be coordinated in a way that the tactic is clear to all stakeholders.” (Online Manager, Brand 1)

The data highlights that different stakeholders might approach the brand message from different perspectives, which could result in a change of the message. The brand message can become different as some actors in the network have a bigger influence on how the message is perceived by the consumer. For instance, in terms of social platforms, certain bloggers have a stronger impact on consumers’ opinions and brand preferences. However, Brand 2 in particular points out that the change of the brand message might also be positive and improve the end user’s perception of the brand. Basically, getting new insights, rethinking, redoing and adapting the message in each stakeholder interaction refines the brand message to become even more optimal. In this sense, the change of the message might be purposeful. Thus, the change might also be intentional as the message can improve in stakeholder interaction. All in all, the cases consistently mention the positive aspect of each stakeholder modifying the message according their expertise towards a better outcome.

“Often we see that the brand message starts in one end…and what comes out in the other end is something very different. I think that this is part of the process....We work with the stakeholders to review the process critically, and to turn the stone back and forth. In the end, we believe that a better product and communication comes out.” (Assistant Brand Manager, Brand 2)
4.4 Perceived Brand Image

The cases consistently suggest that with a solid core, the brands can enhance control over the communication, decrease unintentional change of the brand message and consumer disengagement. As described, several variables can confuse, disturb or grab the attention of the consumer in the current media landscape. Hence, the brand should always consider the most relevant platform and ensure a solid core message in all communication in order to facilitate optimal perceived value for the end consumer. All the cases resonate that brand communication can not diverge from its core message, but it can offer different types of information depending on the channel context. In other words, the nuances in the communication might change but the core message stays the same, so that the consumer is able to jump on board the brand communication despite the point of journey.

“In brand communication, most important is that the core of the brand comes forward in the right way....In this dispersed environment, what company wants to communicate and how consumer perceives it, can be something totally different....Therefore, a brand should aim to communicate a solid core coherently across platforms, for instance with visual elements.” (Brand Manager, Brand 3)

4.4.1 Perceived Value in the Stakeholder Network

As analysed above, a solid core of the brand supports consistent communication, and thus also increases the possibility to facilitate optimal and wanted perceived brand image. In general, the cases do not identify the lack of control as a risk, but illustrate that the level of control over brand message coordination is dependent on the context and stakeholder interaction. Accordingly, the lack of control might become a challenge in the network of multiple actors. The Assistant Brand Manager of Brand 2 mentions that the brand does not always have control over the message, for instance, due to highly influential consumers and bloggers who might talk down the wanted message. In this case, to minimize the risk of misperceived brand message, the communication should aim at transparency and openness. Additionally, the Deploy Manager of Brand 2 elaborates that it is crucial to critically consider whether the message can trigger negative attitudes, and who the optimal stakeholders are to be part of the brand communication. Therefore, it is essential to consider strategies and codes of conducts in case the brand message floats to unwanted channels and the brand loses control over the message. Furthermore, the data confirms that messages that are published in owned and paid
media channels can be governed, but consumer-to-consumer interaction and word of mouth are out of company’s control.

“I think we can control the message as we know exactly where it is present. Of course when considering networks, the message might float and end up to unwanted channels as well... With bloggers and social media, the discussions where the brand ends up is not in our hands, as consumers can freely comment, but the way the message comes out can be controlled.” (Media Agency representative 1, Brand 3)

In addition to the different roles of stakeholders, the Marketing Manager of Brand 1 discusses that in practice the biggest challenge of having control over the brand communication across multiple channels, is the lack of time and access. However, the data also presents contrasting views regarding the increased possibilities in the current media landscape to track all the channels where the brand is communicated in addition to consumer responses. Technology and analytical tools enable companies to measure and follow consumer reactions, which implies that brands can optimize the intensity of interaction, and thereby increase control over brand message coordination. Furthermore, an extensive stakeholder network, especially regarding several external actors, can result in a lack of control, but as long as the core of the brand message is clear and solid, diverse individual perceptions and controlling brand message coordination is not a challenge.

“For instance, if there are seven agencies and a client, controlling the brand message can be challenging. But if there are only a few agencies and each agency has a clear role...control isn’t difficult. But everyone has to know what others are doing so that resources are optimized and there are no overlaps.” (Digital Agency representative, Brand 3)

Regarding the continuous stakeholder interaction, the data highlights the importance of coherent core brand message, as elaborated previously. If the brand has a solid read thread in all communication across the stakeholder network, the risk of misunderstandings and the lack of control decreases. Accordingly, with a simple and clear message, the brand can be communicated coherently despite the long chain of stakeholders. Brand 1 points out that despite the solid core, the individual perceptions of the brand message differ and can not be controlled. However, individual perceptions are not considered as an issue, since differing opinions are acceptable and one FMCG brand can not accommodate all individual needs.
“When the brand message is communicated and reaches the stakeholder in question, it is always dependent on the current mood, way of thinking, and own perception about the product and the message. For instance, depending on the tone-of-voice and the type of the message the receiver might get a completely different perception about the brand.” (Territory Manager, Brand 1)

The data describes that due to the low prices of FMCG products, consumers tend to try different brands, which challenges creating brand attachment and loyalty. Nevertheless, brand loyalty might not be the aim of brand communication in FMCG. Therefore, in order to elaborate how brand messages should be coordinated, it is accurate to consider factors which could diminish brand disengagement. For instance, eagerness to be present across channels but lacking the right content might lead to brand disengagement. The findings explicate that if the brand does not have the right assets for the particular channel, it is better to be absent than present with irrelevant content. Overall, the cases mention that brand communication should always be humble, honest and transparent. Basically, the brand message should not only push the consumer to buy the product, but also shift the focus to providing inspirational content and encouraging the consumer spend time with the brand.

