Brand Building in the Business-to-Business Context: The Brand Equity Perspective

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Acknowledgements

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Galina Biedenbach
Abstract

The main purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to investigate factors affecting B2B brand building by applying the brand equity perspective in the professional services context. The dissertation presents the results of two quantitative studies, which led to the development and examination of the conceptual models presented in four papers composing this dissertation. Three peer-reviewed and published articles and one book chapter examine different aspects related to the enhancement of brand equity and brand building in the B2B context.

The first paper entitled “Brand equity in the business-to-business context: Examining the structural composition” (Biedenbach 2012) investigates the structural composition of brand equity and the interrelationships between the dimensions of brand equity in the B2B context. By specifying the multidimensional model, which can be utilized for measuring and managing B2B brand equity, the paper provides initial knowledge on how the companies can build a strong B2B brand across four dimensions of brand equity.

The second paper entitled “B2B brand equity: Investigating the impact of contextual factors” (Biedenbach 2010) examines the impact of contextual factors in the organizational decision making process on the formation of B2B brand equity. The book chapter expands knowledge on B2B brand building by portraying how such characteristics of customers as relative size of their company and its industry sector can affect B2B brand building.

The third paper entitled “The impact of customer experience on brand equity in a business-to-business services setting” (Biedenbach and Marell 2010) investigates the impact of customer experience on brand equity in the professional services setting. The study shows that customer experience has significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The study clarifies how customer experience can be utilized for building a strong B2B brand.

The fourth paper entitled “Brand equity in the professional service context: Analyzing the impact of employee role behavior and customer-employee rapport” (Biedenbach, Bengtsson, and Wincent 2011) examines whether factors related to customers’ perception of employees’ role behavior in terms of customer perceived role ambiguity, role overload, and customer-employee rapport influence the development of brand equity in the professional service context. The paper advances knowledge on B2B brand building by considering the potential role of the company employees and consequences that their behavior can lead to in this process.

To conclude, the doctoral dissertation demonstrates that the brand equity perspective can serve as a valuable foundation for theoretically understanding and practically managing B2B brand building.
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1 Introduction

The introductory chapter of the dissertation explains the relevance of examining brand equity in the B2B context. The author presents the brand equity perspective as one potential ground, which can be utilized for building a strong brand. The introduction highlights the theoretical gaps, which need to be addressed to apply the brand equity concept as a guiding perspective on B2B brand building. Furthermore, the introductory chapter specifies the main research purpose, the structure of this dissertation and the conceptual links between the papers included in the dissertation.

1.1 The importance of strong brands

In the continuously changing world economy, branding has occupied an important position by being a part of existence and embracing the activities of large corporations, small size enterprises, and not-for-profit organizations. Dating back to about 1300 B.C. (Keller 2003), branding still plays a major role in survival and success of different types of companies and organizations. Initially, brands were used as the means for differentiating the products by craftsmen and claiming the ownership of animals by cattle owners (de Chernatony and McDonald 2003, Kapferer 2004). Nowadays, companies use brands not only with an aim to differentiate the company’s marketing offerings from the ones of competitors, but also to reach the minds and hearts of their customers and create special emotional connections with them. The rational and emotional brand values became appealing for reaching the target customers in both the B2C market and the B2B market (Gobe 2001; Lynch and de Chernatony 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006). Over time, the importance of branding has increased in a tremendous way.

Today, companies in a variety of industries attempt to develop strong brands and to use them for achieving success in the competitive marketing environment. As recent research shows, strong brands can act as important triggers of confidence, satisfaction, and risk reduction for customers (Leek and Christodoulides 2011). Companies owning strong brands can benefit from higher quality perceptions, better differentiation, higher demand, premium price, and higher customer loyalty, among other advantages (Leek and Christodoulides 2011). Practitioners from different industries and the academicians acknowledge brands as one of core strategic assets of a company (Aaker 1991).
The potential influence that strong brands could have on customers’ choice and behavior is reflected also in the estimation of approximate value of these brands. For example, the summative value of the top five most valuable brands in 2011 was estimated to be close to 298 billion dollars (Interbrand 2011). These leading global brands, which are Coca-Cola, IBM, Microsoft, Google, GE, operate in such various sectors as beverages, business services, computer software, internet services and other diversified services (Interbrand 2011). The value of these brands became especially apparent during the times of financial crisis and recession. Despite disadvantageous conditions in the environment these brands could keep their leading positions, generate high turnover, and most importantly to sustain high level of loyalty among their customers.

Despite the importance that strong brands have for companies and their customers, the brand alone is no guarantee for company’s long-term success and customer commitment. This core strategic asset of a company might be vulnerable to changes occurring in the marketing environment. Such evidence indicates in the problems faced by a number of companies in the financial sector. Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers in the United States, Northern Rock in the United Kingdom, Landsbanki in Iceland, Roskilde Bank in Denmark, Anglo Irish Bank in Ireland are some examples of strong brands, which went bankrupt or were acquired by other financial institutions and governments as a result of the financial crisis in 2007-2010 (Lybeck 2011). Other strong brands such as Arthur Andersen, Enron, and Firestone experienced high losses in sales or even stopped their operations because of the crises of confidence (Farquhar 2003). These examples illustrate how the changes in the macro- or microenvironment can undermine the value of strong brands and even threaten the existence of companies owning these brands.

Considering the vulnerable nature of brands and the strength of impact that different factors from the marketing environment can have on these strategic assets of companies, it is important to understand how companies can manage brands effectively and continuously increase their value. This dissertation will focus on the core aspects of brand management, more specifically on how to enhance brand equity and to build strong brands. It is vital to investigate this topic, especially considering that prior research indicates that brands do have high importance for consumer decision making. The findings of a study, which was conducted in five countries from three continents, demonstrate the high impact of strong brands on customer behavior across various categories such as durables, services, fast moving consumer goods, and retail (Fischer, Völckner, and Sattler 2010). Therefore, companies need to develop appropriate strategies helping them not only to
survive and to sustain the strength of their brands, but also to continue building strong brands and raising their value over time.

1.2 Brand equity as a perspective on B2B brand building

The need for guiding principles, which would direct and support the marketing managers in their brand building efforts, triggered a stream of research focusing on brand building. The conceptual models highlight possibilities for the internal brand building, which takes place within the company and ensures its alignment with the strategic objectives of the company (e.g. Urde 2003; Wallström, Karlsson, and Salehi–Sangari 2008). Furthermore, the conceptual models portray opportunities for the external brand building, which specifies the actions, which should be undertaken to communicate the brand image to the customers (e.g. Berry 2000; Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). To successfully compete in the market and to continuously enhance the strength of its brand, a company needs to move beyond the internal brand building, and become successful in the external brand building, which focuses on the formation of brand perceptions in the minds of customers. Due to the large variety of activities that companies can utilize for building strong brands and the complex nature of customer decision making, there is no consensus among the researchers on the optimal model of building a strong brand.

One perspective of high value for understanding of how brand building can be managed by a company refers to brand equity management. The brand equity concept captures “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller 1993, p. 8). Rooted in the associative network memory model, the brand equity concept clearly presents the overall development of brand knowledge in the customers’ minds (Aaker 1991; Keller 1993). Inspired by the seminal contributions by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), brand equity is considered in this doctoral dissertation as an influential trigger of customer’s specific reaction to company’s marketing activities, which is affected by his or her brand knowledge. Brand knowledge formed in customers’ minds has an impact on an extent of effect that brand equity could have in guiding customers in their choices and behavior. A number of factors can influence customer’s brand knowledge. Some examples of such factors include customer’s prior experience of using a brand, or company’s promotional efforts, or even customer’s encounter with employees of a company, as it becomes especially relevant in case of services. Thus, the specific dimensions, which form brand equity, can be seen as the potential key elements that need to be enhanced to increase brand value. The analysis of
brand equity can be used for identifying the logical sequence of steps that contribute to building a strong brand.

Despite the valuable theoretical insights on brand building that can be acquired from prior studies on brand equity, there is a gap in research on this topic in the B2B setting. Over years, the literature reviews have highlighted a need to investigate the branding phenomenon in general and brand equity in particular in the B2B context (Leek and Christodoulides 2011; Sheth and Sharma 2006; Wind 2006). More specifically, the examination of research on B2B marketing acknowledges that there is a large number of studies on brand equity conducted in the B2C market, while there is a lack of studies examining this concept in the B2B market (Sheth and Sharma 2006). Furthermore, a recent literature review of research on brand management proposes that future studies need to scrutinize the dimensionality and operationalization of B2B brand equity, its antecedents and consequences in different sectors of the B2B market (Leek and Christodoulides 2011). The papers included in this doctoral dissertation will address these gaps in extant research on B2B brand equity. Furthermore, this dissertation demonstrates specifically how certain factors, which will be discussed in detail later in the dissertation, can be utilized for understanding of how strong brands can be built in the B2B setting.

The dimensions of brand equity, which the author will assess in the analysis, draw upon the seminal model of brand equity (Aaker 1991, 1996). Therefore, this dissertation investigates the potential applicability of Aaker’s model (1991, 1996) in the B2B context and its prospective use for B2B brand building. Being applied as a foundation for developing the conceptual models in the B2C setting, Aaker’s (1991, 1996) conceptualization of brand equity as consisting of four dimensions was used inconsistently and produced mixed results in previous studies conducted in the B2B setting. In fact, to date only two previous studies on B2B brand equity have considered simultaneously brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty as the key dimensions of brand equity. However, one of these studies (Gordon, Calantone and di Benedetto 1993) provides only exploratory empirical evidence and does not examine the robustness of Aaker’s model (1991, 1996). Another study includes only three dimensions of brand equity with brand awareness and brand associations being merged to one of these dimensions (Kim and Hyun 2011). Therefore, this dissertation makes a theoretical contribution by investigating the possibility of utilizing all four initial dimensions of Aaker’s model (1991, 1996) for measuring B2B brand equity. In addition, the dissertation examines whether this model of brand equity should be operationalized as having a one-dimensional structure or a multi-dimensional structure. These statistical tests are
beneficial for clarifying the dimensions of brand equity, which can be enhanced, and used in research on B2B brand building.

Especially valuable for advancing research on brand building, is the proposition about a possible hierarchy of effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Being noticed in the exploratory study by Gordon, Calantine, and di Benedetto (1993), the hierarchical effects between the dimensions of brand equity can contribute to better understanding of the milestones that need to be reached during brand building and the interrelations that exist between them. In spite of the relevance that the investigation of the hierarchy of effects between the brand equity dimensions can grant for theoretically developing the brand equity concept and for understanding of brand building, prior research has only limited exploratory evidence of such hierarchical relationships. Therefore, this dissertation makes a theoretical contribution by investigating the hierarchical effects between the dimensions of brand equity.

Furthermore, besides conducting a comprehensive analysis of the B2B brand equity model, its composing dimensions, and the interrelationships between them, the dissertation contributes to the branding theory by scrutinizing the factors, which can affect the formation of brand equity. The dissertation empirically tests the hypothesized effects of these factors on B2B brand equity. An understanding about the factors, which influence the enhancement of brand equity, is thus important for brand building. However, as it will be shown later in this dissertation, in addition to understanding the brand equity dimensions, ignorance of factors affecting interactions between service providers and their customers might undermine the results of actions aiming to increase brand equity. Furthermore, it is critical to understand how employees’ efforts to meet customers’ expectations of their role behavior and how contextual factors affect customers’ decision-making. Therefore, it is important to examine customers’ expectations of such factors, since they can potentially have a strong impact on brand building and overall brand equity.

Despite the propositions to investigate the effects of various internal and external factors on brand equity, prior research does not provide much evidence about these factors. One example of such a proposition can be found in the literature review on branding and brand management by Keller and Lehmann (2006) suggesting that future studies need to investigate the impact of experience and other marketing drivers on brand equity. Since there is a limited number of studies on B2B brand equity, the examination of factors affecting B2B brand equity is relatively scarce. More specifically, previous research focusing on the multi-dimensional models of brand equity
provides empirical evidence about the effects of corporate image and marketing-mix efforts such as channel performance, the value-oriented price, promotion, and after-sales service on different dimensions and overall brand equity (Kim and Hyun 2011). The dissertation addresses this need for research and scrutinizes different factors, which can affect B2B brand equity and its development. The four papers composing this doctoral dissertation focus on the service providers, the customers, and the interaction between them, which takes place during the service provision. The papers develop hypotheses about factors affecting B2B brand equity and test the proposed effects using survey data collected in 2007 and 2010. Since the impact of these factors on brand equity has not been examined in previous branding research, the findings presented in this dissertation are of high value for branding theory.

1.3 Research context

Concerning the empirical setting, the dissertation addresses propositions stating a need to investigate the brand equity concept across different sectors of the B2B market. So far, previous studies have investigated brand equity of industrial goods in the contexts of electrical products (Gordon, Calantone and di Benedetto 1993), office electronics (Hutton 1997), manufacturing of industrial goods (Michell, King, and Reast 2001), electrical equipment (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt 2004), and specialty chemicals (van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). Moreover, prior studies on brand equity of B2B services were conducted in the contexts of financial services (Taylor, Hunter, and Lindberg 2007), logistics services (Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt 2008), electronic tracking systems (Kuhn, Alpert, and Pope 2008), and IT software (Kim and Hyun 2011). In spite of representing a large sector of the B2B market, the professional services industry has not been previously chosen as a context for examining factors affecting B2B brand equity.

Nevertheless, the company’s success or failure in building a strong B2B brand can have crucial consequences in the services setting, including the sector of professional services. The brand can help the company to overcome challenges originating from the nature of services such as their intangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons 2001; Grönroos 2000; Lovelock, Vandermerwe, and Lewis 1999). In the professional services industry, the market leading companies often use their strong brands as bases for competition and creation of sustainable competitive advantages. The brands are utilized also to ensure the customers’ trust towards the service providers and facilitating the development of long-term relationships between the service companies and
their customers. Therefore, the papers in this dissertation are addressing the need to examine the formation of brand equity and the potential way of building a strong brand in the professional services context.

The dissertation provides insights on building strong brands in one sector of professional services, which includes auditing, accounting, and consultancy services. Furthermore, it should be noted that this dissertation focuses on a unique situation that occurred in this sector of professional services in Sweden. Considering the directives of European Union (2006/43/EC, 2008/30/EC), the Swedish government made a decision to abolish the statutory audit requirement for companies, which do not meet the EU size criteria for mandatory audit (SOU 2008:32). Certain segments of customers, which were currently obligated to acquire auditing services, would now have a choice to decide whether they would continue purchasing these services or not. Consequently, they would have to decide whether they would stay with their current service provider or switch to another service provider in the future. The need to have a strong brand name in this sector of professional services became even more apparent considering these changes in legislation, increasing complexity in the marketing environment, and raising competition. Although 60% of the customers of auditing companies stated in one study that they were planning to continue the auditing of their accounts, the remaining customers did not choose this option (Svanström 2008). Strong brands could potentially make an impact on the choices of prospective customers, but also affect the decisions of current customers to continue purchasing the auditing services from their current provider.

The changes occurring in the marketing environment stimulated the interest in research on branding among the companies providing auditing and accounting services in Sweden. Being a part of research project, the author gain access to the customer database of one of the Big Four auditing companies and an opportunity to involve their customers as respondents in the planned study. To clarify, the Big Four auditing companies in Sweden are Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG, and PricewaterhouseCoopers. According to the annual reports of these companies, the Big Four companies employ more than 7000 people in total, and provide their services to more than 80% of the companies operating in Sweden (Deloitte 2007, Ernst & Young 2007, KPMG 2007, Öhrlings PricewaterhouseCoopers 2007). The variety of professional services performed by the Big Four companies includes auditing, accounting, consulting, and business advisory services. The range of their customers spans across different sectors including companies listed on the stock exchange to SMEs, non-for-profit organizations to business companies, state controlled organizations to privately owned companies. Since the changes in legislation might cause even stronger tendency among
customers to rely on brand names when choosing between professional services providers, it is of high relevance to investigate how strong brands can be built in this particular B2B market.

To summarize, this dissertation addresses a number of gaps in branding research, particularly in the field of studies on B2B brand equity. The papers make theoretical contributions by comprehensively examining the concept of brand equity in the B2B setting and scrutinizing a number of factors, which can affect the overall development of brand equity and the specific relationships between its dimensions. Furthermore, the author will discuss the findings presented in this dissertation from a broader perspective and elaborate on how these insights can facilitate research and management of B2B brand building and brand equity.

1.4 Research purpose

The main purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to investigate factors affecting B2B brand building by applying the brand equity perspective in the professional services context. The dissertation is composed of four papers focusing on the brand equity concept and the factors, which can be considered to have a high impact on the development of brand equity in the B2B services setting. The dissertation develops the findings presented in the papers and clarifies how this knowledge can be utilized for building a strong B2B brand. The research purpose will be achieved by addressing the following sub-purposes, which are:

- To examine the structural composition of brand equity in the B2B setting based on the assessment of the one-dimensional model and the multi-dimensional model,
- To analyze possibilities of B2B brand building across the four dimensions of brand equity while considering the hierarchical effects between these dimensions,
- To evaluate the effects of factors, which capture the interaction between the customers and the services providers, on the development of B2B brand equity.

The dissertation presents the results of two quantitative studies, which led to the development and examination of the conceptual models presented in four papers composing this dissertation. Three peer-reviewed and published articles and one book chapter examine different aspects related to the enhancement of B2B brand equity in the professional services setting. The empirical data collected during the first study in 2007 was used for testing the conceptual models proposed in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3. The empirical data collected during the second study in 2010 was utilized for
examining the conceptual model formulated in paper 4. A well-known professional services brand representing a corporate name of one of the Big Four auditing companies, its brand equity and the factors, which could potentially have a significant impact on the customers’ perceptions of this brand, were in the focus of these two studies. The customers of one of the Big Four auditing companies served as the respondents in this research. The integration of the findings presented in the papers and the discussion of their potential use for B2B brand building are addressed comprehensively in this dissertation.

The first paper entitled “Brand equity in the business-to-business context: Examining the structural composition” (Biedenbach 2012) creates the foundation for investigating the brand equity concept in the B2B setting and achieving the purpose of this doctoral dissertation. The main aim of the article is to examine the structural composition of brand equity and the interrelationships between the dimensions of brand equity in the B2B context. The literature review conducted in this paper explores the theoretically and empirically driven arguments supporting the proposition to apply the brand equity concept in both the B2C market and the B2B market. By evaluating the one-dimensional model and the multi-dimensional model of brand equity, the paper examines the structural composition and the dimensionality of B2B brand equity. Additionally, the paper tests the existence of the hierarchy of effects between the brand equity dimensions. By specifying the model, which can be utilized for measuring and managing brand equity in the B2B setting, the paper provides initial knowledge on how the companies can build the B2B brand across four dimensions of brand equity.

The second paper entitled “B2B brand equity: Investigating the impact of contextual factors” (Biedenbach 2010) continues the examination of the multi-dimensional model of brand equity, which was developed and tested in the first paper. The main aim of the book chapter is to investigate the impact of contextual factors in the organizational decision making process on the formation of B2B brand equity. The paper investigates the factors capturing the characteristics of customers and their potential impact on the development of B2B brand equity and its four dimensions. The paper expands knowledge on B2B brand building by not only providing additional evidence on how it can be developed across the dimensions of brand equity, but also by portraying how such characteristics of customers as relative size of customer’s company and its industry sector can affect B2B brand building.

The third paper entitled “The impact of customer experience on brand equity in a business-to-business services setting” (Biedenbach and Marell 2010)
proceeds with the examination of factors, which can affect the development of B2B brand equity. The main aim of the article is to investigate the impact of customer experience on brand equity in the professional services setting. This paper focuses on evaluation of the effects of one factor, which captures the interaction between the service providers and the customers, on four dimensions of brand equity. Knowledge about the impact of customer experience on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty contributes to the understanding of relevance of this factor and its possible utilization for enhancing brand equity and building a strong B2B brand.

The fourth paper entitled “Brand equity in the professional service context: Analyzing the impact of employee role behavior and customer-employee rapport” (Biedenbach, Bengtsson, and Wincent 2011) builds on the findings of previous papers and advances them by analyzing new factors, which can have the significant effects on the dimensions of brand equity and brand building in the B2B setting. The main aim of this article is to examine whether factors related to customers’ perception of employees’ role behavior in terms of customer perceived role ambiguity, role overload, and customer-employee rapport influence the development of brand equity in the professional service context. The paper continues the analysis of factors capturing the interaction between the service providers and the customers, which in this case is the customer-employee rapport. Additionally, the paper focuses on the investigation of the factors, which capture the customers’ reflections about the service providers and their behavior during the service encounter. The paper advances knowledge on B2B brand building by considering the potential role of the company employees and consequences that their behavior can lead to in this process.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

This doctoral dissertation consists of two parts. In the first part, the author introduces the background, the purpose and the structure of the dissertation (Chapter 1). The author presents the theoretical framework (Chapter 2), and the research design and methodology (Chapter 3). Furthermore, this part includes the summary of papers (Chapter 4), the discussion and the conclusions (Chapter 5). The second part of the dissertation is composed of three academic articles and one book chapter, which through their findings enable the achievement of the main purpose of this dissertation. Although each of the papers makes a unique theoretical contribution and leads to findings, which are valuable for practitioners, the combined knowledge arising from the four papers makes an additional contribution to branding research and the practical knowledge on B2B brand building. Overall, the
dissertation clarifies the logical links between these four papers and elaborates on how their results can support theoretical understanding and the practical management of B2B brand building.

For achieving the main purpose of the dissertation, the author utilizes the brand equity perspective. The seminal model of brand equity proposed by Aaker (1991, 1996) serves as a foundation for the conceptual models developed by the author. The multi-dimensional model of brand equity links the papers, since all conceptual models tested in the papers are following the basic principles of this model. The conceptual models examined in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 investigate the hierarchical effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, whereas paper 4 evaluates the interrelationships between brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The conceptual frameworks presented in these papers build upon the findings of each other and logically contribute to the investigation of brand equity in the B2B context.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual links between the papers composing the doctoral dissertation. In addition to the brand equity concept, Figure 1 shows the variety of factors included in the conceptual models, which examine the potential impact of the service providers, the customers, and their interaction on the dimensions of B2B brand equity and its development. Being of high relevance for research on B2B brand equity, the conceptual models provide valuable insights and guidance on brand building in the B2B context. The doctoral dissertation clarifies possibilities of utilizing the brand equity perspective for building a strong B2B brand.
Figure 1. Conceptual links between the papers and the frameworks
2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework gives an overview of different approaches, which can be used for understanding brand building. This chapter describes the alternatives for estimating brand value, which is an important outcome of brand building. Following the brand equity perspective, the author examines brand building possibilities in the B2B sector across the dimensions of brand equity. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the factors affecting B2B brand equity during interactions between customers and employees of a service company. The literature review integrates the theoretical assumptions and serves as a foundation for the general model integrating the conceptual frameworks presented in four papers, which are included in this doctoral dissertation.

2.1 Understanding B2B brand building

The contemporary practice of marketing management has evolved over decades being driven by and forced to address rapid changes taking place in the marketing environment. Tremendous shifts in the global economy moving from the goods-based industrial economy to the service-based economy, and subsequently to the experience economy, affected the core focus of marketing strategies developed by marketing managers (Pine and Gilmore 1998). Although the foci of marketing strategies and the means for achieving them have changed over time, one particular consideration had to be made by marketing managers if they aimed to sustain long-term success of their respective companies. Namely, marketing managers had to consider consequences of marketing strategies and their impact on corporate brands and specific brand names of particular marketing offerings provided by their company. To succeed in the complex marketing environment, marketing managers need to align the brand-related decisions and their key strategic choices such as positioning strategy, managing corporate reputation, integrating marketing channels and communications, assessing performance, developing new products, and creating alliances, among others (Keller and Lehmann 2006).