“In brand messaging it is important to be humble and not tell the consumer what they should know. It is more about celebrating the consumer and making them to do the choice....Brand should show that this is something we believe in and want to share with you.” (Assistant Brand Manager, Brand 2)

All in all, the following conclusions can be drawn from the above findings. Firstly, an extensive and hierarchical stakeholder network can restrict brand message coordination process. Secondly, despite the vast network of actors, a potential change of the brand message is not a concern as long as the partly dynamic interaction between the stakeholders is orchestrated by one focal actor. Moreover, the change of the brand message might result in a positive outcome, and facilitate more optimal perceived brand image. Thirdly, the brand has control over the message coordination if only the core of the brand is solid and the dialogue between stakeholders is open and transparent. Finally, the findings confirm the interdependence and interrelation of the three components of the dynamic brand message coordination (Figure 1). The key findings of the empirical study are summarized and their connection to the examined literature is illustrated in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Theoretical Concepts</th>
<th>Empirical Illustration</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Channel Integration     | The dispersed media landscape has impacted on the ways in which companies interact with the actors in the network. Thereby, channel integration and current trend of seamless brand communication is complemented with the concept of service ecosystems. | “Of course all communication should move into seamless direction. This probably creates some pressure inside the company. How to incorporate the communication chain, for instance retailers, sales and other stakeholders closer together. Ideally, we wouldn’t talk about media plans and media schedules separately, but all actions...would be integrated into one plan.” (Media Agency representative, Brand 1)  
“The fact that we are local means we are a lot more flexible. We make decisions here and now, instead of always asking the European brand development for their opinion. The brands that are local jewels are able to develop things a lot faster.” (Brand Manager, Brand 3)  
“We have a good conversational interaction with the client, advertising and communication agency... The only stakeholder that I am not in direct contact with, is the global team, this communication always goes through the Brand Manager...certain aims are set globally, but I think regarding this brand we have an open dialogue and reciprocal communication with stakeholders.” (Media Agency representative 2, Brand 3) | Multichannel brand presence aims at seamless communication, which integrates stakeholders closer together in a network consisting of dynamic and dyadic interactions.  
Vast stakeholder network influences on the flexibility of the brand message coordination and corporate structure makes the process less agile and proactive.  
Seamless brand communication is not yet reality, since an extensive stakeholder network restricts incorporating actors to the same levels of competence. In order to preserve the coherence, one focal actor should orchestrate brand messages. |
| Brand Communication     | The emergence of value propositions is a dynamic process involving several actors of the service ecosystem. S-D logic parallels communication as a form of value proposition and as brands are a way to communicate messages, brand communication is supplemented with value proposition. | “If we manage to reach people who think similar to what the brand represents, then we have the possibility to attach them as fans and get them to share the brand message. This is the ideal world we wish to create, get individuals to take initiative and talk about the brand, share recipes, or tips...to create this, the brand has to be credible and trustworthy.” (Media Agency representative 1, Brand 3)  
“Often we see that the brand message starts in one end...and what comes out in the other end is something very different. I think that this is part of the process...We work with the stakeholders to review the process critically, and to turn the stone back and forth. In the end, we believe that a better product and communication comes out.” (Assistant Brand Manager, Brand 2)  
“Although several stakeholders are involved, in the end the final decision goes through one desk, which cares controlling the (potential change of the) brand message.” (Marketing Manager, Brand 1) | Brand communication across channels has to be targeted, personalized, interesting and most importantly relevant for the consumer.  
The brand message can change in the stakeholder network due to different inputs and perceptions. However, this is a part of the process, and the change of the brand message can be positive.  
One focal actor orchestrates the brand message coordination in the network, which helps controlling the change of the brand message despite different stakeholder influences on the process. |
| Perceived Brand Image   | Perceived brand image is a process of individually determining perception of the brand, which is facilitated by dynamic stakeholder interaction in the network and the proposed brand communication. | “In brand communication, most important is that the core of the brand comes forward in the right way...In this dispersed environment, what company wants to communicate and how consumer perceives it, can be something totally different...Therefore, a brand should aim to communicate a solid core coherently across platforms, for instance with visual elements.” (Brand Manager, Brand 3)  
“When the brand message is communicated and reaches the stakeholder in question, it is always dependent on the current mood, way of thinking, and own perception about the product and the message. For instance, depending on the tone-of-voice and the type of the message the receiver might get a completely different perception about the brand.” (Territory Manager, Brand 1) | Controlling the brand message is not an issue as long as the core of the brand is solid and interactive stakeholder communication is encouraged.  
The perceived brand image is always out of control, as it is formed by individual perceptions and influenced by several variables. |
5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that service ecosystems have a strong influence on how companies can coordinate brand messages in the dispersed media landscape. The prevailing environment, multichannel brand communication in addition to the extensive amount of actors who are involved in resource integration in FMCG, create an interesting setting for the present research. As described earlier and presented in the conceptualization of the research (Figure 1), brand message coordination is a dynamic and highly interrelated process of channel integration, brand communication and perceived brand image. Since the process is not linear but constantly evolving, this section does not discuss the components separately, which strengthens the holistic aspect of brand message coordination. Hence, in order to answer the research question and demonstrate how companies can coordinate brand messages in the dispersed media landscape, the following part is divided under the two main discussion topics derived from the empirical findings. The first part elaborates how the strength of the stakeholder network influences brand message coordination. The second part examines the control and change of the brand messages across the service ecosystem and discusses how companies can respond. In addition, discussion presents a set of takeaways which explicate the theoretical conceptualization and reflect the empirical findings, thereby constructing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, in the end of this section the discussion is summarized in Table 4, by illustrating the proposed takeaways and their connection to the components of the dynamic brand message coordination (Figure 1).

5.1 Strength of the Stakeholder Network

The dispersed media landscape and endless ways to interact with the consumers have increased the complexity of the stakeholder networks. In correspondence with Verhoef et al. (2015), the findings indicate that new media channels, and hence bigger networks, expand possibilities to engage with different stakeholders. Moreover, the findings resonate with S-D logic (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Lusch & Vargo, 2014), implying that actors of the extensive service ecosystems give varying inputs to the resource integration, which, due to the combination of different areas of expertise, can result in an optimal value proposition. Accordingly, the findings align that integration of both external and internal actors in the economic network enriches the brand coordination process and refines the messages to become more optimal. Nevertheless, channel integration literature (e.g. Neslin et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2010) recognizes that broad
stakeholder network might also impose a challenge in finding balance between the levels of integration and creating synergies, in addition to combining actors’ perceptions and knowledge. On this note, the findings evidently demonstrate that an extensive and hierarchical network of actors is more likely to influence negatively and restrict brand message coordination.

The findings indicate that the duration of decision making regarding brand message coordination process parallels positively or negatively depending on the size of the network. Agile and fast responses that smaller local stakeholder networks enable, are highly valued elements of value propositions as Vargo and Lusch (2016) also mention. Hence, brand message coordination which strictly follows global corporate communication chains takes longer and negatively influences on the process. Furthermore, Frow et al. (2014) in addition to Chandler and Lusch (2015) describe how service ecosystems are not static. The findings align that when coordinating brand messages, local adaptation according to the market demands is essential. However, possibility for flexible and agile brand messaging is lacking in large service ecosystems as hierarchy and rigid corporate structures restrict communication. Thus, companies need to be aware that vast service ecosystems might hinder brand message coordination process. The thesis suggests the following takeaway:

**Takeaway 1a. The more extensive and hierarchical the service ecosystem is, the more apparent network’s restricting influence on brand message coordination becomes.**

Iglesias et al. (2013) underline that in order to gain credible brand communication and brand image, participatory information sharing with the stakeholders of the network is necessary. Moreover, omnichannel literature mentions that it is essential that stakeholder interaction is dynamic across the network, in order to enhance seamless brand communication across touchpoints (Pophal, 2015; Verhoef et al., 2015). The findings recognize omnichannel as the future direction, but not as the current way of coordinating brand messages. Furthermore, the findings do not emphasize that participatory interaction with the consumer is inevitable in FMCG, and due to the low-involvement nature of the brands reciprocal interaction is considered optional. The brands can initiate a reciprocal interaction with the consumers, however, such interaction is suggested to be occasional and short-term. Regarding dynamic stakeholder interaction, the findings resonate with the theory to some extent (e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2016), but underline the importance of having one central actor in the service ecosystem who orchestrates brand messages across the stakeholder network.
S-D logic (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2016) does not emphasize that value propositions in a service ecosystem should be coordinated by one focal actor. Nevertheless, the findings empirically demonstrate that the strategic decisions concerning brand message coordination are orchestrated and approved by one central actor before communicating them to a larger set of stakeholders. Especially regarding international stakeholder networks, it is crucial to have a local focal actor who knows the market and is able to adjust the messages according to the specific needs. Overall, S-D logic and omnichannel literature propose that an economic network with dynamic stakeholder interaction is inevitable when facilitating value propositions (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Letaifa, 2014). Respectively, the empirical findings add on to the branding literature and indicate that in order to coordinate brand messages in a coherent, relevant and optimal way, all interactions in a stakeholder network should be orchestrated by one focal actor. The focal actor is responsible for ensuring that the brand communication process is seamless and coherent by facilitating interaction and information sharing between the stakeholders. Thus, the research proposes the following takeaway:

**Takeaway 1b. It is essential to determine one focal actor in the service ecosystem, who orchestrates stakeholder interactions and assures that brand communication remains coherent and relevant.**

The findings clearly imply that actors highly value the closest relationships in the service ecosystem. S-D logic (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2016) describes that value cocreation is a holistic and dynamic configuration of actors, emphasizing the shift towards interdependencies and interrelations between the stakeholders of the economic network. Moreover, the literature review illustrates that value propositions are integration of resources and cocreated through reciprocal negotiations with actors of the economic network as a combination of dynamic interactions (Corvellec & Hultman, 2014; Kowalkowski, 2011). In contrast, the findings indicate that in order to provide optimal and relevant value propositions, interaction between all actors of the economic network is not necessarily dynamic. More often the interactions in the stakeholder network flow according to certain communication chains, and the information sharing remains between two actors. Only the relationships, which include continuous and tight communication between stakeholders, can be described as dynamic. Furthermore, the further the actor is from the other, regarding physical location and responsibilities in the process, the more dyadic and sporadic the interaction is. It should be clarified that in this thesis dyadic interactions refer to one-way communication between two actors, for instance forwarding the planned strategies or marketing materials in a communication chain. Therefore, the empirical
findings clearly add on to the theory by identifying the existence and necessity of dyadic interactions in the stakeholder network.

Furthermore, the empirical findings demonstrate that the decision making process regarding brand message coordination also includes one-way communication from the top management, which decreases misunderstandings and confusion. In contrast, the refined S-D logic has recently shifted the focus from these dyadic relationships to focus on dynamic interaction (e.g. Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Moreover, the literature (e.g. Brodie, 2009) emphasizes that integrating actors to reciprocal interaction when facilitating value propositions is essential. However, the findings empirically demonstrate the positive and necessary aspect of service ecosystems that contain a combination of both, dynamic and dyadic relationships. In other words, only dynamic interaction in the economic network is not a prerequisite for brand message coordination. Hence, the empirical findings complement the theory and recognize that service ecosystem should consist of a combination of dynamic and dyadic interactions. Overall, in order to coordinate the brand message in an optimal manner, relationships between the actors of the service ecosystem should be partly dynamic. Thus, the following takeaway is developed:

**Takeaway 1c. Only dynamic stakeholder interaction in service ecosystem is not a prerequisite for brand message coordination, but the stakeholder interaction should be partly dynamic.**