In general, a brand plays a fundamental part in representing a company’s name, a logotype or even being used as a special term for describing marketing offerings of a company. Balmer and Gray (2003, p. 973) specify a number of roles that can be attributed by marketing managers to brands: “marks denoting ownership, image-building devices, symbols associated with key values, means by which to construct individual identities, and a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed”. These roles of
brands have developed over time following changes in the global economy. While particular marketing managers might emphasize one of these roles when they manage their brands, it is important to notice that a brand has a potential to increase the value for both the company and its customers.

Based on the definition suggested by the American Marketing Association (2011), a brand is “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Although the primary function of the brand is to identify a seller or a company owning it, the real power of the brand relates to the effects that it can have on the customers, their perceptions, and behaviors. For example, studies conducted in the B2C setting show that brands can trigger customers to re-define their identity (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and even form dependency or love relationships with their favorite brands (Fournier 1998). In the B2B setting, research confirms that customers are willing to pay a price premium for their favorite brand, to recommend it to others, and to consider buying brand extensions (Hutton 1997; Taylor, Hunter, and Lindberg 2007). Nevertheless, the transformation of a brand from just being an identification sign to the powerful stimulus, which can guide behavior of customers and create value for the company, can only be possible if the company manages to build a strong brand and to find a way to keep this success for a long term.

The brand building efforts and the investments associated with them are made to support the management of corporate and product brands. As such, brands may be used as key strategic assets for the creation of competitive advantage and long-term profitability (Kotler and Pfoertsch 2007). In this context, brand building concerns the development of brand-building skills for “using all the company’s particular assets to create unique entities that certain consumers really want; entities which have a lasting personality, based on a special combination of physical, functional and psychological values; and which have a competitive advantage in at least one area of marketing” (King 1991, p. 5). To achieve a long-term success, brand building should be in alignment with the processes linking strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image (Hatch and Schultz 2001). Given the importance of brand building, companies need to support and create the conditions necessary for its implementation. Aaker (1991) proposes a number of indicators to identify problems related to brand building such as under-emphasis, or even erosion of brand building in companies. The suggested indicators include lack of knowledge by managers about the levels of brand awareness, the strength of brand associations, the absence of systematic and reliable measures of customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Aaker 1991, p. 9). Furthermore, companies may lack indicators linking their
brands to their long-term performance and success. They may not have a person in charge of the brand, no meaningful long-term objectives and strategic commitment by the managers, no measurement system allowing for evaluation of the effects of marketing activities and programs (Aaker 1991, p. 9). Therefore, companies must facilitate their brand building by continuously developing knowledge, procedures, and tools necessary for the effective and successful brand building.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, despite empirical evidence confirming the benefits of building and owning strong brands, the vast majority of studies on processes and activities supporting brand building are conducted in the B2C market, whereas the number of studies on B2B brands is significantly smaller. A review of current research on B2B marketing suggests a need for more studies, particularly to investigate B2B brand effects, but also to examine other factors, which may increase our understanding of B2B branding (Sheth and Sharma 2006). One of the reasons behind the lack of research on B2B branding can be traced back to the classical view on the organizational decision making, which highlights its rational nature, and consequently the minor impact of brands on the final buying decision compared to such attributes as functionality and performance (Anderson, Narus, and Narayandas 2008). In addition, the seminal models of organizational buying behavior do not highlight explicitly the relevance of branding in this process or just briefly mention a brand as one of choices that buyers make during the process of buying (Johnston and Lewin 1996; Sheth 1973; Webster and Wind 1972).

Over last ten years, B2B research has generated sufficient empirical evidence to question the assumption that B2B decision making is entirely rational. For example, such evidence include demonstrating the impact of emotions on customer behavior in the B2B setting (Andersen and Kumar 2006; Lynch and de Chernatony 2004). Previous research also highlights that branding contributes to trust building between B2B companies and their customers (Roberts and Merrilees 2007). Furthermore, prior studies demonstrate that a relatively high proportion of B2B customers can be considered as branding receptive (Mudambi 2002). A company therefore needs to develop a strong brand to be appealing and reach its full potential among customers in its market segment. Considering the evidence, which indicates the relevance of B2B branding, it is important to understand how to build strong brands in this setting. The papers included in this doctoral dissertation provide valuable insights on B2B brand building and the factors affecting it in the professional services industry.
Taking into account previous studies on B2B branding, brand building has not been addressed explicitly by the researchers in this context. So far, a strong focus in prior research was on examining the nature and relevance of branding in the B2B setting (Lindgreen, Beverland, and Farrelly 2010). Although some conclusions can be made about B2B brand building based on these findings, research needs to provide more clear evidence related to these issues. However, some models proposed in previous research indicate possible approaches, which can be applied for examining B2B brand building.

One such approach used to describe brand building in the B2B market focuses on the internal brand building. The internal brand building starts with the development of “the organization’s own understanding of the brand and its commitment to it” (Urde 2003, p. 1022). For example, a study using a case from the automotive industry highlights that being grounded in company’s mission, vision, organizational and core values, the internal brand building includes the development of brand architecture, product attributes, personality, brand positioning, communication strategy and consequently of internal brand identity (Urde 2003). Another example is the study by Wallström, Karlsson, and Salehi–Sangari (2008) involving companies from the financial, banking and real estate sectors, which suggests that brand audit, brand identity, and brand position statement are the most important steps in the internal brand building. Their three cases indicate that mission, vision, organizational culture, and brand architecture are addressed during brand audit, and hence, are included in the definition of the brand identity and the formulation of a brand position statement (Wallström, Karlsson, and Salehi–Sangari 2008). Although research on the internal brand building highlights the necessary steps for planning and implementing a company’s brand strategy, less emphasis is put on external factors, role of customers in brand building and possible actions for sustaining a strong brand through an effective branding strategy.

The models focusing on the external brand building highlight the unique role of customers in brand building and a company’s potential efforts to shape their customers’ perception of its brand. For example, a study exemplifying the external brand building process in different categories of functional, symbolic and experiential brands emphasizes that the fundamental purpose of marketing activities should be on “conveying a brand image to a target market” (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986, p. 135). A normative framework on brand concept management suggests that the brand image should be selected, implemented, and controlled over time (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). The main stages in the process of brand management include selecting, introducing, elaborating, and fortifying a brand concept.
(Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis 1986). Another example of a model focusing on the external brand building suggests more specific actions and conditions that companies should consider to build successfully their brands in the services setting. The proposed model portrays the importance of the company’s presented brand, which relates to the company’s controlled communication of its identity, the external brand communications including the information that cannot be controlled by the company, and finally customers’ experience with the company affecting their perception of the brand (Berry 2000). Although the study does not contain an empirical examination of the model, it includes the illustrative examples from high-performance service companies, which support the stated propositions (Berry 2000). Overall, the alternative models focusing on the external brand building portray a variety of ways of how a company can reach the customers through its branding strategies and shape their perception about the brand over time. However, essential differences exist between the proposed models. These differences are not only based on the particular stages describing the potential steps in brand building, but also on their choices of determinants and contextual factors, which are assumed to affect overall brand building.

Some theoretical models attempt to integrate the internal process and the external process of brand building (Aaker 1996, de Chernatony 2001, Keller 2003, Urde 2003). Due to their complex nature, previous studies have not examined these models empirically. Furthermore, before considering a complex and overarching model, it might be fruitful to obtain a clear picture based on sufficient empirical evidence about each approach and their consequences for a company, which plans to implement these approaches for their brand building. Depending on the contextual setting, the internal brand building and the external brand building might have different priorities for the company. For example, a leading company in a mature market might prefer to focus more efforts and resources on the external brand building, whereas a new company developing a new brand might firstly concentrate on the internal brand building.

To date, a large number of models and theoretical propositions have centered on the actions that a company has to undertake to build the brand internally or the marketing communications associated with the external brand building. To achieve success, the sole emphasis on the internal brand building might not be sufficient. Inevitably, the company will have to devote their efforts and resources to the external brand building. Traditionally, the mass media communication tools such as advertising have been used for the external brand building, but these tools can turn out to be insufficient for achieving success and reaching a sustainable competitive advantage
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(Joachimsthaler and Aaker 1997). Since the customers are the ones, who in the end will decide whether to buy a market offering or not, companies need to consider the effects of their brand building efforts on the customers’ thoughts, feelings, and behavior. A guiding notion is that the brand equity perspective can be beneficial for understanding these effects and the challenges associated with implementing brand building. Specifically, the brand equity perspective utilized in this dissertation enables the author to capture the external brand building, which starts with the creation of brand awareness, continues with the development of brand associations and perceived quality, and consequently leads to the establishment of brand loyalty. Furthermore, this perspective makes it possible to estimate the effects of other internal and external factors on the final customers, their perceptions of the brand, and overall brand building. The following section clarifies the nature of brand equity and the potential ways of assessing it.

2.2 Capturing brand equity

The resources that a company invests in brand building are expected to support the development of a strong brand and to sustain its successful position over time. The brand building efforts need to be planned and managed in a way so that invested resources could generate sufficient benefits for the company, which owns the brand. Besides creating a competitive advantage, the brands are expected to produce short- and long-term cash flows and predictable growth in earnings (Shocker, Srivastava, and Ruekert 1994). The decisions and actions undertaken during brand building need to be coordinated and support the final goal of creating a strong brand. The brand equity perspective can be utilized for developing a logical sequence of steps for building a strong brand, collecting information about the outcomes of these efforts and utilizing it further for continuously enhancing brand equity.

Historically, companies have used financial information about changes of brand value as guidance for evaluation and coordination of their brand building activities. Originally, the financially driven methods were developed for calculating brand value for accounting, mergers and acquisitions, or divestment purposes (Keller 1993). The methods highlighted in the accounting literature for estimating brand value in monetary terms include price premium method, earning valuation method, royalty payments method, market value method, and original/historic cost method (Tollington 2002). Further advances in the financially based brand valuation techniques led to the specification of a large number of models by academicians and practitioners. The extensive review of financially grounded models from
more than 50 suppliers suggests the following classification (Salinas and Amber 2009):

- Cost-based methods, which evaluate the brand based on the historical costs of its creation or the potential costs needed for creation of a similar brand;
- Market-based methods, which calculate brand value by using open market values of similar assets as reference points of its price;
- Income-based methods, which estimates the brand value by considering future cash flows attributable to the brand.

Unquestionably, information acquired from a financial brand evaluation is a relevant indicator, which can directly show whether or not the brand building efforts managed to meet the financial goals. However, this information does not reflect upon customers’ knowledge and behavior, which are important to understand and to consider for successfully building a strong brand. The brand equity perspective can be used for not only assessing the outcomes of brand building, but also as a guidance on how these efforts can be developed and managed throughout different stages of the brand knowledge formation.

The customer-based brand equity models focus on the content and structure of brand knowledge developed in the customer’s mind (Keller 1993). Initially proposed in the 80’s, the concept of customer-based brand equity was found to be of high relevance for understanding the branding phenomenon and developing successful branding strategies (Kapferer 2004). In one of the key definitions of brand equity, Farquhar (1989) refers to the added value given by a brand to a product. Aaker (1991, p. 15) specifies that brand equity is “a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand’s name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers”. Keller (1993, p. 8) explains that brand equity arises as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.” These classical definitions of brand equity link together the company and its customers. Such links become evident, since these definitions assess outcomes of companies’ marketing activities and customers’ responses to these activities based on brand knowledge formed in their minds. Furthermore, brand equity can be seen as a potential moderator of the effects of marketing activities implemented by a company to shape attitudes and behaviors of its customers (Raggio and Leone 2007).