### 5.2 Control and Change of Brand Messages

The current media environment and the above discussed vast stakeholder network have implications for the control and change of the message, which impacts on how companies can coordinate brand messages. The findings resonate with S-D logic, indicating that actors in service ecosystems facilitate value propositions (Vargo & Lusch, 2014). Moreover, the findings concur with S-D logic that value propositions are shaped and refined by multiple variables in the service ecosystems, thereby implying that the initial value proposition can change significantly (e.g. Corvellec & Hultman, 2014; Kowalkowski, 2011). Thus, aligning with Frow et al. (2014), the findings imply that economic networks are constantly evolving. Furthermore, the empirical findings complement the reviewed literature by suggesting that change of brand messages can be both intentional and unintentional. Intentional change can occur for instance as a result of refining and adjusting the brand messages in the stakeholder network. However, if instructions and communication to external agencies is unclear and confusing, unintentional change can occur.
Furthermore, S-D logic explains how value propositions can change in a negative way, which is referred to as value destruction (Chandler & Lusch, 2015; Corvellec & Hultman, 2014). However, S-D logic is short of empirical real-life exploration, and therefore the findings add on to this theory by elaborating that the change of the message can be also positive. Kowalkowski (2011) mentions that the provider should not predetermine the potential value of the value propositions, but it should be developed and refined through the right type of communication and interaction with the actors of the economic network. Moreover, S-D logic explains that value propositions function as invitations to engage in value cocreation, and thus actors can not be forced to accept them (Chandler & Lusch, 2015). Correspondingly, the findings emphasize the importance of the right type of brand communication, referring to brand communication that is transparent, honest and humble and offers information, rather than pushes the brand message to the consumers. Transparency in brand communication is highlighted, since the consumer decides whether to engage with the brand or not. Additionally, the findings explicate that stakeholder interactions can facilitate new ideas, concepts and improve the overall brand communication. This implies that positive change of the brand message can develop into more optimal and relevant perceived brand image for the beneficiary. In sum, the empirical findings contribute to branding literature and imply that in order to coordinate brand messages in an optimal way, companies need to recognize that the change of the brand message can be positive and the initial brand message can improve in stakeholder interaction. Thus, the research proposes the following takeaway:

**Takeaway 2a. In addition to negative change of value propositions, also positive change occurs in the stakeholder interaction, and brand messages in addition to perceived brand image can develop into more optimal and relevant for the beneficiary.**

Iglesias et al. (2013) recognize brands as dynamic entities, which can not be controlled by a company due to the influence of the stakeholder network, yet, this is not explicitly reflected in the empirical findings. In general, the control over brand message coordination is not considered a challenge, however the findings identify two opposing contexts where the level of control differs. Firstly, control is not an issue regarding how the message is sent out across the touchpoints to consumers. Moreover, the findings complement the theory (e.g. Chandler & Lusch, 2014) and suggest that measuring consumer behaviour enables companies to create and target relevant brand communication, which increases control. Yet, the lack of open communication between the stakeholders in addition to the size of the network are underlined as potentially restricting control. Moreover, the prior discussed focal actor enables the company
to obtain a certain level of control over brand message coordination. Secondly, the findings unanimously identify that consumer-to-consumer interactions are out of the company’s control, reflecting Chandler and Lusch’s (2014) view. Accordingly, the findings identify that the context influences the company’s level of control over the change of the brand message.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with the examined literature regarding resource integration as a combination of several actors’ inputs (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2016). S-D logic describes how actors in the service ecosystems provide differing resources to the value cocreation process (e.g Lusch & Vargo, 2014). Due to uneven and diverse contribution to value propositions some actors can have a more favourable position and more authority in the service ecosystem, and thus in the value cocreation process (e.g. Frow et al., 2014). The findings resonate how actors in the stakeholder network possess varying expertise and roles, which thereby influences the control over the brand message. Therefore, the empirical findings imply that uneven value propositions as well as differing positions in the service ecosystems potentially increase the challenge to control brand message coordination, yet, the focal actor enhances control. Hence, the following takeaway is suggested:

**Takeaway 2b.** Understanding the context in addition to actors’ resources and positions in the network allows companies to enhance and optimize control over brand message coordination.

The findings consistently highlight the significance of establishing and communicating a solid core brand message in the current media environment. S-D logic clarifies that the role of the provider is to create, and communicate a solid offering (i.e. brand messages), which convinces the actors in the service ecosystem and ensures that the messages remain consistent (e.g. Kowalkowski, 2011). Moreover, the findings elaborate on the congruency of brand associations, discussed by Keller (1993), who underlines the importance of shared meaning and content in multichannel communication in order to reach an optimal and cohesive brand image. Fundamentally, the findings conclude that the core of the brand message has to remain unchanged regardless of the channel but the nuances, such as tone-of-voice or the nature of the content (e.g. informative, visual) can diverge. Moreover, the findings imply that a solid core message is considered to diminish brand disengagement and value destruction.

All touchpoints, including direct and indirect platforms of communication, contribute collectively to the individual perception of the brand (e.g. Merz et al., 2009), and therefore the findings stress the importance of cohesive brand communication across channels. Moreover, in accordance to branding literature (e.g. Keller 1993, Madhavaram et al., 2005), the findings
emphasize the consistency of the brand communication in order to facilitate optimal perceived brand image. Binder (2014) states that each channel makes a discrete value contribution to the brand image, thus reinforcing the importance of consistent communication across channels. The findings coincide with the reviewed literature (e.g. Binder, 2014) and exemplify that brand messages have to be adapted to different channels, which enables companies to provide targeted and personalized, and thereby relevant, value propositions to beneficiaries. The findings further clarify that in FMCG, personalization should not be done an individual level, but according to the largest target groups. Furthermore, the objective of the communication should remain unchanged, which increases control and reinforces consistent brand communication. The findings underline that a company can not control individual perceptions of a brand, and thereby perceived brand image is out of company's control. However, solid core brand message, consistent and relevant brand communication across channel can yield to a certain level of control as well as minimize the negative change of the message. Hence, in order to coordinate the brand message in an optimal way, companies need to establish a solid core message for the brand and sustain consistent communication in the stakeholder network. Therefore, the research suggests a following as a final takeaway;

**Takeaway 2c. Control or change of the value proposition in service ecosystems is easier to coordinate and optimize if the brand has a solid core message.**