In comparison to the financial brand valuation techniques, the customer-based brand equity models provide a more direct guidance on how a company can proceed with brand building to achieve each stage in the brand knowledge development. Over time, some attempts were made to integrate
the financial brand valuation techniques and the brand equity models. Although being a promising combination, such models should be applied with caution, because brand equity is “an asset, created by good marketing and should not be confused with the financial worth of that asset” (Salinas and Amber 2009, p. 40). Furthermore, Raggio and Leone (2007) highlight the fact that the concepts of brand equity and brand value should be separated theoretically. Brand equity represents the meaning of the brand to the consumer and moderates the impact of company’s marketing actions on the consumer’s actions (Raggio and Leone 2007). Brand value represents the meaning of the brand to the company and reflects the sale or potential replacement value of the brand (Raggio and Leone 2007). According to Raggio and Leone (2007, p. 392), the primary task of brand management should be “to maximize and leverage brand equity to increase the brand value”.

Considering the propositions from previous research, this dissertation utilizes the customer-based brand equity perspective. Different factors affecting the external brand building are considered as potential determinants, which can help the company to leverage its brand equity. By adopting Aaker’s (1991) conceptualization of brand equity, the studies presented in this dissertation consider different dimensions of brand equity and their potential for brand building across these dimensions. Furthermore, the studies examine the certain determinants, which can leverage brand equity and facilitate brand building during interactions between the customer and the company’s employees. The following section presents the customer-based brand equity model in more detail and elaborates upon the brand building possibilities across the dimensions of brand equity.

### 2.3 Examining B2B brand building across the dimensions of brand equity

A variety of actions available for initiating and carrying out B2B brand building adds complexity to the decisions that the company needs to make to build a strong brand that can reach its full potential. A fruitful way to proceed with such actions is to leverage brand equity by focusing on its dimensions. Since the concept of brand equity links together responses of customers influenced by their brand knowledge and actions of companies, which market their brands to selected target segments (Keller 1993), the focus on the companies’ activities on building the brand across the dimensions of brand equity is a logical starting point. Furthermore, consideration of the brand equity dimensions can help the marketing managers to understand the mechanisms behind the development of
customers’ brand knowledge and to assist them in creating brand loyalty among customers.

The associative network memory model lies at the core of the brand equity concept. Following the principles of this model, semantic memory or knowledge is considered to contain a set of linked nodes, which store information and can mutually activate each other depending on information retrieved from memory (Keller 1993). A node in a customer’s memory can signify a brand, a product, or an attribute, whereas links between them trigger the development of associations in the customer’s mind (Krishnan 1996). In general, the nodes reflect upon concepts stored in a customer’s mind and the linkages between these nodes portray the relationships among these concepts (Dillon, Madden, Kirmani, and Mukherjee 2001). Based on the associative network memory model, specific brand knowledge can be explained as “a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked” (Keller 1993, p. 3). These associations are triggered as a response to different cues that customers receive from environment. For example, when rating a brand, the customer can retrieve information directly from the brand node and the nodes, which are linked with it, or to compute this information, based on available brand knowledge and triggered associations (Dillon, Madden, Kirmani, and Mukherjee 2001). The specific mechanisms, which are used for accessing the brand-related information, can be affected by a number of internal and external factors (e.g. previous brand knowledge, external branding cues, previous experience), but also by different biases (e.g. earlier attribute evaluation can affect the later ones) (Dillon, Madden, Kirmani, and Mukherjee 2001). Therefore, managers responsible for brand building have to face challenges related not only to creating brand knowledge in the customer’s mind, but also to supporting its strength, to generating brand cues, and to dealing with possible sources of biases, which can affect customers’ knowledge and behavior.

A complex phenomenon such as brand equity is often conceptualized by researchers as a multidimensional construct. Independent of the chosen context, B2C or B2B, previous studies highlight the multidimensional nature of brand equity by presenting it as a set of dimensions (e.g. Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt 2004; Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, and Donthu 1995; de Chernatony, Harris, and Christodoulides 2004; Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey 2005; van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005; Yoo and Donthu 2001). Despite a significant amount of research focusing on potential nature of brand equity, the studies do not indicate any consensus in relation to the choice of specific dimensions, which should constitute brand equity, the appropriate way to measure them, or relationships between these dimensions (Leek and Christodoulides 2011; Yoo and Donthu 2001). The
tremendous differences between the conceptual models suggested for examining brand equity can be found when comparing the proposed dimensions of this construct. The range of choices made in prior research varies from studies suggesting one generic measure of brand equity (e.g. Ailawadi, Lehmann, and Neslin 2003) to those utilizing up to five dimensions of brand equity (e.g. Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma 1995).

Nevertheless, a more detailed evaluation of existing multi-dimensional models of brand equity shows that the majority of studies utilize the core assumptions presented in the seminal works by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993). The dimensions of brand equity identified by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993) commonly form the core of different models of brand equity and appear directly as well as indirectly among a range of dimensions suggested by other authors. More precisely, Aaker (1991, 1996) identifies four dimensions of brand equity: brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. Keller (1993) describes brand equity as consisting of brand awareness and brand image reflected in brand associations. Originating from the associative network memory model, two of these classical models of brand equity refer to the strength of brand node captured by brand awareness and to other nodes containing brand associations (Keller 1993). Furthermore, the model suggested by Aaker (1991, 1996) integrates the learning effects, which occur in the customer’s mind and affect his or her subsequent behavior and brand loyalty.

To date, the seminal models of brand equity suggested by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993) have served as a foundation for further development of the measures of brand equity in the B2C and the B2B contexts. Over time, researchers have suggested a number of scales and modified models. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, these efforts did not result in a common agreement upon the appropriate measurements and the conceptualization of brand equity. The first paper (Biedenbach 2012) included in this doctoral dissertation presents a more elaborate overview of studies investigating the brand equity measurement and its development in the B2C context and the B2B context. The literature review conducted in this paper shows that the number of studies examining B2B brand equity is much smaller, and provides less conceptual development and empirical evidence compared to the studies on B2C brand equity (Biedenbach 2012). Overall, research on B2B brand equity can be concluded to be scarce, especially in regard to brand equity of B2B services (Biedenbach 2012).

The key principles of brand equity models proposed by Aaker (1991, 1996) and Keller (1993) can be found in some conceptual models examining B2B brand equity. For example, Aaker’s (1991, 1996) conceptualization of brand
equity and some of its initial dimensions are utilized in the models proposed by Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto (1993), Michell, King, and Reast (2001), van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens (2005), Taylor, Hunter, and Lindberg (2007), Kim and Hyun (2011). However, only two studies (Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993, Kim and Hyun 2011) consider all four dimensions of brand equity in one conceptual model. The rigor approach suggested by Aaker (1991, 1996) describes the brand knowledge formation and the mechanism of its constitution in a customer’s mind and behavior. Therefore, in the spirit of Aaker’s (1991,1996) model, the mechanisms associated with brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are applied in the papers included in this doctoral dissertation. The author acknowledges that some additional dimensions (e.g. brand attitude, brand uniqueness, perceived brand value) highlighted in prior B2B studies might complement these four dimensions of brand equity. Nevertheless, a detailed examination of measures applied for assessing these additional dimensions shows that they partly or fully match the initial four dimensions of brand equity specified in Aaker’s (1991,1996) model. Therefore, the author opted to focus on the core dimensions of brand equity, which are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. To manage successfully a strong B2B brand, it is important to understand the relevance of these dimensions for brand building and the potential relationships between them, which can be formed during brand building.

First, brand awareness shows “the salience of a brand in the consumer’s mind” (Aaker, 1996, p. 114). Brand awareness is estimated through brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is based on “consumers’ ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue” (Keller 1993, p. 3). Brand recall is based on “consumers’ ability to retrieve the brand when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or some other type of probe as a cue” (Keller 1993, p. 3). The development of brand awareness is a significant initial step in brand building. In the highly competitive B2B markets, brand awareness can be of crucial importance for success of the company. Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2008) argue that across many B2B industries, a brand with higher levels of brand awareness has better chances to be included in the B2B customer’s consideration set, and consequently to be selected by this customer compared with other unknown brands. Considering a large amount of alternative B2B products and services, their high relevance and costs for B2B buyers, brand awareness can play a major role in the customer decision making (van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). A remarkable difference between the B2C market and the B2B market can be observed by looking at different initiatives that the companies utilize for
creating brand awareness of their goods and services. Mass communication seems to be a leading tool in the B2C setting, whereas the spreading of information through personal contacts, professional conferences and exhibitions seem to be prevailing in the B2B setting (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt 2004; Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt 2008; Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993).

It is important to notice that the relevance of brand awareness can vary depending on the context of particular company and industry. For a new competitor entering the B2B market, the development of initial brand awareness will be of higher significance than for the companies, which are already established and well-known in this particular B2B industry. In some industries as for example the professional services industry, which was selected as a context for this dissertation, the top leading companies have established tremendously high levels of brand awareness over the years. In this case, the Big Four auditing companies already have such high levels of brand awareness making the contribution of brand awareness to brand building of these particular companies of less importance than contributions of other brand equity dimensions. The dimension of brand awareness was included in the conceptual models analyzed in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3. The findings presented in these papers indicate a rather low relevance of brand awareness in the selected study context. This notion was also evident in the suggestions from the reviewers, who have also brought up this fact to the authors of paper 4. Hence, the final model analyzed in paper 4 does not include the dimension of brand awareness. Prior to making this choice, two alternative models with brand awareness and without brand awareness were compared to each other. The effects and their directions presented in the final model of paper 4 did not differ significantly from the ones present in the alternative model with brand awareness. This finding can be explained by the fact that the respondents were the customers of one of the Big Four auditing company, who already had high brand awareness towards this leading B2B brand.

Second, brand associations refer to “image dimensions that are unique to a product class or a brand” (Aaker, 1996, p. 111). The favorable, strong, and unique brand associations are the relevant determinants of differential responses that the customers form towards various brands (Keller 1993). If the B2B companies will not devote sufficient efforts to brand associations during brand building, they might risk facing situations in which their brands have taken the unintended meanings. For example, such problems can arise when customers exchange information about the company and its brands through word of mouth (Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt 2008). Similarly to the B2C setting, B2B companies often consider intangible brand
associations as important contributors to the establishment of brand strength (Michell, King, and Reast 2001). The experiments conducted in the B2B setting show that the respondents give higher scores to brands with more positive brand associations on different attributes with the scores strongly corresponding to the brand associations they hold (Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993). Nevertheless, one model proposed in the B2B market does not include the dimension of brand associations (van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). Researchers explain the exclusion of brand associations from the model by the fact that B2B brands seldom evoke non-product related associations (van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). However, a closer examination of the suggested model indicates that the measures of product brand equity capture the product’s reputation, and the measures of corporate brand equity capture corporate associations. As such, brand associations are still implicitly added in the proposed model (van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). Considering the role of brand associations in creating brand meanings and ensuring brand strength, the companies need to consider this dimension of brand equity in brand building. Therefore, the dimension of brand associations is incorporated in the conceptual models presented in all four papers, which are included in this doctoral dissertation.

Third, perceived quality indicates “the customer’s perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives” (Aaker, 1991, p. 85). The development of high levels of perceived quality is thus an important part of building a strong B2B brand. Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2008) state that the consistent delivery of high quality performance in the B2B market and the linking of this performance with the service provider’s brand helps, not only to differentiate this brand from other brands, but also to make a distinction from other service providers in being perceived as a service provider delivering higher value. Furthermore, the perceived quality together with the price of an offering can determine the perceptual value range for all products or services offered by the company to its customers (Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993). The variations in product or service quality offered in one category may lead to transfer of perceptions to other offerings even if they belong to different categories. As observed in the study by Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto (1993), customer’s negative perception about quality of an individual product often leads to the switch of the manufacturer brand in all categories relevant for this specific customer. Overall, the studies conducted in the B2B setting show that perceived quality acts as a major driver of B2B brand equity (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt 2004; Michell, King, and Reast 2001; van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). The
dimension of perceived quality is therefore assessed in the conceptual models included in the four papers composing this doctoral dissertation.