The key takeaways of the discussion are summarized and presented below, in Table 4. It should be noted that despite the components of the dynamic brand message coordination process are interrelated and influence on each other, the proposed takeaways are categorized under each component only to illustrate theoretical connections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Takeaways</th>
<th>Theoretical Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Channel Integration</td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 1a.</strong> The more extensive and hierarchical the service ecosystem is, the more apparent network’s restricting influence on brand message coordination becomes.</td>
<td>Channel integration literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 1b.</strong> It is essential to determine one focal actor in the service ecosystem, who orchestrates stakeholder interactions and assures that brand communication remains coherent and relevant.</td>
<td>Omni-channel literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 1c.</strong> Only dynamic stakeholder interaction in service ecosystem is not a prerequisite for brand message coordination, but the stakeholder interaction should be partly dynamic.</td>
<td>S-D logic:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service ecosystem concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Communication</td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 2a.</strong> In addition to negative change of value propositions, also positive change occurs in the stakeholder interaction, and brand messages in addition to perceived brand image can develop into more optimal and relevant for the beneficiary.</td>
<td>Branding literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 2b.</strong> Control or change of the value proposition in service ecosystems is easier to coordinate and optimize if the brand has a solid core message.</td>
<td>S-D logic:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value proposition concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Brand Image</td>
<td><strong>Takeaway 2b.</strong> Understanding the context in addition to actors’ resources and positions in the network allows companies to enhance and optimize control over brand message coordination.</td>
<td>Brand image literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S-D logic:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived value concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service ecosystem concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Conclusion

Despite recent conceptualizations and academic interest in network aspect when facilitating value propositions, stakeholder network influence on brand message coordination has not, to our knowledge, been examined previously. Moreover, the dispersed media landscape and inevitable shift to multichannel brand communication has created the recent phenomenon this thesis addresses. Thereby, the thesis contributes to the existing branding literature by supplementing concepts of traditional branding, and multichannel management to S-D logic, and proposes a novel conceptualization of the components of the dynamic brand message coordination process. The conceptualization and analysed theories were examined empirically with a multiple case study of low-involvement FMCG brands. The final discussion elaborates the strength of the network in addition to control and change of the brand messages in order to coordinate brand messages in a relevant manner in the dispersed media landscape.

The main contributions of this research are explained with a set of takeaways categorized under each of the components, and summarized in Table 4. The takeaway 1a concluded that an extensive and hierarchical network might correlate negatively as a smaller network can positively influence on brand message coordination. The takeaway 1b illustrated that each stakeholder network should establish one focal actor who orchestrates brand message coordination and interaction between the actors, which strengthens the coherence and relevance of the brand messages. The takeaway 1c concluded that stakeholder communication in the networks should be a combination of both dynamic and dyadic interactions, and therefore this thesis proposed that stakeholder interaction should be partly dynamic. The takeaway 2a suggested that due to stakeholder influence, the brand messages are constantly refined, yet in addition to negative change, the messages might also change positively in the process. The takeaway 2b proposed that by understanding the channel context and actors’ resources and positions in the network, control over brand message coordination is enhanced. The takeaway 2c concluded that brands should have a solid core message in order to optimize control and change of the brand messages.

In conclusion, this thesis has formed a comprehensive understanding of the underlying elements of brand message coordination process in the dispersed media landscape. Furthermore, the research has verified the applicability of the proposed theoretical conceptualization. This thesis reinforces that brand message coordination is a dynamic process and all of the established components influence on each other. All in all, FMCG companies can coordinate brand
messages in the prevailing environment by understanding the dynamic interconnection of channel integration, brand communication and perceived brand image, and acknowledging the above proposed takeaways (Table 4).

6.1 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Considering the type of study, some limitations have to be recognized. Since the research was conducted as a qualitative case study with three cases from the same context, the results can not be generalized. However, rather than providing all conclusive results, the thesis explored the research topic, and found connections between the presented theoretical conceptualization and the empirical findings. The findings were further developed into takeaways, which indicate the explicit connection between empirical findings and the examined literature. Furthermore, all three cases represented low-involvement FMCG brands. Although this approach enabled us to generate viable and holistic understanding of brand message coordination in the particular setting, the thesis did not provide inclusive implications of the process in other industries. However, due to the unexplored nature of the topic, the empirical research approach and case selection was purposeful, which enabled the authors to derive deeper insights of the particular context.

The takeaways proposed that there should be one focal actor in service ecosystem who orchestrates stakeholder interaction and ensures coherent brand messages. Therefore, the research suggests that future studies on service ecosystems should pay attention to the role of a focal actor and explore their influence in the vast stakeholder network. Furthermore, the findings indicated that service ecosystems do not solely consist of dynamic interactions between the actors, but include a combination of dynamic and dyadic interactions. Therefore, the thesis recommends further research on the intensity of the relationships in order to conceptualize when dynamic interactions are more beneficial and when dyadic interactions are preferred in a service ecosystem. Moreover, the cases exemplified that interactions in stakeholder network are strongly influenced by the actors’ closest relationships, and individuals might not have a holistic picture of the impact of each interaction. Therefore, based on the findings, this research proposes that individuals’ closest relationships impact on their understanding of the economic network, and this should be further examined in an empirical context. Finally, the authors propose that the future research should adopt a broader view on the topic. The present research established a comprehensive understanding of the underlying elements in brand message coordination in FMCG, and thus provides a solid base for further
research. Hence, it is suggested that future research builds on the current thesis by including other industries and gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

6.2 Managerial Implications

When combining the examined theory and the empirical case study, this thesis elaborates on the research question and in the end proposes managerial implications for FMCG companies. The companies should optimize the size of the stakeholder network in order to enhance agile and flexible way of coordinating brand messages, which is increasingly needed in the current dispersed media environment. Moreover, FMCG companies should determine one focal actor who has the main responsibility of orchestrating stakeholder interaction and making the final decisions regarding brand message coordination. Furthermore, FMCG companies should establish a clear understanding when dynamic interactions in the stakeholder network are necessary and when dyadic interactions are sufficient. In order to streamline brand message coordination, intensity of the interactions should be balanced. Additionally, FMCG companies should grasp the potential the positive change of brand messages poses. In order to enhance control over the messages, the companies should understand the channel context in addition to the roles of the stakeholders. Lastly, it is essential that FMCG companies establish a solid core for the brand message, which is coherently communicated in the stakeholder network and across channels.
References