Fourth, brand loyalty portrays the customer’s attachment to a particular brand (Aaker, 1991). The dimension of brand loyalty can be seen as one of ultimate aims of the brand building efforts. As earlier B2B studies indicate, high levels of brand loyalty correspond to customer’s willingness to pay a premium price, recommend the brand to others, and consider buying brand extensions (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt 2004; Hutton 1997). Considering that B2B services are often characterized by higher risk and complex purchasing process, brand loyalty plays a major role in the customers’ decision making (Bennett, Härtel, and McColl-Kennedy 2005). Thus, B2B customers, who find the service brand to be appropriate, and feel committed to buying these services, will most probably repurchase them again (Bennett, Härtel, and McColl-Kennedy 2005). High levels of brand loyalty towards their current brand in addition to limited associations and neutral attitudes towards other brands explain why some of B2B customers have never bought competing brands (Bogomolova and Romaniuk 2010). Because of the market size and large quantities acquired by certain customers, the gain or loss of few customers in the B2B market can have a tremendous impact on the short-term profit and the long-term success of the company (Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993). Therefore, it can be concluded that brand loyalty is important for success of B2B brands. Consequently, the dimension of brand loyalty is included in all conceptual models examined in the four papers presented in this dissertation.

The four dimensions of brand equity can be seen as core elements to be developed and enhanced during brand building. Following the brand equity perspective, brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are the major contributors to the formation of customers’ brand knowledge, which consequently will affect their preferences and purchasing behavior. Nevertheless, it is beneficial to understand the relationships between these dimensions and the potential impact that the brand equity dimensions might have on each other. The four papers included in the dissertation apply two alternative ways of examining the relationships between the brand equity dimensions. Paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 consider the hierarchical effects between the four dimensions of brand equity. Paper 4 examines the interrelationships between brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The outcomes of each way of investigating the relationships between the brand equity dimensions provide valuable input for companies aiming to build strong brands.
Initially, the brand equity model proposed by Aaker (1991, 1996) was described as a model consisting of certain categories and sets of measures, which were applied to estimate these components. The underlying components were presented as bases of brand equity (Aaker 1991). Overall, this core model did not explicitly address the relationships between the dimensions of brand equity, rather it focused on describing their meaning and potential measures. The further advances of this model led to the consideration of potential relationships between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. In the study evaluating brand equity of car brands and television brands, Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey (2005) demonstrate the presence of reciprocal interrelationships between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty (see Figure 2).

![Diagram of brand equity dimensions](image)

Figure 2. The interrelationships between the brand equity dimensions (Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey 2005)

Previous studies conducted in the B2B setting have not examined explicitly the mutual interrelationships between the dimensions of brand equity. Rather, the majority of studies on B2B brand equity evaluate the relevance of this concept for the B2B setting, and some antecedents and consequences of
it. Two prior B2B studies have chosen to analyze the direct relationships between certain dimensions, instead of estimating the interdependencies, which can occur between them (Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993; Kim and Hyun 2011). However, knowledge about the interrelationships present between the dimensions of brand equity can be of high value for companies aiming to build strong brands, because actions aimed to enhance one of the dimensions might have potential consequences for the other dimensions. Therefore, the conceptual model presented in paper 4 includes the interrelationships between brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Based on the findings from previous research, the paper develops and examines the hypotheses about the presence of a significant covariance between these dimensions of brand equity.

An alternative way of analyzing the relationships between the dimensions of brand equity focuses on the direct effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. This analysis follows the assumptions about a hierarchy between different types of brand knowledge, which is formed in the customer’s mind (Keller 1993). One of the studies, which made a first attempt to clarify such hierarchical effects between the brand equity dimensions, was conducted by Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto (1993) in the electrical products industry. Following their propositions, the development of brand equity can be seen as starting from the formation of brand awareness and brand associations, followed by the development of perceived quality, and finally resulting in brand loyalty (see Figure 3). However, despite an insightful explanation of the hierarchy of effects, Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto (1993) report only exploratory evidence to support this model.

The assumptions about the hierarchy of effects proposed by Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto (1993) are used as a foundation for developing the conceptual models presented in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 in this dissertation. Interestingly, paper 1 is one of the first studies to conduct a thorough empirical examination of the hierarchical effects between the dimensions of brand equity. In addition to these papers, one recent study integrates some direct effects between the dimensions in the model estimating the impact of marketing-mix efforts and corporate image on brand equity in the IT software sector (Kim and Hyun 2011). However, the study by Kim and Hyun (2011) does not completely follow the assumptions about the hierarchy of effects and does not distinguish between the dimensions of brand awareness and brand associations.
Overall, the model estimating the hierarchical effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty can be used as a guidance for brand building. Since the model directly shows the order in which the brand equity dimensions are being formed and the strength of their direct effects on each other, managers can follow this hierarchy when building their brands. The conceptual models investigated in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 examine such hierarchical effects between four dimensions of brand equity. In addition to the relationships between the brand equity dimensions, managers might consider additional factors with potentially strong impact on B2B brand equity. The following section presents such factors, which need to be considered in B2B brand building.
2.4 Investigating the factors affecting B2B brand building

The propositions that there are relationships between brand equity dimensions and that there are direct and indirect effects between them are a valuable input to B2B brand building. Nevertheless, the relationships between the dimensions and their effects on one another suggest that measures to support the brand building efforts should not be isolated from the context in which it takes place. For example, the service companies need to consider interactions during the service encounters, which may have crucial consequences for their brand building. During the planning and the implementation of brand building, the companies need to pay attention to the fact that the customers often develop their judgments about the service company based on their perception of a service encounter, which is “the period of time when the customer interacts directly with the firm” (Bitner 1990). Throughout this interaction between the customers and the service providers, the customers update their expectations and perceptions about the service company (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml 1993). If the service providers fail to meet customers’ expectations, this failure might trigger negative perceptions about the whole company. Consequently, in case of such negative outcomes, the investments in brand building will not result in the desired outcomes and the customers might even consider switching a supplier of services in question. Previous research shows that the main reasons behind customers’ switching of service companies are due to core services failures and service encounter failures (Keaveney 1995). Therefore, considering the crucial role that interactions between customers and service providers have on the success of brand building, these factors are integrated in the conceptual models presented in paper 2, paper 3, and paper 4.

Overall, the models proposed in three papers, which are included in this dissertation, consider three groups of factors relevant for building a strong brand. The selected factors consider two parties participating in a service encounter, which are a customer and a service provider, and an interaction, which takes place between them. First, the customers are in the focus of brand building, because they evaluate and make decisions about the service company and the brand that it owns. In the B2B market, it is important to consider how the contextual determinants such as the organizational characteristics of customer companies affect the decision makers and their buying behavior. The effects of brand building can therefore vary and be dependent on the relative size of the customer company and its industry sector. Previous research indicates that the functioning of cognitive processes differ between small businesses and large companies (Baron 1998; Busenitz and Barney 1997; Stewart, Watson, Carland, and Carland 1998). Similarly, there are differences in the reactions of managers to the external
environmental factors if small businesses are compared to large companies (de Brentani 1995; Coviello, Brodie, and Munro 2000; Dean and Sharfman, 1993; Kimberly 1976; Papadikis, Lioukas, and Chambers 1998; Smith, Cannon, and Grimm, 1988). Furthermore, differences in ownership, funding, and control forces cause differences in the decision making, which takes place in private sector firms and public sector organizations (Boyne, 2002; Papadikis, Lioukas and Chambers, 1998; Perry and Rainey, 1988; Rainey and Bozeman, 2000). Based on the findings from prior studies, paper 2 develops and tests the general hypothesis that differences with regard to size and industry sector could affect decision makers and their assessment of the dimensions forming brand equity.

Second, the service providers can affect outcomes of brand building, because they are the ones, who directly interact with the customer during the service encounter. Consequently, customer’s perception of the service encounter can influence customer’s thoughts and feelings about the service company and its brand. In line with the role behavior theory (Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970), the customers might form certain expectations regarding the service providers’ behavior. The service providers’ inability to meet these expectations might lead to a negative perception of the company, which adversely affects the company’s brand. Since the service providers’ job satisfaction and performance can be influenced negatively by role ambiguity and role overload (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Hartline and Ferrell 1996; Singh 1998; Veloutsou and Panigyrakis 2004), these factors might be possible reasons why service providers fail to meet expectations of their customers. Therefore, role ambiguity and role overload need to be considered in relation to their potential negative effects on brand building. To specify, role ambiguity occurs “when individuals lack a clear definition of the expectations of their role and the required methods to fulfill their duties” (Veloutsou and Panigyrakis 2004, p. 107). Role overload occurs “when individuals perceive that the cumulative demands exceed their abilities and motivation to perform the tasks related to their job successfully” (Veloutsou and Panigyrakis 2004, p. 107). Paper 4 develops and examines the specific hypotheses about the negative effects of role ambiguity and role overload on brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Third, interactions between the customers and the service providers are of high relevance for the company aiming to build a strong brand. Previous research indicates that building of the service brand is “a holistic process beginning with the relationship between the firm and its staff and coming alive during the interaction between staff and customers” (Dall’Olmo Riley and de Chernatony 2000, p. 138). Prior studies confirm that the interaction between the customers and the service providers is vital for customers’
perception of the service company (Bitner 1990; Gwinner, Gremler, and Bitner 1998; Hennig-Thurau, Groth, Paul, and Gremler 2006). Regarding the research context of this dissertation, customers’ perceptions of their interactions with professional services providers can modify customers’ evaluations of their performance, the final output and their general perceptions of the company and its brand. Therefore, the companies need to consider the potential effects of interactions with their customers on their brand building.

This dissertation focuses on two relevant concepts enabling the capturing of the customers’ reflections about their interactions with the service providers. Namely, the author uses such constructs as customer experience and customer-employee rapport to determine the customers’ perceptions of their encounters with the service providers. In paper 3, customer experience is considered as the customer’s interpretation of his or her interactions with the service providers and consequently the service brand, which also includes the customer’s perception of the value of this encounter (Biedenbach and Marell 2010). Paper 3 develops and examines hypotheses suggesting that customer experience has positive effects on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Paper 4 highlights the emotional aspects of interactions between the customer and the service provider. Paper 4 investigates more closely the effects of customer-employee rapport, which is defined as “a customer’s perception of having an enjoyable interaction with a service provider employee, characterized by a personal connection between the two interactants” (Gremler and Gwinner 2000, p. 92). More specifically, paper 4 develops and tests hypotheses suggesting that customer-employee rapport has positive effects on brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

To summarize, the theoretical framework demonstrates that the brand equity perspective can contribute to understanding of critical factors for the management of B2B brand building. Furthermore, the theoretical framework has illuminated the possibilities of brand building across the dimensions of brand equity. The papers included in this doctoral dissertation hypothesize and test the effects of factors capturing the characteristics of customers, role behavior of service providers, and customers’ perceptions of interactions with the service providers during the service encounter. The following chapters describe the methodology, give an overview of the four papers, and present the main findings and conclusions concerning each paper and the dissertation as a whole.
3 Research Design and Methodology

The methodological chapter presents main choices made by the author concerning the research design and the methodology. The author reflects upon the data collection and analysis process. The author evaluates quality of research by assessing its validity and reliability.