# Appendix 1: Interview Guide

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Information</th>
<th>1. Name and position in the company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How long have you worked for/with the company and how long with this particular brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Elaborate in which way you are involved in the brand communication process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What is the essence of the brand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Channel Integration                | 5. What are the motives for multichannel presence? |
|                                    | • Which channel is the most important? Why? |
|                                    | • Stakeholder interaction regarding different channels |
|                                    | 6. How would you describe the connection and communication between different stakeholders? (internal and external) |
|                                    | • What is the role of participatory interaction between the stakeholders? |
|                                    | • What kind of communication and interaction do you have with the consumers? |
|                                    | 7. What is the role of omnichannel in terms of brand communication? |
|                                    | • Role of different channels |
|                                    | • Importance of synergies and congruity |

| Brand Communication               | 8. What is important to consider when communicating the brand message across multiple channels? |
|                                    | • Dynamic interaction with consumer |
|                                    | • Dynamic interaction with other stakeholders |
|                                    | 9. How do you make the brand message stand out and reach the target consumer? |
|                                    | • Personalizing and adapting the brand communication |
|                                    | • Convincing the consumer |
|                                    | 10. Have you experienced change of the brand message due to the influence of multiple actors in the network? |
|                                    | • Challenges and opportunities |

<p>| Perceived Brand Image             | 11. Do you consider there is a lack of control when coordinating the brand message? Why? |
|                                    | • Advantages and disadvantages |
|                                    | 12. How can you avoid consumer disengagement in brand communication? |
|                                    | • Level of interaction |
|                                    | • Core of the brand image |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>What are the motives for multichannel presence?</th>
<th>How would you describe the connection and communication between different stakeholders?</th>
<th>What is the role of omnichannel in terms of brand communication?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Manager (Europe)</strong></td>
<td>As FMCG there is a need to be present where the consumers are and a combination of channels can be used in more business savvy way.</td>
<td>Regional team provides the globally supplied media assets for the local teams. Local teams have the responsibility to allocate and adapt the budget and campaigns and execute.</td>
<td>Consistency and simplicity are valued and communicating the same key message across channels is the core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Manager</strong></td>
<td>It is important to test and learn from digital channels. Consumers can be reached better, and new channels possess big financial potential.</td>
<td>There are frameworks and rules for the communication flow, basically innovation comes from the global level. Local marketing has to adjust the assets to fit the market.</td>
<td>Despite the point of interaction, consumer has to be able to jump on board. Thus, the message needs to be coherent and convey the same core brand message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing Manager</strong></td>
<td>Target audience is widespread, thus multichannel presence is essential. Different content can be delivered more effectively in different channels.</td>
<td>The quality of the communication between all stakeholders is dependent on how clear the direction and core brand promise are in general, all local communication goes through one desk.</td>
<td>The amount of touchpoints has multiplied, which reinforces the importance of consistent brand message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Territory Manager</strong></td>
<td>Multichannel presence is needed since different channels enable different kind of interaction with the consumers.</td>
<td>Local brand building or category manager briefs new campaigns. Interaction is not constant.</td>
<td>It is important to create synergies when messaging across channels, and all should support the same core brand message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Agency representative, Head of SEO</strong></td>
<td>Brands need to be present in several channels and message needs to be coherent in order to reach the target of the campaign.</td>
<td>It takes time for information reaches the stakeholders who operate different functions in different channels. There are risks of misunderstandings when information does not flow between stakeholders.</td>
<td>The role is important, and the message should be optimized across channels, which does not really function at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</strong></td>
<td>By using multiple channels company can obtain maximal coverage for the brand message as well as communicate different kind of messages in different channels.</td>
<td>Dialogue is mainly between Media agency and brand building. Globally supplies media assets reduce the need to be in contact with multiple local agencies.</td>
<td>Everything should move to seamless direction. All actions relating to media, sales, sales promotion etc. should be integrated to one plan. It is big challenge, but potential point of difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Key Considerations</td>
<td>Brand Message Stand Out</td>
<td>Changes Due to Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Manager (Europe)</strong></td>
<td>The brand comes first, meaning it is important to know how the brand should communicate the message and that is why the core has to be solid.</td>
<td>Attractiveness, relevance and talkability. In order to create talkability, simplicity and consistency of the message are highlighted.</td>
<td>Global team makes the key decision regarding brand strategy, which eliminates the risk. All changes in the core brand message go through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Manager</strong></td>
<td>The brand message should be scaled and adapted locally. The importance of gathering data and personalization of the message will increase.</td>
<td>Convince the consumer to share and talk with their friends about the brand. Personalization and quality of the targeted message are essential.</td>
<td>Traditionally a challenge, but nowadays with targeted marketing the risk can be avoided. Marketing is the decision maker which assets are used to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing Manager</strong></td>
<td>Brand communication is always consumer driven. Target the brand message but maintain consistency in the communication.</td>
<td>Find a niche for the brand communicate. Know where the target group is and what kind of information they are looking for in the specific channel.</td>
<td>Keeping a consistent red thread in all brand communication helps to lower the risk of changed message. All communication is controlled by the (local) brand building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Territory Manager</strong></td>
<td>Main focus is on sales. The brand message should be short, simple and understandable.</td>
<td>Research consumer behaviour and communicate functionality of the product with coherent brand message.</td>
<td>The risk is avoided if the brand message is clear and communicated thoroughly to all stakeholders. But perceived brand image is always depending on past experiences, tonality, time and situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Agency representative, Head of SEO</strong></td>
<td>There is need for interaction between stakeholders and the message should stay consistent.</td>
<td>It is a result of a good and functioning idea that makes the consumer interested in and spend time with the brand.</td>
<td>Brand websites are planned so carefully that there the message cannot change but no experience from other platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</strong></td>
<td>Brand communication should be consistent from the consumer perspective. It is important to know what kind of messages can be communicated in which channel.</td>
<td>Everyone in the network has to know the core message and understand what type of message reaches the consumers in which channel.</td>
<td>It can change accidentally or intentionally, however sometimes change can be positive and ultimately fit better to the local market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Do you consider there is a lack of control when coordinating the brand message?</td>
<td>How can you avoid consumer disengagement in brand communication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Manager (Europe)</td>
<td>Not a big challenge, hierarchy and internal frameworks helps in controlling the message flow.</td>
<td>Get the stakeholders on board early and ensure coherent message.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Manager</td>
<td>Risk is low as long as the essence of the brand is consistently communicated</td>
<td>Balance the intensity of brand communication, measure and follow the conversions and react fast, adjusting the campaign.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>Controlling the message in different channels is not a big challenge, the decision to air something in a local market goes through one desk. However, controlling the perceived image by the end consumer is challenging.</td>
<td>Know what kind of content is suitable for a particular channel, ensure relevant message.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory Manager</td>
<td>In-store risk is low: communication is simple and materials stay exactly the same as provided.</td>
<td>Know what the consumers are used to, constantly innovate and refresh the brand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Head of SEO</td>
<td>It must be challenging since there are different people in charge of different channels.</td>
<td>The more engaged the consumers are with the brand, less likely they will leave the brand. In order to create loyalty, the brand has to mean something to the consumers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</td>
<td>It is a challenge due to various stakeholders. Good collaboration provides better results and when all stakeholders feel they are equally important, cooperation improves.</td>
<td>Regarding the low-involvement nature of the products, the engagement is low to start with and it is more about creating memory traces for the consumers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 3: Findings of Brand 2

### BRAND 2: CHANNEL INTEGRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>What are the motives for multichannel presence?</th>
<th>How would you describe the connection and communication between different stakeholders?</th>
<th>What is the role of omnichannel in terms of brand communication?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Brand Development Manager</strong></td>
<td>Different channels have different purpose and the channel mix for the brand communication depends on who you want to target and in what way.</td>
<td>Close interaction with local brand building to make sure that stakeholders are aligned about the message.</td>
<td>Firstly, the message needs to be the same across channels, and secondly, you need to use the right channels for communicating the particular message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Brand Manager</strong></td>
<td>Multichannel presence allows reaching different targets, potentially multiple times. Each channel communicates own type of information.</td>
<td>Media agency and other agencies do the content for the overall communication. Cooperation is tight and follow up is constant.</td>
<td>Holds potential and 360-omnichannel approach is the aim. Creating a seamless experience by synergies and recognisability is very important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Account Manager</strong></td>
<td>Brands need to come closer to the consumers and different channels enable reaching them better. Consumers want to have value and experience for their money.</td>
<td>Brand development comes from regional team and it is a long process in terms of approval. This is due to corporate policies and hierarchy long process.</td>
<td>Omnichannel is all about creating balance and putting the consumer first. The messages should be short and attractive and communicated in a seamless manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Deploy Manager</strong></td>
<td>Different consumers are in different channels, and by multichannel presence brands are able to reach the whole consumer group.</td>
<td>The interaction is good and teams work in a very cross-functional way.</td>
<td>Consistency, synergies and clear message across channels is important in order to make it to stick in consumers’ minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>What is important to consider when communicating across multiple channels?</td>
<td>How do you make the brand message stand out and reach the target customer?</td>
<td>Have you experienced change of the brand message due to the influence of multiple actors in the network?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Brand Development Manager</td>
<td>Strong consumer and customer orientation in order to understand what they want. The message has to be consistent and relevant for the target group.</td>
<td>Package design is important since the purchase decision is ultimately made in-store. Basically, grab the attention on shelf, follow-up with a good benefit and finally deliver the promise.</td>
<td>Every stakeholder has their own responsibilities, and avoiding the change in brand message can be a challenge but something that can be worked with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Brand Manager</td>
<td>It is important to listen to the landscape, and adjust the communication accordingly. Messaging should be humble and not pushy. Tight cooperation and interaction with stakeholders is valued.</td>
<td>Interact with the consumer and constantly try new ways to communicate with them. Stay (visually) consistent with the message. In the future digital channels enable more targeted communication.</td>
<td>The brand message might turn completely different as some actors in the market have power over what is taken in by the consumers. However, brand message can change positively in interaction with the stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Account Manager</td>
<td>Fast and pragmatic process and finding the balance in integrating the channels to the normal media mix without favouring one. Thus, stakeholder interaction and network is central.</td>
<td>Brands have to be bold and smart, and utilize the gathered data and consumer insights in order to target and personalize the message better.</td>
<td>Change of brand message does not occur a lot. In general, we should be rather proactive than reactive and respond and change their strategies faster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Deploy Manager</td>
<td>Cross-functional cooperation and local adaptation is also important in order to make consumers relate to the brand. Off-pack and on-pack communication has to be consistent in technical terms.</td>
<td>Point out the technical benefits and translate them to consumer language. Personalize and target the communication according to consumer habits.</td>
<td>Yes, but the message should be fluffy in the beginning and develop into simpler and more concrete through stakeholder interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>How can you avoid consumer disengagement in brand communication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Brand Development Manager</td>
<td>It is a challenge due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Also people working with the brand might change, creating a challenge for the consistency of the brand message.</td>
<td>It is important not to over claim and ensure that the brand promise is delivered. For established brands, it is important not to make too drastic changes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Brand Manager</td>
<td>C2C and WOM communication is hard to control, for instance strong influencers such as bloggers. It is important to ensure that the first brand engagement is positive.</td>
<td>Do not push the message but embrace and allow the consumer to make the choice. Level of aggressiveness in following the customer depends on the channel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Account Manager</td>
<td>No lack of control, but rather lack of core message. The brand communication should focus on one core message instead of having several different ones.</td>
<td>Disengagement cannot be avoided but can be diminished by making the product and communication as interesting as possible. Brands need to be humble and let the consumer decide whether to engage or not.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Deploy Manager</td>
<td>Not a problem, but rather a positive development, regarding the message spreading in social media for instance. Surely the brand has to be careful what it communicates, but when that is clear there is no problem.</td>
<td>It is crucial that the brand messaging is beneficial for both, the consumer and the company. Digital channels enable personalizing the message which diminishes brand disengagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>What are the motives for multichannel presence?</td>
<td>How would you describe the connection and communication between different stakeholders?</td>
<td>What is the role of omnichannel in terms of brand communication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Manager</td>
<td>It is possible to reach wider audience, and by being present in the channels where consumers are the likelihood of purchase increases. But communication needs to be targeted according to the consumer groups.</td>
<td>Stakeholders create an orchestra and in the end everything is about cooperation. The core of the brand has been same for decades, and thus it is easy to communicate the brand message to other stakeholders.</td>