3.1 Research approach

To achieve the stated research purpose, the author developed four conceptual models, which were tested empirically by applying the selected multivariate analysis techniques. Paper 1, paper 3, and paper 4 specified the hypotheses focusing on the relationships between variables included in the conceptual frameworks. Paper 2 did not include the explicit statement of hypotheses. However, this paper followed the same logical composition as other papers included in the dissertation. Overall, the papers adopted a deductive view assuming theory verification (Orton 1997). Fundamentally, the deductive view is based on the researcher’s conceptualization of a research phenomenon, the formulation of hypotheses and their empirical testing (Holden and Lynch 2004). The author utilized the deductive view throughout the papers, since they began with the literature review, continued with the formulation of hypotheses, and resulted in the examination of the stated hypotheses and the proposed conceptual frameworks.

Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that another view could have been applied for developing the insights on B2B brand building. To exemplify, an inductive view assuming theory generation (Orton 1997) could have been utilized for exploring the alternative determinants of B2B brand equity and interpreting their meaning for brand building. However, this view would not support the fulfillment of the research purpose, which the author proposed in consideration of the gaps in current research. Considering prevalence of exploratory and qualitative studies in the B2B context, and a large number of alternative models of brand equity in the B2C context, the author selected to apply the deductive view in this research. By following the deductive view, the author could statistically examine the robustness of the core model of brand equity, empirically test its structural composition, and advance branding research theoretically by investigating the impact of selected factors on the main dimensions of brand equity. Therefore, the deductive view chosen by the author enabled the fulfillment of the research purpose by systematically deriving the relevant hypotheses and testing the conceptual
models, which were important for establishing the effects of selected factors on B2B brand equity.

The conceptual models analyzed in paper 1 and paper 2 focused on the core model of brand equity, its composing dimensions, and relationships between these dimensions. The variables capturing the four dimensions of brand equity included brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The examination of relationships between these variables enabled the investigation of the multidimensionality of brand equity in paper 1, and the evaluation of the hierarchical effects between the dimensions in paper 1 and paper 2. In addition to the analysis of the hierarchical effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, paper 3 included another variable in the conceptual model. More specifically, paper 3 examined the effects of customer experience on these four dimensions. Paper 4 focused on the interrelationships between brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Paper 4 analyzed the effects of customer-employee rapport, role overload, and role ambiguity on these variables.

According to the general classification of marketing research, the studies focusing on the examination of relationships between the variables can be classified as descriptive research (Aaker, Kumar, and Day 2001; Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). In general, the literature clarifies that the descriptive research approach estimates “the frequency with which something occurs or the relationship between two variables” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 91). Since all four papers included in the dissertation analyzed the relationships between the selected variables, it can be concluded that they have followed the descriptive approach.

Besides the descriptive research, the literature on marketing research distinguishes two additional types of research approaches, namely exploratory research and casual research (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001, Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). The exploratory research is commonly utilized for “the discovery of ideas and insights” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 91). The causal research is often followed for “determining cause-and-effect relationships” in a laboratory setting (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 91). The author acknowledges that the exploratory approach and the causal approach could potentially contribute to advancing the knowledge on branding in the B2B setting. However, since the main interests of the author were to investigate the relationships between the dimensions of B2B brand equity and the effects of selected factors on these dimensions, the descriptive research approach was beneficial to achieve these aims.
It is important to notice that the author examined the models included in the papers by utilizing the structural equation modeling. The terminology used in the structural equation modeling clarifies that the examined relationships can be seen as the causal relationships (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Byrne 2001; Hair et al. 2006). The general classification of marketing research assumes that the most reliable evidence of a causal inference can be observed in the experimental research, which is classified as the causal research (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001, Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). In addition, other types of research such as for example the descriptive research “may suggest causality between two variables” (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001, p. 333). Following the assumptions applied in the structural equation modeling, it can be seen as “a methodology for testing hypotheses, making predictions, or evaluating cause and effect” (Bagozzi 1982, p. 403). Based on this view, the research approach utilized in this doctoral dissertation enables the testing of a causal inference, despite its classification as descriptive research following the general classification of marketing research.

3.2 Data collection

Considering the nature of the stated purpose and the author’s aim to test causal inferences, the quantitative design was applied in this research. The quantitative design enabled the author to verify the specified models of cause and effect (Johnson and Harris 2003). The author is aware that the qualitative design would be beneficial for exploring the detailed in-depth data and uncovering new variables and relationships (Johnson and Harris 2003), but this research design would not be sufficient for achieving the purpose of this doctoral dissertation. Therefore, the author collected the data by using the quantitative surveys.

The two quantitative studies were conducted as a part of a project investigating the development of B2B brand equity, its antecedents, and consequences in the professional services industry. The author utilized the data, which was collected in 2007 for developing the analyses in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3. The data collected in 2010 was used in the analysis developed in paper 4. Both times, the customers of one of the Big Four auditing companies served as respondents. The contact information was retrieved from the company’s customer database. The respondents were selected randomly from this database. The companies chosen for the studies included various segments of the professional services market. The CFOs and CEOs of these companies participated in the telephone surveys. The respondents had to be in direct contact with their service providers to be able to reflect about their perceptions of experience, established rapport and role behavior of service providers during a service encounter.
The questionnaires were administrated over the telephone by trained interviewers. The questionnaires included different sections focusing on brand equity and factors, which could potentially affect its development and have an impact on customers’ perceptions of this brand. The measures were developed as a result of the thorough literature review. The author adopted the scales, which were applied in previous research. An expert group of marketing and management executives from the company was interviewed to specify some constructs and to provide the feedback about the questionnaires. The scales were pre-tested prior to the first study. The majority of scales were applied consequently in the first study and the second study. To decrease common method biases related to item characteristics and item contexts, the author followed suggestions by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) and included different formats of scales, applied various lengths of scales, and excluded ambiguous items. The overview of constructs and their measures relevant for particular models were presented in the respective papers.

The choice of telephone surveys was supported by consideration of their advantages concerning better access to a certain population, shorter data collection period, and likely a better response rate compared to mail surveys (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001). Another advantage of the telephone surveys was related to their lower costs compared to personal interviews (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001). However, the author acknowledged the potential disadvantages of telephone surveys regarding the omission of respondents without the telephone, the limited number of response alternatives, the limitations related to asking personal or sensitive questions (Aaker, Kumar and Day 2001). In this research, the contact information from the customer database included the telephone numbers of the selected respondents. The questionnaires had a sufficient number of items measuring the analyzed constructs. No personal or sensitive questions were included in the questionnaires. The respondents were informed about the confidentiality of the collected data prior the start of each interview. All respondents have provided their personal agreements to participate in the studies. To guarantee privacy of the respondents, the findings of this research were presented in an aggregated way.

3.3 Data analysis

The first data collection resulted in 669 completed questionnaires. The second data collection led to 632 completed questionnaires. The agreement to participate in the studies was received from 28% of the respondents reached on the telephone in the first study and 21% of the respondents in the
second study. The questionnaires with high levels of missing data, which exceeded 30% (Hair et al. 2006), were excluded from the analyses. The author analyzed the remaining questionnaires by utilizing the statistical software SPSS and AMOS

For each data set, the author evaluated the non-response bias by comparing the respondents and the nonrespondents on the known characteristics following the procedure proposed by Armstrong and Overton (1977) and Collier and Bienstock (2007). In this research, the available characteristics were turnover of their company and the number of employees. The chi-square test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the respondents and the nonrespondents, which eliminated concerns about the presence of a nonresponse bias in this research.

The techniques of multivariate data analysis were applied to analyze the collected data. The normality assumptions were fulfilled for all items and constructs scrutinized in the analyses (Hair et al. 2006). The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients calculated for each scale confirmed their reliability. The exploratory factor analysis showed the convergence of the brand equity dimensions, which indicates the uniqueness of this construct (de Chernatony, Harris, and Christodoulides 2004; Mackay 2001). In paper 2, the author conducted the MANOVA analysis to test simultaneously the differences between perceptions of the respondents from different contexts and along the selected dimensions of brand equity.

The author empirically examined the conceptual frameworks and the hypotheses stated in the papers by using the structural equation modeling. In general, the structural equation modeling can be described as “a statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory (i.e., hypothesis-testing) approach to the analysis of a structural theory bearing some phenomenon” (Byrne 2001, p. 3). By conducting the structural equation modeling, the researcher can “simultaneously examine a series of interrelated dependence relationships among the measured variables and latent constructs (variates) as well as between several latent constructs” (Hair et al. 2006). In the papers composing this dissertation, the structural equation modeling was conducted to test the causal relationships between the dimensions of brand equity and to estimate the effects of the chosen factors on these dimensions. In all four papers, the calculated fit indices exceeded the minimum required levels (Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Hair et al. 2006). These results indicate a good fit between the structural models and the data.
3.4 Quality criteria

The author assessed the validity criteria and the reliability criteria to evaluate the quality of this research. Validity of the study shows the extent of research accuracy (Hair et al. 2006). In evaluation of the studies, the author applied three types of validity criteria including predictive validity, content validity, and construct validity (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002).

Predictive or criterion-related validity portrays “how well the measure predicts the criterion” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 407). Paper 3 and paper 4 provided evidence about the predictive ability of the selected measures. The findings of these papers supported the hypotheses about the impact of customer experience, customer-employee rapport, role overload, and role ambiguity on the dimensions of brand equity. Since the measures of brand equity utilized in two studies and the brand equity model were found to be robust, these results provide additional evidence about the predictive validity of the applied measures.

Content or face validity indicates “the adequacy with which the domain of the characteristic is captured by the measure” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 407). The procedures applied for the development of measures have an impact on content validity of the study (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). As it was mentioned previously, all constructs used in this research originated from the rigor literature review. The scales for each construct were adopted from previous research. In addition, validity was assured by involving an expert group to clarify the concepts and by pre-testing the questionnaires prior to their use in the surveys. The procedures applied in this research supported its content validity.

Construct validity reflects on “what the instrument is, in fact, measuring” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 407). The statistical tests conducted during the structural equations modeling enabled the assessment of construct validity (Hair et al. 2006). More specifically, these tests estimated convergent validity, discriminant validity, and nomological validity of the constructs (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). Convergent validity refers to “the extent to which indicators of a specific construct converge or share a high proportion of variance in common” (Hair et al. 2006). The calculated coefficients of extracted variance showed that the selected constructs have a sufficient level of convergent validity. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients and the construct reliability coefficients generated additional evidence confirming an appropriate level of convergent validity. Discriminant validity portrays “the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs” (Hair et al. 2006). The results of comparison of the one-
dimensional model and the multidimensional model of brand equity provided specific evidence about a good level of discriminant validity in this research. Nomological validity examines “if the construct behaves as expected with respect to other constructs to which it is theoretically related” (Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, p. 412). Since the hypothesized effects between the brand equity dimensions and the factors affecting its development were found to be statistically significant and met the expectations about their directions, the studies can be concluded to have an appropriate level of nomological validity.

In addition to different validity criteria, the author evaluated overall quality of this research by applying the reliability criteria. In general, reliability estimates “the degree to which a set of indicators of a latent construct is internally consistent in their measurement” (Hair et al. 2006). The stability of findings over time indicates reliability of the research (Aaker, Kumar, and Day 2001; Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). In the studies, which were conducted at two points of time, the findings related to the general model of brand equity were found to be robust. These results indicate reliability of the research findings. Furthermore, reliability can be determined by evaluating internal consistency or internal homogeneity of the scale items (Aaker, Kumar, and Day 2001; Churchill and Iacobucci 2002). Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients and construct reliability coefficients can be utilized for assessing reliability. In relation to all conceptual models, which were investigated in the papers, these coefficients confirmed reliability of applied measures.
4 Summary of Papers

4.1 Extended abstract of paper 1

Paper 1

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to examine the structural composition of brand equity and the interrelationships between the dimensions of brand equity in the B2B context.

Design/methodology/approach
The study examines the multidimensionality of brand equity in the B2B context. The analysis is developed based on the replies of 647 customers of one of the Big Four auditing companies in Sweden. The structural equation modeling is used to scrutinize a one-dimensional model and a multidimensional model of brand equity. In addition, the study examines the presence of the hierarchy of effects between the dimensions of brand equity.