<td>It is where the brand needs to aim. It is not reality at the moment, and although the company can do a lot, input from other actors is necessary to really create synergies across all touchpoints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Manager</td>
<td>Multichannel presence enables brands to be where the consumers and reach the target groups. Each channel has a certain role in communication but they should be linked together.</td>
<td>The Brand Manager is in the core, a central link between stakeholders, and also in charge of how the brand communicates.</td>
<td>It is part of the brand communication strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</td>
<td>Consumer behaviour has changed and the brands need to follow. Basically multichannel presence aims at constant reach and staying on top of mind of the consumers. Different medias talk to different people and reaching masses is important.</td>
<td>There is a tight and good cooperation with everyone. Two-way communication with all stakeholders is important, and everyone can somewhat influence and be part of the brand communication</td>
<td>Very important, especially as low-involvement brands lack loyalty aspect with omnichannel, the brands are able to create memory trace which reinforces the purchase. Also important to note that in omnichannel, each channel has own role and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Digital Planner</td>
<td>Certain consumer groups cannot be reached using only TV, therefore there is need for other channel to reach various target groups and also to reinforce the memory traces.</td>
<td>On a local level the communication with different actors is open and reciprocal. There is no contact with global team, this communication always goes through the Brand Manager.</td>
<td>Synergies are important but channels do not have to be active the same time but need to support and reinforce each other, creating memory traces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Project Manager</td>
<td>Digital and offline channels cannot be separated anymore. Consumers have widened their channels selection, and by being present in multiple channels brands can reach wider audience.</td>
<td>Communication with the Brand Manager is transparent and direct. Everything goes through the Brand Manager, and Media agency is involved in the communication.</td>
<td>It is important that big campaigns such as product launches, look similar both online and offline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## BRAND 3: BRAND COMMUNICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>What is important to consider when communicating across multiple channels?</th>
<th>How do you make the brand message stand out and reach the target customer?</th>
<th>Have you experienced change of the brand message due to the influence of multiple actors in the network?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand Manager</td>
<td>Core of the brand has to come forward in a right way and the communication has to have certain look and feel throughout. Also, stakeholder cooperation is important.</td>
<td>Brands should provide added value to consumers. Also, brands need to be visible in right places and platforms, reinforcing the aim of the brand communication.</td>
<td>When message moves organically in social media it will change. When the brand equity is strong, it is ok if the message changes. Basically the nuances might change but not the core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Manager</td>
<td>The content needs to be relevant to particular channel and also consistent with other communication. There can be small adjustments according to channel.</td>
<td>Important to know what is the aim and the task of the brand.</td>
<td>We have the responsibility to communicate the core message clearly, in a way that the message flows through the communication chain. But of course it is not possible to control everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</td>
<td>The characteristics of the channel, and which message works in which context, needs to be recognized. Taking in consumer and increasingly client (retailer) feedback is also important.</td>
<td>Clear and relevant message, which consumers remember when entering the store. For instance, message could be attached to a local tradition in order to create stronger memory traces.</td>
<td>No, the same information is given to each stakeholder, and thus the message does not change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Digital Planner</td>
<td>It is essential that the brand message stays the same to certain degree. Visual aspects should remain the same but different channels can highlight different aspects of the brand message.</td>
<td>Brands needs to reach the right consumers with the right message, and know for whom the message is really relevant.</td>
<td>Regarding the brand communication strategy, the structure and message remains the same. Then it is different if a message starts spreading in social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Project Manager</td>
<td>The message should not lie. The importance of transparency is increased since consumer are more and more aware.</td>
<td>Basically people’s reactions can be measured, which indicate whether the segment is right for the particular message. Also, the brand message has to be solid and relevant.</td>
<td>The core of the message does not change. It might change at some stage but the aim is to go forward with materials and instructions that are received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Do you consider there is a lack of control when coordinating the brand message?</td>
<td>How can you avoid consumer disengagement in brand communication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Manager</td>
<td>Yes it is challenging but it should be considered more of an opportunity than a threat. Regarding social media, it is important to be proactive and moderate the conversation, and thus control to some extend.</td>
<td>It is not brand’s job to tell the consumers what they think, and thus message should remain humble and it should not be forced to the consumers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category Manager</td>
<td>It is challenging and the brand does not have 100% control how the message is communicated forward (e.g. by sales to retailers). Coherent communication from company’s side can alleviate lack of control.</td>
<td>Too aggressive communication might turn into disengagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Client Lead</td>
<td>There is control since the company knows exactly in which channels the brand is present. However, when brand message comes out for instance in social media, it might flow to channels and discussions the company has no control over.</td>
<td>It is very challenging, but show the product range and give the consumer a choice. Agile and smart responses in social media are also important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Agency representative, Digital Planner</td>
<td>Control is not an issue when brand communication is done well and interaction between stakeholders is enhanced and transparent.</td>
<td>Disengagement can be minimized with relevant brand communication. However, avoiding is probably not possible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Agency representative, Project Manager</td>
<td>When there are several external agencies involved it can be challenging. If there are a few external agencies and each knows their role, then control is not challenging.</td>
<td>Too aggressive communication, however, can be optimized. Dishonesty in brand communication is a factor that would disengage consumers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>