Findings
The study concludes that the multidimensional model performs better in the B2B setting than a one-dimensional model. The study provides empirical evidence about the existence of the hierarchical effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Research implications
The study shows that the framework of brand equity, which was initially proposed in the B2C context, can be utilized for conceptualizing brand equity in the B2B context. The study generates empirical evidence about the structural composition of B2B brand equity.

Practical implications
The study provides marketing managers with a valuable tool for measuring brand equity in the B2B setting. Marketing managers can use the examined conceptual model for enhancing brand equity of their marketing offerings and developing successful branding strategies.
Originality/value
The study contributes to the understanding of the structural composition of B2B brand equity. The study initiates the investigation of the hierarchical effects between the dimensions of brand equity.

Keywords
Brand equity, business-to-business, hierarchy of effects, brand management

4.2 Extended abstract of paper 2

Paper 2

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of contextual factors in the organizational decision making process on the formation of B2B brand equity.

Design/methodology/approach
The analysis focuses on the contextual settings including large companies versus small businesses, and private companies versus public organizations. The sample consisting of 488 respondents involved the CFOs and CEOs of the companies acquiring services from one of the Big Four auditing companies. The MANOVA analysis was conducted to explore the differences in brand equity developed by the decision makers from the selected contexts. The structural equation modeling explored the differences in relation to the effects across the dimensions of brand equity, which occurred between the respondents from various contexts.

Findings
The study concludes that the contextual factors such as the relative size of customer’s company and its industry sector can affect the particular dimensions of brand equity and its overall development in the B2B setting.

Research implications
The study demonstrates that the cognitive processes occurring in the minds of customers can affect their perceptions of a brand and its evaluation depending on the contextual setting in which they take place.
Practical implications
The study highlights the fact that marketing managers can utilize their knowledge about the contextual settings of their customers to improve the efficiency of their brand building efforts.

Originality/value
The study highlights importance of considering the contextual factors in the organizational decision making process and their impact on the development of brand equity.

Keywords
Brand equity, business-to-business, organizational buying behavior, decision making process.

4.3 Extended abstract of paper 3

Paper 3

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of customer experience on brand equity in the business-to-business services setting.

Design/methodology/approach
The analysis is developed by using 647 responses from the CFOs and CEOs of companies, who were directly involved in the choice and evaluation of their auditing company. The structural equation modeling is used to test the potential effects of customer experience of four dimensions of brand equity.

Findings
The study shows that customer experience has significant positive effects on brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Research implications
The study contributes to the understanding of relevance that the direct interaction between the customers and the services providers has on the development of brand equity in the B2B services setting. The study highlights the impact that customer experience has on the dimensions composing brand equity and on the relationships between these dimensions.
**Practical implications**
The study provides marketing managers with a clear understanding of how customer experience can affect the development of brand equity in the B2B setting. The study motivates marketing managers to integrate the efforts aimed at enhancing brand equity and creating customer experience.

**Originality/value**
The study advances branding research by analyzing the impact of customer experience on all four dimensions of B2B brand equity and considering the hierarchy of effects between these dimensions in one conceptual model.

**Keywords**
Brand equity, customer experience, business-to-business, brand management

**4.4 Extended abstract of paper 4**

**Paper 4**

**Purpose**
The purpose of the study is to examine whether factors related to customers’ perception of employees’ role behavior in terms of customer perceived role ambiguity, role overload, and customer-employee rapport influence the development of brand equity in the professional service context.

**Design/methodology/approach**
632 customers of one of the Big Four auditing companies serve as the respondents in this study. The structural equation modeling is conducted to examine the effects of customer-employee rapport, role ambiguity, and role overload on B2B brand equity.

**Findings**
The results show negative effects of role ambiguity and role overload on brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Customer-employee rapport is found to have positive effects on these dimensions of brand equity. Role ambiguity and role overload have negative effects on customer-employee rapport, which trigger the detrimental indirect effects on brand equity.
Research implications
The paper advances knowledge on B2B brand equity by investigating the impact of factors, which have not been considered in prior branding research. Since customer-employee rapport and the factors capturing employee role behavior are found to be of high relevance for customers’ perception of their service encounters and consequently brand equity, the study highlights a need to include the factors reflecting upon the interaction during service encounters in future branding studies.

Practical implications
The study brings up to attention of marketing managers the consequences that behavior of service providers and their interaction with the customers can have on the brand equity development. The marketing managers are provided with suggestions regarding the managing of employee role ambiguity and role overload, and the establishment of rapport, which can help to increase brand equity and to develop the successful branding strategies.

Originality/value
The study advances research by showing how the customers’ perceptions of the role behavior of service providers and the interaction between the customers and the service providers can influence the development of B2B brand equity.

Keywords
Brand equity, role ambiguity, role overload, customer-employee rapport, professional services.


5 Discussion and Conclusions

The concluding chapter of this dissertation addresses the main findings of each paper and develops the synthesis of the conducted research. The author proposes a general framework reflecting upon brand building in the B2B setting. The chapter describes limitations and suggests future studies, which can provide fruitful contributions to branding research. The managerial implications provide the insights for marketing practitioners on B2B brand building.

5.1 Synthesis of research findings

The four papers included in this doctoral dissertation contribute to its general purpose, which is to investigate factors affecting B2B brand building by applying the brand equity perspective in the professional services context. Prior to the proposition of the general conceptual framework, which integrates the findings of the four papers composing the dissertation, it is important to review the results of each paper and their contribution to the achievement of the main research purpose. Firstly, the discussion addresses overall possibility of applying the brand equity perspective for understanding brand building in the B2B context. Secondly, the author elaborates upon the selected factors, which can potentially have the significant effects on brand equity, and consequently affect B2B brand building.

The underlying assumptions about the potential applicability of the brand equity model (Aaker 1991, 1996) in the B2B setting were investigated initially in the first paper (Biedenbach 2012). The empirical examination of the structural composition of B2B brand equity suggests that it can be conceptualized as a multidimensional model. In line with the studies confirming the assumptions about the multidimensionality of brand equity in the B2C setting (Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey 2005; Yoo and Donthu 2001), paper 1 demonstrates that brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty are the composing dimensions of B2B brand equity. In addition, paper 1 advances current knowledge on brand equity by indicating presence of the hierarchy of effects between these dimensions. In previous research, the dimensions of B2B brand equity have been examined by gathering exploratory evidence (e.g. Gordon, Calantone, and di Benedetto 1993), by combining some unique dimensions (e.g. Kim and Hyun 2011), or even by excluding them from the proposed models (e.g. van Riel, de Mortanges, and Streukens 2005). As it was stated in the literature reviews on B2B branding (Leek and Christodoulides 2011; Sheth and Sharma 2006), this field of studies needs more research and empirical
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evidence about possible dimensions of B2B brand equity and the relationships between them. Paper 1 addresses this gap in current research by examining the four dimensions of brand equity and the hierarchical effects between them as applied in the B2B context.

The findings of paper 1 not only contribute to research on B2B brand equity, but they also clearly present potential applicability of this model as a guiding perspective on B2B brand building. Considering the associative network memory model (Keller 1993) and the learning effects taking place in the customers’ minds (Aaker 1991, 1996), which underline the brand equity model, this process of brand knowledge formation can be adopted directly to build strong B2B brands. Furthermore, the brand equity perspective provides valuable insights for understanding and managing of brand building. B2B brand building can addresses the four dimensions of brand equity and consider the potential effects between them. Since paper 1 has empirically confirmed the robustness of the brand equity model (Aaker 1991, 1996) and highlighted the core dimensions of brand equity, which can be applied in the B2B market, it can be concluded that the brand equity perspective can be utilized for building and managing strong brands in this particular context.

The second paper (Biedenbach 2010) and the third paper (Biedenbach and Marell 2010) provide additional evidence about the multidimensional model of brand equity. Paper 2 evaluates existence of the hierarchical effects between brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty across the three groups of respondents: large businesses, small businesses, and public organizations. Paper 2 provides a first indication that, under some circumstances, the effects between the particular dimensions of brand equity can become weak due to external factors. For example, in paper 2, the effect of brand awareness on brand associations was insignificant with regard to public organizations. Similar findings were identified in the analysis performed in paper 3, where strong and significant effects of customer experience on four dimensions of brand equity triggered the decrease in the effect of brand awareness on brand associations. A tentative explanation of these results might be high levels of brand awareness already established in the customers’ minds, which is less likely to increase and to enhance further overall brand equity of the selected brand. Thus, under these circumstances, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty have higher potential and stronger contribution to the formation of overall brand equity. The positive hierarchical effects between these dimensions were found to be robust in the conceptual models examined in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3. Paper 4 focused on the interrelations between brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The significance of
proposed conceptual framework shows that besides the hierarchical effects, the dimensions can trigger each other to some extent.

In relation to B2B brand building, these results bring attention to the fact that actions aiming to enhance one dimension of brand equity can consequently affect other dimensions. More particularly, the hierarchy of effects reported in paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 demonstrates to what extent the dimensions can have a direct impact on each other. In case of this particular company, which already has one of the leading competitive positions in the selected sector of professional services, a further enhancement of brand awareness among existing customers is likely to have less potential for building a strong brand than the enhancement of brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. However, for companies, which have not managed to build such high levels of brand awareness, the enhancement of this core dimension of brand equity might be their initial goal and one of the prospective milestones leading to the formation of high levels of brand loyalty among their customers. Clearly, a newly established company offering professional services needs to build brand awareness among customers allowing them to identify this company and its services. Therefore, high levels of brand awareness might be interpreted as potential signals of positive outcomes of B2B brand building efforts.

Besides the thorough evaluation of the brand equity model, paper 2 initiates the investigation of factors, which can have a significant impact on the formation of B2B brand equity. Since the development of brand equity reflects upon processes in the customers’ minds (Keller 1993), the development and outcomes of these processes might vary significantly between various groups of customers. Paper 2 advances findings of prior research suggesting that the functioning of cognitive processes differs among managers working in different organizational contexts (Baron 1998; Busenitz and Barney 1997; Stewart, Watson, Carland, and Carland 1998). Paper 2 concludes that the relative size of organization and its industry sector affect the formation of brand equity. Whereas no differences were identified in paper 2 concerning brand awareness and brand associations, the significant differences were discovered in relation to perceived quality and brand loyalty of different groups of customers. Therefore, it is important to consider that outcomes of B2B brand building can vary across the groups of customers.

Although the company can manage to build high levels of brand awareness and to create similar positive associations across various categories of customers, their perceptions of quality and brand loyalty might be affected by contextual characteristics. For instance, customers representing SMEs might be more prone to form more positive evaluations of perceived quality
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

and as a consequence of these perceptions to develop high levels of brand loyalty. However, marketing managers need to be cautions when interpreting these findings, because there could be other alternative explanations for these results. For example, marketing managers can try to evaluate whether these outcomes are caused by particular experiences of these customers, the choice of promotional tools, or even variations in a composition of the specific marketing offerings for each segment. The resulting conclusions will then determine the area to be addressed in order to enhance the specific dimension of B2B brand equity. Furthermore, overreliance on the marketing tools aiming to increase brand awareness might not lead the company to desired outcomes. As paper 2 has shown, some market segments might have similar levels of brand awareness and brand associations, but might be significantly different with regard to perceived quality and brand loyalty. Therefore, the marketing tools focusing on the enhancement of brand awareness would not be sufficient for building a strong brand in these segments. Findings supporting this argument are reported in Paper 3, which indicated that some factors might significantly modify the impact of brand awareness on the other dimensions of brand equity.

Paper 3 continues the investigation of factors, which can affect the dimensions of brand equity and its overall formation. Following the propositions of research on consumer behavior about the impact of customer experience on customers’ attitudes, feelings, and their decision-making (Fazio and Zanna 1978; Grace and O’Cass 2004; Havlena and Holbrook 1986; Hoch and Deighton 1989), paper 3 examines the potential effects of this factor on four dimensions of brand equity. The evidence about the positive effects of customer experience on brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty confirm that the relative success of brand building efforts can be determined during encounters between service providers and customers. Customers’ perceptions of interactions generate experiences, which significantly affect not only the composing dimensions of brand equity, but also the development of hierarchical effects between them. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the role that experience has in B2B brand building. In addition to addressing the gap in research identified in the literature review (Keller and Lehmann 2006), paper 3 starts a discussion about the factors capturing the interaction between the service providers and the customers that is of high value for branding research in the services setting. These issues have not been addressed in previous studies on B2B brand equity.

The fourth paper (Biedenbach, Bengtsson, and Wincent 2011) proceeds with this line of research and evaluates the impact of another factor assessing
customers’ perceptions, which are formed during their interactions with the service providers. The findings of paper 4 demonstrate the positive effects of customer-employee rapport on brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Therefore, these findings provide additional insights about the factors that need to be considered when building strong brands. Following the conceptualization of customer-employee rapport (Gremler and Gwinner 2000), and based on the results of paper 4, it can be concluded that B2B brand building needs to encompass activities, which enable an enjoyable interaction leading to a perception of a personal connection between the service provider and the customer. Here the findings indicate that the scope of brand building efforts extends beyond the enhancement of brand equity dimensions. Thus, there is a need to consider other relevant factors, which might affect the formation of brand equity.

As a logical continuation of analyzing the factors having a major impact on brand equity in the services setting, paper 4 examines the effects of the employee role behavior on the formation of brand equity. Drawing on the role theory (Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970), paper 4 shows the negative effects of role ambiguity and role overload on B2B brand equity. Therefore, these findings indicate an area that needs to be considered during B2B brand building, namely whether the customers’ perceptions of employees’ behavior are coherent with how customers expect them to behave. Therefore, these factors need to be controlled and coordinated, so that their negative impact would not undermine success of B2B brand building. The identification of another set of relevant factors, which can affect the development and outcomes of B2B brand building, completes the investigation conducted in this doctoral dissertation.

Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework, which was developed by the author as the result of synthesis of the main research findings. Figure 4 portrays the potential approach to B2B brand building based on the brand equity perspective. This conceptual model incorporates the main dimensions of B2B brand equity, which are brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. Furthermore, the conceptual model presents three groups of factors, which have been identified in this research as having the significant effects on B2B brand building. In the conceptual model, the potential impact of interaction is captured by estimating customers’ perceptions of their experience and customer-employee rapport established during service encounters. Furthermore, customers’ perceptions of employees’ role behavior are assessed by measuring role ambiguity and role overload. The relative size of organizations and its industry sectors are considered as the contextual characteristics, which might affect customers’ perceptions of their interaction with the service providers, and consequently
modify brand equity formed in their minds. Overall, the proposed conceptual model demonstrates that B2B brand building can be initiated across the four dimensions of brand equity, while considering the specific factors, which have an impact on outcomes of interactions between the customers and the service providers.

![Diagram of B2B brand building with the focus on the customers' perceptions](image)

Figure 4. B2B brand building with the focus on the customers’ perceptions

To conclude, the doctoral dissertation demonstrates that the brand equity perspective can serve as a valuable foundation for theoretically understanding and practically managing B2B brand building. The four papers included in this dissertation portray how B2B brand building can be
developed across the dimensions of brand equity. Furthermore, the findings highlight the role of other critical factors such as those presented in Figure 4, which illustrate how customers’ perceptions of service encounters and the parties involved in them affect B2B brand building.

### 5.2 Limitations and future research

Although this dissertation addresses a number of relevant research gaps and makes significant theoretical contributions, the author recognizes that as any academic work, this dissertation has some limitations. Each of four papers included in the dissertation addresses limitations related to the specific conceptual models examined in the papers. In this section of the dissertation, the author would like to highlight the main limitations, which have affected this research as a whole, and which have the potential to inspire future branding research.

One main limitation of this study relates to the author’s choice of the research context. The conceptual models proposed in the four papers were examined empirically in the professional services setting in Sweden. Based on the synthesis of these findings, the author has developed the conceptual framework illustrating B2B brand building with the focus on the customers’ perceptions. As such, the choice of this particular context can be considered as appropriate and justified, because it enabled the author to gain important insights on B2B brand equity, the factors affecting its development, and brand building in the B2B services setting. For example, the examined factors, which capture the interaction between the customers and the services providers, have a fundamental impact on brand equity and brand building in the professional services setting. Although these findings are generalizable to other B2B services settings, additional empirical evidence is needed to confirm whether these results will hold for brands in the B2B goods sector as well. Considering the current state of research on B2B branding, empirical evidence from other countries could also be beneficial, because some elements of the phenomena in focus could have stronger manifestations in other cultural settings. For example, expectations of behavior associated with the services providers’ roles may vary across countries, and consequently affect brand equity and brand building to different extents.

Another limitation is the general choice of the B2B context as a research setting. The choice of the B2B context enabled the author to advance research on B2B branding, which has been an area with scattered empirical evidence due to a lesser amount of studies compared to research on B2C branding. Therefore, the author acknowledges that there are several areas
with regard to branding, which B2B and B2C research have in common. In fact, some of the analyzed constructs in this dissertation could have stronger effects on brand equity and brand building in the B2C context. For example, the construct of customer experience could have even stronger impact on brand loyalty, which is one of brand equity dimensions, in the B2C services setting. Another area is brand awareness, which is another dimension of brand equity. It is likely that brand awareness has a stronger impact on the overall brand equity in the fast-moving consumer goods sector than reported in this research on professional services. All models examined in the four papers and the overall conceptual framework developed in this dissertation are based on original propositions not previously investigated neither in the B2C context nor in the B2B context. Consequently, it is of interest for future research to replicate these studies in the B2C context. Such future studies would generate additional empirical evidence about the phenomena under investigation and test the robustness of the proposed models in the B2C market. To make a unique theoretical contribution, future research should advance the models assessed in this dissertation by considering other factors in addition to those already analyzed by the author. For example, the examination of the impact of satisfaction or factors capturing the atmosphere during service encounters on the dimensions of brand equity might be a fruitful contribution to branding research and knowledge on brand building.

In the previous sections, the author based the presentation of limitations and the suggestions for future studies on the contextual setting and the theoretical foundations of this research. Additional reflections about limitations and possible ideas for future studies can be found in the four papers included in the doctoral dissertation. Therefore, the author would like to conclude this part by addressing another type of limitations, which concern methodological choices made in this research.

In this dissertation, the author collected the data to test the conceptual models by conducting two cross-sectional studies. As argued earlier, these studies were necessary for testing the proposed frameworks and for fulfilling the purpose of this dissertation. Nevertheless, the author sees a great potential in developing a longitudinal study and evaluating the long-term effects of some factors on B2B brand equity and assessing their impact on B2B brand building over time. Being aware of a variety of possible research approaches and analysis techniques, the author finds it extremely interesting to advance branding research by conducting the mixed-method studies, which might provide additional evidence about the researched phenomena. Another suggestion is to perform action research, which in addition to theory testing can make a direct impact on performance of a selected company. To
the author’s knowledge, these methods are not widely used in branding research in general. Therefore, they can generate important contributions, which would be beneficial for advancing marketing theory and practice.

5.3 Managerial implications

The doctoral dissertation provides valuable insights for marketing managers aiming to build a strong brand in the B2B context. Considering the strong impact that brands have on performance of companies, and their increasing influence on the process of decision making in the B2B market, the findings presented in the four articles and the dissertation as the whole are of high relevance for marketing practitioners. Each of four papers provides clear and detailed suggestions that can be implemented by marketing managers and serve as beneficial inputs to their daily practice. In addition to making such specific suggestions, the author would like to highlight the more general implications of the findings and exemplify how this knowledge can contribute to the successful completion of important tasks performed by marketing practitioners.

First, the tasks performed by marketing managers might include planning and development of marketing strategies. Thus, when a marketing manager is faced with an assignment that specifies a need to develop a strong brand, the findings of this dissertation are of utmost importance for completing this task. Therefore, this dissertation can be seen as a starting point and a guide on how to manage a strong B2B brand, what particular steps should be taken to build a B2B brand, and what issues need to be considered to succeed in this process. The findings of the dissertation suggest a perspective portraying the specific dimensions that need to be enhanced if the company would like to increase their brand value. For instance, if the marketing manager is responsible for building a strong B2B brand, this person needs to consider whether the selected strategies and the proposed actions will lead to high levels of brand awareness, positive associations, high perceived quality, and strong brand loyalty. Furthermore, the findings of this dissertation demonstrate that these dimensions are important to consider if the company aims to build a strong brand in the B2B context. The dissertation clarifies the nature of each dimensions, interrelationships between them, and their general contribution to building a strong brand.

Often in the planning process, marketing managers are responsible for developing the general marketing strategies, besides particular tasks such as building a strong brand. The author of this dissertation would like to draw attention to the fact that a marketing manager dealing with such an important assignment needs to assess carefully the consequences of the
proposed strategies. This is important, because the implemented marketing actions do not only affect the financial indicators, but also brand value of this company. Even though the marketing managers’ assignment do not state it directly it is necessary to evaluate the impact of strategic decisions on the company’s brand value. The reason behind this suggestion is that strategic decisions and tactical actions undertaken without a consideration of their effects on a company’s brand might have negative consequences on customers’ perceptions of this brand and their preferences for choosing this brand over competitors in the future. As we can see from some cases presented in the introduction, the loss of customers’ trust and their negative evaluations of the brand can be damaging for the company and even lead to its bankruptcy. For instance, a company’s efforts to improve customer experience need to be evaluated regarding their impact on brand equity. Although some ways to improve customers’ perceptions of their experience can be beneficial from a short term perspective, they may for example have a negative impact on brand associations formed in customers’ minds, and consequently decrease their loyalty in the long term. Therefore, even if the scope of tasks that marketing managers need to perform does not include brand building directly, they need to consider the consequences of their choices on the equity of their brands.

Second, other types of tasks completed by marketing managers include the implementation of marketing strategies, and the coordination of tactical actions. In addition to planning marketing strategies, the findings of the doctoral dissertation can be utilized to understand the factors affecting outcomes, which only become evident after implementing the chosen strategies. Although the marketing manager might have considered the impact of certain tactical actions on brand equity and proposed an effective plan for reaching the desired objectives, their practical implementation might lead to different results than were initially expected. For example, managers’ perception of how an advertising campaign or a discount in price might affect their brands is likely to be dependent on whether they work in a small company or in a large company. The dissertation highlights a number of factors that marketing managers could consider during the implementation of their proposed marketing strategies. In particular, the findings show that the factors capturing the contextual setting of customers, role behavior of service providers, and the interaction between customers and employees during a service encounter can significantly affect the dimensions of brand equity and alter outcomes of implemented marketing actions. The author suggests that marketing managers should devote time and resources on assessing the potential impact of these factors on their brand and make needed alterations, which would remove the risk of possible
negative effects, while increasing the positive effects of these factors on the brand equity.

Finally, marketing managers can use insights on brand building presented in this dissertation when dealing with tasks related to control, especially focusing on the design of the control metrics and the practical assessment whether the proposed strategies and actions led to the desired outcomes. Similarly to the planning tasks, marketing managers might be asked to control whether the company managed to achieve its brand building goals. Likewise, they might be involved in the overall evaluation of company’s performance. When working with such tasks, the findings of this research provide a valuable input. The dissertation presents a detailed overview of four dimensions of brand equity and measures that can be utilized for assessing these dimensions in the B2B context. Marketing managers can adopt these scales in customer surveys and evaluate the respective constructs individually or in combination with other factors, which might be of interest for a particular company. As it was discussed previously, the dissertation provides reliable scales for measuring a number of factors, which were found to have the strong effects on B2B brand equity. Marketing practitioners can use this knowledge as an input for continuous improvement of their general marketing management.
References


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